“Jamaica has been famous for its music, culture and sports for decades but, today, it is also renowned for transforming its economy. The turnaround we have achieved in the six years prior to the global pandemic has few international precedents,” asserts Nigel Clarke, Minister of Finance and the Public Service.

In November 2019, the Caribbean island nation triumphantly emerged from a series of International Monetary Fund bailout programs that started in 2013. “At that time, we had insufficient reserves, high inflation and unemployment, and little or no economic growth,” explains Clarke. Between then and the emergence of COVID-19, all those indicators were dramatically reversed. In addition, the country received multiple credit rating upgrades, made a budget surplus of 7.5 percent every year, interest rates stayed low, debt to gross domestic product (GDP) went down by over 50 percentage points and business confidence boomed.

“We accomplished this by conducting economic reforms with determination. For instance, we have moved toward indirect taxation, engaged in investment incentive reforms, pursued privatizations and modernized procurement,” he says. The government’s pro-business approach has made the country the sixth-best place in the world to set up a company, according to the World Bank. “The landscape has changed, we are removing the stumbling blocks to growth. As a result, we have seen record investment in both traditional and non-traditional areas of our economy,” notes Robert Montague, Minister of Transport and Mining. Tourism is one sector bringing in investors, while the fact that the country has the third-largest English speaking population in the Western hemisphere has made it a center for business process outsourcing and digital services.

Another major advantage Jamaica offers is a location at the heart of the Americas, directly north of the Panama Canal and near to many of the world’s main shipping routes. This positioning, alongside substantial infrastructure that includes one of the Caribbean’s largest seaports and three international airports, has made it a regional hub for logistics and transportation. “We are known for providing a world-class one-stop shop in shipping and have always punched above our weight in transshipments,” says Montague. Jamaica’s skills in air transportation have a similarly high reputation, says Howard Armstrong, general manager of AEROTEL, which provides technical services to the industry: “The International Civil Aviation Organization acknowledges that we are one of the top 12 countries in the world in terms of compliance with its safety standards and recommended practices.” With the support of the private sector, the government now wants to develop its infrastructure further, so that Jamaica can join Rotterdam, Dubai and Singapore as the fourth node in the global logistics chain.

Committed to responsible and sustainable development
Opportunities can also be found in Jamaica’s wealth of natural resources, including its world-leading agricultural produce such as coffee and cocoa, and its mineral reserves, which represented 2.7 percent of GDP in 2018. Traditionally, mining in Jamaica meant bauxite, “However, we are beginning to see interest in non-traditional areas like limestone, marble, gold, copper, zinc, semi-precious stones and moving up the bauxite value chain,” states Montague. Although welcoming investment in the sector, the country is committed to sustainable development, as exemplified by the leading company Jamalco—a joint venture between the global trader Noble Group and the publicly owned Clarendon Alumina Production—which started extracting bauxite in the south of Jamaica in 1959. “We do our best to support communities we work in because we believe our social license to operate is derived from them,” says Austin Mooney, Jamalco’s managing director. As part of its extensive corporate responsibility activities, the company invests in capacity building. For example, in the last five years it has put nearly $0.5 million into education initiatives, including grants, sponsorships and vocational training. It has also developed infrastructure such as schools and hospitals, while it rehabilitates mined-out lands and constructs high-tech greenhouses on them for local farmers.

“In addition, we have a role to play in the government’s goals for clean energy. The steam we use in our refinery will now come from gas and we are looking at other opportunities to move away from heavy fuel oils,” Mooney states. This modernization is part of Jamalco’s ongoing investment in a refinery that can convert its high-quality bauxite into 1.425 million metric tons of alumina every year. “We have to continue to lower our costs, produce more and meet environmental challenges in order to remain competitive. One of the main advantages for us in Jamaica is a business-friendly, stable government and an improving investment infrastructure,” he says.

Unearthing value and supporting sustainability: a partner for national development
Jamalco currently mines bauxite in Jamaica and refines it into alumina, which is exported from its own port. Through having high-quality bauxite reserves, the company creates exceptional value for our customers, partners, workforce and community. Jamalco is jointly owned by Noble and Clarendon Alumina Production Ltd, a wholly owned Government company.

