

Authentic Jamaican Hospitality

An Interview with Olivia Morrow, Co-Owner and Director of Sales and Marketing U.K., Jamaica Inn

EDITORS' NOTE *Olivia Morrow is a co-owner of the beautiful family-owned, award-winning, Jamaica Inn in Ocho Rios, Jamaica. The 52-key hotel opened its doors in the 1950s and has been mastering the art of combining discreet privacy with heartfelt personalized service for more than 65 years. Morrow grew up at the Jamaica Inn, but officially joined the team in early 2022 as Director of Sales and Marketing for the U.K. Based between London and Jamaica, she works to bring the next generation*



Olivia Morrow

of concepts and innovation to the renowned Jamaica Inn. Since she joined the team, Jamaica Inn has been awarded #1 Best Sustainable Spa at the Marie Claire Awards, Top 10 Caribbean Hotel at the Conde Nast Traveler Readers' Choice Awards, Top 10 Resort in the Caribbean at Travel + Leisure's 2023 World's Best Awards, Top 40 Caribbean hotel in The Sunday Times, listed as an "Icon" in the Harper's Bazaar Travel Guide, and named one of the best beach escapes in the annual Tatler Spa Guide and Tatler Travel Guide.

PROPERTY BRIEF *As soon as guests enter the Jamaica Inn (jamaicainn.com) in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, they are sure to feel the Old Hollywood meets colonial charm at a 65-year-old, family-run resort where Ian Fleming famously frequented the bar, Marilyn Monroe and Arthur Miller honeymooned, and Meghan Markle celebrated her (first) wedding. The Morrow family has mastered the art of combining discreet privacy with heartfelt personalized service. Spread over eight acres, with a 700-foot private white sand beach considered to be one of the best in the Caribbean, Jamaica Inn has 52 finely furnished suites and cottages, all with sea views, including seven secluded cottages with large verandahs, sea access, and plunge pools. Jamaica Inn boasts three culinary venues: the Sea Shanty, Teddy's Beach Bar & Grill, and Terrace Restaurant, serving traditional Jamaican meals and wood-fired pizzas, complete with daily drink specials and live music. Guests are also invited to experience the healing touch of nature at the property's Ocean Spa, set within the cliffs of Cutlass Bay, with treatments drawn from plants on the Island.*

Will you highlight the history of Jamaica Inn?

In 1948, the Morrow brothers, Frank and Bob (my great granfather and his brother),

traveled to Jamaica to investigate entrepreneurial opportunities in the tourism industry. The glam Hollywood set had recently discovered the island, and rumor had it, this was the start of something big. They discovered a property with huge potential next to the famous Doctor's Cave Beach. The Montego Beach Hotel opened in 1950, and Frank's son, Charles Morrow, along with his childhood best friend, Matthew "Archie" Archibald, arrived to run the hotel as business partners.

In 1958, after buying several other hotels that also became very successful, Charles and Archie learned about a lovely property for sale in Ocho Rios. After touring the hotel and seeing its spectacular location, they bought what was to become the Jamaica Inn we have today. The Inn quickly became the main hotel owned by the Morrow family and soon thereafter, they sold their other properties and focused on the elegant Ocho Rios resort.

Jamaica Inn quickly became the destination for the '50s jet setters, with Hollywood aristocracy

and British nobility flocking to its shores. Errol Flynn, Noël Coward, Sean Connery, Vivian Leigh, Marilyn Monroe, Arthur Miller, Ian Fleming and Oliver Messel were among the storied guests. Sir Winston Churchill famously frequented the inn and was especially partial to Suite 21. Through the years, Jamaica Inn has also played host to several international heads of state and Jamaican prime ministers.

The Morrow-Archibald team continued to run the hotel successfully when Charles Morrow's sons, Peter (my uncle) and Eric (my father), came on board in 1981.

After Charles' passing in 1987, my Uncle Peter and my father, Eric, took the helm. In early 2000, after acquiring the North Bend property, Peter and Eric started adding the cottages with infinity pools. A beautiful open-air spa was also built.

Today, the Morrow family legend continues as my sister, Eloise, and I (fourth generation hoteliers) work hand-in-hand with my parents, Eric and Belinda. I joined the team in early 2022 as the Director of Sales and Marketing for the U.K. and Europe. My mother, Belinda, is also involved and has been instrumental in founding the White



Jamaica Inn



Premier Verandah Suite

River Fish Sanctuary, looking after the hotel gift shop, as well as the beautifully manicured grounds. She also manages her family farm, The Colliery, which is located in the hills of St. Ann, about ten minutes from the hotel.

Will you provide an overview of the property and how Jamaica Inn is positioned in the market?

