



Hotel Mocking Bird Hill

Where simplicity is a style in itself and indulgence is guiltless

OVERVIEW

Jamaica's Hotel Mocking Bird Hill is a 10-room, eco-chic hideaway nestled in 7 acres of gardens and trees on a hillside outside Port Antonio. It offers its guests a unique environmentally-friendly setting providing luxury boutique accommodation at a moderate price. It's close to both town and beach and only a short drive from the waterfalls, forests & botanical gardens that distinguishes the North-East coast of Jamaica.



As you would expect from an independent, owner-run hotel, the welcome is cordial, the service friendly and requests by guests, no matter how trivial, are met with a personal touch that leaves a sense of confidence and trust. The owners, Barbara Walker and Shireen Aga, are always happy to offer useful insights into the arts, culture and sights of Jamaica, especially when partaking in Afternoon Tea or Sundowner Cocktails on the hotel terrace every afternoon.



With its many personal flourishes and original artwork, this informal hotel combines a contemporary, relaxed atmosphere with an old fashioned traditional charm that instantly allows guests to feel at ease. It's all very informal, very laid-back Caribbean.



OUR PHILOSOPHY

The hotel's ethos "guiltless indulgence" communicates its focus of providing comfort in a responsible fashion. It doesn't simply provide luxury at any cost but concentrates on sustainable luxury. From its inception the hotel's aim was to prove that a small business could operate in a sustainable manner successfully without placing undue burdens on the environment.

Everything at Mocking Bird Hill is planned with nature and the local community at the forefront and it is managed with a dedicated concern for the environment and for promoting sustainable tourism. Mocking Bird Hill was one of the first hotels in the world to be certified as environmentally friendly. Hence no plastics among the room amenities ("bottled" water comes in reusable thermos flasks); the stationery in the guest rooms is made from recycled paper by a women's cooperative in a nearby village; the toiletries in the bathrooms are also produced locally, and the hotel is currently in the process of expanding its use of renewable energy beyond solely solar water-heating, which the hotel has used since its opening in 1993.

All of these measures enhance rather than detract from the guests' experience, practicably and philosophically. With its serene setting and mesmerising views the hotel is an idyllic escape from the pressures of today's hectic lifestyles, enticing guests to stay put, chilling by the pool or slipping into the garden gazebo for a soothing massage beneath the orchid tree. It provides an ideal setting for nature lovers and bird watchers. The garden, with its remarkable biodiversity, welcomes up to 25 of the 28 endemic species and is home to more than 40 species (some of them endangered, such as the Black-billed Streamer-tail). In fact, the hotel is listed in *Birds of the West Indies* as being one of the best places for bird-watching on Jamaica.

But the hotel is also an ideal base camp for exploring the many natural attractions – waterfalls, botanical gardens, forests, beaches et al - of the surrounding countryside.

THE BASICS

Owners/Managers:
Barbara Walker & Shireen Aga

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Facebook:
facebook.com/HotelMockingBirdHill

Twitter:
twitter.com/mockingbirdees

Languages spoken:
English, German, French

Location:
The hotel is located about 2 miles/7 kilometres east of Port Antonio in the northeast corner of Jamaica (known as the Parish of Portland), in the hills; 5 minutes by car from town and 5 minutes from the beautiful beach at Frenchman's Cove or the fabled Blue Lagoon.

Use of a pay-as-you-go courtesy mobile phone is available to our guests; if you need to phone outside Jamaica we suggest using the VoIP provider Skype.



ACCOMMODATION

Room rates range from US\$190 to US\$600 from December 20, 2010 to April 30, 2011, and from US\$155 to US\$515 from May 1 to December 19, 2011. Half-Board (breakfast & dinner) is an additional US\$78; a breakfast-only option is also available, with a wide range to select from on an a la carte basis, prices range from US\$10 to 30. Please note that there is a 2-night minimal stay requirement.

Mocking Bird Hill's 10 large, breeze-cooled rooms enable guests to relax in a comfortable, tranquil atmosphere - simple elegance meets Caribbean flair. The rooms feature large cool white tiles, soft cotton linen sheets, attractive hand-printed floral fabrics, hand-crafted bamboo furniture, original artwork, decorative mosquito nets and large hammock-strung balconies. They are cooled by paddle fans (but supply blankets are provided for the cooler winter nights!).

But it is the absence of some of the more intrusive elements of modern living that inspire our guests' positive feedback – no air-conditioning (rarely necessary at this elevation), television or telephones. The hotel lobby provides free wireless access and two computers for those that need to stay in contact with friends, family or work, or keep up with the news.

