

A BRIEF HISTORY OF **THE BIKINI** P. 78

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LIKE A PRO
OUR PHOTOGRAPHER
SHARES HIS TOP
SECRETS
P. 16

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BEST WAVES,
HOTTEST HOTELS
AND
COOLEST BARS*

inside

JAMAICA EATS
A GOURMET'S
GUIDE TO EATING
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UNDER \$200 P. 60

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ZACH STOVALL



Cover

Sink your feet into the talcum sands at Cayman Kai, on Grand Cayman. When you get thirsty, hit up nearby Rum Point for an original Mudslide. PHOTO: ZACH STOVALL

ON LOCATION

"After all these years, the people here are still jerking chicken, rolling out patties and stewing conch, often passing the torch to the next generation."

— STEVEN PETUSEVSKY in Negril, Jamaica

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Take Your Vacation Already

A guy named Timothy Ferriss wrote a book you've probably heard of, provided you read one of the 35 languages it's been printed in so far. It's called *The 4-Hour Workweek*, and on its cover is the silhouette of somebody lounging on a hammock strung between two palm trees. Below that is a mighty promise: *Escape 9-5, Live Anywhere, and Join the New Rich*. It's a delicious concept, though I fear its feasibility may hinge on writing a best-selling book that ends up being printed in 35 languages.

Now, in the interest of full disclosure, I'll confess that I haven't read beyond the preface of *The 4-Hour Workweek*, but I have held the book in my hands. I do that often. I can't seem to resist picking it up and feeling the inspiring heft of it. I'm skeptical of its title in an *8 Minute Abs* kind of way, but with visions in my head of *me* lounging on a hammock strung between two palm trees, I'm finding the what-if potential of its newly expanded and updated 416 pages to be pretty damned seductive.

I'm not close to a four-hour workweek. Truth told, I'd be pretty happy with a *40-hour* workweek at this point. And a vacation would be nice too. A real one, the kind that doesn't include a tour of the entire hotel before I put down my suitcase or staff photographer Zach Stovall taking pictures of my food before I eat it.

Statistically speaking, U.S. workers are staggeringly reluctant to use their vacation time: Most estimates suggest that more than half of us don't take all of our earned days off. A recent *CNNMoney* story estimated that Americans forfeited 448 million vacation days during 2010.

Of course, the reasons we're working through our vacations are as manifold as the days we're skipping, but I'm willing to bet that fear is at the root of most of them: fear that the office will go to hell during our vacation, fear that it *won't* go to hell, fear that our absence will make our co-workers miserable, fear that it will make them ecstatic.

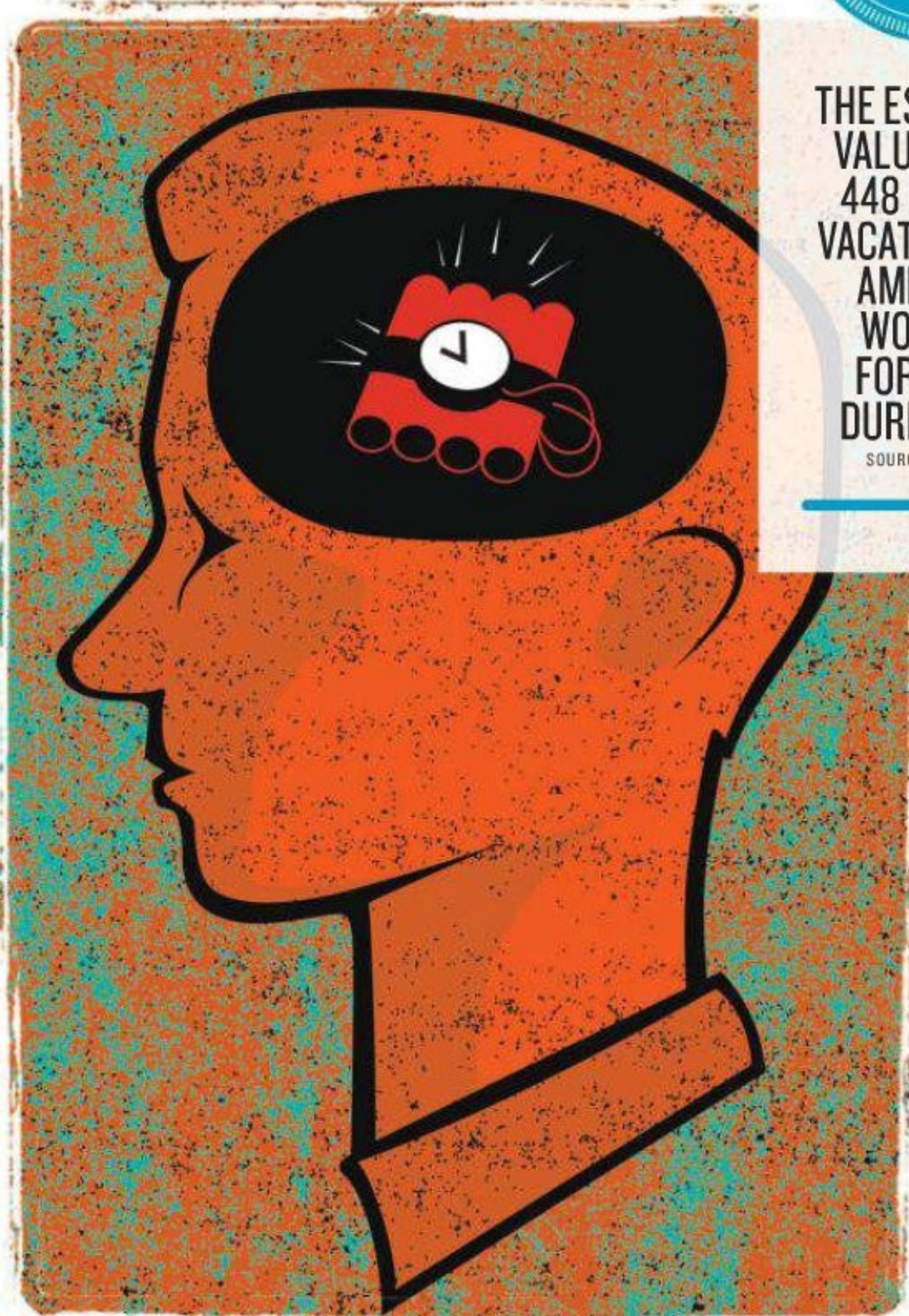
And I'm as guilty as anybody; just ask my wife. Vacations and dental cleanings are two things I ardently avoid even though I always feel better afterward. It's foolish. The irony, of course, is that I'll gnash my teeth and rend my garments when the soda machine in the break room steals 60 cents from me, but I'll shrug off lost vacation days like they were missed reruns of *M*A*S*H* on TV Land.

