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Jamaica

Security Overview and Travel Assessment



armadaglobal

INVESTIGATIONS • INTELLIGENCE • SECURITY

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Executive Summary

Jamaica, one of the largest islands in the Caribbean, is a very popular tourist destination, especially amongst Americans. Due to its dependence on tourism, the country's authorities have tried to establish a sense of security for foreigners, but high crime rates continue to plague the country. Kingston, in particular, is an area of concern. The U.S. Department of State does not have any current travel warnings issued for the island, but tourists should nonetheless maintain a high level of alertness in crime-ridden areas. Also, even though the Center for Disease Control has reduced Jamaica's case of the Chikungunya Virus down to a Level 1 warning, all health precautions should be practiced when travelling to the island. Fortunately, the service learning provided by Amizade will be performed in areas that are relatively far from Jamaica's centers of criminal activity. If individuals follow the safety procedures provided in this report, then the service learning experience should be successful and enjoyable.

Arrival to Airport

The Sangster International Airport is one of the busiest and technologically advanced airports in the Caribbean. The airport won the World Travel Awards "Caribbean's Leading Airport" in 2005 and from 2009 to 2011. Modernization of the airport has made the facility very "tourist friendly" as demonstrated by the number of international passengers which has peaked 95 percent. Additionally, 38 different airlines operate out of Sangster International Airport. There have been no major accidents or incidents reported recently at the airport.

The only concern is that Sangster International Airport is located 3 miles from Montego Bay, which has had a history of criminal activity. Immediate travel from the airport to desired destinations will nullify this threat, and staying away from reported areas of danger will help ensure the safety of individuals.

Areas with High Criminal Activity

Although Jamaica is a country known for its tourism industry, the Caribbean nation suffers from a disturbingly high homicide rate. According to World Bank data, Jamaica experiences 39 homicides per 100,000 people, which ranks it in the top six worldwide. In comparison, the city of Pittsburgh had a total of 46 murders in 2013, which averages approximately 14.6 per 100,000 inhabitants. This does not mean that Jamaica is dangerous countrywide, but rather, violent

criminal activity plagues certain parts of the island, mostly in and around Kingston and Montego Bay. Government agencies have concluded that in 2013 there were 1,193 murders, 1,227 shootings, 580 aggravated assaults, 792 rapes, 2,631 robberies, and 2,443 break-ins. Although the homicide rate has decreased by 35 percent since 2009, the overall crime rate in the country continues to rise.

Various bureaus in the Department of State, The Bureau of Diplomatic Security and the Bureau of Consular Affairs, advise that the locations indicated below should be avoided:

