



OSAC Country Security Report Jamaica

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This report is intended to supplement the U.S. Department of State Jamaica [Travel Advisory](#) and [Jamaica International Travel Information Page](#).

Embassy & Consulate Contact Information

U.S. Embassy Kingston

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Emergencies: +(876) 702-6000. Hours. Monday-Friday 7:15 am to 4:00 pm

OSAC Country Chapters

The Kingston country chapter is active and meets an ad-hoc basis.

Contact [OSAC's Americas team](#) with any questions.

Jamaica Travel Advisory

The current U.S. Department of State [Travel Advisory](#) at the date of this report's publication indicates that travelers should reconsider travel to Jamaica due to natural disasters, crime, and medical services.

Some areas are Level 4, Do Not Travel due to risk of crime.

These areas include:

St. Ann's Parish - Steer Town and the Buckfield neighborhood near Ocho Rios.

St. Catherine's Parish - Spanish Town, Central Village, areas within Portmore, including: Naggo Head, New Land, Old Braeton, Portmore Lane, Gregory Park, and Waterford.

Clarendon Parish - all of Clarendon Parish, except passing through Clarendon Parish using the T1 and A2 highways.

St. Elizabeth's Parish - Vineyard District Community, between the communities of Salt Spring and Burnt Savanna, St. Elizabeth.

Hanover Parish - Logwood and Orange Bay.

St. James Parish/Montego Bay - Inland side of the A1 highway and The Queen's Drive from San San to Harmony Beach Park.

Kingston and St. Andrew Parish - Cassava Piece, Duhaney Park, Grants Pen, Standpipe, Swallowfield, Elleston Flats, August Town, and downtown Kingston, defined as between Mountain View Avenue and Hagley Park Road, and south of Half Way Tree and Old Hope Roads. Downtown Kingston includes Arnett Gardens, Cockburn Gardens, Denham Town, Olympic Gardens, Seaview Gardens, Trench Town, and Tivoli Gardens.

Manchester Parish - Green Vale and Gray Ground neighborhoods of Mandeville.

St. Thomas Parish - Black Lane neighborhood in Seaforth, Grands Penn, Church Corner neighborhood near Yallahs, Town of Yallahs, except when driving through on the main highway.

Trelawny Parish - Clarks Town.

Westmoreland Parish - Russia community in Savanna-la-Mar (The Southeastern quadrant of Savannah la Mar east of Darling Street and south of the A2 highway/Barracks Road), Morgan Bay, Kings Valley, The Whitehall, Bethel Town, and Red Ground neighborhoods of Negril.

Review OSAC's report, [Understanding the Consular Travel Advisory System](#).

Crime

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Kingston as being a CRITICAL-threat location for crime directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has included a Crime "C" Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Jamaica, indicating that there may be widespread violent crime and/or organized crime present in the country, and/or that local law enforcement may have limited ability to respond to serious crimes.

The crime emergency line in Jamaica is **119**. Review the U.S. Department of State's Crime Victims Assistance [brochure](#).

Crime: General Threat

From January 1 to December 27, 2025, the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) reported 666 murders, which is 41.7% less than the same period in 2024. This follows a decline from 2023 to 2024, where homicides declined by 17%. However, Jamaica's per capita murder rate is still amongst the highest in the Western Hemisphere. Other crimes the JCF classifies as "serious" showed significant declines in 2025. According to their records, there was a 31% decrease in shootings, and a 28.3 % decrease in rape. Non-violent crimes increased. There was a 7% increase in robbery and a 17% increase in break-ins. Overall, reporting of serious crimes decreased 17.1% for this period from 2024 to 2025.

Starting in 2017, the Government of Jamaica declared States of Emergency (SOEs) and Zones of Special Operations (ZOSOs) in high-crime communities throughout Jamaica. Under the SOE, security forces were deployed to address organized crime, including gang violence related to drug and gun trafficking and lottery scams. The Emergency Powers Act allowed security forces to detain and deport suspicious persons, to enter premises and seize property without a warrant, and declare curfews. Presently there are no more SOEs in effect. ZOSOs are areas designated as high crime sites. The status confers to security forces some additional detention authorities, such as are found in SOEs.