So in lieu of joining the New Rich by writing a no. 1 *New York Times* bestseller and international phenomenon called *Take Your Vacation Already*, I'll say simply this: Let's buck an ugly trend and take our vacation days this year. *All of them*. And let's spend a few of them on the beach.

I will if you will. — MATT PHENIX, *editor-in-chief*



THE ESTIMATED
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THE FRONT



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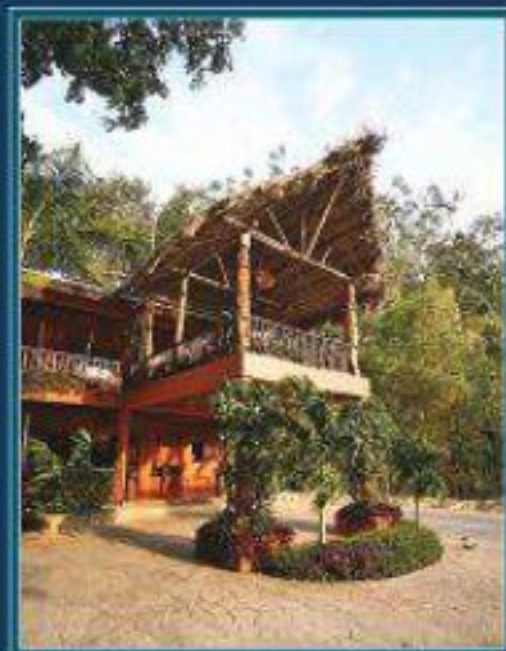
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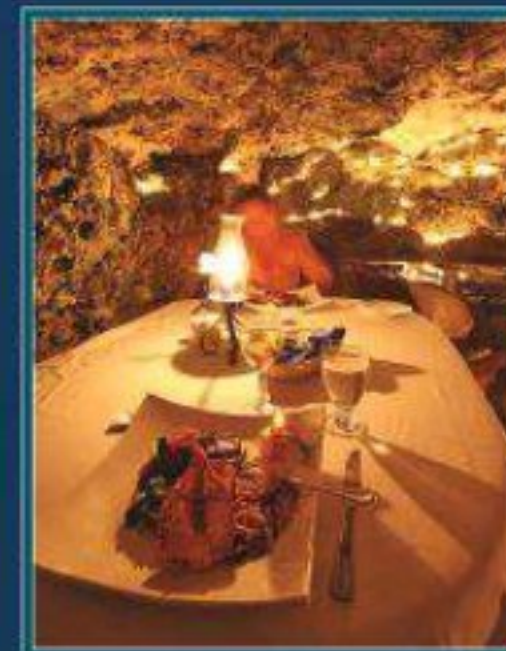
CARIBBEAN
SEA



Belcampo Lodge

BELIZE

Snuggle up, young lovers: Rooms at this rainforest retreat (formerly Machaca Hill) are wide open to the hooting, whooping, howling and growling of the jungle after nightfall.



The Caves

JAMAICA

Candles flicker on ledges in a seaside cavern, where a table carved out of the rock awaits and seductive strains waft from a hidden CD player. If this doesn't put you in the mood for love, check your pulse.

Isn't It Romantic?

There's a mushy old saying along the lines of "It doesn't matter where you go in life but who's beside you." True enough, but it surely can't hurt to take your honey someplace great now and then. Here are a few of the Caribbean's most romantic spots. *By Matt Phenix*



Emerald Pool

DOMINICA

A painless hike into the verdant forest reveals this unspeakably lovely grotto. Unless you find crowds romantic, however, visit late in the afternoon to miss the cruise-shippers.



