



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
INTERNATIONAL
EDUCATION

CARIBBEAN
STUDIES
PROGRAM
IN JAMAICA

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THE CARIBBEAN STUDIES PROGRAM IN JAMAICA

Jamaica, the "Jewel of the Caribbean," is an English-speaking country of great beauty and cultural richness. Previous USM Caribbean Studies Program participants have found Jamaica to be a land of warm, friendly people with great pride in their history, culture, and heritage. Getting to know the Jamaicans and discovering their famous love of life and sense of humor will be a very rewarding experience. Jamaica also provides an exceptional setting for exploring the issues, opportunities, and challenges typical of a developing nation.

As a participant in the Caribbean Studies Program, you are about to embark on an adventure and learning experience of a lifetime. This handbook should answer many of your questions about the program. There also are a wide variety of guidebooks and web sites available to further whet your appetite for your time ahead in Jamaica. A good place to start is the web site for Jamaica's Gleaner newspaper: <http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/>

The director and faculty of the Caribbean Studies Program are seasoned travelers with a passion for the Caribbean. While you are in Jamaica, they will be available daily to answer your questions and help make your stay in Jamaica a rewarding academic, cultural, and personal experience.

YOUR JAMAICAN ADDRESS

Accommodations. All students and faculty in the Caribbean Studies Program reside at the Sandcastles Resorts in beautiful Ocho Rios, Jamaica. Sandcastles Resorts is an oceanfront condominium complex. Students typically are housed with one room mate. Each air-conditioned room contains a bathroom, and an efficiency living/dining area. A private pool and restaurant are located on the grounds along with intermittent

internet service. The facilities also adjoin Ocho Rios' main beach. Continental breakfast and daily maid service is provided.

Please note that we will try to honor your requests for roommates, but this is not always possible. You are likely to spend much more time with your friends outside the suite

Please note that smoking is not allowed inside the Sandcastles Resorts rooms. Smoking areas are available on the grounds. Please, though, take into account the comfort and concerns of any non-smoking roommates.

Mail. Mail can take from two to three weeks to travel between the U.S. and Jamaica, so it is not practical to receive letters or packages mailed from the States. You will most likely arrive back in the U.S. before your own postcards and letters arrive from Jamaica.

Phone. The Sandcastles Resorts central telephone number is 876.974.5626. No international phone code is necessary when calling from the U.S.--just dial "1" and the number, as you would for a long-distance call within the U.S.

Sandcastles Resorts provides a telephone in each room, which operates from a main switchboard. Upon arrival, students who expect to use the resort phones for incoming or outgoing calls must make arrangements with the staff at the registration desk.

Phone calls often take several minutes to complete, and occasionally much longer. You must remain in your room while waiting for your call. For this reason, don't promise to call home "as soon as you arrive" in Jamaica. We will arrive late the first day. You'll be busy checking in, getting settled, etc. There will be time the next day to complete calls.

Calls from Jamaica are **very** expensive. We recommend that you do not call from your room. Be aware that phone rates from Jamaica can be \$2 per minute or higher. Be sure to ask for the

current rate ***before*** you call. The most economical calling arrangement has been for a couple of students to purchase a Jamaica “pay as you go” cell phone. Students can then load minutes on their shared phone and call when time permits.

U.S. telephone calling cards generally are NOT accepted in Jamaica. Jamaica has its own system of calling cards, though—similar to those you can buy at stores in the U.S.

Internet Access: In addition to the wireless service that is available at the resort (around the pool area) there are several establishments in Ocho Rios from whom you can purchase web access. The price averages about US\$1 for 15 minutes.

FAX. The Sandcastles Resorts FAX number is 876.974.2247. Messages may be faxed to the resort office at the above number. These messages will only be delivered to the front desk during regular office hours.

E-mail. E-mail is by far the most economical—and often the easiest—means of communicating with your family and friends back home. Again, there are several establishments in Ocho Rios that typically combine e-mail and long-distance phone services. We will point some of these out to you during the orientation walk through town. Remember to bring a list of your family and friends’ e-mail addresses, perhaps along with some of your favorite Web site URLs.

Time. Jamaican time is the same as U.S. Central Daylight Savings Time.