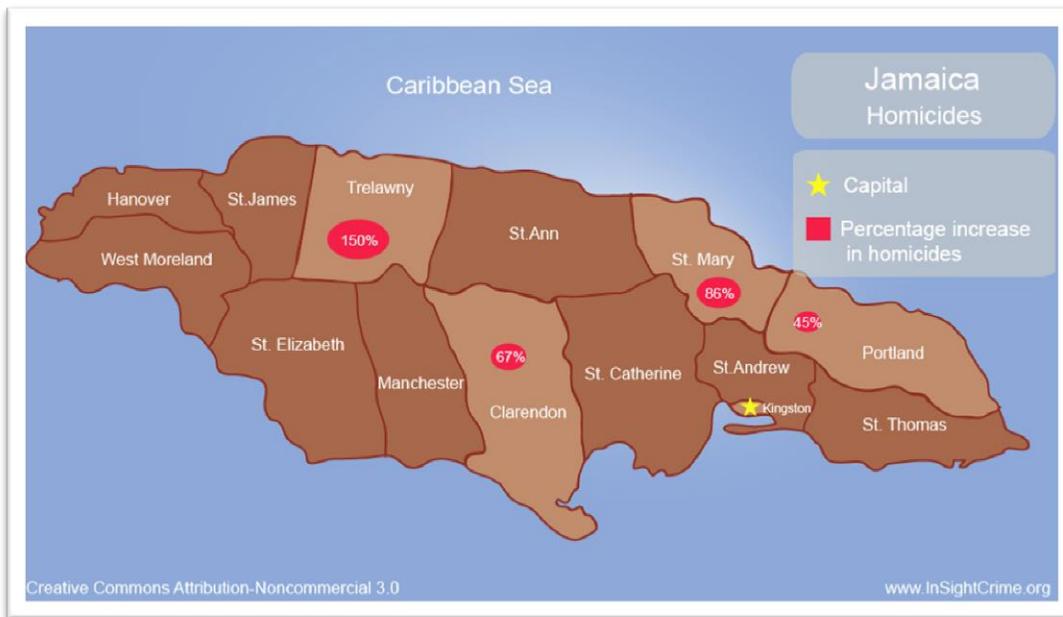
Kingston area

- Mountain View
- Trench Town
- Tivoli Gardens
- Cassava Piece
- Arnett Gardens

Montego Bay area

- Flankers
- Canterbury
- Norwood
- Rose Heights
- Clavers Street
- Hart Street

The map below shows other areas of concern due to a spike in homicides:



Reports from these agencies along with local media outlets claim that most of the crime perpetrated in Jamaica is due to gang activity, drugs and poverty. Jamaica is a cocaine transit destination and a large marijuana producer, which make the island susceptible to violent criminal activity. Jamaican government intelligence claims that 268 different gangs operate on the island and perpetrate an estimated 80 percent of all major crime in the country. Additionally, gang members are not known to have certain tattoos or specific clothing, so travelers should maintain a high sense of awareness when roaming in unfamiliar areas.

If possible, avoid all-together the St. Catherine Parish, which includes Kingston and Bog Walk. A recent spike in homicide activity in this area has resulted in numerous high ranking officials visiting in an attempt to resolve the epidemic. St. Catherine Parish is shown below in red:



Although a consensus has been reached that most crimes are “Jamaican on Jamaican,” there have been minimal attacks on U.S. citizens. Crime involving Americans include 8 murders, 34 robberies, 7 rapes, 6 aggravated assaults, and 2 kidnappings since 2013. Crime against tourists overwhelmingly results in petty theft rather than violent acts. Analyzing local news reports confirm the conclusion that tourists are not at a heightened risk of becoming victims.

Additionally, the American deaths involved individuals that held dual-citizenship rather than American tourists who only visit the island for a short period of time. A concerning event took place however in 2013 when an American tourist was shot dead in a gunfight between a local criminal and police in Savanna-La-Mar, 20 minutes away from Petersfield. Thus, individuals should never let their guard down, even in locations not known for crime.

Hate Crimes

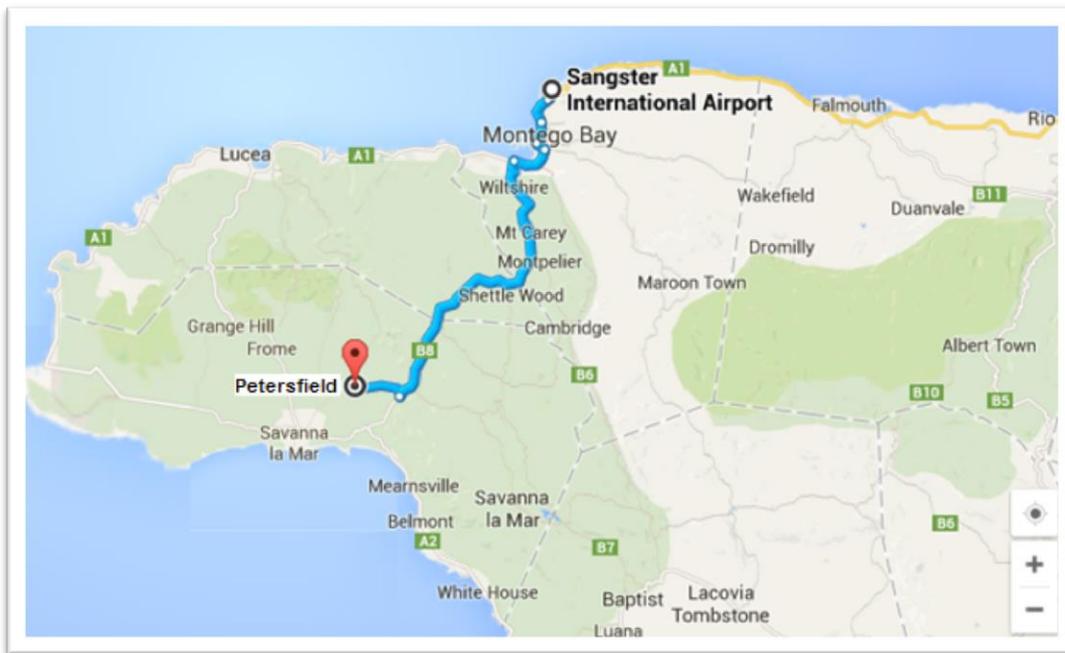
Tourists should be aware that not all lifestyles are acceptable in Jamaican society. Even though the Jamaican government has claimed that it “is committed to the equal and fair treatment of its citizens,” the country is considered to be homophobic. People that live an alternative lifestyle can be victims of harassment or even worse, violent attacks. Furthermore, the government has not taken any progressive steps to halt homophobia and has passed laws that criminalize homosexual acts. Men involved in same-sex intercourse face up to ten years of imprisonment. And even though lesbian intercourse is not illegal, the activity is not viewed favorably by the locals. Although international institutions have called upon the Jamaican government to curb acts of violence and intimidation against the LGBT community, the situation has not gotten better.