The Crane

BARBADOS

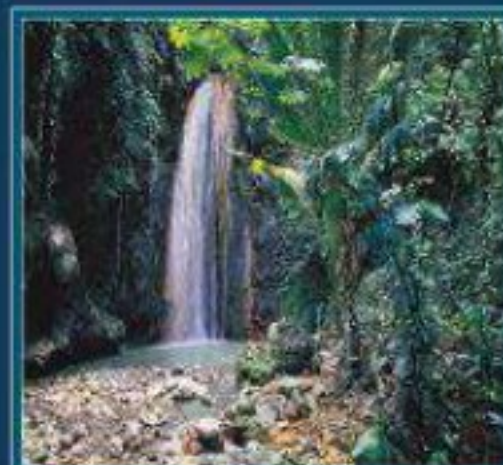
In this vaunted resort's cliff-top historic hotel, the Harlequin-novel-perfect Room 8, formerly known as the Honeymoon Suite, flings open its doors to the sound of crashing waves.



Old San Juan

PUERTO RICO

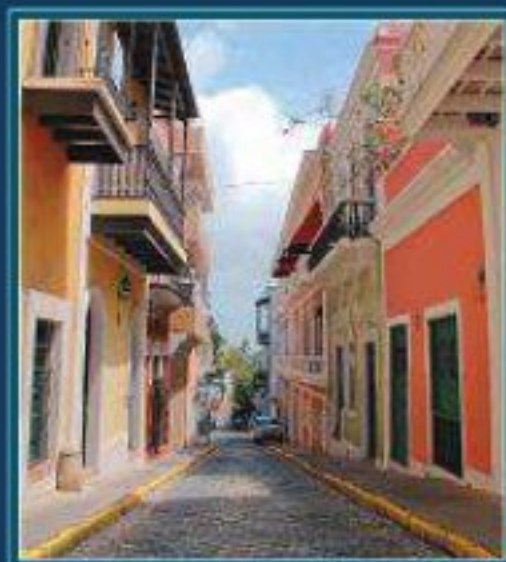
The old city has been inspiring romance for centuries. Take a sunset stroll along the tree-lined Paseo de la Princesa and feel the good vibrations.



Diamond Falls

ST. LUCIA

In *Superman II*, the Man of Steel — who could've gone pretty much anywhere on Earth for fresh flowers — landed at this idyllic spot to pluck a few birds of paradise for Lois Lane.



Boca Pistol

CURAÇAO

Doubtless the Caribbean's most suggestive natural wonder, this spot is named for the way the seawater shoots up when an ocean swell meets the rocky cliff.



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The Current

✧ WHAT'S HAPPENING RIGHT NOW IN THE BEST CORNER OF THE WORLD ✧

SAND IN MY SADDLE

A lifelong horseman (and Jamaica devotee), British Prime Minister Winston Churchill once remarked, "No hour of life is wasted that is spent in the saddle." It's a sentiment worth remembering on your next Caribbean vacation. Riding is as much a part of the region as rum and reggae, and the islands abound with excellent equestrian outfitters. Even for a newbie, a horseback tour can be a wholly memorable way to experience places where rental cars fear to tread, including rough-hewed back roads, remote nature trails and, of course, beaches.

By Matt Phenix



1

TAKING THE REINS

Hoof it with these first-rate island stables.

Spicelands Equestrian Centre

BERMUDA

Put some hoofprints in the sand — including lovely Horseshoe Bay Beach — on a ride with owner Liza Outerbridge's esteemed stable.

2

Ocean Echo Stables

BARBADOS

From the east-coast town of Newcastle, join this family-run outfitter for a broad array of horseback tours, including an hourlong saunter to pretty Bath Beach.

3

Chukka Caribbean Adventures

JAMAICA

Along with zip-line and dog-sled tours, this Jamaican mainstay offers its horseback "ride 'n' swim" in Ocho Rios, Mo'Bay and Falmouth.