Information and emergencies. The Caribbean Studies Program Director is Dr. Tim Rehner. He can be reached at:

The University of Southern Mississippi
School of Social Work
118 College Drive #5114
Hattiesburg, Mississippi 39406
Telephone: (601) 266-4168
FAX: (601) 266-4167
E-mail: tim.rehner@usm.edu

During the time in Jamaica, Dr. Rehner can be reached at the Sandcastles Resorts’ number (876) 974.5626. Upon arrival, students will be given phone numbers for all faculty and the director. Students may share those numbers with family.

Kingston. Students will experience a field trip to Kingston - Jamaica’s capital and principal city. A detailed schedule for the Kingston trip will be discussed during class meetings.

PROGRAM POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

At the initial Program orientation meeting in Jamaica, the policies and guidelines of the Program will be discussed in detail. In general, students participating in the Caribbean Studies Program are expected to conduct themselves in an adult and responsible manner, and in a manner that reflects well on the Program. We want all students to have an educational, safe and enjoyable experience in Jamaica. Some of our most central concerns must therefore be to protect (1) you, (2) other students in the Program, and (3) the Program's long-standing reputation and success. Although students will have the time and freedom to explore Jamaica outside of class trips, we have a few rules that students must adhere to:

- **Visitor Policy.** Do not bring anyone who is not a faculty member or fellow student in the Program into your suite. This rule is a Sandcastles Resorts policy that makes good sense. Furthermore, do not bring guests onto the grounds of Sandcastles Resorts. You can meet with Jamaican friends in other public places.
- **Room Key.** It is Sandcastles Resorts policy to have only one key per suite, which is kept at the desk when no one is in the room. Whenever you return to Sandcastles Resorts from class or elsewhere, check at the desk for the key. If it isn't there, your room mate is in. If it is there, take it to the room with you. Out of courtesy to your roommate and in the interest of safety, do not leave your door unlocked, and do not give your room number to anyone who is not a student or faculty member in the Program.
- **Illegal Drugs.** You will almost certainly be asked if you want to purchase illegal drugs during your stay in Jamaica. Be aware that drugs that are illegal in the U.S. -- including marijuana -- are also illegal in Jamaica. If you use or possess illegal drugs, (or are suspected to have had possession of or used drugs) you will be

immediately expelled from the Program and sent home and you will fail the course. In addition, you may face criminal charges in Jamaica. If you are arrested, you will be prosecuted under Jamaican law. You do not want to do time in a Jamaican prison on drug or any other charges; trust us on this.

- **Common courtesy and respect for your roommate and fellow students.** You may not know your roommate before you get to Jamaica. We hope you welcome this opportunity to make new friends. Please keep in mind that in such close quarters you should take extra care to be thoughtful towards your roommate.
- **Overnight Outings.** Students have the opportunity during the time in country to explore Jamaica. In some cases the student may want to stay overnight in another town. If for any reason you plan to spend a night away from Sandcastles Resorts your plans must be approved by the Director and your faculty member. Your plans must include a reasonable strategy for contacting you in case of emergency.
- **Dismissal from the Program.** Final authority for any behavior problem rests with the Program Faculty and Director. The Program Director has not hesitated, in the past, to dismiss students from the Program and will not hesitate to do so if students use or possess illegal drugs or engage in dangerous or seriously disruptive behavior. We have a "zero tolerance" policy on these issues. If you are sent home, no member of the faculty will accompany you on the return trip, and no refund will be issued. Dismissal means that all course credits will be forfeited and the student will be assigned a failing grade on their transcript. In addition, if you engage in rule-violating behavior in Jamaica that comes to the attention of faculty after your return to your home college, you may face follow-up penalties at home.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

Required Documents. Based on new Federal regulations, it is required that you obtain and use a valid passport when traveling to Jamaica. Your passport must normally be valid for 6 months past the date of your return.

Passports are required during your flight and at several check points during arrival and departure from Jamaica. They are also required for certain money exchanges. All travel documents should be kept together, readily available during travel, and safely deposited when not in use. A photocopy of these materials should be made and stored apart from the originals in case you lose your documents. No visa is needed for Jamaica, but travel is not possible without the appropriate documents named above. Be sure you have the necessary papers in your possession when you arrive at the airport. You cannot depart without them.

