



Jamaica
Hotel & Tourist
Association

JULY 2026

MANGROVES MATTER

A PUBLICATION BY JHTA PRODUCT, ENERGY & SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE



26 JULY 2026

World *Mangrove* Day

UNESCO INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE MANGROVE ECOSYSTEM
JAMAICA HOTEL & TOURIST ASSOCIATION · PUBLISHED JULY 2026

Why this day deserves real attention

Observed every year on 26 July, World Mangrove Day exists to raise awareness of ecosystems that live between land and sea, and to promote their sustainable conservation.

UNESCO describes mangroves as living systems that support biodiversity, protect coastal communities, strengthen food security, and act as natural defenses against storms and erosion. Its warning is stark: mangroves are disappearing far faster than the world's forests overall, and global mangrove cover has effectively been cut in half over roughly the last forty years.

This is not a niche environmental issue. UNEP reports that mangroves occur across 123 countries and support the wellbeing of the billions of people living within 100 kilometres of a coast, while providing nursery habitat for many commercially important fish.

IUCN adds the balance sheet: mangroves store almost eleven billion tonnes of carbon and shield millions of people and tens of billions of dollars in property from coastal disasters every year. Yet **more than half of all mangrove ecosystem units are already at risk of collapse.**

3 to 5X

FASTER LOSS THAN GLOBAL FORESTS OVERALL

123

COUNTRIES WHERE MANGROVES OCCUR

2.4B

PEOPLE LIVING WITHIN 100 KM OF THE COAST

1,533+

SPECIES SUPPORTED, INCLUDING NURSERY FISH HABITAT

The message is simple: mangroves are not background scenery. *They are living infrastructure* for climate resilience, biodiversity, fisheries, and coastal economies.

11B

TONNES OF CARBON STORED WORLDWIDE

US\$65B

IN PROPERTY PROTECTED FROM COASTAL DISASTERS YEARLY

15.4M

PEOPLE PROTECTED FROM COASTAL DISASTERS YEARLY

50%+

OF MANGROVE ECOSYSTEM UNITS AT RISK OF COLLAPSE



WHERE THE FRINGE MEETS THE SHORELINE: MANGROVES ALONGSIDE COASTAL DEVELOPMENT

THE JAMAICAN REALITY

Why it matters to Jamaica and to tourism

In Jamaica, the issue is immediate. The Forestry Department's 2021 island-wide assessment covered nearly 14,000 hectares of mangrove and swamp ecosystems and found a cumulative loss of 2,123 hectares over fifteen years. It states plainly that mangroves have historically been threatened by coastal development, including sprawling hotels, tourist attractions, and other infrastructure along Jamaica's shoreline.

The same agency stresses what Jamaica stands to lose if mangroves decline further: protection against sea level rise and storm surge, cleaner nearshore waters that keep land-based pollution off the reefs, and habitat for hundreds of species found along our coasts.

An estimated **75 percent of game and commercial fish** rely on mangrove forests at some stage in their lives, which places these forests at the base of both fisheries livelihoods and the seafood on every resort menu.

The resilience case is just as direct. A World Bank assessment for Jamaica found that during a 200-year storm, mangroves can reduce the number of people flooded and avoid damages by **nearly 50 percent** across the country. For a sector whose assets, workforce, and guest experience are concentrated along the coast, mangroves are not only an environmental concern. They are a resilience issue and a destination-protection issue.

2,123

HECTARES LOST
OVER 15 YEARS

220

FISH SPECIES IN
JAMAICAN
MANGROVES

200

BIRD SPECIES
SHELTERED

75%

OF GAME &
COMMERCIAL FISH
RELY ON THEM

~50%

FLOOD DAMAGES
AVOIDED IN A 200-YEAR
STORM

How JHTA should embrace the day

Members should treat World Mangrove Day as a leadership moment, not a courtesy mention.