Tel: +1 876-986-2561
www.jamalco.com
Experience the rhythm of life in the Caribbean’s jewel

More and more visitors are recognizing that the home of reggae is a unique and diverse destination.

Jamaica is rightly famed for its vibrant and diverse culture, welcoming people, and breathtakingly beautiful beaches and tropical landscapes that provide visitors to the country with unique and unforgettable experiences. As a result, tourism makes up a substantial part of the Jamaican economy. “30 percent or so of our gross domestic product (GDP) is from tourism, 10 percent directly,” states Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett. The sector is also the top contributor to the country’s GDP growth—nearly 2.7 million tourists visited its shores in 2019, 8.4 percent more than in 2018. These visitors generated around $3.5 billion, a 10.1 percent increase over 2018.

When day-tripping cruise passengers are included, Jamaica will be very close to achieving its “3x5x3” goals for tourism: 5 million visitors and $5 billion in revenue within five years, says Bartlett. “The global pandemic has interrupted our growth but we are trending ahead and the projections will be realized by 2022.” There are five big draws for the tourists that flocking to Jamaica in combination with other sun, sea and sand destinations, according to Donovan White, director of tourism at the Jamaica Tourism Board. “Gastronomy, shopping, sports and entertainment, health and wellness, and knowledge. They provide a strong differentiation from anything you can anywhere else.”

The quality of Jamaican cuisine is extraordinary. “Lots of people know our delicious spiced and grilled jerk dishes. But so much more is available with our food, which is organically produced through our agricultural industries. We have restaurateurs investing in farm-to-table experiences, where they are growing the product that you consume—it’s freshly caught, cut, prepared and consumed within minutes of leaving the field,” says White. The government is encouraging this development and has further whetted tourists’ appetites by establishing a historic landmark, Devon House, as a center for gastronomic experiences, adds Bartlett. “In addition, we have built an app for the tourists that flocking to Jamaica that connects visitors with our culinary trail before they arrive.” Once on the island, various tours enable the exploration of that trail to discover celebrated local products, including Tia Maria liqueur, coffee and rum.

“We also offer a unique experience in shopping because of a very strong arts and crafts component, and are investing heavily in the development of five directly creative artisan villages,” says Bartlett, who adds that the first is due to open in mid-2021 in Falmouth. “It will accommodate over 300 artisans and vendors who we call ‘craft entrepreneurs’ as well as food experiences and entertainment. We are also expanding our duty-free laws, which will give our duty-free operators a much vaster universe of products to carry.”

Sport is another vital pillar, he says: “Like music, Jamaica has produced some of the world’s foremost performers, such as Usain Bolt and Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce—I could go on and on. There are opportunities for visitors to engage with some of these and to attend events that will unearth the next Usain Bolt.”

The country’s rich biodiversity is an advantage when it comes to health and wellness tourism. “It allows us to develop numerous nutraceutical and other beneficial products. We are interested about how cannabis, for example, can be utilized in this area,” states Bartlett. Making use of these natural products are high-quality spas, including two of the best in the world—Milk River and the Bath Fountain—and some focusing on the benefits of cannabis. Due to its wide-ranging facilities for meetings, conferences and conventions, alongside perfect locations in its atmospheric mountains for retreats, Jamaica is also uniquely positioned in the ecosystem of needling to learn and to experience ‘leisure,’ where people come for business but stay for leisure,” enchants White.

To help people appreciate the elements that differentiate the island as a destination, the Jamaica Tourism Board has created digital resources that enable potential visitors to visualize, feel and experience the country’s abundant attractions. White says, adding: “In addition, our new marketing campaign, which is driven by the international love of reggae, is focused on how Jamaica delivers outsized experiences and attractions with an outsized love for people and service. Jamaica is an all-encompassing destination, where everything is outsized and aligned to the visitor’s needs.”

A global leader in sustainable tourism

Jamaica is advancing tourism sustainably to benefit tourists, the country and the worldwide industry.

Jamaica is building its capacity to attract more visitors and provide them with high-level services and experiences. According to its director of tourism, Donovan White, the Jamaica Tourism Board’s plan to expand its global connections was inspired by the global pandemic. “Nowhere standing, we are maintaining the conversations with multiple airlines about increasing capacity when the time is right,” says White.