In December 2025, the House of Representatives approved an extension of 180 days to the ZOSOs. The current list of ZOSOs includes Denham Town, West Kingston; Norwood and Mount Salem in St. James; Greenwich Town, Parade Gardens and August Town in St. Andrew; and Savanna-la-Mar in Westmoreland. Within the ZOSOs, crime has been trending downwards.

Gangs are a major security issue and account for over 60% of the island's homicides. While there is no evidence to indicate criminals and gang-related activities specifically target U.S. citizens for violent crime, U.S. citizens are the prime targets for financial "lottery scams" in which scammers lead victims to believe they have won a drawing or lottery, but the cash or prizes will not be released without upfront payment of fees or taxes. Scammers frequently target the elderly or those with disposable income and operate predominantly from the north coast near the tourist areas. Those organizing scams may obtain personal information of tourists and use it to conduct their operations.

According to the [Travel Advisory](#), violent crime in Jamaica has decreased since 2024, but it remains statistically high throughout the country. The homicide rate reported by the Government of Jamaica is among the highest in the Western Hemisphere.

- Tourist areas generally see lower rates of violent crime than other parts of the country.
- Armed robberies and sexual assaults are common.
- The U.S. Embassy routinely receives reports of sexual assaults, including from U.S. citizen tourists at resorts.
- U.S. citizens report slow or unsatisfactory response to serious criminal incidents.
- When arrests are made, cases are infrequently prosecuted to a final verdict and sentence.

Crime: Areas of Concern

The U.S. Embassy in Kingston maintains several areas as off-limits to its personnel due to high levels of crime:

St. Ann Parish: Steer Town and the Buckfield and Clark’s Town are off limits areas.

St. Catherine Parish: Off limits areas include Spanish Town and Central Village. Additionally, areas within Portmore including Old Braeton, Naggo Head, Newlands, Portmore Lane, Gregory Park, and Waterford are off limits.

Clarendon Parish: The entire parish is off-limits, although personnel may pass through Clarendon parish using the T1 and A2 highways.

St. Elizabeth’s Parish: Do not travel to Vineyard District Community, between the communities of Salt Spring and Burnt Savanna, St. Elizabeth.

Hanover Parish: Do not travel to Logwood and Orange Bay.

St. James Parish: Do not travel to all of Montego Bay on the inland side of the A1 highway and The Queen’s Drive from San San to Harmony Beach Park. The downtown “Hip Strip” of bars, clubs, and vendors in Montego Bay is an area where tourists should remain aware of pickpockets and theft.

Kingston and St. Andrew Parish: Do not travel to Cassava Piece, Grants Pen, Standpipe, Swallowfield, Elleston Flats, and August Town. Also do not travel to downtown Kingston, defined as between Mountain View Avenue and Hagley Park Road, and south of Half Way Tree and Old Hope Road. Downtown Kingston includes Arnett Gardens, Cockburn Gardens, Denham Town, Olympic Gardens, Seaview Gardens, Trench Town, and Tivoli Gardens.

Manchester Parish: Do not travel to Green Vale, Gray Ground and Red Ground.

St. Thomas Parish: Do not travel to Blacksmith Lane, Seaforth, Grands Pen, and Church Corner.

Trelawney Parish: Do not travel to Clarks Town.

Westmorland Parish: Do not travel to the following areas: Whitehall, Bethel Town, Grange Hill, Kings Valley, and Red Ground.

Travelers must pass through the Red-Zone to access Kingston’s Norman Manley International Airport (KIN). The approved routes are South Camp Road and Mountain View Avenue. The Embassy does not require employees to request permission to travel to KIN using either of these approved routes. All other travel to off-limits areas requires pre-approval from the Regional Security Office.

Review OSAC’s reports, [All That You Should Leave Behind](#), [Hotels: The Inns and Outs](#), [Considerations for Hotel Security](#), [Taking Credit](#), and [Our Two Cents: Petty Crime Basics and How to Minimize the Risk](#).

Kidnapping Threat

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Kidnapping “K” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Jamaica.

Kidnappings are rare in Jamaica.

Review OSAC’s reports, [Kidnapping: The Basics](#) and [Active Shooter and Kidnapping Response Tips](#).

Terrorism

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Kingston as being a LOW-threat location for terrorism directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Terrorism “T” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Jamaica.

While there are no known extremist groups active in Jamaica, the prevalence of U.S. and other Western tourists could make the country an attractive target for potential terrorists.