The strongest positioning frames mangroves as part of the tourism sector's natural support system. And because Jamaica's forestry authorities note that coastal development has been part of the historical pressure on mangroves, JHTA adds real credibility by acknowledging that tourism holds both a responsibility and an opportunity here. The best message is not defensive. It is constructive: the sector understands the value of mangroves and intends to be part of protecting them.

I *Recognize*

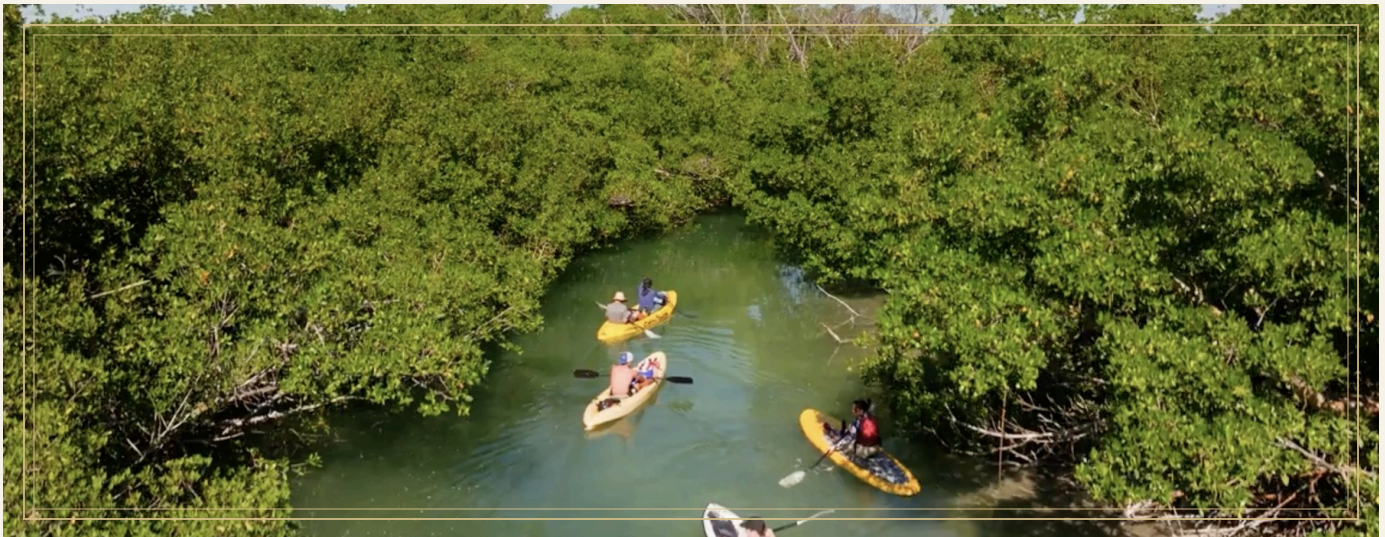
Publicly mark the day and use the Association's voice to champion mangrove conservation across the membership.

II *Connect*

Tie mangrove protection to Jamaica's tourism resilience and brand: the shorelines, reefs, and fisheries the destination depends on.

III *Align*

Practise visible stewardship: cleaner coastlines, better waste and runoff practices, and partnership with agencies and communities already active, including the Forestry Department's Jamaica Mangroves Plus effort to protect 7,600 hectares.



LIVING INFRASTRUCTURE, LIVING PRODUCT: GUESTS PADDLING A MANGROVE CHANNEL



— BENEATH THE CANOPY: THE LIVING ARCHITECTURE OF RED MANGROVE PROP ROOTS

PRESERVATION & CARE

Five best practices for the preservation of mangroves

I Restoration & Replanting

Corporate and community groups actively propagate and plant red, black, white, and buttonwood mangroves at vulnerable sites along the coastline.

II Regulatory Support

Provide volunteer and cash support for the NGOs and agencies working to preserve mangroves, including the Forestry Department and the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA), as they enforce sustainable development standards, such as drainage and culvert requirements that maintain vital water flow during coastal road construction.