4

Trikk Pony Stables

BAHAMAS

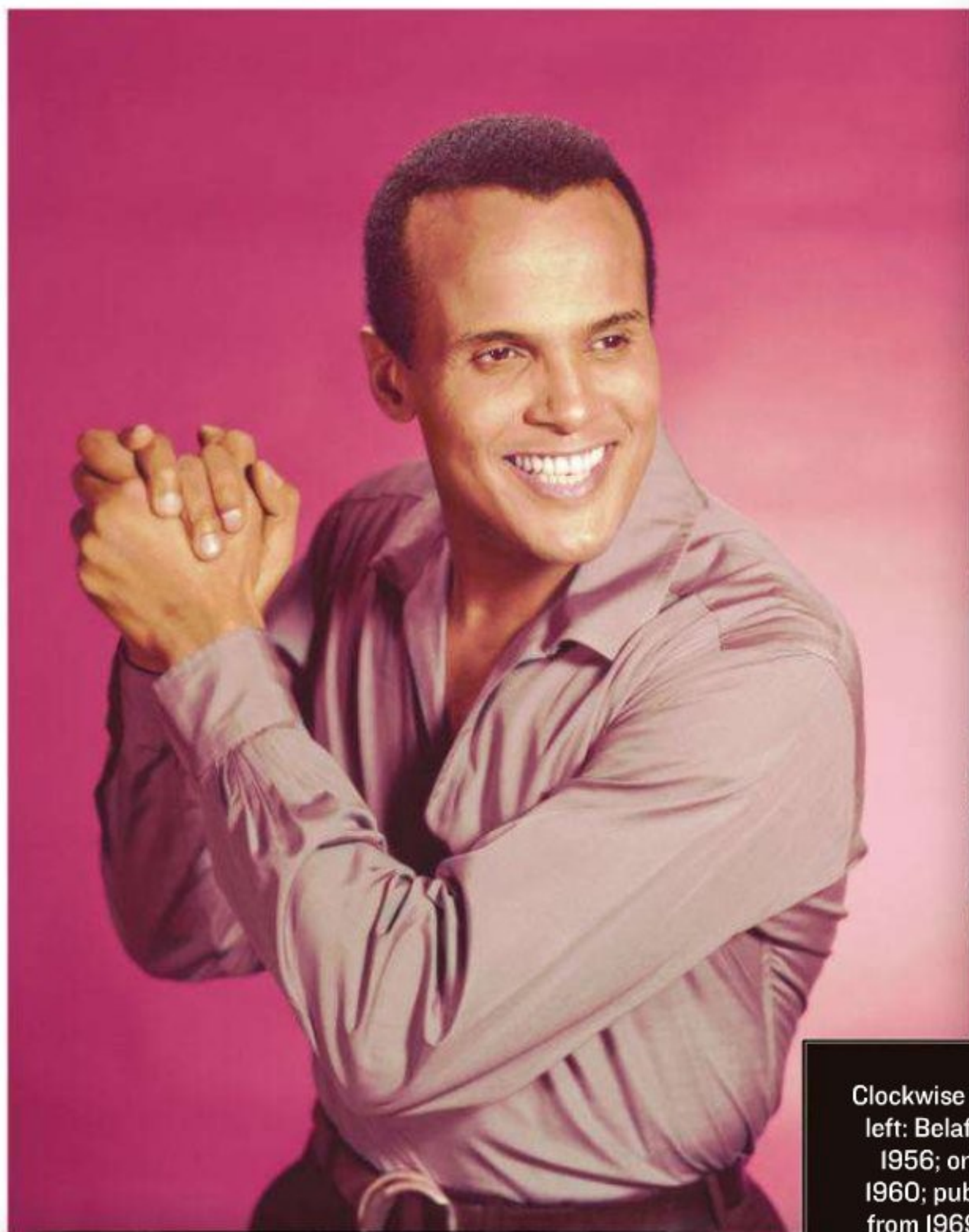
Prepare to get wet with this top-rated outfitter: Beach rides include some horseback splash time in the crystalline waters that fringe Grand Bahama Island.