The international airline ban on fluids and gels in your carry-on without an immediate emergency need is the same as it is for domestic flights. Please bring copies of prescriptions for medications in fluid or gel form which must be taken during the flight. Otherwise, pack fluids or gels in your luggage or they will be confiscated by airport security.

Exceptions to the policy from the TSA:

1. Travelers may carry through security checkpoints travel-size toiletries (3 ounces or less) that fit comfortably in ONE, QUART-SIZE, clear plastic, zip-top bag.
2. After clearing security, travelers can bring beverages and other items purchased in the secure boarding area on-board aircraft.
3. Travelers may carry through security checkpoints any quantity of saline solution, eye drops, and prescription and nonprescription medicine.

Departure points. Students not departing from New Orleans will have arrangements sent to them through our travel agent. While you will receive a paper receipt of your ticket, all tickets are e-tickets. Paper receipts of tickets will be hand delivered to students departing from New Orleans.

USM representatives will meet those participants departing from New Orleans, at the airport, to distribute tickets and assist with check-in and other flight procedures. Faculty members will travel with students during the flight to assist them and answer questions. Almost all faculty and students will “join up” at the Atlanta or Miami airport before arriving in Montego Bay.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Expect the unexpected, to use a cliché. The most exciting part of a study-abroad program is exactly that: it's an experience probably very different than anything you've ever done before. You are likely to return with a very different perspective on the world and yourself.

Please remember that we are guests in Jamaica. Keep an open mind. Program participants should avoid giving the impression of being "Ugly Americans"--defined as those who enjoy comparing things Jamaican with things American and concluding with an air of disgust that Jamaica comes up short. Before going to Jamaica, you should realize that you are making a decision to try something different, and it is precisely because of such differences that you are taking part in this program. For a successful stay in Jamaica, just keep the purpose of our trip in mind, and decide to open your mind to people and things foreign to you. Proceed with the knowledge that it is much more rewarding to be positive instead of negative.

Because Jamaica is so different from home, it can be an intense and even emotional experience. Quite likely, there will be days when you will have the time of your life. A few days, you also are likely to feel down, uncomfortable, aggravated, confused, or homesick. These are all normal emotions that everyone experiences, and they are all part of the learning experience. "Culture shock" is a very real, normal, and even fascinating phenomenon. It will pass!

You will very soon discover that poverty exists in Jamaica and is very apparent, despite Jamaica's image as a "tropical paradise." You will learn that for many Jamaicans, the "essentials" that we take for granted are luxuries. On the other hand, you may find yourself redefining "quality of life," to include Jamaican "essentials" such as fresh tropical fruits, a more relaxed attitude toward life, and the rhythms of the Caribbean region.

You'll soon discover that Jamaicans can be very forward, especially toward tourists. (You'll also discover that tourists can be very disrespectful toward local residents and their country.) Bear with it for a few days. Tell Jamaicans that you're not a tourist. Stop to ask them some questions. Recognize that every place in the world has lots of nice people & a few complete jerks; you'll soon learn to tell the difference. Very soon, you'll find that the locals will start to know you and treat you like a guest rather than a tourist. You'll soon start to feel more at home in Jamaica, and you'll discover how interesting and friendly Jamaicans can be. You'll also discover their famous love of life and sense of humor.

PREPARING FOR THE CARIBBEAN STUDIES PROGRAM

Luggage. Pack light! The airline allows a carry-on bag and a maximum of two suitcases (as of March 1, 2005 maximum weight per bag is 50 pounds). Try to get by with one suitcase, though. You will be carrying your own luggage most of the time. Carts are not always available when you need one. If you are bringing material to donate at a Jamaica agency mix the items

among both bags that you will check. Expect the bags to be "inspected" (X-rayed) in the US airports as well as in Jamaica.

You can carry a carry-on (a backpack or a small bag) on the plane and use that same bag for daytrips and overnight stays while in Jamaica. You may also want a beach bag for Ocho Rios.

Lost luggage is rare, but it does happen occasionally. Pack a few emergency items in your carry-on: toiletries, change of underclothes, a spare shirt, etc. Also, carry on anything that you can't afford to lose, or can't be without: for example, prescription medications, contact lens gear, jewelry, cameras, etc. Don't forget that packing such items in your carry-on applies on the return trip as well.