III Community Education

Educate students and adults on the importance of protecting local ecosystems, and on viewing them as valuable resources that can be sustainably managed to provide viable sources of income.

IV Alternative Livelihoods

Promote projects that reduce unsustainable practices such as charcoal production and wood extraction for fishing pots, including advocacy for licensed bamboo charcoal facilities as a renewable economic alternative.

V Community Co-Management

Encourage local communities to become effective stewards of coastal forests, empowered to manage mangrove resources and to engage in mangrove-friendly economic activities such as oyster harvesting and beekeeping.

What the global picture tells us

Globally, the day is being used not just for awareness but for visible action. Serious jurisdictions treat 26 July as a moment for education, restoration, partnership, and climate leadership. That is exactly the lane JHTA should occupy.

United States

NOAA FISHERIES

Marks 26 July through public education on mangroves as vital habitat for fish, lobster, snapper, grouper, and other species tied to fisheries and coastal livelihoods.

26 July

MARKED ANNUALLY
THROUGH EDUCATION

India

ICAR & GOVERNMENT OF
GOA

A 2025 plantation drive placed over 400 saplings with students, villagers, volunteers, and officials, explicitly protecting a 2 km stretch from storm surge and tidal impacts.

400+

SAPLINGS PLANTED, 2 KM
PROTECTED

Philippines

BANGSAMORO REGION

Officials marked 2025 with a first-ever region-wide celebration, planting more than ten thousand mangrove seedlings.

10,000+

SEEDLINGS PLANTED

Saudi Arabia & Oman

FAO HIGHLIGHTED

Saudi Arabia has planted more than 37 million saplings toward a 2030 target of 100 million mangrove trees, while Oman plans a comprehensive restoration programme.

100M

TREES TARGETED BY 2030

The Caribbean

UNEP · UNESCO MANGRES

The Cartagena Convention Secretariat calls reef, mangrove, and seagrass systems fundamental to Caribbean economies, and identifies mangrove restoration as a nature-based solution for climate, biodiversity, and coastal resilience. UNESCO's MangRes project supports restoration across the region, while the Mangrove Alliance for Climate commits members to plant, rehabilitate, and restore.

Regional

PRIORITY FOR
RESTORATION

THE GLOBAL LESSON

The day is recognized in serious jurisdictions as a moment for *education, restoration, partnership, and climate leadership*. Jamaica's tourism sector belongs in that company.



FINAL THOUGHTS

Protecting mangroves is protecting *Jamaica's future*

Among our most valuable natural assets.

These coastal forests protect shorelines from storm surge and erosion, support marine biodiversity and fisheries, improve the health of nearshore ecosystems, and store significant amounts of carbon. At a time of rising climate risk, protecting mangroves is part of protecting Jamaica's people, coastlines, and future.

For tourism, this is not a symbolic issue.

Healthy mangroves strengthen the resilience of the beaches, bays, reefs, communities, and coastal infrastructure on which our destination depends. Jamaica's own forestry authorities describe them as vital natural shields, and World Bank analysis shows they can materially reduce flood impacts and damages across the island during major storms.

Protecting mangroves is a shared responsibility.

This work does not belong to governments and environmental organizations alone. Businesses, residents, visitors, schools, and community groups all have a role to play. JHTA encourages all members to mark the day with awareness and action: use our voice to champion mangrove conservation, support cleaner coastlines and responsible coastal stewardship, and partner where possible with restoration and community efforts. Protecting mangroves is good environmental practice. It is also smart resilience, sound destination management, and an investment in Jamaica's long-term tourism strength.



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SOURCES

UNESCO · UNEP · IUCN · FORESTRY DEPARTMENT OF JAMAICA · WORLD BANK
NOAA FISHERIES · FAO · UNEP CARTAGENA CONVENTION SECRETARIAT