

Cultural Daily

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My Trip to Jamaica

Elisa Leonelli · Wednesday, May 20th, 2020

When I interviewed [Stephan James](#) about the Amazon series *Homecoming*, I asked him about [Jamaica](#), since the young actor was born in Toronto, Canada of Jamaican parents. This reminded me of the magical photography trip I took to that Caribbean island in April 1982.



Trident Hotel, Port Antonio (c) Elisa Leonelli

As a photojournalist, I was invited by the Jamaican Tourist Board to sample the best hotels in the island, sightsee and experience the local attractions with a guide that drove us around by car. We started in the capital city of Kingston, filled with skyscrapers and slums, but nevertheless bordering amazing beaches; drove across to Port Antonio where we stayed at the romantic Trident hotel and went river rafting; finally to Montego Bay, the tourist resort town nicknamed Mobay, where we were hosted in the luxurious Half Moon Club. On our own for the second week, we rented a modest two-bedroom hut with outdoor showers on the 7 mile beach of Negril, and we enjoyed our stay immensely, mixing with locals.



Reggae musicians Joe and Faybiene. Montego Bay (c) Elisa Leonelli

A former British colony, conquered from the Spaniards in 1655, where slavery was abolished in 1838 and independence won in 1962, Jamaica is populated by fiercely proud African blacks who speak English with a particular accent, popularized by the [Reggae music](#) of [Bob Marley](#) and [Jimmy Cliff](#) in the 1960s and 1970s. In Mobay, we interviewed two Reggae musicians, Joe and Faybiene, and we learnt more about this music of the Rastafarian religion that promotes love and racial equality. In Negril we met a blond couple from North Carolina, who had moved to this hippie paradise, adopted the dreadlocks hairstyle, and were expecting their first child.



American couple. Negril. photo (c) Elisa Leonelli

Along the road, we would stop to drink water from freshly cut coconuts, eat jerk chicken grilled in steel drums, buy fruit from wooden shacks. We marveled at the lush tropical landscape and the white sand beaches and spent hours relaxing in the warm crystalline waters. We never forgot the lessons of this laid-back lifestyle of peaceful communion with nature and humankind.



Coconut and sugarcane vendor. Jamaica (c) Elisa Leonelli

For a large selection of photos, my original travel article, and the 10 pages pullout magazine supplement where it was published, click on the [Jamaica series](#) of the [Elisa Leonelli, Photojournalist](#) collection at Claremont Colleges.



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