

The Annual Pilgrimage to 9 Mile, Jamaica

Reggae fan or not, there is little argument that Robert “Bob” Nesta Marley has touched the hearts and lives of millions worldwide with his music. His messages of love, and respect still resonate with many people regardless of their race, color or socioeconomic level. In addition, his disenchantment with politics and the resulting inequality many around the world experienced (and continue to experience today), strike a chord with those same people. If you were to look in peoples’ music collections, even if you don’t find among them a multitude of reggae music CDs, you will more than likely notice a copy of Marley’s *Legend* album. *Legend*, released three years after Marley’s death in 1981, remains the best selling reggae CD of all time.

A Little About the Man, the Musician, the Legend

Marley was born in 1945 in 9 Mile, in St. Ann Parish, Jamaica to [Jamaican by descent] Norval Sinclair Marley, a captain in the British Royal Navy and Cedela Booker Marley. He would form and dissolve three bands before finding fame with the one we know today as Bob Marley and the Wailers. The first band he founded performed a style known as Rocksteady, from which Reggae was born in the late 1960s.

Jamaica’s Prodigal Son Returns Home

Few would argue that were it not for Bob Marley and the Wailers, the world outside of Jamaica might never have come to appreciate the unique sound known as Reggae. Becoming the standard by which all future Reggae musicians would be rated, Marley offered us not only his musical genius but also his love for life, his religion and his way of life. For the brief period that he was alive, the world got a glimpse into the life of the man who would become the father of Reggae.

Much too soon, Marley died in 1981 of Malignant Melanoma. He was only 36. Left to mourn his memory and legacy are his wife Rita, his 11 children, some of whom are Rita’s and others the result of his free-spirited life and literally millions of fans around the world.

Pilgrimage to 9 Mile

Tens of thousands of fans flock to his birthplace and final resting place, known as 9 Mile. Located about 1 ½ hours from Ocho Rios, a popular tourist site also in St. Ann Parish, you can rent a car, hire a Taxi or pay a tour company to get there. Traveling the countryside from your resort to a part of Jamaica that to this day remains poverty-stricken, it can’t go unnoticed what often inspired Marley’s lyrics in songs like “Get Up, Stand Up”, “One Love/People Get Ready”, “Redemption Song”, “Exodus” and many others.

Although it might shock fans to see children begging, especially having spent several days in your resort, it's well worth the pilgrimage. Not only do you get a glimpse into the reality of what it's like for the hundreds of thousands of Jamaicans who don't rely on tourist dollars to feed their families, but as a fan of Jamaica's prodigal son, it's a must see!