

JAMAICA CUSTOMS

Greetings:

Greetings range from a nod to a slap on the back to a kiss—depending on the people involved and the occasion.

It is considered rude not to greet someone properly before beginning a conversation or asking a question.

A common phrase is *Whaapun?* (What's happening?) or *Alright, alright* (as if to bypass asking and responding to “How are you?”).

Common parting phrases include *Later, Tomorrow then, Next time, and God bless.*

Gestures:

Jamaicans can be very animated when speaking and tend to use hand gestures to help make a point.

People sometimes show respect for or approval of shared ideas by touching fists.

They emphasize greetings by holding on to an initial handshake or by touching the person's arm or shoulder.

To get someone's attention, one may clap hands or tap on a grill or gate of a home. Some people say “pssst” to attract another's attention, but this can be considered rude.

Sucking air through the teeth may express exasperation or the idea of “Give me a break,” but it also may be considered a rude way to say “You don't impress me.”

Chewing gum, combing one's hair, or kissing extensively is not common in public.

Holidays:

Jamaican holidays include New Year's Day, Ash Wednesday, Easter (Friday–Monday), Labor Day (23 May, a day for community improvement projects), Independence Day (first Monday in August), National Heroes Day (the third Monday in October), Christmas, and Boxing Day (26 Dec.).

Maroons celebrate 6 January as their independence day.