

Ghana + Jamaica: From Garvey to a New Atlantic Bridge

Cape Coast, Elmina and Port Royal connect the memory of the Atlantic with a new conversation about diaspora, travel and enterprise.

Editorial concept: Paul Hay | Published 1 October 2026



John Dramani Mahama (left) and Andrew Holness during the August 2026 visit. Photo: Presidency of Ghana; source [2].

A meeting with an Atlantic horizon

President John Dramani Mahama visited Jamaica from 2 to 5 August 2026. His talks with Prime Minister Andrew Holness placed a long relationship in a contemporary setting: people, travel, cooperation and shared opportunity. The programme included engagement with Jamaica's Parliament and a reparations dialogue at the University of the West Indies, Mona. The visit took place ahead of Jamaica's 6 August Independence Day. These are the documented August events, rather than a meeting in the fortnight before this October publication. [1]

From Garvey to a modern bridge

At the Kingston talks, Mahama recalled the influence of Jamaican Pan-Africanist Marcus Garvey on Kwame Nkrumah. Ghana's Black Star symbolism and its early shipping venture drew on Garvey's vision. The leaders discussed stronger economic connections, air and maritime links, health cooperation and teacher exchanges. They also reaffirmed cooperation on reparations. Their effort to accelerate bilateral air-service arrangements points toward possible Accra-Montego Bay flights; it does not establish an operating direct route. [2]

Cape Coast and Elmina: two places, one difficult inheritance

The cover photograph shows Cape Coast Castle. Elmina Castle, also known as St George's Castle, is a separate historic site. Both belong to Ghana's UNESCO-listed ensemble of coastal forts and castles. European trading posts on this coast became deeply implicated in the transatlantic slave trade. Visiting them together allows the story to hold both the distinctive history of each place and the wider system that connected Africa, Europe and the Americas. [5]

Port Royal: the Jamaican shore of the story

Port Royal adds an essential Caribbean chapter. UNESCO describes its seventeenth-century archaeological ensemble as evidence of an early English colonial settlement and the rivalries of European expansion. The 1692 earthquake submerged much of the town and killed people across social divisions, including enslaved people. Its surviving and submerged remains reveal an Atlantic port society beyond the familiar romance of pirates. [6]

Remembering people, not only ports

Cape Coast, Elmina and Port Royal are not interchangeable sites, nor does their shared Atlantic setting prove a particular voyage between them. Read together, they invite a more responsible heritage journey: one that considers trade and colonial power alongside the lives of those who endured enslavement. Our editorial connection is between histories and communities, not a claim that every Jamaican family traces its ancestry to these Ghanaian castles.

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Gateway to Africa

"Mahama unveils plan to open the continent's free trade market to Jamaica while fast-tracking direct flights"

Jamaica Observer | Jerome Williams | 4 August 2026. Short headline excerpt; original report linked in source [7].

Diaspora return and travel access

Mahama's advocacy for a diaspora right of return gives the relationship a forward-looking dimension. Jamaica Information Service reported his call for such a right to be established; that advocacy must not be read as an automatic entitlement to citizenship, employment or permanent residence. [3] Reciprocal visa-free travel was already a bilateral initiative reported in June 2019. [4] Jamaica's PICA currently lists Ghanaian nationals as not requiring an entry visa. [9] Travellers heading to Ghana should confirm the current treatment of their passport directly with Ghanaian immigration or a diplomatic mission before booking; the general GIS table consulted does not explicitly list Jamaica. Entry permission and permission to settle remain separate matters. [8]

Enterprise with memory and purpose

For African Airways Travel & Tours, the editorial opportunity is a paired journey through Ghanaian and Jamaican heritage, supported by local guides, accommodation providers, cultural venues and small enterprises. A Cape Coast-Elmina programme can be complemented by a Kingston-Port Royal programme. These are proposed travel themes, subject to suppliers, access and confirmed transport. The aim is to help visitors meet living communities as well as monuments, and to let local businesses share in the value of cultural travel.

The bridge we choose to build

Garvey's legacy, the castles and Port Royal belong in one conversation with today's diplomacy. The past explains why this connection carries emotional weight; the present gives it practical questions about mobility, learning and enterprise. The next chapter should be measured by meaningful encounters, honest remembrance and benefits that reach the people whose cultures make the journey possible.

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Sources & documentary record

- [1] Ghana Presidency: the August 2026 visit
- [2] Ghana Presidency: bilateral talks and photograph
- [3] Jamaica Information Service: diaspora right of return
- [4] Jamaica Information Service: reciprocal visa initiative, 2019
- [5] UNESCO: Ghana forts and castles
- [6] UNESCO: seventeenth-century Port Royal
- [7] Jamaica Observer: Gateway to Africa, Jerome Williams, 4 August 2026
- [8] Ghana Immigration Service: entry requirements
- [9] Jamaica PICA: entry visa requirements