

Philatelic adventures in Jamaica

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As many of you know I particularly enjoy stamps issued by the British Commonwealth of Nations. About nine years ago, my wife and I won a trip to Jamaica. We looked forward to this trip and of course and had a great time, promising upon leaving that like Macarthur that “we would return”. Well, recently we had the opportunity to return to beautiful Jamaica. As always, an important part of any vacation for a stamp collector is the opportunity to pursue your hobby. Naturally, I was interested in the stamps of Jamaica. While I have collected Jamaican stamps for some time it’s a real adventure to purchase stamps at face value directly from the source. Stamp collecting in Jamaica as I understand from our tour guides is not particularly popular as a hobby. This is probably in part because Jamaica is really a “third world” country where the average income is \$2,000 US per year. Sugar, bananas, bauxite and of course tourism are the biggest sources of revenue to this island country off the coast of Cuba. While we were visiting, the Finance Minister for the country indicated that increases in tourism had offset the increases in the cost of gas for the country.

We stayed in Montego Bay, one of the tourist destinations on the island and the home to one of the countries 2-3 “official airports”. The Jamaican dollar trades at 1 Jamaican dollar=\$.025-\$.03 US.



St. Leonard's Post Office

While stamps can be purchased at the local hotels, to see/purchase an array of available stamps you have to venture to a post office. I visited two post offices while in Jamaica, one in “urban” Montego Bay and one in rural St. Leonard's (in the heart of the cockpit country of the Maroons—descendants of Spanish slaves set free when the country was invaded by the English and with which the English have a self-government treaty similar to those with some Native Americans in the US).



The Montego Bay Post Office is a large bustling Post Office with a Philatelic counter. There is one employee that has all of the philatelic material. If you arrive at lunch you will be informed that she will “soon come” to show you the stamps. After a half an hour she did come and regaled me with an array of available stamps, much to the chagrin of others waiting in line.



The stamps, scenery and people of Jamaica make it a wonderful place to visit particularly when one leaves the miserable late winter weather of Western New York to visit the balmy 85 degree year round weather of Jamaica.



Remember, when traveling explore your hobby!