To service these additional visitors, Jamaica requires more hotels, to fulfill their passions, to experience those things that will make them bigger than themselves, which will make them expand their own realm and their appreciation of life and of cultures. Jamaica is at the center of all that.

Edmund Bartlett, Minister of Tourism

Jamaica: The all-encompassing Caribbean destination

Jamaica: Number 1 travel destination in the Caribbean (reviewed by TripAdvisor 2019)

1st Caribbean country to offer Best Countries for Business Report)

Most competitive country in the Caribbean (WEF Global Competitiveness Report 2019)

Number 6 in the world for ease of opening a business (World Bank’s 2019 Doing Business Report)

3rd largest English-speaking country in the Western Hemisphere

Number 1 producer of coffee in the world

80 percent of Jamaica’s coffee is consumed in Japan

Number 1 global producer of recorded music per capita

Number 2 country in the Caribbean for transshipment (ECLAC)

6th largest producer of Bauxite in the world

Number 1 producer of choice in the world

80 percent of Jamaica’s coffee is consumed in Japan
Focus and relentless work to present a result ‘beyond expectations’

Edmund Bartlett, Minister of Tourism, explains the plan to move Jamaica’s core sector forward, strengthening its international profile

Tourism accounts for 10 percent of Jamaica’s gross domestic product and 10 percent of jobs; it is the fastest growing industry in the country. Can you please begin by giving an overview of the tourism sector today?

Tourism has now embraced close to one third of the economic activity overall in Jamaica. Food is one of the main motivators for people to travel when choosing a destination and represents 62 percent of their expenditures. To build our gastronomy as the experience of choice for the visitor is the way to go to enable the larger portion of what visitors spend to remain in the destination. We encourage investment in agricultural development and the development of more winter vegetables in particular.

Besides that, we want to encourage the creative development of our own culture and products. We established the Craft Development Institute that is connected to our established school of art. We will have a team of trainers that will go across the island to train the artisans to give them a better sense of what their creative horizon is to open their minds and think deeper and wider. We established a fund at the EXIM Bank and we put one billion Jamaican dollars toward the small- and medium-sized enterprises of these artisans and others at the rate of 4 percent.

The health and wellness sector is a one-billion-dollar industry in tourism worldwide. Jamaica wants to make a pitch in this area, and we have a rich biodiversity, which enables us to develop from our rich flora numerous nutraceutical and pharmaceutical products. We are excited about how cannabis, for example, can experience? We have to build our capacity in the region to withstand disruptions, to recover from them. It is to that end that we wanted to look at what kind of institutional framework we can set up that will enable us to do the research and create a compendium of best practices. The center that we established, the Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Center, is the first of its kind in the world. In purpose is bringing together qualified and technically competent minds to develop strategies and ways to assist countries in thriving. It is housed at the University of the West Indies, Mona.

“Tourism workers across the world are generally seen as seasonal workers without tenure. Our efforts aim to give them tenure, enabling a professional cadre for them to move through.”

Edmund Bartlett, Minister of Tourism

How can Jamaica continue to move up the ranks in tourism and continue to promote its brand to the world?

Jamaica offers a lot in terms of resilience building, destination assurance, marketing, as well as product development. Jamaica is investing in creating new and exciting experiences for visitors. Today’s visitors are not driven by brands, they are driven by experiences. They are driven by travel, to fulfill their passions and experience those things that will make them bigger than themselves, which will make them expand their own realm and their own appreciation of life.

What unique experiences can Jamaica offer in terms of this experiential tourism?

For years, Jamaica, and largely the Caribbean, has been known for its sun, sea and sand. We believe that there is a need for us to be able to differentiate Jamaica from all other warm-weather destinations. We are building our strategy on five core pillars. One is gastronomy—food. Food remains the number one reason why people travel. We believe that food has to be a critical part of how we attract more people who have never thought of or visited Jamaica before.

The next one is that we are building our shopping experiences. We believe we have a unique experience in our own shopping, because of the strong component that Jamaica offers to the arts and the unique pieces of gift items that people can only get in Jamaica. We are investing heavily in the development of five artisan villages across Jamaica, which will give our artisans the opportunity to have a more controlled and diverse environment.