Political Violence and Civil Unrest

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Kingston as being a LOW-threat location for political violence directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Civil Unrest “U” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Jamaica. Civil unrest can develop quickly without prior notice, often interrupting logistics and services. Avoid demonstration activity, as even those planned to remain peaceful have the potential to turn violent.

Elections/Political Stability

Jamaica is a constitutional parliamentary democracy. Its political system is stable, and the country has a history of peaceful transfers of power between the two political parties, the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) and the People’s National Party (PNP). National elections were held in September 2025. The incumbent Prime Minister Andrew Holness won re-election for a rare third term. The JLP won at least 34 of the 63 seats in Parliament while the PNP won at least 28. Voter turnout was lower than most previous national elections at 38%. Elections are constitutionally due every five years.

Protests & Demonstrations

Protests and demonstrations can be unpredictable. Although protests and demonstrations are infrequent in Kingston, they do occur. On rare occasions, protests can become confrontational

and escalate into violence. Some cases have involved roadblocks, rock throwing, burning tires and vehicles, and possible physical violence between law enforcement and protesters. The U.S. Embassy and U.S. interests within the community are not immune to the effects of these protests but are generally not direct targets.

Review OSAC's report, [Surviving a Protest](#).

Anti-U.S./Anti-Western Sentiment

Jamaicans are accustomed to the presence of U.S. travelers and residents, and exhibit little to no anti-U.S. sentiment.

Law Enforcement

The National Security Ministry is the bureaucratic home of the Jamaican Constabulary Force (JCF) and the Jamaican Defense Force (JDF). The Prime Minister is the de facto defense minister and has authority over the Jamaican Defense Board. As chairman of the board, he has responsibility for defense-related matters including command, discipline, and administration.

The JCF is the country's police force. It has primary responsibility for internal security and has units for community policing, special response, intelligence gathering, and internal affairs. When the Prime Minister and Parliament declare a state of emergency, the JDF has arrest authority and operational partnership alongside the JCF.

The Passport, Immigration, and Citizenship Agency has responsibility for migration. Jamaican police officers have received extensive training from the United States and other international trainers, including the United Kingdom, Russia, China, Canada, and South Korea.

Police Response

Local police assistance is available throughout the country. A shortage of personnel, training, vehicles, and resources can hinder police support for foreign victims of crime. Police do not usually mistreat victims of crime, but response times, investigation techniques, evidence collection, and the arrest/conviction rates of suspects are below the standards found in U.S. police departments. The JCF are working toward a goal of a 15-minute response time to calls in Urban areas. Rural areas might have up to a 45-minute wait for emergency service.

The police can be reached by calling **119**.

Investigations of rape and sexual assault can be particularly inadequate, as rape kits are not always available. Victims must often ask for medication to avoid STD transmission and reduce the chances of pregnancy. Prosecution of rape cases moves very slowly, and foreign victims may need to return to Jamaica during the legal process.

Some civilians fear that the authorities cannot protect them from organized criminal elements because they suspect authorities are colluding with criminals, leading them to avoid giving evidence or witness testimony. Those in some marginalized communities are often indifferent to police authority, adding to a perceived sense of lawlessness. Reporting a crime is often a lengthy process that some see as frustratingly bureaucratic.

Those involved in a traffic accident or victimized by crime may have to accompany the investigating police officer to the local police station to file a complaint or respond to questions. Should you require a police report for an insurance claim, the police will charge a nominal fee. Should you require a police report for an insurance claim, complaint must pay a fee at the Tax Administration Department as required by law, before obtaining the police report.

Transportation Security

Road Safety

Driving is on the left side of the road in Jamaica. The lack of pedestrian crosswalks requires special vigilance. Most roads are paved, but suffer from ill repair, inadequate signage, large potholes, limited lighting, and poor traffic control markings. Construction zones are often poorly marked, and vehicles share the roads with pedestrians, bicyclists, and livestock. Driving habits range from aggressive speeding and disregard for others, to inexperienced and overly cautious behaviors, creating uncertainty and hazards to pedestrians.

Drivers should maintain special care when entering poorly marked traffic circles; entering motorists must yield to those already inside. Exit points are exceptionally confusing, often making it difficult to determine which exit to take.