5

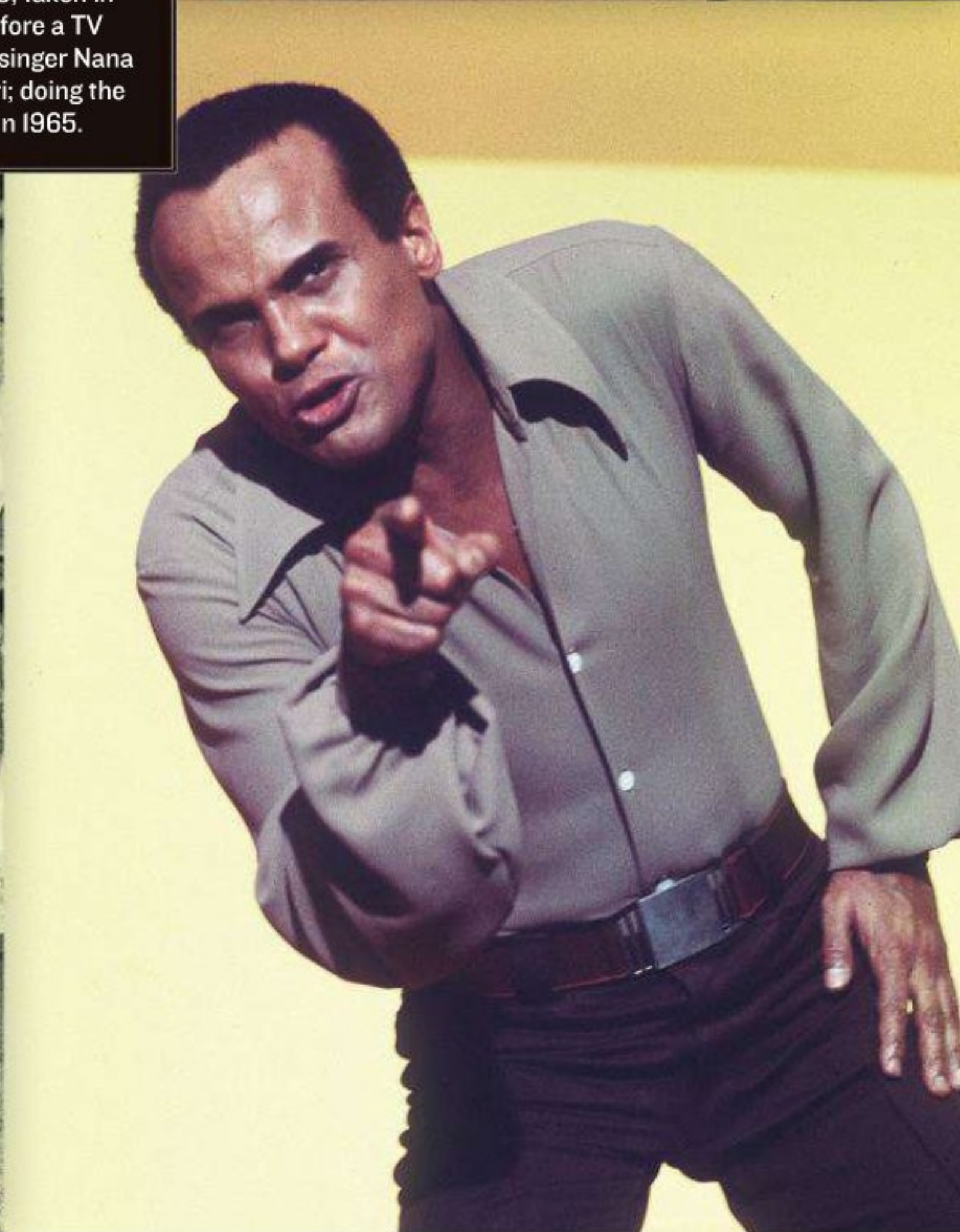
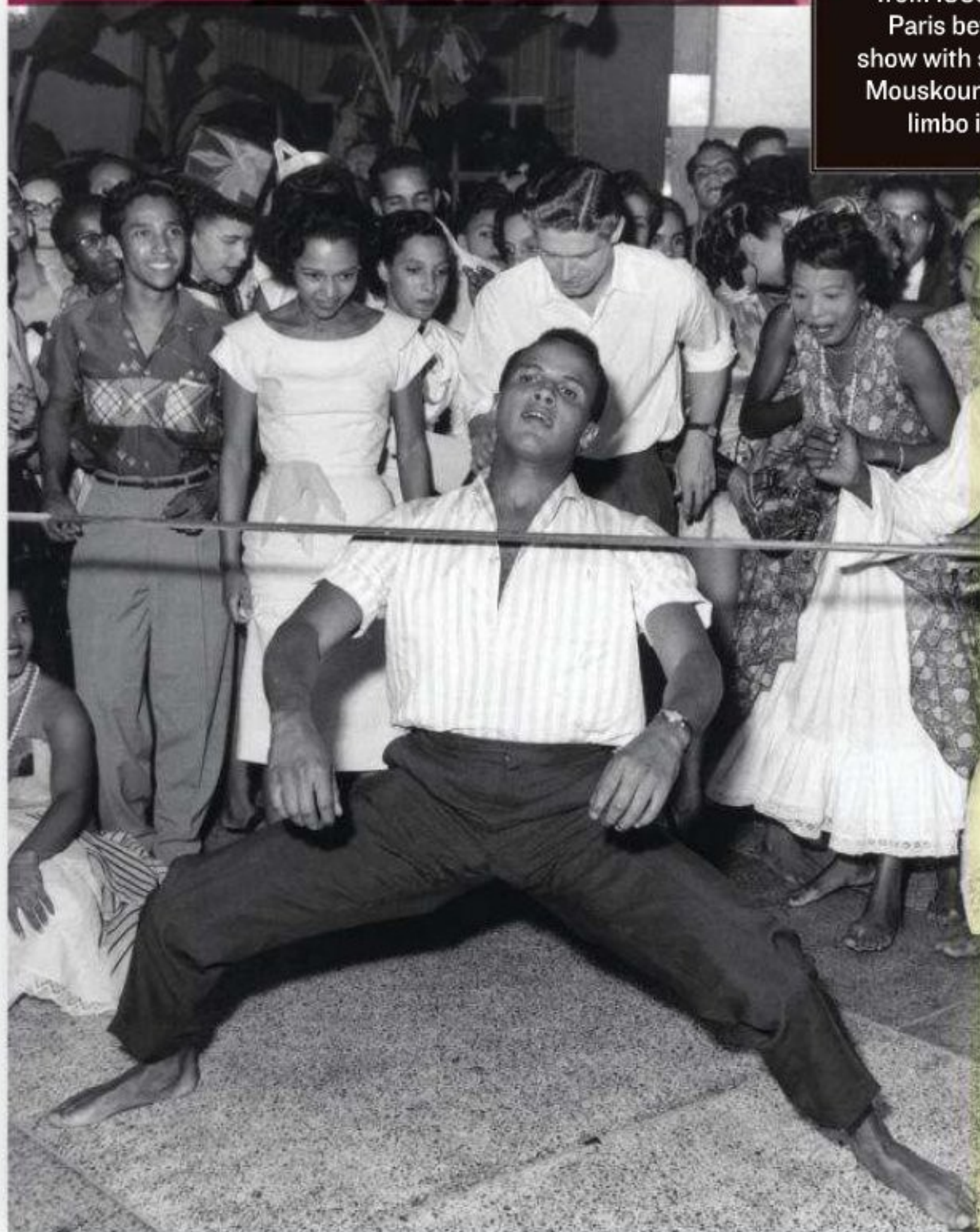
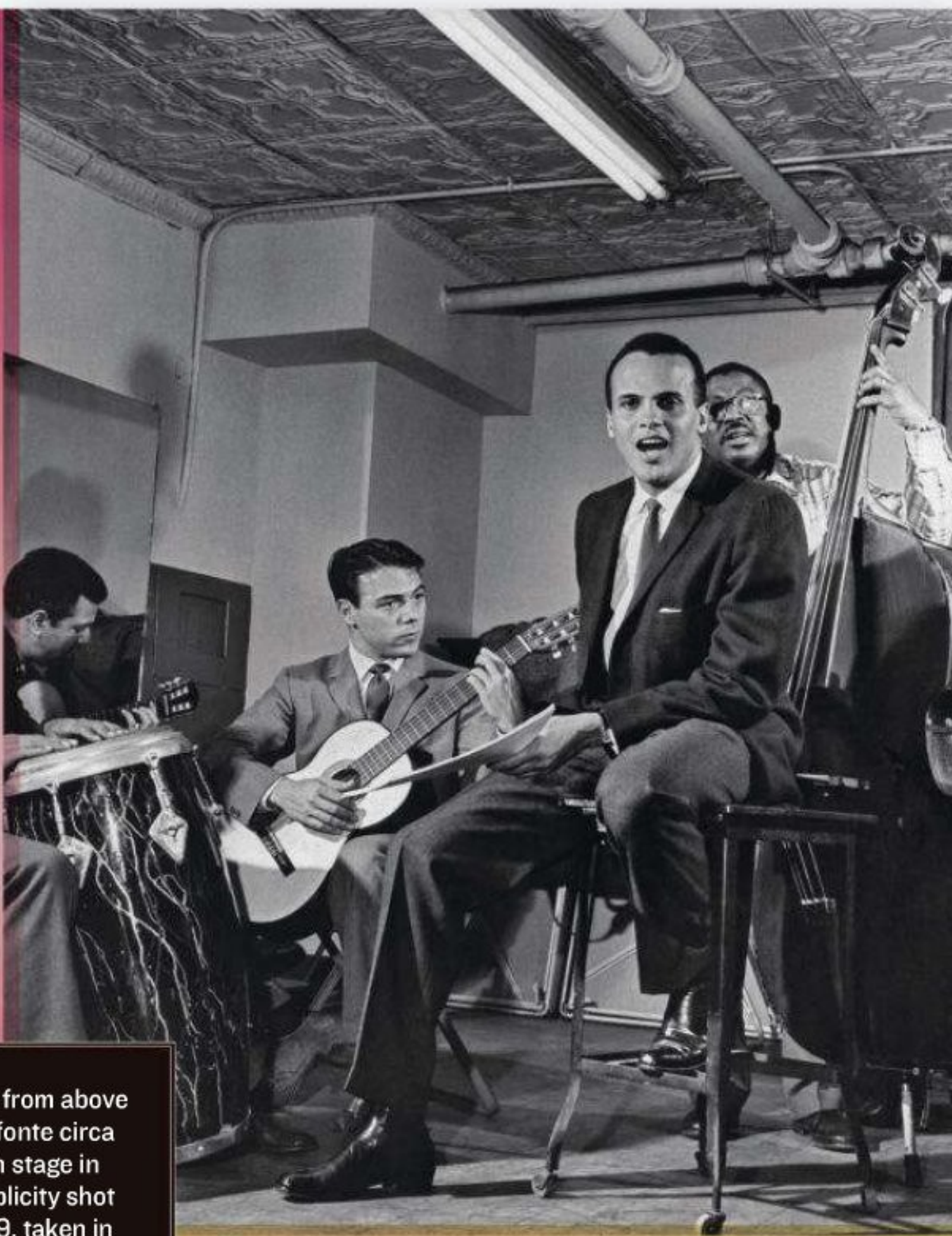
Tropical Trail Rides

