

Travel

Jamaica delights at every turn

By ANNE WANSTALL
Times editor
KINGSTON, Jamaica — Christopher Columbus, who never seemed to have any qualms about sailing off the edge of the world, doubted his theories when he dropped anchor at the Garden of Eden.

So lush with colorful flowers, fruits and vegetation that the most worldly man of his time thought he had sailed back into the time of Creation, Jamaica remains a paradise isle set in an azure sea.

Despite the rigors of ex-

ploitation, slavery and resulting poverty, all followed by an understandable mistrust of anything white, Jamaica has made a remarkable comeback as a top destination for Canadian holiday travellers.

With an advertising campaign that explains the value of the tourist dollar to the people of this emerging and bankrupt country still continuing, Jamaicans have returned to their natural courtesy and charm that made them such hospitable hosts in the past. In fact, you

can't take an early morning walk along the white sands without someone stopping you for a chat about the joys of Jamaica.

And joys there are aplenty, with something for everyone from one end of the island to the other. There is only one problem, and that is getting around to see all that Jamaica has to offer. Flash floods (a 10-minute rainfall on the island goes a long way — as I found out when I stepped into a wading pool after what seemed to have been a short, sharp shower) play havoc with the roads, making a ride on many comparable to a turn with the bumper cars at the Canadian National Exhibition.

Exploring

You can rent a car (Jamaicans drive on the left) and if you take the trip in easy stages you'll be rewarded with sights that delight the eye and senses at every turn. There's also a train trip from Kingston to Montego Bay that is reputed to be one of the world's most fascinating rides. Otherwise, it's special coach trips, cabs or crowded public buses.

However, transportation isn't a problem when you have to get from one of the airports to your holiday hotel. The majority of the resorts have their own mini-buses or arrangements with motor coach lines.

The hotels can also arrange coach trips to Jamaica's sights, such as Noel Coward's last residence, the Great Houses now open to view, plantation tours and one of the several rafting rivers.

"Packages" are the most popular way of visiting the island. Some are all inclusive, so that you literally don't need anything more than spending money for souvenirs. Others are on the European plan, in which vacationers must be

prepared to spend money on the essentials.

Because people look for different things on vacation, be sure to thoroughly check that the package offered is something that will appeal to you. If you have no intention of being active every hour on the hour, you might be better off paying separately for such extras as sailing, tennis, horseback riding or scuba diving that are inclusive in some of the packages.

Our mini-guide should help with your preliminary investigation for a winter vacation in the sun.

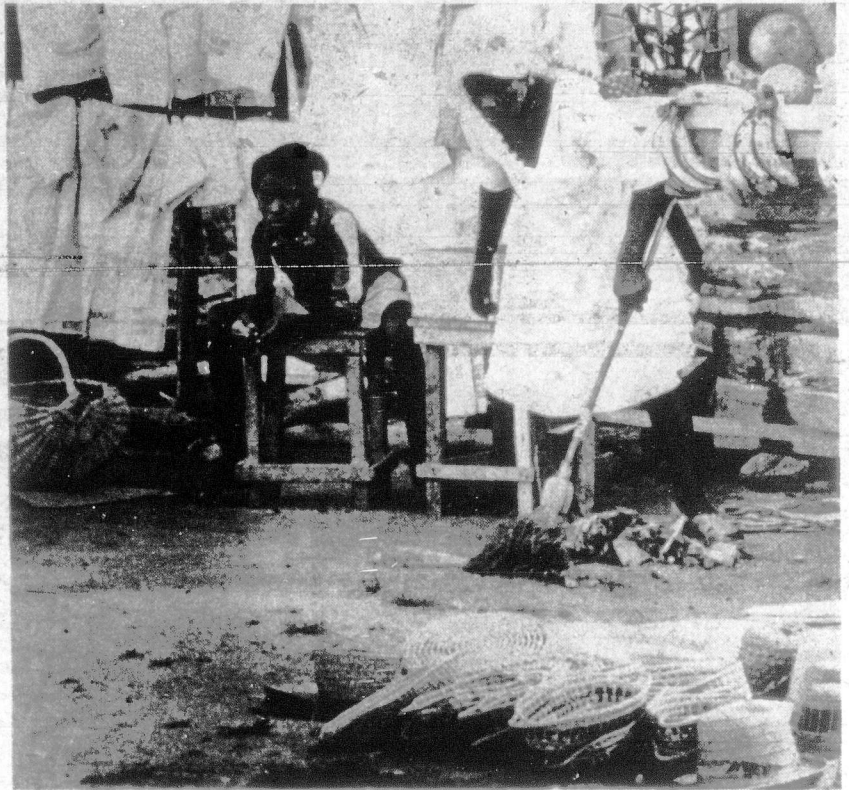
Non-stop

Negril Beach Village, about two hours by bus from Montego Bay, is hep on hedonism. Package prices include everything other than hard liquor, laundry and cigarettes.