With the completion of the Highway 2000 toll road in 2016, there is now a modern, expedient route between Kingston and the north coast area near Ocho Rios. The A1, A2, and A3 highways provide links between the country's most important cities and tourist destinations. These roads are comparable to but do not quite meet the standard of U.S. highways. Only the North-South Highway and Highway 2000 prohibit bicyclists, pedestrians, and livestock. Breakdown assistance is limited in urban areas, and virtually unavailable in rural areas. The U.S. Embassy does not permit its personnel to travel between cities at night. Drivers and passengers in the front seat must wear seat belts, and motorcycle riders must wear helmets. Use extreme caution operating motorcycles, as this is the leading category of traffic deaths.

Review OSAC's reports, [Road Safety Abroad](#), [Driving Overseas: Best Practices](#), and [Evasive Driving Techniques](#); and read the U.S. Department of State's [webpage on driving and road safety abroad](#).

Public Transportation Safety

U.S. Embassy employees may not use public transportation, except for the Knutsford Express and a few pre-approved taxi companies. Public buses are often overcrowded and a venue for crime. Several serious and fatal accidents take place each year involving passengers riding in taxis without seatbelts. There are reports of private buses, acting as public transport, driving erratically leading to injury and death for riders and pedestrians.

Official public transportation vehicles have red license plates. Private vehicles, not licensed for public transportation, have white license plates with blue letters/numbers. Only use licensed taxicabs with red-and-white PP license plates or recommended transportation services.

Aviation Concerns

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the government of Jamaica's Civil Aviation Authority as compliant with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of air carrier operations in Jamaica.

Review OSAC's Report, [Security in Transit: Airplanes, Public Transport, and Overnights](#).

Maritime Security

There are no serious concerns regarding maritime security in Jamaica, although drug trafficking organizations are known to traffic around Jamaican waters, especially in go-fast boats between Jamaica and Haiti.

Travelers with Special Considerations

For [specific traveler concerns](#) in Jamaica, review the local laws and circumstances on the U.S. Department of State's Country Information Page.

- [Women Travelers](#)
- [Gay and Lesbian Travelers](#)
- [Accessibility Needs](#)
- [Studying Abroad](#)
- [Faith-Based Travel](#)

Rule of Law, Arbitrary Detention, Official Harassment, Corruption, & Transparency

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Risk of Wrongful Detention "D" Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Jamaica.

De facto impunity for security forces is a problem, since cases against officers are infrequently recommended for criminal trial or see substantial procedural delays. Charges against members of the security forces often take years to process, primarily due to investigatory backlogs, trial delays, and appellate measures.

The constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention but allows arrest if there is “reasonable suspicion of a person having committed or about to commit a criminal offense.” The law provides for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of his or her arrest or detention in court. The government generally observes these requirements.

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, but the government generally does not implement the law effectively. There were numerous reports of government corruption, and corruption was a significant problem of public concern. Media and civil society organizations criticized the government for being slow and at times reluctant to prosecute corruption cases.

Health Concerns

The medical emergency line in Jamaica is **110**. Medical care is limited when compared to the United States. Comprehensive emergency medical services are only available in Kingston and Montego Bay. The U.S. Embassy medical staff does not recommend using medical facilities outside of Kingston and Montego Bay. Ambulance availability and care provision is limited, especially in rural areas. Response times can be up to 45 minutes. Traffic congestion and road conditions may slow response times.

Jamaica has 24 hospitals island-wide, 318 clinics and health centers operating within the public health system.

Healthcare providers often require cash payment prior to providing services. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation (medevac) can cost thousands of dollars. Be aware that U.S. Medicare/Medicaid does not apply overseas. Most hospitals and doctors overseas do not accept U.S. health insurance. U.S. citizens with medical emergencies can face bills in the tens of thousands of dollars, with air ambulance service to the United States in the range of \$30,000-50,000.

Emergency services and hospital care vary throughout the island, and response times and quality of care may vary from U.S. standards. Public hospitals are under-resourced and cannot always provide high level or specialized care. Private hospitals require payment up front before admitting patients and may not have the ability to provide specialized care.

Mosquito borne viruses (e.g., Dengue, Chikungunya, Zika) are prevalent in Jamaica. Use insect repellent with DEET.

Find contact information for available medical services and available air ambulance services on the U.S. Embassy [website](#). The U.S. Department of State strongly recommends purchasing international health insurance before traveling internationally. Review the U.S. Department of State's [webpage](#) on health insurance overseas.