ROOM CATEGORIES

Garden View Rooms [there 4 of them] are enchanting little nests with views of the flowers & trees; two of them also look out to the sea.

Superior Rooms [3], on the upper level, offer views overlooking both the lush hillside and the sea and include a luxury bathroom, bathrobes and an extended range of tropical body care products.

Deluxe Rooms [2] similar to the Superior Rooms, but with an extended open seating area fitted with folding serpentine doors which open onto the balcony for tropical-style indoor/outdoor living.

The new Suite [1] has a separate bedroom, sitting area and two bathrooms. This new suite has additional amenities such as an individual wireless internet work station (free) with complimentary VoIP and DVD linked to the flat screen, an iPod docking station, laptop safe, a CD player, a sofa-bed and a cosy reading corner with magazines and a selection of books.

There is also one Economy Room with two twin beds, intended primarily for children accompanied by their parents. Cosy and simple, it's close to the swimming pool but it does not offer views, nor does it have the larger balcony or hammock of the other garden view rooms. Given its proximity to the pool, this room is popular with children but lacks some of the tranquillity offered by the other rooms.

All of our rooms are non-smoking. There is an energy surcharge of US\$3.00.

Please note that although our rooms do not contain a mini-bar if you have medicines or baby food that requires chilling we are more than happy to keep these in our coolers.

ROOM AMENITIES

Balconies
(most with panoramic vistas)

Hammocks

Coffee/tea making facilities

Radio/clock

Hairdryer

Make-up magnifying mirror

Iron and ironing board in all rooms
(we do not offer a laundry service
due to issues regarding liability if
clothes are damaged but we do
provide a washing bowl and are
more than happy to hang out any
laundry that you do)

Lotions and body care items from
Jamaican Blue Mountains Aromatics

Hand-made recycled
paper stationery

Chocolate tea balls

Recipe collection of popular
Mocking Bird Hill dishes

Safety box

Fresh flowers from the garden

Tropical fruit plate

Spring water in refillable flasks

Bathrobes (superior, deluxe rooms
and suite only)

Ceiling fans and louvers for cooling

NOTE: Honeymooners also receive a
bottle of sparkling wine, a welcome
cake and a gift from the staff. The
room is specially decorated with
flowers and fragrant candles.

FACILITIES

Restaurant serving traditional
Jamaican & creative Caribbean fare

Terrace bar with magnificent views

Swimming pool in the garden

On-site art gallery, Gallery
Carriacou, with works by the
owner and by local artists

Beach towels

snorkelling equipment
(extra charge)

Complimentary morning tea or
coffee between 7.00 – 8.00 am

Complimentary afternoon tea
between 4.00 – 5.00 pm

Complimentary internet access

Complimentary shuttle and
entrance to Frenchman's Cove
Beach (visits to other beaches will
require a taxi fare)

Complimentary parking

Small "exchange" library

Massage gazebo (extra charge)

Picnic baskets on request for
breakfast or lunch (extra charge)

Airport transfers and various tours
and excursions can be arranged
for an extra charge



The Restaurant



The Gallery



The Pool



The Rooms



Massage



The Flowers



HALF-BOARD

A Delicious Multiple Choice at Mocking Bird Hill

Half board at Mocking Bird Hill comprises a slow, luxurious breakfast and a delicious fusion style 3-course a la carte menu for dinner. Our menus are seasonally led and the ingredients for each of the dishes are sourced locally to ensure:

A) food miles are kept to an absolute minimum

AND

B) members of the local community who act as our suppliers also benefit from this form of sustainable tourism

BREAKFAST

A leisurely cooked breakfast is a great way to start the day; energized and raring to go discover Jamaica. We believe that, alongside the ambiance it is eaten in, breakfast is the most important meal of the day, and therefore pay as much attention to its details as any other meal served.

We hope that this information has been helpful and if you think we have forgotten something please do let us know. And to make sure that you start your holiday off on the right foot book our Jettison the Jetlag treatment before you leave home.

The menu at Mille Fleurs Restaurant is a daily changing choice of 3-4 dishes for each course, that is entirely determined by what is being harvested at the moment.

Each course has a selection of either seafood/fish, meat/ chicken & vegetarian options to comfortably cater for all diet types apart from Meatless Mondays, when the menu is purely vegetarian.

For those who need their meat and fish and don't wish to have the meal plan on a Meatless Monday, there is the alternative to cancel the meal plan for the whole day and for your morning breakfast instead order from the a la carte breakfast menu. We can assist you in making a reservation at another Port Antonio restaurant.