PUERTO RICO

When the tide is low, trade your surfboard for a saddle and join a gentle but spirited horseback saunter along Shacks Beach, in the west-coast hamlet of Isabela.



Clockwise from above left: Belafonte circa 1956; on stage in 1960; publicity shot from 1969, taken in Paris before a TV show with singer Nana Mouskouri; doing the limbo in 1965.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ARCHIVE PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES (2); AFP/GETTY IMAGES; HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES; OPPOSITE, FROM LEFT: VICTORIA WILLIAP PHOTO; JON WHITTLE

Wild About Harry

In his extraordinary new memoir, octogenarian singer, actor and activist Harry Belafonte reflects on his life, his many passions and the real importance of "The Banana Boat Song." *By Ben Sisario*

LEGEND

APPROPRIATELY ENOUGH FOR the man who introduced the sounds of calypso to the planet, Harry Belafonte's epiphany about the cross-cultural appeal of Caribbean music and "The Banana Boat Song" came thousands of miles from Jamaica.

"I didn't really realize how powerful that song was until I sang it to 50,000 Japanese and saw them trying to do 'Day-O,'" recalls the 84-year-old singer, actor and social activist. The audience may have struggled with the phonetics, but the song's message of sympathy for homesick night laborers — wrapped in a seductive island lilt — was understood instinctively. "It was just a delight to see different cultures relate to that song," Belafonte says in the warm rasp of his silver years.