In particular, the year 2012 included many high profile incidents of hate crime. That year alone, there were 68 reports of sexually motivated harassment or abuse. Incidents included youth mobs

attacking suspected homosexual men with the police not intervening. LGBT activists were also killed in 2012. Also concerning is the practice of “corrective rape” of women accused of being lesbians. Thus, this warning should be taken very seriously and tourists should do everything possible to avoid unnecessary attention in the public’s eye.

Departing Airport and Travelling to Petersfield

Once ready to leave the airport for the desired service center location, individuals will be picked up by Amizade staff and taken to Petersfield. When leaving the Sangster International Airport for the service site, there are two different roadways that can be taken: A1 and B8. The suggested travel route is B8 for numerous reasons. Firstly, B8 is the shorter route as it only takes 56 minutes of driving to cover 46.5 km of road. Secondly, since the roadway is designated as a B, it is not one of the primary roadways that are highly congested and frequently used as transport routes for illegal activities to and from Kingston. This travel route is shown below:

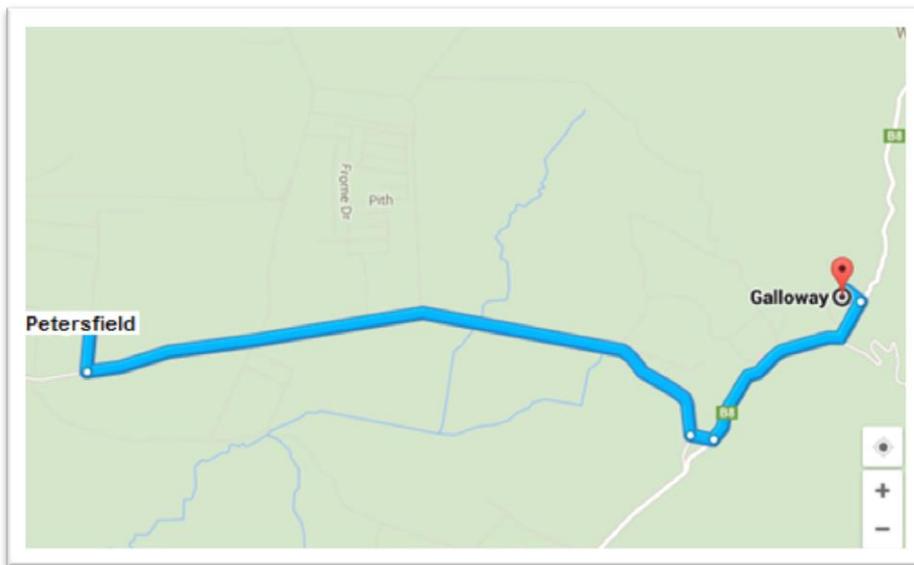


Even though B8 is considered the safer of the two roadways, caution must be taken since traffic accidents in Jamaica are not uncommon. Although most of the main roadways in Jamaica are paved, there are dangers when travelling. As a former colony of England, one travels on the left side of the road in Jamaica. Also, the signage and road markings are very difficult to read and can easily become confusing for tourists. Nighttime travel should be avoided and one should never travel alone. When considering transport options, it is highly recommended that individuals only use resort-sponsored taxi drivers. Avoid public buses at all costs as tourists have reported being pickpocketed.

