

**Kingston** is the [capital](#) and largest city of [Jamaica](#), located on the south-eastern coast of the island. It faces the 7<sup>th</sup> largest natural harbour in the world and is protected by the [Palisadoes](#), a long [sand spit](#) which connects the town of [Port Royal](#) and the [Norman Manley International Airport](#) to the rest of the island. In the [Americas](#), Kingston is the largest predominantly English-speaking city south of the United States.

**Kingston**, was founded in July 22, 1692, on Colonel Samuel Barry's Hog Crawle as a refuge for the survivors of the June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1692 earthquake that destroyed two-thirds of the nearby city of Port Royal and causing the death of about three thousands persons. The survivors of this massive earthquake fled to an area across the harbour then known as the Liguanea Plains, named after the giant Iguana. The Plains was a 530 acres property owned initially by Colonel Samuel Barry and was used as a hog pen. Sometime in the early 1660s Colonel Barry sold the property to Colonel William Beeston. Colonel William Beeston owned the entire Liguanea Plains until 1692, the year the massive earthquake destroyed the wealthiest and most populous English town in the new World.

After the earthquake, the Jamaican Council designed a plan to relocate the residents of Port Royal to the Liguanea Plains. The Council purchased 240 acres of the plains for a total cost of one thousand pounds from Nicholas Lawes, who acted on behalf of Colonel Beeston. On Beeston returned to Jamaica he declared the sale illegal and renegotiated the sale at a higher price. Early maps listed Kingston's name as "Beeston". This could have easily been said as the land was purchased from Sir William Beeston.

Soon after, the Jamaica Council instructed surveyor John Goffe to draw up the plan for building “the new town of Kingston. John Goffe drew up a plan for the town based on a grid bounded on the south by Port Royal Street and the North, East and West by North, East and West Streets. The town was one mile from north to south and half mile from east to west. At the center of the grid the main streets in the town running South to North (King Street) and East to West (Queen Street) intersected. This intersection was marked by a four acre area which was a military camp known as Parade (where St William Grant Park is today). The area was also surrounded by the Parish Church and the Theatre Royal.

Kingston’s development after the 1692 earthquake was slow as many residents of Port Royal returned as soon as the horrors of the earthquake were forgotten and a sense of normalcy was restored to Port Royal. This all came to a halt a few years later when a catastrophic fire in 1703, completely destroyed most of what the earthquake had spared, as well as the buildings that were restored. Once again Port Royal residents migrated to Kingston, most never to return.

Soon after 1703 Kingston grew fairly quickly. In 1713 it was declared by law that the place should “forever be taken and esteemed as an entire and distinct parish with all the powers of any other parish” and that, further it should “have the right of sending three representatives to the Assembly. By the mid 1700 Kingston had become the commercial capital of Jamaica and due to its deep water harbour it was also the center of trade for the entire British colony.

In 1774 the Chamber of Commerce was established in Kingston and by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the population had grown to almost 30,000. By 1802, Kingston was granted Charter as a corporation, obtaining formal recognition as a city. Its contribution to the colony's income was about 54 percent and it had more houses at the time than Spanish Town.

Somewhere around the mid eighteenth century, Governor, Sir Charles Knowles, sought to have the capital city moved from Spanish Town to Kingston. A reason for this historians note is because Kingston's port had a greater capacity than all other ports in the island combined. Also, because of its location, Kingston benefitted from the trade in contraband with Spain's recalcitrant colonies in the Caribbean. Not many shared the view of Knowles, especially because Kingston was merely fifty years old and many thought that it could never succeed Spanish Town as a suitable capital especially as Spanish Town had been the capital for two hundred and thirty years. Admiral Knowles' proposal met with strong support from members of the Assembly from Kingston and other eastern parishes, and a harsh and vigorous opposition from members from Spanish Town and the western parishes. Eventually steps were taken to make Kingston the capital of Jamaica by Governor Knowles who sent the paperwork to Britain for it to be made into law. His successor Henry Moore announced in 1758 that the King had not allowed the Bill making Kingston the capital city of Jamaica. However, by 1780 the population of Kingston was 11,000, and the merchants began lobbying for the administrative capital to be transferred from Spanish Town, which was by then eclipsed

by the commercial activity in Kingston. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Kingston's population had reached 30,000 and it had grown from a seaside town to a city with houses, stores and wharves. The city contained more than 3,000 brick buildings. The harbour fostered trade, and played part in several naval wars of the 18th century. Kingston took over the functions of Spanish Town (the capital at the time). These functions included agriculture, commercial, processing and a main transport hub to and from Kingston and other sections of the island.

In 1802, during the reign of George III Kingston was incorporated as a city and John Jacques, commander of the People's Militia was elected Mayor.

In 1865, over 100 years after Admiral Charles Knowles sought to transfer the capital of Jamaica to Kingston, Governor John Peter Grant was assigned the task of re-organization after civil upheavals which had resulted in the Morant Bay rebellion. Part of Governor John Peter Grant re-organization included the relocation of the capital from Spanish Town to Kingston. As many years went by, the capital of Jamaica soon switched from Spanish Town to Kingston. In 1872, after over a century of lobbying by Kingston's merchants, Kingston became the official capital of the island. This was inevitable as the population of Kingston was rapidly increasing and its location was said to be more in touch with the outside world through shipping, and commercial activity.

The government passed an act to transfer the government offices to Kingston from Spanish Town, which occurred in

1872.<sup>[9]</sup> It kept this status when the island was granted independence in 1962.

