

# KÚYA



THE COOLER SIDE  
OF JAMAICA

MONTEGO BAY COMES OF AGE

RETURNING FALMOUTH  
TO ITS GLORY

RESTORING KINGSTON'S  
CATHEDRAL





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It might surprise many to know that there is actually no town named Treasure Beach in St. Elizabeth. Treasure Beach is actually a nickname for a collection of fishing communities spread along the southern coast of the parish, including Great Pedro Bay, Calabash Bay, Frenchman's Bay, Billy's Bay and

Fort Charles. This popular reference actually comes from the name of the area's first hotel, The Treasure Beach Hotel, which opened in Frenchman's Bay in the 1930's and is still in operation. Hidden behind the Santa Cruz Mountains to the north and the Great Pedro Bluff to the east, Treasure Beach is by and



# CAUTIOUS DEVELOPMENT

Stakeholders in St Elizabeth are in support of a sustainable development plan.

large isolated from the rest of Jamaica, a fact which sits just fine with most of its residents.

Blessed with a captivating mixture of rolling hills and arid plains, black sand beaches, coves, brackish coastal ponds and wetlands, the area boasts a unique and fragile

ecosystem. Scores of endemic plants, birds and other animals, including crocodiles and turtles, make their home there. As local Coldwell Banker real estate agent Sandy Tatham puts it, “the biodiversity is the real treasure in Treasure Beach.”

The popular Treasure Beach hotel, Jake’s.



Although visitors have been coming to Treasure Beach for over 80 years, their numbers have grown considerably in the past decade, driven in part by the success of the shabby chic hotel Jake's and annual events such as the Calabash International Literary Festival, Jake's Off Road Triathlon, the South Coast Jazz Festival and the Hook N' Line Fishing Tournament. Nevertheless, the area has managed to retain its quiet seaside character. Driving around Treasure Beach feels like a step back in time to old world Jamaica where everyone knows everyone and there is a distinct lack of crowds, traffic and congestion.

The local community is largely committed to keeping the unspoiled model of community tourism exactly as is. E. George DeLeon, president of the Greater Treasure Beach Citizens' Alert Benevolent Society believes that Treasure Beach would not be able to handle large-scale development. Mr. DeLeon explained that local fishermen have started taking visitors out to sea to experience a day of St. Elizabeth fishing, and it is this sort of small one-on-one activity that characterizes the unique visitor experience in this community.

Low impact and green development is largely the model being followed so far in

this sleepy fishing village. Local developer Giuliano Pignataro from Treading Lightly Developments describes the company's planned homes that will showcase traditional St. Elizabeth architecture and use renewable energy as "using local resources in harmony with this unique destination." Additionally, the Breds Treasure Beach Sports Park and Community Centre is being built with the objective of impacting the environment and neighbouring residents as little as possible.

In spite of the relatively slow and controlled pace of development, greater demands are being placed on the land and infrastructure to support the increase in visitors, as well as local residents. The area suffers from flooding during the rainy season, as well as water supply and sewage issues. Construction began over four years ago on a controversial canal designed to address some of these problems, and although still unfinished, it has helped to ease some of the pressure from recent heavy rains. Some worry that pressures from further growth will threaten the natural balance of the area. Environmentalist Ann Sutton worries that the laws are not adequate to protect the environment and that some of the important ecosystems of the area could be seriously endangered, especially the extensive bird life for which the area is known.

A recent initiative was formed between the Department of Local Government, the St. Elizabeth Parish Council, the Parish Development Committee, other local stakeholders and the Canadian Urban Institute (CUI) to create a sustainable development plan for the area. According to Andrew Farncombe, Vice President International Partnerships, the CUI will be contributing their expertise to helping St. Elizabeth residents and stakeholders design a development plan that is in keeping with their own specific objectives and priorities.



"I truly feel Treasure Beach could be Jamaica's version of Martha's Vineyard; very family friendly, community based, with passionate residents and property owners," says Jason Henzell, president of Island Outpost and chairman of Jake's, who has been working closely with the CUI project. A newcomer to the area and owner of Shakti Home villa, Sharon Feanny agrees, "in Treasure Beach, I am not a 'tourist' but a part of an incredible community of like-minded people who want to see this magical place remain what it is...a pristine piece of paradise where nature, creativity and community collide." ✦

**opposite page** Looking up the Black River, St Elizabeth.  
**above** Loading of sight-seeing boats in Treasure Beach.  
**below** Artist rendering by Treading Lightly Developers of planned homes in Old Wharf.