COMPLIMENTARY TEA & COFFEE

For those that want to take in our panoramic morning vistas, we advise getting up for your morning tea or coffee between 7.00-8.00 am, it's a great time for light. Even before starting your breakfast you can enjoy complimentary tea or coffee from the easy self-service coffee machine and a member of staff is always willing to assist you on request.

Incidentally, for breakfast we make freshly brewed Jamaican Blue Mountain coffee in small batches... no "thin, brown dishwater" that is "stewed" for hours on a warm plate! There are (unlimited) large mugs of it. We like more than a mug ourselves so expect to give our guests nothing less than we'd expect.

FRESH FRUIT & FRESHLY PRESSED JUICE

To start with we recommend indulging in a plate of fresh, local and seasonal fruits and a glass of our genuinely freshly-pressed juice.

HOME MADE MUESLI

We go to great lengths to make sure you enjoy highly nutritional and healthy foods and therefore make our own Muesli with oven roasted grated coconut, nuts and dried fruits, but no added sugar. You can sweeten it to your personal taste with natural honey. We suggest trying it with our homemade natural yoghurt which is made from one of our small independent farm suppliers, it's delicious.



Eggs

You have a free choice of cooked eggs prepared any which way you would like, poached, fried, boiled or scrambled. For omelette lovers we can prepare these with various different ingredients such as onions, tomatoes, callaloo, cheese, peppers, bacon or sausage. Talking about eggs, you will see the difference in the colour, taste & size of our eggs, which we source from free-range chickens, fed as naturally as possible.

FRESHLY BAKED BREADS

We offer a wide selection of home-made breads which are baked fresh daily on the property, accompanied by a selection of home-made jams with not a plastic container in site! A wonderful cheese plate is available, including a selection of locally made artisan goat cheeses for you to try, chevre with herbs or pepper, a Camembert like cheese called Tom's Hope and a homemade Brie.

It's not just the ingredients that make up the breakfast – the atmosphere counts a great deal and again we based the Mocking Bird Hill experience on what we appreciate; therefore no canned or piped music to jerk or shock you awake. Simply enjoy the quiet serenity with just the birds, with the breeze gently stirring the fresh flowers on your table.

VEGETARIANS & VEGANS

Don't worry if you are a vegetarian or vegan, we offer you a choice too! Whether it is fried mushrooms & tomatoes with fresh herbs on toast, or potato & onion fritters with scrambled tofu, either will leave you sated & content.



For those with children, over your drinks we will arrange with you and them what they will be eating for their evening supper. Our evening meals are geared toward adults so to cater for children's individual tastes and preferences we ask you and them personally what they would like whipped up for dinner; one perennial favourite is pasta with our homemade tomato sauce, chicken and cheese, but as said it's their choice!

For those that like to eat punctually at 7.00pm we will at this time give you the evening menus so that you can make your selections and we can have it ready for you on the dot.

A LA CARTE MENU SELECTION

The menu at Mille Fleurs Restaurant is a daily changing choice of 3-4 dishes for each course, that is entirely determined by what is being harvested at the moment. It includes a selection of fish, meat/ chicken & vegetarian options to comfortably cater for all diet types apart from Meatless Mondays, when the menu is purely vegetarian.

Because we buy locally from independent farmers, fishermen and other suppliers we are dependent on the vagrancies of the market. This can be determined by occasional rough seas, which in turn means that the fishermen in their small boats can't go out, or for example as has been the case after a hurricane when all the banana crop was destroyed and we had no bananas! It would be easy to look to imports to stop the gap, but we prefer to be creative with our menus and promote sustainable tourism, in which members of the local community all benefit from our guests' visits to Jamaica.



DINING

The hotel's restaurant, "Mille Fleurs" ("thousand flowers"), is set on a classic, Caribbean veranda. Low-key and unpretentious but with a spectacular view of the forested Blue Mountains and the sea, it is perfect for romantic, candlelit evenings, with tree frogs trilling and the scent of jasmine in the air. Sunsets here are magical and no raucous music is allowed to disturb guests' conversations or the sense of tranquillity.

Our chef selects and prepares the freshest of whatever produce is available that day from our favourite local suppliers and the hotel's kitchen garden. The menus feature creative Caribbean cuisine prepared with a continental flair that will surprise & seduce.



Among his one-of-a-kind creations are dishes like cassava flour pastas, apple & cinnamon crumbles and banana-walnut upside-down cakes.

Menus change daily and always offer several choices for each course. Vegetarian specialities are always included and special dietary needs, including Vegan, are available on request. For children, the chefs can cook to order to please their special tastes.