On January 14<sup>th</sup>, 1907 Kingston was struck by an earthquake followed by a catastrophic fire that lasted for four days and destroyed much of downtown. It is said that approximately 1500 persons died as a result of the earthquake and fire. The damage was estimated to be about 2 million pounds. The earthquake led to a three-story height restriction on all central business district structures and the requirement that they be built in reinforced concrete. The city was rebuilt between 1907 and 1957.

In 1914, two young Jamaicans, Marcus Garvey and his wife Amy Ashwood Garvey, founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association in the Kingston Market section of the city. Although Garvey left Jamaica two years later for the United States where he settled in New York, the Kingston-born UNIA eventually became the largest organization in the world composed of people of African ancestry.

By the 1930s Kingston residents formed a trade union movement that eventually became the driving force in the Jamaican independence campaign. In 1948 the city became the site of the Mona Campus of the University of West Indies, the first institution of higher learning in Jamaica.

When independence came in 1962, Kingston remained the capital of the new nation. At the time its population was estimated at 350,000. By that point the height restrictions were lifted and “New Kingston,” a downtown development of high-rise office buildings, became the financial center of the island,

while uptown became the site of Parliament and other government buildings.

By the early 1970s reggae music emerged from Trench Town, a Kingston slum that produced singers such as Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, Bunny Wailers, Jimmy Cliff and others. The name of the slum came from local residents who described the unpaved streets without sidewalks as trenches.

## Demographics

The majority of the population of Kingston is of [African descent](#). Large minority ethnic groups include [East Indians](#) and Chinese, who came to the country as [indentured servants](#) in the late 19th century. The Chinese occupy important roles in Jamaica's economy especially in the retail markets in Downtown Kingston and the wider metropolitan area. There is also a minority of [Europeans](#), mostly descending from immigrants from Germany and Great Britain. [Syrians](#) and [Lebanese](#) form one of the most influential ethnic groups in not only Kingston, but the entire island. Though a minority ethnic group, the [Lebanese](#) were able to give Jamaica one of its Prime Ministers, [Edward Philip George Seaga](#). There is also a small Jewish population in the city.

## Religion

There is a wide variety of Christian churches in the city. Most are Protestant, a legacy of British colonisation of the island. The chief denominations are the Church of God, Baptist, Anglican, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Seventh-day Adventists and Pentecostal.

There is a strong Roman Catholic community, with the Holy Trinity Cathedral which is the seat of metropolitan archbishop and was consecrated in 1911, as well a few Catholic schools and institutions such as the Immaculate Conception High School, St Francis Primary and Infant School, Holy Childhood High School which was founded and is owned by the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of our Lady of Perpetual Help (FMS) in Jamaica.

Afro-Christian syncretic religions such as the Rastafari movement also have a significant following.

The Shaare Shalom Synagogue serves Kingston's Jewish population. The city also has communities of Buddhists and Muslims. The Islamic Council of Jamaica and the Islamic Education and Dawah Centre are both located in Kingston. There are three units of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the city.

## **Economy**

Kingston plays a central role in Jamaica's economy. The vast majority of economic activity takes place within Kingston, and as most government ministries are located in the city, it is a key force in legislation in regards to Jamaica's finances. The high population density of the capital city means that the majority of monetary transactions occur in Kingston - stimulating much of Jamaica's local economy. The city is also home to the highest number of schools, hospitals and universities anywhere in

Jamaica. Kingston is also the island's main transportation hub and its largest seaport.

Many multinational conglomerates and financial institutions are headquartered in and around the Kingston Metropolitan Area

The city's major industries include tourism, apparel manufacturing, and shipping. Many international exports are traded through the city's seaport, with major exports including bauxite, sugar and coffee.

## **Climate**

Kingston is surrounded by the Blue Mountains, Red Hills, Long Mountain and the Kingston Harbour. The city is on the Liguanea plain, an alluvial plain alongside the Hope River. Kingston experiences frequent earthquakes, including the 1907 earthquake.

Kingston has a tropical climate, specifically a tropical wet-and-dry climate, that borders on a hot-semi arid climate. (*Bsh*). characterised by a wet season from May to November, which coincides with the hurricane season, and a dry season from December to April. During the dry season, there is not much rainfall, however, cold and stationary fronts occur at this time, and often bring heavy showers, especially in March. Kingston is in the rain shadow of the Blue Mountains; therefore, little to none of the moisture carried by the Northeast Trade Winds falls over Kingston, causing Kingston to be very dry in comparison to Portland and Saint Mary on the windward side of the Blue Mountains. Kingston is on a coastal location, hence it comes under the influence of the sea, though dense urban development can negate this effect. In the 21st century, Kingston has experienced temperatures as high as 38.8 °C (102 °F) and as low as 13.4 °C (56 °F). Between 1895 and



1990, the total average rainfall was recorded at 813 mm (32.0 in), the highest monthly average rainfall recorded in October at 177 mm (7.0 in), and the lowest monthly average rainfall recorded in March at 18 mm (0.71 in).<sup>[17]</sup> Fog, hail, thunder and tornadoes are all extremely rare.

## **Attractions**

Kingston attractions include the Museum of Jamaican Art, Emancipation Park, Mandela Park and the 2,000 acre Hope Royal Botanical Garden. The Bob Marley Museum located in uptown Kingston is the singer's former residence. **Parade**, located in the centre of the city, was originally called the Victoria Park, after Queen Victoria. It was renamed the St. William Grant Park in 1977, The Athletic Track and Field Training Area was the site where world famous athletes such as Usain Bolt and Shelly Ann Fraser-Price trained before winning their Olympic gold medals.