Knowledge, the third pillar of our strategy, is increasingly an area of travel focus, where people around the world are traveling to learn more. We feel Jamaica is uniquely positioned with the meeting facilities, the convention centers, that facilitate people who want to bring their conferences to Jamaica, but also experience business with leisure.

The fourth pillar is sports and entertainment. Jamaica has produced some of the foremost persons in the world, including the likes of Usain Bolt and Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce. There are experiences or opportunities for tourists to visit Jamaica to be able to not only engage sometimes with some of these people, but to come to events that will usher the new stars of tomorrow. We want to include that as part of the experience that people can have when they come to Jamaica.

Last but not least, we have the whole business of health and wellness. We believe that some of the organic assets of Jamaica: the plants, the trees, the land, the earth—some of those things that come out of the earth have become valuable contributors to the development of nutraceuticals. For example, there are a number of cannabis-driven spas and cafés that are now legally operating.

With international cooperation being fundamental to the industry, what would be your strategic vision moving forward?

On the one hand, we are looking towards, to ensure that we build a sustainable industry that is going to be focused on the development of our people and our infrastructure. On the other hand, we are looking outward, to see where the new markets of travelers are coming from. We want to create more repeat visitor opportunity as well as engage in new markets to build new capacity.
Jamaica adds value in mining and transportation

Robert Montague, Minister of Transport and Mining, provides an insight into two important economic sectors

The mining of limestone and its conversion into alumina have long played an important role in the Jamaican economy. In 2018, the mining sector made the biggest contribution to the country’s gross domestic product growth of 1.8 percent. Have international partnerships supported the growth in mining and what new projects are on the horizon?

We have always had partnerships with international companies in our bauxite sector. Today, there include the U.S.’s New Day, Russia’s UC Rusal, China’s JISCO and Hong Kong’s Noble Group. The plan is to move from alumina production into the production of aluminium and its end products, such as fish and engines. We are also seeing significant growth and interest in non-traditional mining. For example, the mining of medical-grade limestone is expanding, there is renewed interest from housing developers in our marble and a local firm has been doing a lot of prospecting for gold, silver, copper, tin and other minerals. Further up the value chain and in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme, we have run a program and workshop for ornamental crafts and jewelry making from semi-precious stones.

Jamaica is a regional transshipment leader. What are the key reasons for its competitive edge in this sector?

We are uniquely placed along the main sea lanes between North and South America, and directly north of the Panama Canal—we have exploited that. We have been able to show that we will utilize that position not only for our benefit, but for others, which has enhanced our reputation. In addition, we

have been open for business and are a country of laws. We speak English, which is the language of business. We are on the doorstep of the largest and wealthiest commercial and consumer market in the world: the U.S., as well as having very strong relations with the U.K. and Europe, and we are non-aligned in international politics. Our judiciary is independent, respected and has a long history of making good judgments, especially for commercial business. Our banking system is tied into all other banking systems and is manned by people who have been trained to international standards. Overall, what our country offers is the full value chain—a full-service one-stop shop for the shipping industry. We even put food and water on ships and remove waste to treat it. People are confident that, once we start offering a service, it is of an international standard. We also offer backroom operations and security is another area that we are strong in.

In recent years, air transportation to and from places such as the U.S., U.K., France, Russia and South Africa has been growing. What are your hopes for the aviation sector?

We don’t have a national airline and, therefore, are one of the few countries that are willing to offer seventh-freedom rights, which permit flights between countries that don’t touch an airline’s home territory. This gives an opportunity to enhance our logistics operations, helps with tourism and, by having linkages across so many countries, it develops our aviation industry.

We already have a reputation for our high-quality pilots and air traffic controllers, and we want to expand that to cover mechanics, instrument officers and all other services linked to aviation. One of my pet objectives is to increase general aviation: Jamaica flocked over the years was to transport vehicles, now we are changing that to transport people.

Can you describe the current investment climate in Jamaica?