For safety, individuals should lock their cars and have their windows rolled up while driving a vehicle. Further, tourists should avoid leaving their mode of transportation as the “bump and rob” is a common occurrence. The “bump and rob” is when another car “accidentally” bumps your car. When the tourist exits their vehicle to check for damage, one or multiple individuals from the other car either rob the person and/or steal their vehicle. Thus, exiting the vehicle should never be one’s first choice.

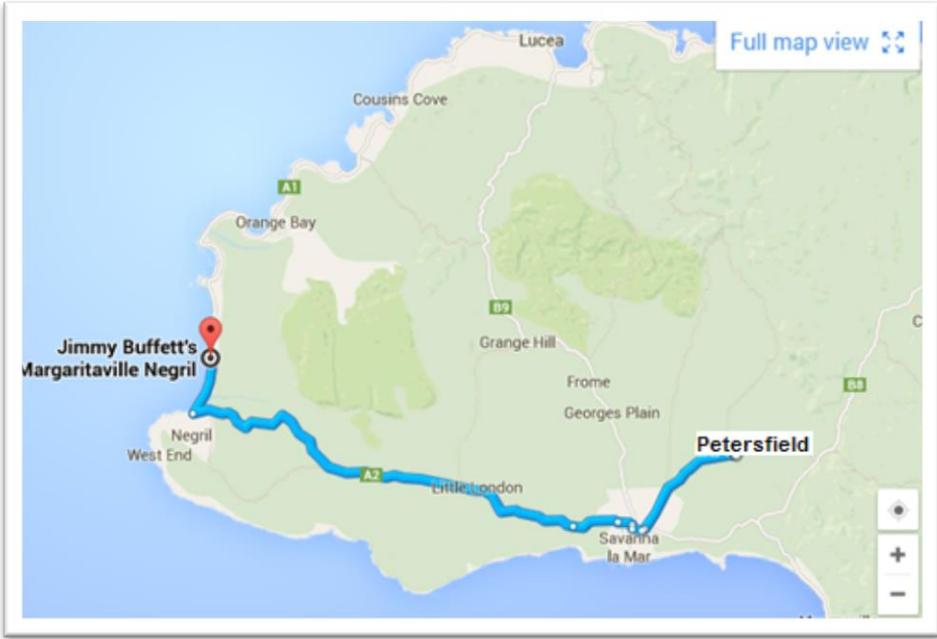
Finally, when travelling to Petersfield, individuals should be ever vigilant since innocent traffic accidents are frequent in Jamaica. Since tourists are not familiar with the Jamaican roadways, extra caution should be taken when travelling from one location to another.

Once individuals make it to their service site in Petersfield, the crime threat drastically decreases. Petersfield is 56 minutes away from Montego Bay and three hours from Kingston, which are considered the crime hubs of the island. Gang activity tends to be focused in the inner cities. Some individuals might also be performing community service in Galloway while other volunteers stay in Petersfield. The two locations are 6.4 km apart and an 8 minute drive via the B8 roadway. The travel route is depicted below:

