

Jamaica



1509 - Jamaica occupied by the Spaniards under a license from Columbus's son; much of the indigenous Arawak community dies off from exposure to European diseases; African slaves brought in to work on the sugar plantations.

1670 - Jamaica formally ceded to the British in accordance with the Treaty of Madrid.

1692 - Jamaican capital Port Royal sinks into the sea during an earthquake; Spanish Town becomes the new capital.

1838 - Slavery abolished.

1870 - Banana plantations set up as the sugar cane industry declines in the face of competition from European beet sugar.

1884 - New constitution marks the initial revival of local autonomy.

Jamaica gained full independence within the British Commonwealth in 1962. Deteriorating economic conditions during the 1970s led to recurrent violence and a drop-off in tourism. Elections in 1980 saw the democratic socialists voted out of office. Subsequent governments have been open market oriented.

JAMAICA FACTS

Population: 2.6 million (UN, 2003)

Capital: Kingston

Major language: English

Major religion: Christianity

Life expectancy: 74 years (men), 78 years (women) (UN)

Monetary unit: 1 Jamaican dollar = 100 cents

Main exports: Bauxite, aluminium, sugar, bananas, rum

Average annual income: US \$2,800 (World Bank, 2001)

Internet domain: .jm

International dialing code: + 1876



Flag Description: diagonal yellow cross divides the flag into four triangles - green (top and bottom) and black (hoist side and outer side). To listen to the Jamaican national anthem go to http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/country_profiles/1190968.stm