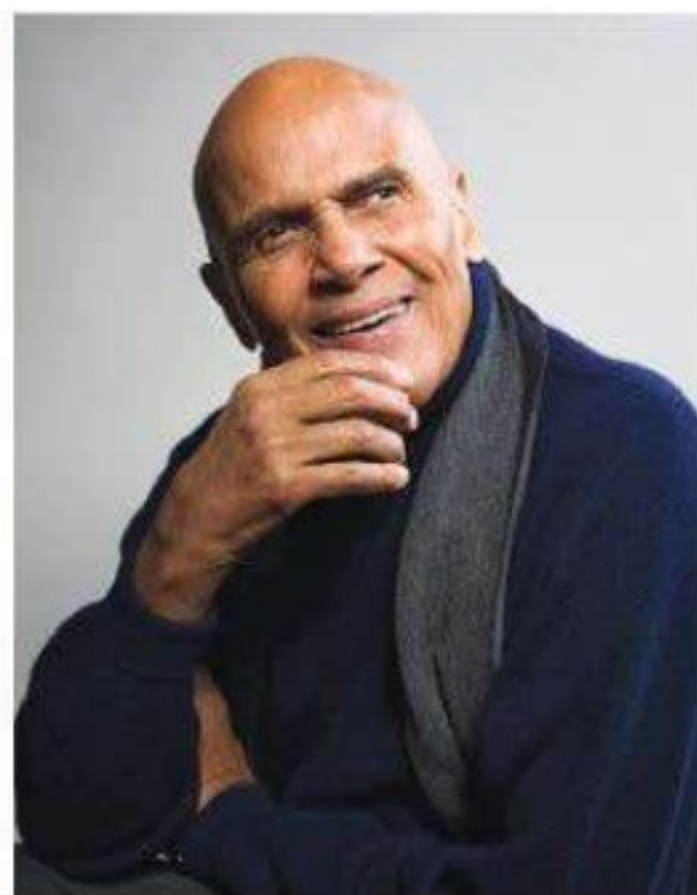
As he relates in *My Song*, his engaging new memoir, Belafonte has had a quintessentially American life, from hardscrabble beginnings in Harlem and Jamaica to a stereotype-smashing career in music and film in the 1950s. Ultimately he reached a unique position in the civil rights movement, often serving as a buffer in the complex relationship between the Kennedys and his good friend the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Yet Belafonte's most important role may be that of Caribbean musical ambassador. Aside from Bob Marley, no singer has had a greater influence in shaping global perceptions of Jamaica. In 1956, Belafonte's album *Calypso* became the first LP to sell a million copies, and while in hindsight the unadorned rhythms and topical themes of the songs meshed perfectly with the emerging folk movement, at the time they were anomalies.

"I just called upon the memories of my youth," Belafonte explains. "I found the music pleasant, and I thought it would be

pleasing to the audiences I was singing to. The record company didn't think too much of the idea, but to everybody's surprise, the world began singing 'The Banana Boat Song' and 'Jamaica Farewell' and 'Island in the Sun,' and I was off to the races."

The impact was immediate as an obscure West Indian genre spread over the airwaves and across college campuses. (Belafonte's music also inspired the kinds of incongruous scenes — Ivy Leaguers emoting in their best Jamaican patois — that might have fit in the 2003 folk mockumentary *A Mighty Wind*.)



As the times have changed, "Banana Boat" has been shaped and reinterpreted in a way that few songs are. In the 1960s, with calypso giving way to reggae and ska, the sound became nostalgic. Before long, the song was a singalong at rock concerts: You can hear it in the Kinks' 1972 live album *Everybody's in Show-Biz*. In Tim Burton's 1988 film *Beetlejuice*, it's a playful song-and-

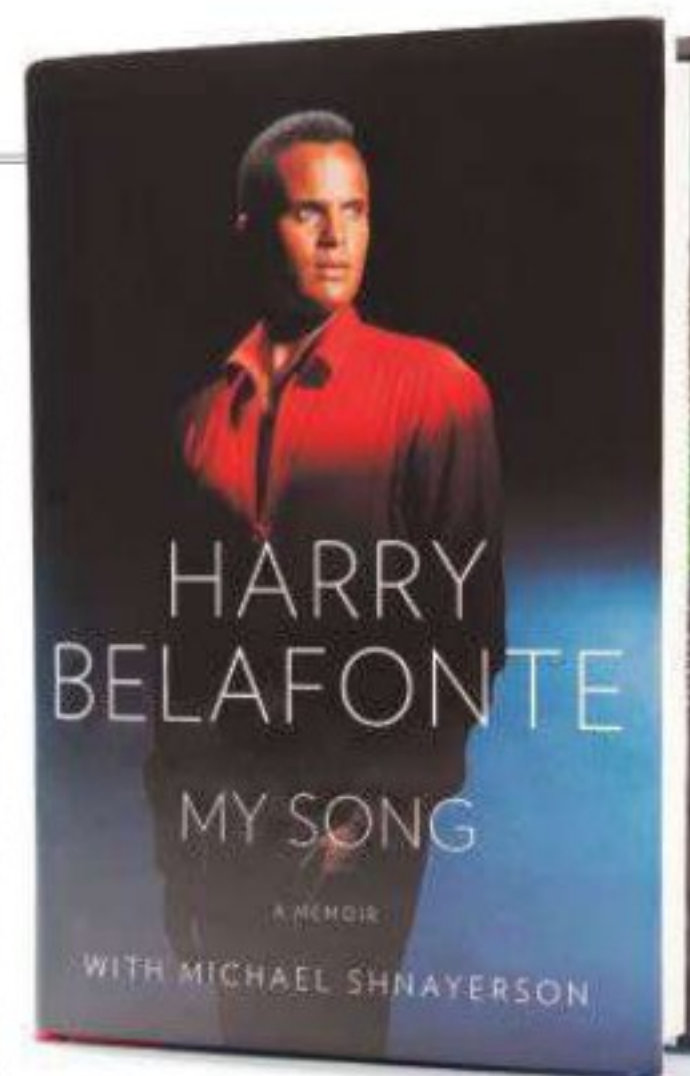
dance number at a possessed dinner party, and these days you're as likely to hear it as a sports chant as on a film soundtrack.