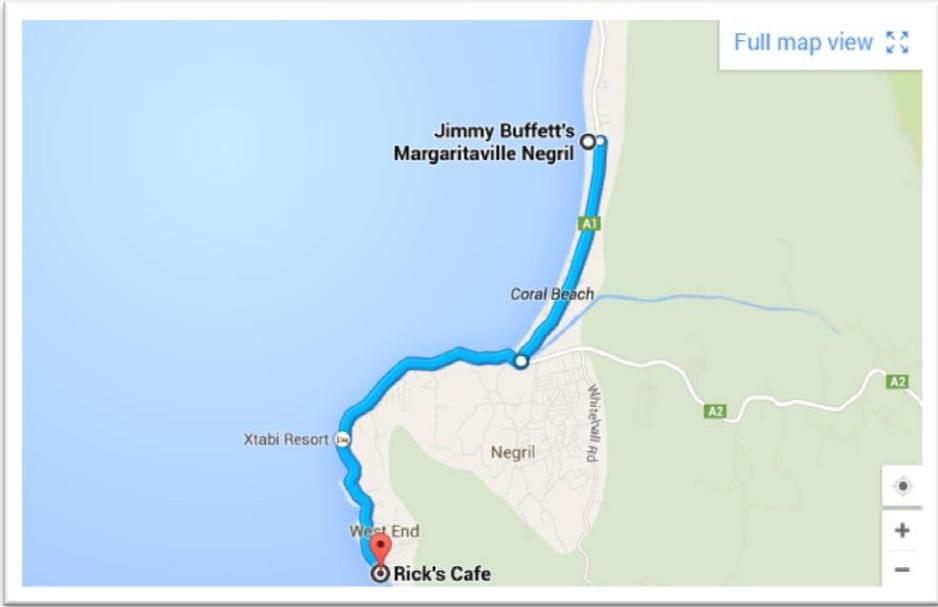


Traveling to Negril

Volunteers will enjoy a day trip to Negril, which is world renowned for its beach. When travelling to Negril, the best route is the A2 roadway that can cover 37 km in 36 minutes. The roadway is in the west, away from the two main crime hubs of Montego Bay and Kingston.



Once the group arrives to Negril, which is known for its tourist scene, they will find that most of the accommodations and entertainment are provided only for the tourists. Thus, the area provides a sense of safety for visitors. Additionally, Amizade volunteers will make a trip to Rick's Café, which is a nine minute southward drive along the beach. While at Rick's Café the group will remain in the vicinity and enjoy entertainment such as cliff jumping. Once again, due to the location being a vibrant area for tourism, there is extra precaution made to insure that individuals are safe. Thus, since the day trip is pre-planned and individuals remain in distinctive locations, there are no glaring security threats.



Health and Safety Information

Weather Concerns:

Reports claim that Jamaica suffers from 200 earthquakes per year, but they are classified at magnitudes less than 4.0. The most seismically active areas are the Blue Mountain block in eastern Jamaica and the Montpelier-Newmarket belt in western Jamaica. The last earthquake that resulted in more than just infrastructure damage was in 1907 when 1,000 people perished. Nonetheless, individuals should always be prepared for a natural disaster. The Office of Disaster Preparedness provides the following guidelines in regard to earthquakes:

BEFORE

- Secure objects like doors and shelves so items are less likely to fall or fly in the event of an earthquake.
- Check the house electrical wiring for defects and fix them.
- Prepare an earthquake safety kit with a minimum: flashlight with batteries, first aid kit, canned foods, bottled water, money, emergency contact numbers and copies of important documents.

DURING

- If you are outdoors, lie flat where you are and stay away from power lines, trees and buildings (especially buildings with a lot of glass).
- If you are indoors, ‘duck, cover and hold’.
- Duck under sturdy heavy objects like tables.
- Cover your head with one hand to protect it from falling and flying objects.
- Hold the furniture with the other hand so if it moves, move with it.
- If you are indoors and have no furniture to ‘duck, cover and hold under’, stand in the doorframe.
- If you are indoors, stay away from anything that looks like it could fall. Common hazards are wardrobes, freestanding closets, bookcases, lamps, figurines, hanging plants, mirrors on walls, objects on shelves, hanging lamps or chandeliers, heavy pictures/paintings above the bed.

AFTER

- Be aware that aftershocks may happen in the minutes, hours, days or months after.
- Check yourself and your family for injuries.
- Walk in heavy soled shoes if possible. Check stairs and other structures for soundness before standing or walking on them. Be careful of fires, live wires, glass and other hazards.

Another weather concern is hurricane season which takes place from June 1 to November 30 each year. The Office of Disaster Preparedness recommends the following:

- Stockpile a two-week supply of emergency supplies. Be sure to have nonprescription drugs and other health supplies on hand.
- Stock water reserves and learn how to purify contaminated water. You should store at least a two-week supply of water for each member of your family or group.
- Keep food in the driest and coolest spot in the house – a dark area, if possible. Keep food covered at all times. Foods that require no refrigeration, preparation, or cooking are best.
- Important disaster supplies to have on hand include: flashlight and extra batteries, portable battery-operated radio and extra batteries, first aid kit and manual, emergency food and water, essential medicines, cash and credit cards, sturdy shoes.

Looting is common after natural disasters, so individuals should take every precaution to keep oneself safe when lawlessness is present.

Snakes:

One concern for many tourists that visit Caribbean islands is the abundance of poisonous snakes. This is not the case for Jamaica. Of the seven species of snakes that inhabit Jamaica, none are of the poisonous variety. One should still be careful because the Jamaican Yellow Boa can grow to be more than 6 ½ feet long. Yellow Boas along with the Blind Snakes, Thunder Snakes, Black Racers, and Garden Snakes are usually found under rocks and logs or in trees. The snakes tend to hunt at different times of the day – Yellow Boa during the night and Black Racer during the day.

