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Strawberry Hill Hotel, Jamaica - hotel review: a lush mountain retreat steeped in reggae history

Kate Lough checks into one of Jamaica's most iconic - and secluded - hotels

📷 Strawberry Hill Hotel - in pictures



show all

You might associate holidays in Jamaica with postcard-perfect white sand beaches and lush green coastline - but there's another side to it you shouldn't miss. This is the Blue Mountains.

Sloping down to Kingston, where we landed at Norman Manley Airport, these jade peaks are a peaceful, cool place to retreat to while exploring the country.

And perched on one of these peaks you'll find one of Jamaica's most iconic hotels, Strawberry Hill. We stopped off on our way from the sleepy fishing village of Treasure Beach to the lush jungle of Port Antonio - following in the footsteps of Bob Marley and Mick Jagger.

Where is it?

If you snake up the Blue Mountains for an hour from Norman Manley International Airport, you'll find Strawberry Hill. The views from the hotel back over Kingston are spectacular, the lights sparkling at night like a thousand fireflies below. For us, it was a photogenic way to split up what would otherwise have been a six hour trip from the the south west coast to the north east coast.

Style:

Strawberry Hill is set in an old coffee plantation - a slice of the Blue Mountains that was granted to Horace Walpole by the royal family in the 18th century. After going through several more owners and weathering a few hurricanes, the property was bought by Island Records founder Chris Blackwell - who also owns

Golden Eye near Ochos Rios - in 1972. Thanks to Chris, the hotel is steeped into musical history and the guest book at the hotel reads like a who's who of the glitterati: Bob Marley recovered here after being shot in 1976 and Mick Jagger and Prince Charles have both visited.



**Jakes Treasure Beach, Jamaica
- hotel review**

Which room?



(Strawberry Hill)

Accommodation at Strawberry Hill is made up of 12 Georgian-style tree-house cottages which stand on stilts amidst a jungle of monstera and ginger lilies and look out over Kingston. The suites have all-white interiors with a colonial feel - think four poster mahogany carved beds draped with linens, fretwork detail and a shuttered doors opening to reveal a mini balcony. They also include little kitchenettes should you wish to make yourself a little more at home with tea and coffee. Our room, Cedar, was handily near the restaurant, bar and infinity pool.

Facilities

Start your day as I did with a fabulous, stress-busting massage at the beautiful spa. I normally avoid spas in hot places as lying in a dark room being kneaded like dough is the last thing I want to do. But at Strawberry Hill, the spa looks out through white shuttered windows over verdant emerald hills and tropical birds provide the soundtrack. After an hour of lavender-scented full body massage, I was ready to flop by the magnificent infinity pool, pausing only to occasionally pat the hotel dog, Whitey.



A treatment room at Strawberry Hill's spa (Strawberry Hill)

On the opposite slope from the guest cottages, Strawberry Hill has a beautiful flat lawn for barbecue lunches and even a game of croquet if you fancy it.

In the evening, the bar becomes the hub of the hotel, offering rum cocktails, great views and plenty of framed portraits of the famous faces who have graced the hotel. Afterwards, ask for a table on the wrap-around verandah for dinner, which was one of the best meals we had in Jamaica. Particular highlights included the smoked ochi sausage and the rack of lamb. As a tribute to its name and history, strawberry makes a few appearances on the menu.



The Blue Mountains (Strawberry Hill)

Best for:

A secluded pit-stop just after arriving or just before leaving Kingston airport. Or as a half way point between coasts, like we did.

When to go:

Up in the Blue Mountains, you're shielded from the worst of the heat, but we found the end of January to be just perfect: bright blue skies and a light breeze.

How to get there

BA flies to Kingston from £689 return; [Island Routes](#) provide transfers from Kingston airport.

Details

Rooms from £310 a night for a studio suite, including breakfast; strawberryhillhotel.com

Find out more at visitjamaica.com