The average cost for a 3-course à la carte dinner for 2 persons without drinks is US\$ 90. Guests who opt for the Meal Plan (full breakfast, 3-course dinner, US\$78 per person per day) can select freely from all the menu options.

ACTIVITIES

Since guests at Hotel Mocking Bird Hill tend to be self-dependent travellers with a conscience the hotel does not offer a resort-style roster of planned activities. However, there is available a range of options both at the hotel and in the surrounding countryside, most of them designed to help guests get to know the local culture. Some of them require advance booking or an additional fee.

- * In-house garden tours
- * In-house cookery classes to learn traditional Jamaican cooking (guests can then enjoy the results for lunch but they must indicate their interest in advance)
- * In-house art classes in pastel or charcoal drawing and sculpting (which must be ordered prior to arrival)
- * Snorkelling (masks available at small charge from the hotel, transportation extra except to Frenchman's Cove)
- * Scuba diving and deep-sea fishing nearby (on request, extra charge)
- * Plantation tours, horseback riding, river rafting and guided hiking excursions (on request, extra charge)
- * Visits to community projects and local schools which are sponsored by the hotel



EXCURSIONS & GETTING AROUND

The hotel is delighted to organize sightseeing tours and soft-adventure excursions that show off the beauty of the Parish of Portland. Custom-built trips can be designed specifically for each guest, couple or party so that a stay at Mocking Bird Hill becomes a truly memorable, unique experience. There is much to see here.



Our day tours and excursions generally require a day's notice to allow us to reach our preferred guides. Our guides either have either full-time jobs such as being park rangers or are farmers, so to host your excursion they will need notice to allow them to reschedule their duties and chores.

A few miles away, Port Antonio provides a wonderful time-warp to an old Antillean port that reached its heyday in the era of the great banana plantations that filled the surrounding pastures. It's a quiet, unassuming market town inhabited by hospitable people who are always willing to help strangers.

Beyond the town, there are gardens and waterfalls, historic ruins and plantations as well as five romantic beaches within a 15- to 30-minute drive of the hotel. Especially popular attractions include rainforest hikes in the Blue Mountains, river-rafting down the nearby Rio Grande River (where the tourist version of the banana-carrying bamboo raft was first introduced to the world) and intriguing eco-cultural tours to a small Blue Mountain coffee estate or a Maroon community descended from runaway slaves. Farther afield, we can set up a historical tour of Kingston and the legendary haunt of Port Royal.

Please do allow at least half an hour for us to call a taxi if you should wish to explore the area independently. Our hotel is intimate and as such we do not have a taxi rank outside the hotel, rather we will call an insured taxi to come to the hotel and transport you accordingly.



WEDDINGS & HONEYMOONS

The charm and serenity of Mocking Bird Hill have great appeal for honeymooners but more & more couples are discovering its merits as an exclusive venue for intimate, moderately priced weddings. Given its informal atmosphere, Mocking Bird Hill is easily converted into what is essentially a 10-bedroom private villa – and renting for much less than many of the exotic villas on the island. Wedding parties can have the run of the house with all its personal service and attendant staff ready to tailor amenities, meals and activities for each wedding party. A call to Barbara or Shireen will set the ball rolling in arranging a truly memorable “green” wedding.

For couples who get married and spend their honeymoons here, the hotel offers a “Happy Marry Tree” Package that includes a handmade gift certificate and two trees, which will be planted in your name by the Jamaica Conservation Development Trust (JCDDT).

GETTING THERE

Guests have the option of flying into two international airports when bound for Mocking Bird Hill Hotel:

Kingston’s Norman Manley International is the nearest (65 miles/100 kms), a drive of approximately 2 to 2½ hours across the scenic mountains and along the winding Wag Water River (A3, also known as Junction Road).

Montego Bay’s Donald Sangster International Airport is located in the northwest of the island, a drive of approximately 3½ to 4 hours along the newly upgraded north coast road (A1) via Ocho Rios, Oracabessa and Port Maria.



(The aerodrome at Port Antonio is currently closed to commercial traffic except for small planes that are privately chartered – but charters are recommended for small groups, which Mocking Bird Hill can help arrange.)

Arrangements can also be made via the hotel, on request and for an extra charge, to have guests greeted at the airport and brought to the hotel, using comfortable cars or minibuses licensed by the Jamaica Tourist Board, depending on the number of guests. The fare from Kingston is US\$165 for 1-2 persons, one-way; from Montego Bay, US\$300 for 1-2 persons, one way.