Vaccines:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lists a variety of vaccines recommended for individuals planning to travel to Jamaica. The information from CDC's official site is below:

<p>All travelers You should be up to date on routine vaccinations while traveling to any destination. Some vaccines may also be required for travel.</p>								
<p>Routine vaccines</p>	<p>Make sure you are up-to-date on routine vaccines before every trip. These vaccines include measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis vaccine, varicella (chickenpox) vaccine, polio vaccine, and your yearly flu shot.</p>	 						
<p>Most travelers Get travel vaccines and medicines because there is a risk of these diseases in the country you are visiting.</p>								
<p>Hepatitis A</p>	<p>CDC recommends this vaccine because you can get hepatitis A through contaminated food or water in Jamaica, regardless of where you are eating or staying.</p>	 						
<p>Typhoid</p>	<p>You can get typhoid through contaminated food or water in Jamaica. CDC recommends this vaccine for most travelers, especially if you are staying with friends or relatives, visiting smaller cities or rural areas, or if you are an adventurous eater.</p>	 						
<p>Some travelers Ask your doctor what vaccines and medicines you need based on where you are going, how long you are staying, what you will be doing, and if you are traveling from a country other than the US.</p>								
<p>Hepatitis B</p>	<p>You can get hepatitis B through sexual contact, contaminated needles, and blood products, so CDC recommends this vaccine if you might have sex with a new partner, get a tattoo or piercing, or have any medical procedures.</p>	  						
<p>Rabies</p>	<p>Rabies is present in bats in Jamaica. However, it is not found in dogs and is not a major risk to most travelers. CDC recommends rabies vaccine for only these groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travelers involved in outdoor and other activities in remote areas that put them at risk for bat bites (such as adventure travel and caving). • People who will be working with or around bats (such as wildlife professionals and researchers). 	 						
<p>Yellow Fever</p>	<p>There is no risk of yellow fever in Jamaica. The government of Jamaica <i>requires</i> proof of yellow fever vaccination only if you are arriving from a country with risk of yellow fever. This does not include the US. If you are traveling from a country other than the US, check this list to see if you may be required to get the yellow fever vaccine: Countries with risk of yellow fever virus (YFV) transmission.</p> <p>For more information on recommendations and requirements, see yellow fever recommendations and requirements for Jamaica. Your doctor can help you decide if this vaccine is right for you based on your travel plans.</p>							
<p>Key</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td> Get vaccinated</td> <td> Eat and drink safely</td> </tr> <tr> <td> Keep away from animals</td> <td> Reduce your exposure to germs</td> </tr> <tr> <td> Avoid sharing body fluids</td> <td> Avoid non-sterile medical or cosmetic equipment</td> </tr> </table>			 Get vaccinated	 Eat and drink safely	 Keep away from animals	 Reduce your exposure to germs	 Avoid sharing body fluids	 Avoid non-sterile medical or cosmetic equipment
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Additionally, communicable diseases along with maternal, perinatal and nutritional conditions accounted for an estimated 21 percent of all mortality in Jamaica. And even though Jamaica has stabilized its HIV epidemic with its percentage of population prevalence of 1.5 percent, every health precaution should be taken while in Jamaica.

Chikungunya:

As of October 21, 2014, cases of Chikungunya have been reported in Jamaica. Chikungunya is an illness caused by a virus that spreads through mosquito bites. Symptoms are as follows:

- Fever
- Joint pain
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Joint swelling
- Rash

Fortunately, Chikungunya rarely results in death, but the symptoms are not pleasant. There is currently no vaccine or medicine to prevent Chikungunya. The only way to prevent Chikungunya is to prevent mosquito bites. To prevent bites:

- Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and hats.
- Use an appropriate insect repellent as directed.
- Use permethrin-treated clothing and gear.
- Stay and sleep in screened or air conditioned rooms.
- Use a bed net if the area where you are sleeping is exposed to the outdoors.

The Jamaican government declared a state of emergency in October to halt the spread of the disease and currently the CDC has Chikungunya classified under Level 1, meaning tourists should practice usual travel precautions.