The U.S. Department of State has included a Health “H” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Jamaica, indicating that health risks are present, including current disease outbreaks or crises that disrupt a country’s medical infrastructure. Review the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) country-specific [Travel Health Notices](#) for current health issues that impact traveler health, like disease outbreaks, special events or gatherings, and natural disasters.

See OSAC’s [Guide to U.S. Government-Assisted Evacuations](#); review OSAC’s reports, [The Healthy Way](#), [Shaken: The Don’ts of Alcohol Abroad](#), [Health 101: How to Prepare for Travel](#), and [Fire Safety Abroad](#); and visit the U.S. Department of State’s webpage on [Your Health Abroad](#) for more information.

Vaccinations

Although Jamaica does not have any specific vaccination requirements, authorities require the Yellow Fever Vaccine for entry if the traveler has been in an area where Yellow Fever is active.

Review the CDC [Travelers’ Health](#) site for country-specific vaccine recommendations.

Issues Traveling with Medications

The availability of prescription drugs is very limited in outlying parishes. EpiPens are not sold anywhere in the country.

Review OSAC’s report, [Traveling with Medication](#).

Water Quality

There are no concerns about water quality in Jamaica.

Review OSAC’s report, [I’m Drinking What in My Water?](#)

Natural Disasters

The U.S. Department of State has included a Natural Disaster “N” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Jamaica, indicating that a natural disaster, or its aftermath, poses danger.

Hurricane Melissa made landfall in Jamaica on October 28, 2025, causing widespread damage. Some airports, including the Norman Manley International Airport in Kingston have reopened for commercial flights.

Some areas, such as Black River and Montego Bay, are in varying stages of recovery from Hurricane Melissa. Until repairs are complete, fewer hotels and transportation options may be available. Services may also be limited. Flooding continues to persist in some areas.

U.S. Embassy Kingston releases emergency weather and natural disaster alerts to citizens. Check the [website](#) for alerts during hurricane season and sign up for [STEP alerts](#) to stay updated on natural disasters and resulting damage to airports or basic facilities. Keep a close eye on reliable weather sources such as NOAA and the National Hurricane Center. Shelter in place when a storm occurs and follow evacuation suggestions or orders when in place.

Hurricane season runs from June 1 to November 30.

Jamaica also sits on the Enriquillo–Plantain Garden fault zone along with Haiti and the Dominican Republic. This zone is vulnerable to large earthquakes, such as those that caused severe destruction in Kingston in 1692 and 1907, and Port-au-Prince in 1751, 1770, and 2010.

Review OSAC's report, [Earthquake Preparedness Toolkit](#).

Cybersecurity

Jamaica is one of the few countries in the region with a critical infrastructure plan, an approved national cybersecurity strategy, and a government entity to manage national cybersecurity. While Jamaica has taken actions to put necessary structures in place to develop its cybersecurity and meet international standards, it should still be regarded as evolving.

Scams originating in Jamaica regularly defraud U.S. and other foreign nationals via Internet contacts they thought were their friends or loved ones. These schemes include online dating services, inheritance notices, work permits/job offers, bank overpayments, non-existent BTA airline boarding fees, adoption of children and even the appearance that you are helping a friend in trouble.

Review OSAC's reports, [Cybersecurity Basics](#), [Best Practices for Maximizing Security on Public Wi-Fi](#), [Traveling Abroad with Mobile Devices](#), and [Guide for Overseas Satellite Phone Usage](#).

Counterintelligence Issues

There are no counterintelligence threats specific to private-sector operations in Jamaica.

Import/Export Restrictions

Jamaica strictly forbids importing or possessing firearms without prior authorization from the Firearms Licensing Authority of Jamaica. A U.S. concealed carry permit does not allow you to bring a firearm or ammunition into Jamaica. If you bring a firearm, firearm components, firearm parts, or ammunition (even a single bullet) to Jamaica, you will face arrest and prosecution. This will result in a large fine and/or incarceration for an unspecified amount of time. Bringing mace, pepper spray, or knives into Jamaica without authorization will also lead to arrest.

There are no restrictions on the import of satellite phones.

A country-specific listing of items/goods prohibited from being exported to the country or that are otherwise restricted is available from the U.S. International Trade Agency [website](#).

Additional resources and reports can be found in the [OSAC Traveler Toolkit](#).