Rental cars for guests who want to do their own driving can also be booked via the hotel. However, after a long international flight, many guests prefer the transfer services, allowing them to relax and enjoy the scenery instead of having to concentrate on unfamiliar road conditions and traffic that drives on the left.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AT MOCKING BIRD HILL HOTEL

The owners of Hotel Mockingbird Hill take a holistic view of their business. Since opening in December 1993, they have been guided by established principles of sustainability and are totally committed to the highest level of environmental management, incorporating it into every aspect of the hotel’s operations.

In terms of the use of natural resources and the generation of waste Mocking Bird Hill has been identified as one of the most efficient small hotels in Jamaica and has won more than 14 awards, local and international, since it opened in 1993.

The hotel's approach is fourfold: firstly, by paying into an accredited carbon offsetting programme (Sustainable Tourism International's My Climate) to offset carbon emissions it is investing towards carbon-cutting projects; secondly, by improving environmental performance the hotel reduces the carbon emissions produced; thirdly, by seeking guests' involvement (short-term & long-term); and fourthly, by contributing to a local programme dedicated to mitigating some of the environmental problems facing Jamaica.

This contribution towards a Jamaican project is vital. The Jamaica Conservation Development Trust is a non-governmental organization (NGO), promoting sustainable resource management, helping to increase local awareness of environmental issues, training park rangers and developing community-based tourism in the John Crow and Blue Mountains. The JCDT's programme is particularly important as they plant in areas identified as high priority for rehabilitation using mainly native Jamaican fast-growing forest trees that have little value for lumber but which are excellent for biodiversity.

The decision to make these contributions is not about easing conscience, but is part of the hotel's strategy to operate in an environmentally sound manner. This initiative is about investing upfront to conserve for the future without sacrificing on the comforts associated with an eco-chic hotel.

In keeping with sound sustainable practices:

- * The hotel was converted from an existing structure, rather than being built from scratch and having to clear land to construct new buildings;
- * The grounds around the hotel were left almost entirely in their natural state, enhancing them only with terracing and topsoil replacement;
- * The gardens and grounds survive on rainfall only;
- * The villa chosen to be the hotel was originally constructed to maximize natural ventilation and daylight;
- * Water cisterns have been added which now hold 53,000 gallons. By storing this amount of rainwater we reduce the hotel's consumption of water from the already strained public water system;
- * Aside from the photovoltaic energy system the main environmental investments for the hotel were an anaerobic biological wastewater treatment plant and a solar water heating system, both installed from the start.

The owners also work closely with Nature's Handmade Paper Cooperative, a group of women in the village of Fairy Hill who transform shredded paper into hand-made stationery. All of the hotel's used paper is turned over to them for recycling but the owners also assist them with product development and help them access funding to purchase papermaking equipment and have a logo designed for their label. A programme called E.N.O.U.G.H. (Education Needs Our Urgent Generous Help) was initiated which encourages guests to help in whatever way they can in securing supplies for the school.

In particular the hotel supports the Maroon community at Charles Town. Aside from offering visitors an interesting learning experience, this community project provides Hotel Mocking Bird Hill with its supplies of bammy and cassava chips, Pimento Liqueur and pasta made from cassava flour!

OWNER BIOS

Co-owner Shireen Aga studied environmentally friendly tourism and hotel management in Bonn, Germany. She is also a qualified trainer. The hotel conducts seminars with its own staff and the staff of other hotels in the area, explaining not only the value of sound environmental policies in hotels but also of implementing what they learn in their own homes, expounding the long-term rewards, including financial savings.



Co-owner Barbara Walker is a widely exhibited artist. It is her goal to bring visitors into contact with the Jamaican arts, which she insists amount to much more than the popular reggae culture. Gallery Carriacou was built adjacent to the hotel to provide an inspiring insight into Jamaican art, exhibiting her own sculptures and paintings alongside works by other noted Jamaican artists.



BOOKING & CANCELLATIONS POLICY

Payment for the requested reservation must be paid in full upon booking, by credit card via the secure payment system. Please note that whilst Hotel Mocking Bird Hill tries to specify accurate prices, they are subject to change; however the price will not be increased once your booking has been confirmed.

If you wish to amend your reservation and if we are able to make the requested change an amendment fee of US\$ 65.00 per transaction will be made to cover administration costs.

You have the right to cancel your booking with Hotel Mocking Bird Hill at any point, however cancellation charges will apply.

- More than 30 days - a full refund less the transaction fee of US\$ 65.00
- 29-15 days prior to arrival - 50% refund less the transaction fee
- As of 14 days - 100% will be charged
- There are no refunds for no shows and early departures

We hope that this information has been helpful and if you think we have forgotten something please do let us know. And to make sure that you start your holiday off on the right foot book our Jettison the Jetlag treatment before you leave home.



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