Dengue:

Like Chikungunya, Dengue is another mosquito-borne illness. In addition, there are no treatments for Dengue, and vaccines are still in the developmental phases. Symptoms are as follows:

- Headache
- Fever
- Vomiting
- Skin rash
- Bone pain
- Joint pain
- Muscle pain

The Aedes mosquitos that carry these illnesses are primarily day biting and often live in homes and hotel rooms, especially under beds, in bathrooms, and closets. The same protection measures for mosquito bites should be taken that were outlined in the Chikungunya section.

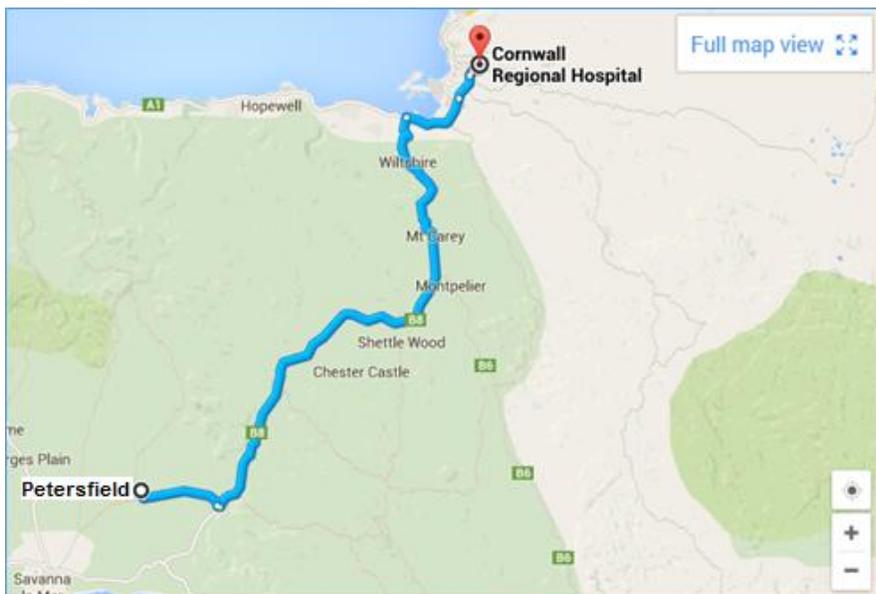
Hospitals

Unlike the United States, Jamaica only has two locations for comprehensive medical care: Kingston and Montego Bay. Prescriptions, emergency, and ambulance services are limited as well. In case of a serious medical emergency, it is highly recommended that individuals go to the hospitals in Kingston and Montego Bay if time permits.

- In Kingston, the recommended hospital for U.S. citizens is the University of the West Indies at Mona, Kingston 7, Jamaica, West Indies. Phone Number: (876) 927-1620. By taking the A2 roadway, individuals can reach the hospital in just over three hours from Petersfield.



- In Montego Bay, the Cornwall Regional Hospital at Mount Salem, Box 900, Montego Bay, St. James. Phone number: (876) 952-9100. From Petersfield, the hospital is a 52 minute drive via the B8.



These are the only locations that the American Embassy recommends U.S. tourists to visit if in need of medical care. This is due to previous complaints that community and resort clinics have been overcharging and not accepting American insurance coverage. Since most of the clinics and hospitals in Jamaica require payment before treatment, individuals should consult their medical insurance companies before leaving for Jamaica.

Safety Recommendations

Armada Global advises all travelers to practice the following security awareness techniques:

- Be cognizant of your surroundings
- Avoid predictable patterns and change your travel routes
- Do not dress extravagantly or wear expensive jewelry
- Travel in groups
- Use only trusted transportation nodes (arranged by western hotel, for example)
- Do not hail street cabs
- Prior to your trip, register with the U.S. Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program - <https://step.state.gov/step/>
- Ensure you have proper vaccinations and have registered for travel insurance and medical evacuation coverage

Most importantly, avoid Kingston and Montego Bay if possible, which are plagued with high levels of criminal activity.

Emergency Contact Information

Jamaican emergency line: 119

Police Station closest to Petersfield: Savanna-La-Mar police station
96 Great Georges Street, Savanna-La-Mar, Jamaica
(876) 955-2810

U.S. Embassy in Kingston 7:15 am – 4:00 pm, Monday-Friday

U.S. Embassy (after hours): (876) 702-6000

U.S. Marine Security Guard: (876) 702-6055

Regional Security Office: (876) 702-6153