Our prime minister has been very clear in telling the world that Jamaica is open for business and is a country of laws. We speak English, which is the language of business. We are on the doorstep of the largest and wealthiest commercial and consumer market in the world: the U.S., as well as having very strong relations with the U.K. and Europe, and we are non-aligned in international politics. Our judiciary is independent, respected and has a long history of making good judgments, especially for commercial business. Our banking system is tied into all other banking systems and is manned by people who have been trained to international standards. Within our financial system, there have been no threats, and no issues with money laundering or funding terrorism. Our universities are accredited and produce graduates that are respected across the world. We are also very strong on cybersecurity. We respect people’s privacy and, whatever the level of your investment, you can and will be accommodated here in Jamaica. We love innovators, because we are a nation of innovators.

“Whatever the level of your investment, you can and will be accommodated here in Jamaica. We love innovators, because we are a nation of innovators.”

Robert Montague, Minister of Transport and Mining

www.country-reports.net
Ongoing investment is vital for success in bauxite and alumina

Austin Mooney, Managing Director, Jamalco, discloses why the company is investing in its facilities and local communities

Jointly owned by the Hong Kong’s Noble Group and Clarendon Alumina Production Ltd, a publicly owned Jamaican company, Jamalco mines high-quality bauxite and refines it into alumina, which it exports from its own port. Can you explain why Jamaica is one of the world leaders in alumina production?

The key point for Jamaica is its access to bauxite—that is its main advantage. If you are importing bauxite, by the time shipping costs are added to all the other expenses, you have an extremely high cost. We can get bauxite to our refinery at a cost that is lower than the freight to move bauxite from Guinea or Brazil to the U.S. or Europe. In addition, the Jamaican government heavily supports the bauxite industry and makes doing business in the country very, very easy.

Jamalco recently celebrated its 60th anniversary. How has the Jamaican mining industry developed over the years and how can Jamalco continue to contribute to Jamaica’s economy while remaining sustainable, providing jobs, and protecting workers and the environment?

Bauxite and alumina are global commodities, so we are always under cost pressure. Over the years, the bauxite industry moved fast from the Americas, then to Australia and now it is starting to grow in the Middle East. The key to Jamalco’s success and to our sustainability is that we have to keep investing in our refinery—we have to continue to lower our costs and produce more.

“We have an investment program planned that covers the next six years, which is going to introduce large changes to our cost base and production capacity.”

Austin Mooney, Managing Director, Jamalco

Each year, we make substantial investments in our refinery. It’s an ongoing process to adapt the facility to the different production and environmental challenges that arise every year. We have an investment program planned that covers the next six years, which is going to introduce large changes to our cost base and production capacity.

In addition, New Fortress Energy (NFE) has constructed a gas-fired co-generation power plant in Jamaica and Jamalco’s refinery will use steam from that facility. That will help to make our operation very efficient and we will get the benefit of a reliable steam source as well. Whatever we can do to reduce our carbon footprint is always good. NFE’s new gas infrastructure will come right up to Jamalco’s boundary fence, so we are now looking at the opportunities for converting our other energy-consuming processes from heavy-fuel oils to gas, which is cleaner.

We will also carry on investing heavily in and working very closely with the communities in which we operate. Thank you, our partnerships with these communities have helped to prevent some of the issues that mining operators have experienced in other parts of the world. We are always mindful of the fact that we are only able to operate to the extent that our host communities allow us to.

Jamalco is a significant player in corporate social responsibility (CSR) and has won multiple awards for its CSR programs from organizations such as the United Way of Jamaica and the Council of Voluntary Social Services. How does CSR fit into Jamalco’s overall vision?

Jamalco’s CSR activities revolve around six pillars: capacity building, alternative economic opportunities, social renewal, volunteerism, civic partnerships, and charity. We believe we have an obligation to contribute to the sustainable development of our local communities. We do our best to support them, and we recognize that many face educational and infrastructural challenges. Jamalco tries to assist with these by building the capacity of residents, contributing to infrastructural development and upgrading schools and other facilities.

Many residents are unable to afford medical care, for example, and so we host health fairs in some communities every year. In 2019, we held four fairs, with over 1,000 people benefiting from the services offered. Similar fairs were hosted for our retirees and employees. As part of Jamalco’s 60th-anniversary celebrations that year, we undertook a number of special community projects, such as constructing a new community health center and awarding 60 scholarships to students attending local tertiary institutions.

