



# HISTORY

## **Jamaica History Overview**

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Jamaica history has become very rich in its story telling and purpose. The truth is that very little is known of Jamaica history and Jamaica culture and the facts remain that most of what was written in the era before the arrival of Christopher Columbus is disjointed at best.

### **PRE-1492 – The Arawak Indians in Jamaica History**

Before the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1492 Jamaica history cites that the country was inhabited by the Arawak Indian called the Tainos by the later Spanish. These Indians had migrated from [South America](#) to Jamaica in boats. Jamaica history records that Arawak Indians were a race of short stocky people. The Arawaks thrived in very isolated communities. The Arawak men worked as fishermen with the main meat staple being fish, shark and turtle. The Arawak women planted crops such as cassava, potatoes and corn. For clothing the Arawak women used the cotton they grew as was recorded by Jamaica history writers in Spanish. The Arawak Indians were wiped out by the Spaniards because of new diseases. These previously alien to the Arawak Indians reduced their numbers to almost extinction. Many Jamaican Arawak Indians added a very rich and strong aspect to Jamaica history.

### **1494 – 1655 in Jamaica History : Christopher Columbus and Spaniards ERA.**

Jamaica history has been long marred by the arrival of Christopher Columbus. He arrived in 1492 and proceeded to wipe out the Arawak Indian communities by enslaving them and new diseases that were unleashed by the Spaniards. The Spaniards initially thought that Jamaica was rich in precious ore such as gold and or silver. This was not the case. So the Spaniards utilized Jamaica as a port of call for its war ships heading to South America and other countries in [Central America](#), namely what is now known as [Mexico](#). Writers of Jamaica history claim that the Spaniards established many cities and towns and began to develop the country as a main source of crops for its passing war ships. Jamaica history lives on today with cities such as [Ocho Rios](#) and Spanish Town were major ports of call for the Spaniards. By 1655 the British wanted the land for its crop base and captured the [island](#) from the Spaniards in a light war. The Spaniards who were more steeped in precious ore left the island without much fight. This led to the dawn of a new era in Jamaica history which is known as British Rule.

### **1656 – 1838 in Jamaica History : Slavery to African Emancipation**

After the British expelled the Spaniards from the island, they quickly realized the non-existence of ores yet saw an abundance of crops which they could exploit. However to tend to these crops the British were not physically equipped due to the tropical heat. The British adopted the trans-Atlantic slave trade in which heralded a dark period in Jamaica history. The capture and enslavement of African nationals on the sugar plantations the biggest crime in Jamaica history. A look further in Jamaica history sees the island as the most lucrative West Indian British colony. Sugar plantations sprung up all over the island and

owners became wealthy using a great barter system. The British marred Jamaica history even worse than the Spaniards. The slave trade in Jamaica history was as a direct result of sugar, slaves and manufacturing goods. The plantation era in Jamaica history dominated life on the island. In legal jurisprudence and economic wealth sugar determined the life and liberty of all who resided in Jamaica history.

Jamaica history does not give enough credence to this and the horrific occurrences during the period. It was several disruptive slaves later known as the **Maroons** who escaped the plantation life and began guerilla warfare against the English forces. This led to treaty after treaty to capture other runaway slaves. Jamaica history looks on this as a proud moment however in hind sight many historians have now realized that this tactic was used by the then slave traders to capture slaves in West Africa. During this time in Jamaica history the political class and structure era used a ruling class governor and a council, an assembly of territory or parish representatives elected by the plantation owners. Eventually the sugar based economy began to lose steam and it eventually became a burden on the British economy and that precipitated emancipation and not philanthropy and human rights as Jamaica history leads some to believe. This is cited by many historians as a dawn in Jamaica history.

### **1838 – 1938 Jamaica history**

Emancipation was the most fundamental occurrence in Jamaica history. As the ex-slaves left the plantations in droves. Knowing nothing but farming the migrants left the sugar cane and began cultivating other products. This caused a massive amount of class and race struggles, where the field ex-slaves battled against former artisan and ex-house slaves for land. This led to the Morant Bay Rebellion in 1868 a very dark period in Jamaica history. This led to a rapidly changing economy as more and more other crops were beginning to be grown. Jamaica history has not actually admitted that it is this era that has led to the boom in Jamaica coffee and Jamaican bananas.