Clothing. Students need to be aware that clothing norms are different in Jamaica. Though Jamaica is a sunbather's paradise, appropriate attire is expected of university students. Shorts, t-shirts, and sandals are acceptable for classroom wear at Sandcastles Resorts, but they are not appropriate for men or women when we travel to the University in Kingston or for any other field trip or meeting with Jamaican professionals. All students should bring comfortable but appropriate clothes for meeting with Jamaican professionals or eating out at the better restaurants. For men, ties are not required, but blue jeans will not suffice either, and shorts are unacceptable. Khakis, nice polo shirts, and the like are best for professional outings. For women, miniskirts and blouses with low necklines or without shoulders are generally not appropriate in professional settings, nor are tank tops or outfits with spaghetti straps. **To be sure, when you are preparing for a class field trip, check with your instructor about suitable attire. As a guest in Jamaica it is always better to be over dressed.**

Keep in mind the heat and long bus rides. Dress simply, in wash-and-wear, lightweight fabrics that resist wrinkling during travel. Bring a small travel iron if you need one. There are no coin-operated laundries on the premises but you can find laundry services for a negotiated fee. Be sure to establish the fee in advance and determine whether it is to be paid in U.S. or

Jamaican dollars. Many students and faculty simply wash their own clothes by hand.

Comfortable walking shoes are necessary for the extensive walking required. Include a pair of beach shoes, strap-on sandals, or old tennis shoes for the climb up Dunn's River Falls. You may want some sturdy shoes or boots if you plan to hike.

Students will be involved in service on Jamaica's Labour Day. You will want to bring a set of clothes that you can get dirty in as the event may involve painting or working with some cement. Again, work clothes must be appropriate for "public" work.

What to pack/What *not* to pack

Items you need to bring with you:

- **Notebook, pens and/or pencils for class**
- **Any readings that your professor has told you are required**
- **Personal hygiene products, contact lens and other eye care products**
- **Appropriate clothing (see above discussion)**

Items available in local stores and markets at reasonable prices:

- Hand soap, laundry and dishwashing soap, paper products, toothpaste, and shampoo (though you might want to bring a good conditioner, as the sun is tough on hair)
- Snack and other food items (The local grocery stores have American and Jamaican brands, although they tend to cost more in Jamaica; some students bring lightweight favorites along.)
- Suntan and shave products (often higher in Jamaica)

Items you might want to bring with you (either expensive or not readily available in American brands):

- Small flashlight and batteries. Occasional power outages do occur.
- Disposable waterproof camera, for climbing Dunn's River Falls, snorkeling, etc.
- Insect repellent
- Snorkels, masks, etc. These are included with the cost of snorkel trips, but you might want to bring your own for the sake of hygiene and comfort. If you are in the Caribbean Marine Studies course, you should plan on bringing your own snorkel, mask, fins and flotation device.
- Small scissors, nail clippers
- Can openers: handheld rotary type (if you plan to cook) and a churchkey style opener for juice cans
- Short clothesline/clothespins, clothes hangers, sewing kit
- Beach bag and sandals
- Band-aids and medicines such as Tylenol, Immodium, Pepto Bismol, Benadryl, and Dramamine (Jamaican roads are rough and curvy)

Jewelry. Participants are strongly advised not to carry valuable jewelry with them. An inexpensive waterproof watch is your best bet.

Electrical Items. American hairdryers, curlers, shavers, and radios will work in the electrical outlets, but plug-in electric clocks will not keep consistent time. (Jamaican electric power operates on a 50 cycle system.) Bring a windup or battery operated alarm clock with you.

Towels and sheets. Bed linens and towels are provided by Sandcastles Resorts and changed frequently. There is an arrangement for beach towels where a student leaves a US\$10 deposit when they get their towel. Then they are refunded the money when they turn the towel back in.

Money. The fees paid to the program cover nearly everything except meals; tips; the Jamaican departure tax (see below);

textbooks in some cases; and personal expenses for entertainment, independent travel, and shopping. Bring whatever amount you consider sufficient to cover these items. Past students report an average expenditure of around US\$700, but there are wide variations in students' budgets and spending patterns.