Unearthing value and supporting sustainability: a partner for national development

Jamalco currently mines bauxite in Jamaica and refines it into alumina, which is exported from its own port. Through having high-quality bauxite reserves, the company creates exceptional value for our customers, partners, workforce and community. Jamalco is jointly owned by Noble and Clarendon Alumina Production Ltd, a wholly owned Government company.

Tel: +1 876-986-2561
www.jamalco.com
Open skies and safe, fluid transit remain aviation’s priorities

Howard Armstrong, General Manager, AEROTEL and KOOL 97FM

How have Jamaica’s aviation, telecommunications and media industries developed over the decades and what are some current challenges? Will AEROTEL span two sectors. On the aviation side, we provide the technical support and the technology services for the aviation industry. The aviation activities of the Jamaica Civil Aviation Authority (JCAs), the Airport Authority of Jamaica (AAJ), the Meteorological Service and the army (Jamaica Defense Force) are all supported technically by AEROTEL. The technology has changed unbelievably. When an aircraft leaves here, it must have the same services, the same communications and the same technology access as when it lands in London Heathrow or JFK New York. So we have to ensure that our facilities are commensurate with theirs. Accordingly, we have been acknowledged by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) as one of the top 12 countries in the world in terms of compliance with their safety standards and recommended practices (SARPs).

We are also the proud owners of the best music/lifestyle radio station in the country. According to a U.K. Daily Telegraph article from a few years ago, we are one of the best radio stations in the world. We plan to leverage the popularity and international internship of KOOL 97FM to help entertain and inform the world from a Jamaican perspective. We are first and foremost, by national mandate, an aviation service provider. 97FM has not always been a high priority. That has changed in the last few years, particularly under the current minister. He sees a tremendous asset in this radio station and he has tasked us to ensure that we derive full access as when it lands in London Heathrow or JFK New York. So we have the same services, the same communications and the same technology (Jamaica Defense Force) are all supported technically by AEROTEL. The skies and the technologies already have substantial capacity. We now need to mirror that with our capabilities on the ground in the airports. It’s not only a question of infrastructure development, but also of enhancing technology investment. The skies and the technologies already have substantial capacity. We now need to mirror that with our capabilities on the ground in the airports. It’s not only a question of infrastructure development, but also of enhancing technology investment. The skies and the technologies already have substantial capacity. We now need to mirror that with our capabilities on the ground in the airports. It’s not only a question of infrastructure development, but also of enhancing technology investment.

Ownership and consensus drive the nation’s progress

Nigel Clarke, Minister of Finance and the Public Service

Jamaica experienced an exceptional positive turnaround of its economy in the six years leading up to its successful exit from back-to-back International Monetary Fund (IMF) financial support programs in November 2019. Could you give our readers an overview of some of the substantial economic reforms and other measures introduced by the government that helped enable this impressive performance?

Jamaica’s economic turnaround is an example of what is possible with sound macroeconomic policies pursued by governments that take ownership of their realities with responsibility.

Nigel Clarke, Minister of Finance and the Public Service

www.country-reports.net

What are some of the ways in which the Jamaican government is encouraging the growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in the country?

We are improving access to finance for MSMEs and have programs that channel loan—using the Development of Bank of Jamaica as a conduit—to the MSME sector. We are also strengthening our venture capital investment and participation in the reforms. We have also engaged in mergers and direct investments of state-owned enterprises. Our strategy for privatization is focused on a number of elements: the first is to broaden the ownership base of the Jamaican economy—divesting assets via the stock exchange allows for democratic participation. The second objective is to give Jamaicans the opportunity to invest in sectors that they couldn’t previously. Another aim is to ensure that, as the government delivers, there are assets available for the private sector to invest in. In the past, delicensing funds would just be invested in government dels.

Ownership and consensus drive the nation’s progress

Jamaica ranks sixth in the world for starting a company. However, we have work to do in other areas and we’re focusing on making the accessibility of public services easier by migrating several services to electronic and internet-based channels. We have also removed distortional taxation taxes that impeded the formalization of businesses and we’re putting in place policies to address crime. We have achieved a lot, but the best is yet to come.
IN THE AIR

ICT Support for Aviation in Jamaica and the Caribbean

www.aerotel-jm.com

@aeroteljm

IN YOUR EAR

The KOOLest radio station in Jamaica

www.kool97fm.com

@kool97fm