The economy became to some extent diversified but was still heavily dependent on agriculture. Jamaica history does rarely explore this period in depth. In fact it is the most fundamental period in Jamaica history as plantation owners attempting to boost sugar brought in many indentured laborers from Asia. Jamaican historians cite this is the reason for the diversity in Jamaican ethnicity. Hence Jamaica history played a major role.

### **1938-1962 Jamaica History**

This era is known as the Jamaica history Independence era. It is characterized by the many movements that emerged for Jamaican independence. Jamaica history documents that agitated by the political ideals of Marcus Mosiah Garvey, one of the proponents of repatriation that led to a massive rebellion in 1938. Jamaica history is marred by this period as the colonial powers loosen their grip on the British [West Indies](#). During this period in Jamaica history Jamaican labor unions typically Bustamante Industrial Trades Union and the National Workers Union flowered into the Jamaica Labor Party (JLP) and the People's National Party (PNP). The BITU was formed by Sir Alexander Bustamante and the National Workers Union (NWU) by the Rt. Hon Norman Manley. Both were instrumental in establishing universal adult suffrage and enacting of self-government in Jamaica history in 1944. This period in Jamaica history is also known for the major changes in political, economic and social structure. The economy now reaped the benefits of a multifaceted agricultural sector coupled with the export of bauxite and a booming [tourism industry](#). This led up to Jamaican independence the most gratifying period in Jamaica history.

### **1962 – 1992 Jamaica History : 30 Years Political Independence, 1962-1992**

Jamaica gained independence was granted in 1962 and the then Jamaican government opted for a Westminster or British style constitution which meant a Governor-general as

acting as the British Monarchy or what is known as a bicameral style of Parliament. This comprised of a House of Representatives elected and a Senate which is appointed by both the current Prime Minister and the elected Leader of the Opposition. The government is headed by a Prime Minister. Jamaica history cites that governments formed were the JLP and the PNP. Throughout the 1960's the Jamaican economy boomed and yet there was still many problems that transpired. The economy made inroads in the mining sector, [tourism](#) sector, manufacturing sector, and construction sectors. A change of government in the 1970's led to a change in political and social status quo with a more communist or socialist view point. This was the first post independence marring of Jamaica history. With a host of blunders by the Jamaican government of the time the noteworthy in Jamaica history was introduction of a levy on bauxite mining in 1974 as the Jamaican government tried to reap more profits from the industry. This fit in well with the socialist economic ideologies of that era in Jamaica history.

Heavy subsidization of services such as Jamaican food, Jamaican housing, Jamaican education and Jamaican health. Jamaica history cites that massive capital inflows helped to buoy the Jamaican economy in the run up to the most disastrous Jamaican election. The 1980 election proved the most socially and economically catastrophic of its time in the English speaking [Caribbean](#). This heralded a massive outflow of Jamaican nationals fleeing crime and imminent poverty to [North America](#) and the [UK](#). This has led to a massive Diaspora. This led to an obvious change in government and the JLP seized power 1980 to 1989. Using aid from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the US-AID the JLP was able to return the economic and social structure.

The development of areas of what Jamaica history calls Free Zones became a great source of employment for low skilled workers and low paying jobs. In 1988 Hurricane Gilbert plunged the country into darkness for almost 6 months and aid coming from all over the world saw a change in the moral of Jamaicans. Jamaica history cites the Hurricane and ensuing corruption scandals as the demise of the JLP government and the subsequent PNP government returns to power in late 1989. Between this period to 1992 Jamaica saw its first black Prime Minister PJ Patterson.

### **1992 – 2007 Jamaica History :** The PNP's Long Reign

The PNP government has been in power for the longest time in Jamaica history. There have been many technological and social advances within this time period. However there has been massive fallout in the economy that has overshadowed all social advances. By 1993 the Jamaican dollar was falling from a low of USD\$9.00 to USD\$27.00 with no end in sight. This was a direct result of liberalization which led to an increasing deficit in the balance of payments. By 1997 the banking sector collapsed leaving the hole to be plugged by government resources. Jamaica history blames the then finance ministry for the woefully policing of the sector. The same finance ministry has since then only corrected this problem by borrowing cheap funds to pay for common Jamaican social services. By 2004 the Jamaica history was steeped in violence as crime continued to increase year over year and only slowed its rate in 2006. This coincided with a landmark in Jamaica history. The first female Jamaican prime minister. Portia Simpson Miller has held the reigns of Jamaican government and has since then called for a general election on August 27, 2007. Jamaica history salutes Portia Simpson Miller for her achievement