

# THE JEWEL OF JAMAICA

BY MAXINE ALBERT



Within a few hours, you can be away from the cold weather sitting on a beautiful beach on a tropical island drinking a rum punch. I'm talking about Jamaica, and as the natives say, "yah mon" – sounds good. With its lush greenery, mountains and beaches, tasty food and music, it's the perfect winter getaway.

With these thoughts in mind, I hopped on a plane and treated myself to a few days in the sun to swim, relax and enjoy nature. The Jewel Dunn's River Beach Resort and Spa in the Ocho Rios region, with its oceanfront setting, spa menu and varied restaurants, is designed to give each person exactly the type of experience they want. This was great – a vacation geared to my preferences was exactly what the doctor ordered. Just minutes from Jamaica's famous Dunn's River Falls and other attractions, the location is ideal.

My large, beautifully appointed room had a balcony with a spectacular view of the ocean. What I found particularly appealing at The Jewel was the service. Whether it was a waiter at one of the eateries, a bartender, the front desk, or the pool concierge, everyone was friendly, gracious and lovely. I don't think I have ever been at a place where the staff was nicer and more willing to please. And they were always smiling. At first I admit I was a bit suspect. I guess I'm a bit of a jaded New Yorker. However, within a very short time I gave in to the genial atmosphere and noticed that I was grinning, repeating "yah mon" and feeling pretty good.

Sitting on a lounge chair looking out at

the blue Caribbean, sipping the "gem" of the day, (as each daily libation is called) was heavenly. It felt so hedonistic to have the pool concierge swim out to my pool float and serve me fresh fruit and drinks – and such fun.

Recently renovated, this former Sandals resort is an all inclusive with six restaurants, six bars (two-swim-up), pools with falls, private beach, gym, nightclub, tennis, European spa, hair salon and more. Anything you want, they'll arrange. I was wondering how I would feel about the meals- and drinks-included part. I'm the kind who usually likes to venture out. I loved it. With such a multitude of offerings, you don't have to have any schedule or leave to go any place. Just relax and enjoy.

Ackee, the national fruit, was delicious for breakfast with eggs in the morning where I sat al fresco facing the ocean. The national dish, ackee and cod, was absolutely addicting. I dined by candlelight on the beach one night. Another evening I savored pumpkin soup, coconut shrimp, and lobster at one of the indoor venues with live music that included reggae, soul, old standards and ballads. The Jewel is very conducive to couples with its private cabanas and romantic setting.

A not to be missed excursion is a visit to Dunn's River Falls where you climb in the actual waterfall to the very top. (Be sure to wear water shoes) It was one of the most exhilarating adventures of my life. Close by is Dolphin Cove – where I swam with and was kissed by the dolphin "Tatiana", saw gorgeously colored iguanas and snorkeled

with stingrays. (I still can't believe I did that). I recommend lunch aboard a boat while you enjoy the scenic coastline and take in the glorious rays of the sun. Also memorable was a side trip to Mystic Mountain where you first glide over treetops strapped into a seat, then race up and down hills in a speedy bobsled. The finale is a zipline. The resort will arrange all of this for you.

Next it was time for some well deserved pampering at the Jewel's Radiant Spa. I had a facial and the Signature Massage with ginger essence followed by a whirlpool. My skin was so soft and I felt so relaxed. As I got ready to leave I found out that the spa was about to have a *sparty* – cocktails using some of the treatment ingredients. I sipped a chocolate martini first, then a taste of a lemongrass citrus martini. I had to try the coffee one – I honestly don't remember which one I liked the best; they were all smashing. I looked up at the magenta sunset and the sky. Valentines Day is coming up, I thought. Wouldn't it be nice to spend it at The Jewel?

[www.jewelresorts.com](http://www.jewelresorts.com)

*Getting There:*

*JetBlue flies from major cities to Montego Bay, Jamaica*

[www.jetblue.com](http://www.jetblue.com)

*The resort will send a car for the hour and a half drive*