Set within a secluded, sandy cove, the 52-room boutique hotel has mastered the art of combining discreet privacy with heartfelt personalized service. Exuding the warmth of Caribbean hospitality paired with the quiet luxury that makes the hotel so unique in the market today, Jamaica Inn has managed to remain true to its history while keeping relevant in the ever-changing hospitality landscape.

What have been the keys to Jamaica Inn's strength and leadership in Jamaica?

Our guests appreciate the way Jamaica Inn embraces the essence of serenity, sophistication & simplicity coupled with the authentic & warm Jamaican service we deliver. Our style of hospitality is not for every traveler – we are not flashy, we have none of the new technology and never have or will have TV's in our rooms, but what we do have is a hospitality that is genuine and authentic. Our all-Jamaican team are more like a family, with several members of the staff being part of the team for over five decades. The love for the hotel is evident within the team and that leads to happy and long-standing guests.

How has Jamaica Inn approached its restaurant/food and beverage offerings?

Food and travel are so synonymous these days – people now travel somewhere just to eat. Luckily, Jamaica is the place to go for foodies, with our delicious spices and unique local dishes abundant. At Jamaica Inn, our food is “international” but all with a Jamaican twist, weaving in the flavors of the island. Our new Teddy's Grill, set on the beach, is a wood-fired grill that serves up local and international dishes cooked over local Pimento Wood which gives off a wonderful warm and smoky taste. On Friday's, our guests can accompany our Head Chef to the local farmers' market to peruse yams, Scotch Bonnet chilies, and mangos. Afterwards, he demonstrates how to cook ackee and saltfish – Jamaica's national dish – with light, fluffy Johnny cakes. Also, our cocktail list certainly has a rum focus, with some of the classics thrown in. The signature drink is our famous Planters Punch, a strong but refreshing take on the Rum Punch with the addition of nutmeg and local spices. We serve this complimentary on our beach every day at 11:00 AM. For those who prefer an alcohol-free option, a firm favorite is our fresh fruit punch, a blended drink using local and seasonal fruits.

Will you highlight Ocean Spa and the emphasis that the spa has placed on sustainability?

Jamaica is an island abundant with medicinal plants, fruits, and spices. We knew that we needed to harness these restorative elements within our Ocean Spa treatments and provide a truly authentic Jamaican experience. Before each treatment, the

spa attendant will mix his or her choice of spices, herbs, coffee, sugar, etc., all locally sourced in our garden and bespoke to the client. This removes the use of packaged/plastic products and is truly a farm to skin experience. The Ocean Spa is set on the edge of a cliff overlooking the sea, so the treatment rooms are open in the front to let the beautiful Caribbean breeze through, removing the need for air conditioning.

Will you discuss Jamaica Inn's focus on offering personalized service and a customized guest experience?

We believe that wonderful service transforms a guest experience. The Jamaica Inn team is our biggest asset and is what sets us apart in the hospitality space. Many of our team members have been with us for more than 20 years, with the longest standing team member at 55 years. With that in mind, we ensure that our team strikes a balance of providing exceptional service for our guests coupled with authentic Jamaican warmth. Our team gets to know our guests, many of whom stay with us year after year, and anticipate our guests' needs. We like to be on the front foot. That could be anything from remembering their preferred seat on the terrace, their favorite cocktail, the type of flowers they like in their room, or making sure we have a fresh cold coconut ready for them at the beach in the morning. With a hotel as small as ours, a guest's experience can be completely bespoke – we love to make every trip memorable, and that is mainly because of our dedicated team.

How do you focus your efforts leading Jamaica Inn?

Since coming on board in early 2022, I chose to focus my efforts on several smaller projects. For a hotel like ours, which has been around for so long (65 years), change does not come quickly or without its challenges, so I initially kept my focus on items that were tangible. Updating our branding was where I started first. I wanted to streamline our assets internally throughout the hotel, but also across the full guest experience, so our website and booking platform. I also worked with our Chef on developing our new restaurant – Teddy's Grill, which serves lunch and dinner on the beach. It was exciting to help create a new menu and style for this space that is much loved by our guests. I have also been working with our U.K./European sales and PR teams to target a younger demographic of travelers who appreciate the quiet luxury vibe we have at Jamaica Inn.

What advice do you offer to young people interested in building a career in the hospitality industry?

Hospitality is best learnt through experience. That can be work experience such as working in a restaurant or different departments within a hotel, or simply by getting out and seeing what hospitality businesses are doing well – traveling when you can, and soaking in the details of a space that has mastered their version of what they do, and noting how you can apply that to your own journey or business. It is also an eagerness to learn, and willingness to do the jobs that aren't always glamorous. That's really how you learn the ins and outs of a hotel. I remember my dad always told me that if you don't know how to do the job yourself, how can you expect to know when someone you work with isn't doing the job correctly. ●