You should carry the bulk of your money in travelers' checks and bring no more than US\$200 in cash. Smaller denomination bills are suggested. Avoid bringing large U.S. bills, as there have been counterfeits in the Caribbean recently.

Many local restaurants are located within easy walking distance. The average person avoiding expensive restaurants can eat out well for US\$20 to \$30 daily. Students may also cook in their suites. Each room has a small kitchenette complete with basic dishes, silverware, cooking utensils, refrigerator, and stove. Several grocery stores and markets are located nearby.

Technically, the only legal currency in Jamaica is the Jamaican dollar, known as "J." Most all transactions should be completed in "J," but there are times when an American dollar can work wonders. As of this writing, the "J" exchange rate is approximately 83J per US\$1. Credit cards are accepted in a growing number of places such as the better restaurants, duty-free shops, etc., but they are totally useless on the streets and in the daily markets of Ocho Rios. Do not expect to be able to use personal checks. Some ATM cards may work--but you shouldn't count on them.

The exchange rate will vary slightly from time to time and place to place. Both cash and travelers' checks can be exchanged at all banks and exchange booths, but travelers' checks are useless in the daily market places.

Tipping. In Jamaica, it's customary to tip for the same kinds of services (baggage handling, restaurant service, etc.) that we tip for in the U.S. A tip of \$1US per suitcase is appropriate at the airport or at Sandcastles Resorts. When grocery shopping, you will probably find that locals will be eager to carry your grocery bags to your hotel – it is appropriate to tip them, usually US \$1

or its Jamaican equivalent per bag. (US dollars are normally preferred when tipping.)

Departure tax. The Jamaican government requires a departure tax from all visitors as they exit the country. This fee is generally US\$30 and must be paid in cash (U.S. or "J") in Montego Bay at the airport check-in counter prior to departure. Most recently, the departure tax has been included in the airline ticket and the tax is not paid at the airport. Be sure and save enough cash to cover this tax in the event that it did not get included on your airline ticket.

Paperwork. Before registration can be finalized, all participants must sign and return the "Release From Liability for Credit-Abroad Programs," included with this packet. Release forms must be returned to:

USM Caribbean Studies Program
International Education
118 College Drive #10047
University of Southern Mississippi
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

Applications for International Student Identity Cards also should be returned to this address.

ACADEMICS

Textbooks. If any textbooks or other supplies are required for your course, your professor will advise you in advance of your departure.

Orientation. Academic information will be provided during the initial orientation session the first day of the program. During your first days, your professor will introduce your academic course, give you a schedule of academic programming, and explain your out-of-class academic assignments. Your faculty

member is your source for up-to-date information about the program schedule. When in doubt, ask.

Coursework. Every effort is made to assure that academic courses provide students with unique, enjoyable educational experiences capitalizing on the Jamaican experience. Lecturers have been scheduled who are well established in their fields, as have academic field trips to Jamaican institutions, agencies, businesses, and other sites pertinent to each area of study. Some courses will require out-of-class research and other projects designed to familiarize you with Jamaican culture and help you get to know the Jamaican people. Faculty makes reasonable effort to have some equivalent expectations of students in terms of course workloads and free time but inevitably there will be differences.

Grades. All participants in the Caribbean Studies Program will enroll in the 4 credit hour course of their choice. Grades are reported at the end of the spring term. All students will receive a computerized spring term grade report. To avoid disappointment, please pay proper attention to your academic program. Grading scales and expectations are set by each professor. See the Caribbean Studies Program brochure for a brief description of each course.

MEDICAL, SECURITY, & SAFETY INFORMATION

Medical

International Student ID. The International Student Identity card is required of all students. This card serves as a picture ID, as well as providing limited sickness and accident insurance. An order form is attached.

Medical conditions and medicines. Participants with a medical condition must furnish the Director of the Caribbean Studies Program with a precise description of the condition prior to

departure along with a listing of prescribed medications. This is especially important if participants are planning to carry medicines containing narcotics or addicting compounds. Such participants are also advised very strongly to carry a letter from a doctor justifying their medications. All medicines should be transported in their original, labeled containers. If you are pregnant, please let the Director know. Those requiring medical care of any kind, or for whom ambulation is impaired, should also notify the Director prior to departure.