There are hour-to-hour activities, wine made from imported concentrate with lunch and dinner, and there is a nude bathing beach. Mostly a young crowd. Package prices start from \$769.

Club Guava in Montego Bay is close to the airport. A gracious hotel converted to club atmosphere, it offers on-the-hour activities. You cross a quiet road to reach the beach (there's a swimming pool on the premises). There's a daily, supervised program for children. Rates are all inclusive and start at \$569 U.S. per person, double occupancy. Price for children sharing a room with parents is \$100 U.S. less.

Seawinds on the Montego Freeport complex has a regular hotel and a villa complex. It offers plenty of activities, but these are not inclusive in the price (bananas are the currency). The villas are the quiet spot if you want the children to bed down early. You can also do your own cooking. There's a doorstep



THE TIMES

This colorful roadside market near Negril is where shoppers can pick up inexpensive hand-made basket-weave crafts, and shirts made out of pure cotton flour sack-

beach long enough for morning joggers. Prices start at \$299 U.S. at the Towers, and \$319 U.S. at the apartments.

Casual

Rockhouse in Negril is a collection of palm-leaf-thatched villas on promontories overlooking the sea. Each has a small kitchen with ice box and rates are European plan. A bicycle will get you to the noise at Negril Beach Village; otherwise, there's nothing to do but take in the breathtaking view. Rates

start at \$50 daily for each villa.

Coconut Cove in Negril is elegant, has a nice beach (with a small reggae band), excellent food, room service and pool. Fiesta Holidays have a package, tour; otherwise, rates start at \$650 per person, double occupancy and inclusive of everything but the airfare.

Cheaper

Bonny View in Port Antonio or rather, above Port Antonio. Too high on the hills for a beach, but

there's a jitney service down. There's a pool, a tennis court and an astonishing view.

You can have a cottage that sleeps five for \$40 a night, or pay around \$150 a week per person for a modest room. Meals are excellent (about \$6 Jamaican for lobster curry) and they make a special rum punch that's more than cooling.

About getting there: The cheapest route offered by Air Jamaica is the Monday-to-Friday return, at \$350.



TRAVELCHAT

By Anne Wanstall
Travel Editor

Probably the most uncomfortable part of an airline trip is finding that the person seated next to you paid half as much as you did for the same seating and service.

There's such a range of prices available that only your travel agent knows for sure which is the least expensive, but when the trip is sudden, there's generally no other way than the most expensive.

Lufthansa German Airlines, which has gained a deserved reputation as the "businessman's airline," recognizes that this disparity causes complaints and, provided it gets permission from the Canadian government, will remedy the situation starting Jan. 2.

From that date, Lufthansa will begin a three-class system. There will be the regular first class and charter class, plus an executive traveller class for passengers paying full economy fares.

The new class will have seating behind the first class, complimentary bar service throughout the flight, priority dining service and complimentary headsets for the movie and music.

The number of seats for this new class can be increased according to the number of full-fare paying economy passengers.

Canadian Pacific Air has negotiated 1,000 visas for Canadians who wish to visit the People's Republic of China in 1979 and will feature 20 departures running from February to November.

Operated by Elan Holidays, the tours will run from 16 to 20 days with approximately 12 days in China. Other destinations on the agenda include stopovers in Tokyo and Hong Kong. Get details from your travel agent or CP Air.

British Airways is offering what they call the "Spanish Alternative," with package tours to the Costa del Sol on the Mediterranean, from January through April, 1979.

The holidays range in duration from two to 15 weeks. Prices, based on two sharing either a hotel room or fully equipped apartment, start at \$609, including BA airfare from Toronto and a day and a night in London.

Costa del Sol has an average temperature of over 55 degrees Fahrenheit January through April.

The U.S. Weather Service, a government agency, has predicted a better winter for Florida this year. The state has had a drop in tourist visitors after the last two gruelling winters, but is depending on the official forecast for an improvement in 1979.

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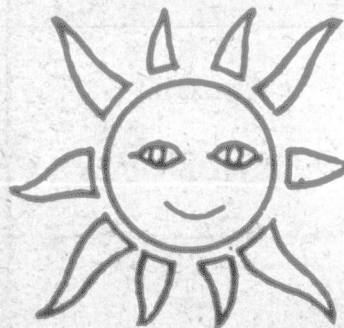
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