

ASK THE experts

Jamaica enjoys a 42% repeat visitor rate from the UK.
Adam Shaw asks what to suggest for second-timers



PICTURES: Hugh Wright; Michael Matther

1 'Each part of Jamaica offers a different experience'

Liz started as an agent in Florida, before moving to Palm Beach visitors' bureau, then Universal Studios and Hello Florida. While living there she would often take long weekends to Jamaica. As regional director UK at the Jamaica Tourist Board, she works closely with operators and agents.



Liz Fox
regional director, UK,
Jamaica Tourist Board

“We're very pleased to be the biggest destination in the Caribbean from the UK – we had 231,000 visitors in 2022. We have a 42% repeat rate from the UK, which is probably because Jamaica is quite large for a Caribbean island, and it's the largest English-speaking country in the region.

You might come back later and think 'I want to try a different area', because each part offers a different experience.

Laid-back Negril is famous for the Seven Mile Beach, Rastas and buildings no taller than a palm tree, Montego Bay is a bit more resort-y, with tennis courts, golf courses and all-inclusives.

Ocho Rios is great for families because there's lots to do – from tubing to waterfall climbing. The south coast is rural and undeveloped, and the east coast is great for exploring the rainforest, birdwatching and river rafting.

Everybody knows we've got great beaches, but our research shows that more and more people are looking for a bit of adventure and want to embrace the local culture.

There's also a lot going on when it comes to hotel openings. The new Princess resort will have more than 2,000 rooms and will be the largest resort in Jamaica when it opens next winter. We've also got a Hard Rock coming, The Ritz-Carlton, a Unico and Dreams. There will be 8,500 more rooms in total by 2025.

2 'Families can try soft-adventure experiences'

Leah, who will celebrate 28 years at Unique Vacations UK in November, is responsible for educating agents on the Sandals and Beaches Resorts product, as well as commercial negotiations with trade partners for inhouse tour operator Unique Caribbean Holidays.



Leah Marshall
director of sales,
Unique Vacations UK

“Jamaica is a vast, vibrant and energetic island – the destination offers so much to see and do that not everything can fit into one holiday. Many of our guests will take this into account and visit Jamaica more than once.

There are seven Sandals Resorts on the island, including Sandals Dunn's River, which opened on May 24. Our customers will often return to Jamaica and choose to stay at the same resort, but we encourage our guests to get out and about to see the island.

Those heading back can easily explore outside the resorts with excursion company Island Routes. Commissionable tours are available when agents book in advance through Unique Caribbean Holidays.

Authentic, soft-adventure experiences such as waterfall climbing at Dunn's River Falls are a great way for families or couples to immerse themselves in the destination.

Another option is a bamboo river rafting and horse riding excursion. Guests sail along jade-green waters, learning about the warmth of the Jamaican people while taking in the beauty that makes the country such a gem.

Then they can test their horse riding skills and go off-the-beaten-track, riding off into the warm waters of the Caribbean Sea.

3 'Focus on life away from the beaches'

Jacqueline is a personal travel consultant with more than 20 years' experience working in the travel industry. She offers advice on UK, short-haul and long-haul bookings and is a Blue Bay Travel expert on trips to Jamaica, where her father has lived for the past 23 years.



Jacqueline Jones
personal travel consultant,
Blue Bay Travel

“My advice to those looking to sell Jamaica is to focus on life away from the beaches. On their first trip, people tend to stick close to the coast – but the island is buzzing with incredible things to do, and you can discover them all when you move away from the sand for a while.

From the vast array of magnificent golf courses to cultural landmarks such as the Bob Marley Museum or Rose Hall Great House – said to be haunted by the white witch – there's more to Jamaica than meets the eye.

That's before we talk about Jamaica's national dishes – jerk chicken, ackee (fruit), saltfish, rice and peas – which are delicious and inexpensive.

Encourage or help clients to map out an itinerary that merges lazy beach or pool days with more adventurous moments. Planning a dynamic trip not only allows them to see more of the island, but it also delivers a truly unforgettable experience.

Pull up a pew at Rick's Café in Negril and watch daredevils jump from cliffs into the sea below, swim with dolphins at Dolphin Cove, toboggan down Mystic Mountain, try ziplining at the Good Hope plantation or take a reggae catamaran cruise and snorkelling trip.

With lots of hotel choice, it's also crucial to recommend the right [hotel] group to the right client so they get the most out of their stay.