Medical insurance. Health care costs are the responsibility of each participant. All participants are advised to consult with their personal insurance provider concerning the nature and extent of coverage while in Jamaica. Your International Student ID card includes limited medical insurance.

Doctors and hospitals. If you are ill or otherwise in need of a doctor's services, go to the Program Director, other USM faculty member, or the Sandcastles Resorts office. The Director has access to private physicians who will see students during regular office hours. A 24-hour clinic is located in town and there is a hospital in nearby St. Ann's Bay. Several physicians and drugstores are within easy walking distance.

Security

Some 100,000 American students participate in study-abroad experiences every year. Occasionally, a few of these students experience some sort of serious problem or misfortune--and these incidents, appropriately, receive a great deal of publicity.

Every year, many thousands of tourists and other visitors experience Jamaica. Rarely, a visitor to Jamaica experiences some sort of serious problem or misfortune--and again, these incidents often receive a great deal of publicity. (There's even a well-known song in the Caribbean about the "foreign press"--and why it never seems to publicize the many good things about the islands.)

Should this stop you from studying abroad or traveling to Jamaica? This is a question that only you and/or your family can answer. The Director will be happy to answer any questions for you that might help you make this decision.

We--the Director, the Program Faculty, and the Staff of Sandcastles Resorts-- do everything we can to make your experience as safe as possible. We select our accommodations carefully, with security in mind. We select drivers that have positive reputations and good driving experience. We provide orientations for all students, with recommendations on safe conduct while in Jamaica. We enforce our program policies, for example those related to risk taking behavior and Jamaican guests on Sandcastles Resorts property. We advise you to exercise the same sort of common sense that you would in any urban tourist area (i.e., New Orleans' French Quarter) or unfamiliar city. Finally, we consult with our extensive network of contacts in Jamaica regarding health and safety issues.

As much as we would like to, however, we cannot pretend to guarantee your safety or security in Jamaica. We can, however, work together in the most responsible manner possible, to create the most safe, secure, and rewarding learning experience possible.

Safety

Here are just a few common-sense rules regarding safety in Jamaica:

- Inform the Director or your instructor immediately about safety concerns that develop related to your own safety or that of another student in our group.
- Many people drink the tap water in Jamaica, but you can drink bottled water, which is available in any grocery store.
- Be sure to drink plenty of liquids--especially water and juices. The tropic climate will drain you. Remember that beer, liquor, and coffee actually dehydrate you!

- Don't ever ride a rental motorcycle without a safety helmet.
- Advise the Director or faculty member, as soon as possible, of any illness or injury.
- Follow all rules of the Program (see page 3).

International Emergencies.

Southern Miss provides a wide range of study abroad opportunities in various countries, and the health and safety of our students and faculty are of primary concern. Therefore, we have undertaken a variety of measures to protect the safety, security, and well-being of our students. These include close monitoring of U.S. Department of State cautions, advisories, announcements, and warnings; registration of programs with U.S. embassies and consulates; and the development of a plan which provides guidelines for program officials to follow in the event of emergencies. Should an international emergency occur, program personnel will work in consultation with local authorities and U.S. consular personnel to institute all necessary security measures.

Important Contact Numbers:

USM International Programs numbers: (601) 266-4344; (601) 266-6372; (601) 266-5626

USM 24-hour number: (601) 266-4986

International Student Identity Card Emergency Assistance: (715) 342-4104 (collect worldwide)

*Overseas Citizens Services: (after hours emergency number; ask for the OCS duty officer.)

From in the US: 1-888-407-4747

From Overseas: (202) 501-4444

U.S. Department of State Hotline for American Travelers:
(202) 647-5225

EXPERIENCING JAMAICA

Restaurants. All types of restaurants are available in Ocho Rios, within walking distance or a short taxi ride from the hotel. Barbecued chicken, beef, and pork (called "jerk") are good, inexpensive Jamaican specialties. "Patties" (meat or vegetable pies), "rice and peas," and an abundance of fresh fruits also provide inexpensive meals. KFC, Burger King, Baskin-Robbins, TCBY Yogurt and other American-style fast food shops are available for the homesick.

There also are many high quality restaurants in Ocho Rios, which range in price from moderate to expensive. Try to budget for a special meal or two out. Feel free to ask a faculty member or the Director for a suggestion.

Local transportation. Sandcastles Resorts is centrally located within easy walking access to the beach, local markets, shopping centers, restaurants, and night spots. Few places are far enough away to warrant hiring transportation, but there are taxis available at Sandcastles Resorts at all times. Local buses are often too crowded for American tastes but are available nearby if you want to wait for one. Local taxis do not have meters, and all fares should be negotiated before departure. Make sure you establish whether the fare is in U.S. or J. The best rates are for groups. If you arrange for a round trip, pay on the return trip.

Entertainment and independent travel. Jamaica is one of the most popular tourist spots in the world, so you will want to budget for some entertainment and independent travel of your choice. Representatives for any number of tour companies can be accessed through the information located in the lobby of Sandcastles Resorts. Staff at the resort can also give you information related to upcoming events, night life, musical and sporting events, and other attractions.

If you hire a local taxi and/or tour guide, establish a round-trip fare in advance and arrange to pay all or part of it upon your return. Most of the USM faculty members are frequent visitors to Jamaica and will be most happy to make suggestions and help you plan your itinerary. A number of excellent guidebooks to Jamaica are available in U.S. or through the internet; you may want to obtain and read one before your departure.

You are free to travel, recreate... or do homework while you are on the island. If you plan to travel, make advance hotel reservations especially if you plan an overnight trip. Don't forget, you **must inform the Director and a faculty member of your plans.**

Shopping. Jamaica is a shopper's paradise, whether you are interested in duty-free items from around the world or in browsing the area craft markets for locally made articles. Visitors from the U.S. are allowed up to U.S.\$400 worth of purchases without duty or tax, as of this writing. Two liters of liquor per person are allowed duty-free as long as you can pack it within your luggage. You may not carry liquids (liquor) as a carry on no matter what the sales clerks may tell you. Art works, coffee, many handicrafts, and some perfumes qualify as tax free. Items are pre-priced in some of the many duty-free shops in Ocho Rios and other towns, but you will have to learn to bargain with the local vendors in the craft markets to negotiate your best deal. A suggestion: to avoid paying too much for an item, shop around and bargain for your items. Wait until the last few days of your trip to actually make your purchases.

Please note that Cuban cigars are sold in many stores in Jamaica. They are expensive, and many of them in Jamaica are counterfeit or of inferior quality. You can buy and smoke Cuban cigars while you are in Jamaica, but under U.S. law it is illegal to bring Cuban cigars back to the U.S. (For genuine Cuban cigars, which can be brought back to the U.S. legally, in limited quantities,

you'll need to join USM Cuban Studies as your next study-abroad program.)

Watersports. A wide variety of watersports--including parasailing, wave runners, skiing, sailing, fishing, and snorkeling--are available on the private beach at Sandcastles Resorts. As always, ask around to negotiate the best prices. Prices vary from vendor to vendor, and the best deals are negotiated for a group. Find out who wants to do watersports and go in together.

Sightseeing. Past experience suggests that most students enjoy group activities during the early part of their stay and begin to enjoy more independent travel and activities as their stay progresses. It doesn't take long to get into the Jamaican way of life. Weekends gives students time for independent travel and sightseeing; many students take this opportunity to travel to Negril, the Blue Mountains, Port Antonio, Mandeville, or other popular destinations. While the academic course will be demanding, you will have ample free time to experience and enjoy Jamaica--if you study hard and plan your free time around your academic schedule.

Susan Steen
The University of Southern Mississippi
Director, International Education
118 College Drive #10047
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Telephone: (601)266-4344
FAX: (601)266-5699
E-mail: s.l.steen@usm.edu

Sylvia McNabb, Admissions Specialist &
Assistant to the Director, Caribbean Studies Program
Office of International Programs
118 College Drive #10047
University of Southern Mississippi
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Tel. 601 266 5147, fax 601 266 5699
sylvia.mcnabb@usm.edu

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Caribbean Studies Director's office

Tim Rehner, PhD
The University of Southern Mississippi
School of Social Work
118 College Drive # 5114
Hattiesburg, Mississippi
Telephone: (601) 266-4168
FAX: (601) 266-4167
E-mail: tim.rehner@usm.edu