But is the song's mournful, socially conscious theme lost when the tune is shouted at Yankee Stadium? Not necessarily, Belafonte says. Even in the original, the weariness of the lyrics is hidden behind a wistful melody and gentle syncopation, getting you first to sway your hips and sing along. Then it's up to the listener to absorb and reflect, just as countless others have done over the last half-century, from Jamaica to Japan and everywhere in between.

"It's an amazing journey," Belafonte says, "for that wonderful song."

And for Belafonte himself.

➤ BEN SISARIO is a reporter for *The New York Times*.



TOP BANANA

"The nearest market was Brown's Town, to which the villagers brought their harvested goods by donkey and cart. When their carts were full, they carried more on their heads, wrapped in colorful bandannas. If I was lucky, I'd be asked to go with one of my uncles, either to walk behind or, as a special treat, to ride on the donkey. ("Don't crush the banana!") Sometimes I was lucky enough to hitch a ride on one of the few trucks in the region. ("Hey, mon, you want a fender ride?") I'd hop on the fender and hold on to the window frame, and we'd roll down the dirt roads, inevitably passing a group of bauxite workers headed home, their faces red from bauxite dust.

The larger market, especially for bananas, was Ocho Rios, with its deepwater pier, where the United Fruit Company boats loaded up. Bananas, sugarcane, mangoes, oranges — all these were shipped, after being tallied and paid for by the UFC tallyman. "Come Mr. tally-man, tally me banana, / Daylight come and me wan' go home." Not by chance did that song become my signature; I knew of what I was singing." — From *My Song*

Click it! For an excerpt from Harry Belafonte's *My Song*, head to caribbeantravelmag.com/belafonte.

SHOOT BETTER BEACHES

The one thing everybody wants to photograph on their Caribbean vacation happens to be one of the hardest things to photograph well. Here are 10 indispensable tips from a guy who does it for a living. *By Zach Stovall*



Distinguish Yourself

Avoid the sand trap of snapping a desertlike expanse that has no focal point. Find something that sets this particular beach apart from every other beach on the planet. Shoot that. Then use a palm tree (or a thatch hut or a cocktail server) either to frame the shot or to serve as a focal point to give the beach scale.

DON'T BE THAT GUY ➡ You know, the one bombarding his Facebook page with cheesy shots of his feet in the sand or his drunk Uncle Ernie buried up to his neck.



Take Chances Shoot the first thing that comes to mind, then turn around. There's probably a better opportunity behind you. And though shooting with the sun at your back is a popular beginner's tip, by using exposure compensation, you can shoot into the light or cross light (when the sun is at 90 degrees) to cast dramatic shadows through the photo.

4 GEAR TIP

A circular polarizer will change your life. Really. It cuts through haze, enhancing the color of the water and sky. Rotate the filter until the colors are as vivid or as subtle as you'd like.

5 The Rule of Thirds

To make an image more interesting, think of the frame as a three-by-three grid, then align the elements where the lines intersect. (Break this rule if you *really* want that perfectly symmetrical palm tree shot, but never put the horizon in the middle of your shot.)



DON'T LOSE YOUR BALANCE

➡ The world may not be flat, but that's no reason for your horizon to be lopsided.

6 Get High

Beaches look amazing when viewed from above: A high vantage point disguises the small imperfections of the beach while allowing you to use its curvaceous shape to your compositional advantage. So head for the hills, climb the tallest thing in the vicinity or go parasailing.





GET GEARED UP

Let's face it, you don't want to lug lots of equipment while you're enjoying your day at the beach. Here's how to get great results without schlepping a lot of stuff.



CAMERA

Ricoh GXR If you want interchangeable lenses without the bulk of a DSLR, Ricoh's new GXR offers the best of both worlds. And unlike a DSLR, where changing lenses means exposing the camera's sensor to the elements, this system combines the lens and sensor in a single sealed unit, so you can swap lenses at the beach without fear of getting sand on your sensor. The image forecast? Clear blue skies free of UFO-like dust spots. \$479 (body plus 28-300 mm lens). ricoh.com

TRIPOD

Joby Gorillapod Original

This pint-size tripod won't take up a lot of space in your beach bag. At less than 6 inches tall, it's the perfect solution for those who want to take long-exposure shots but don't want the hassle of a full-size tripod. The Gorillapod's flexible legs mean you can even wrap it around the arm of your beach chair. \$19.95. joby.com



CASE

OtterBox 3250 Save your gear from salt, sand and sun by stashing it in the OtterBox 3250. This drybox can be submerged to 100 feet, so if you've had a few too many piña coladas and it's man overboard, your gear will still be safe and dry — even if you aren't. \$25.49; otterbox.com

7 The Perfect Sunset Shot

It's elusive but attainable. Set up your tripod in the sand and focus on a rock outcropping in the foreground of the frame, far enough from the water so that only the biggest waves will wrap around the rocks. In the 30 or 45 minutes after sunset, take long exposures (from one to eight seconds) with your white balance on the "sun" setting. The lapping waves will lose their individual form, washing together in a big appealing blur, while the sky and its reflection in the water will be mostly blue with a bit of color on the horizon.



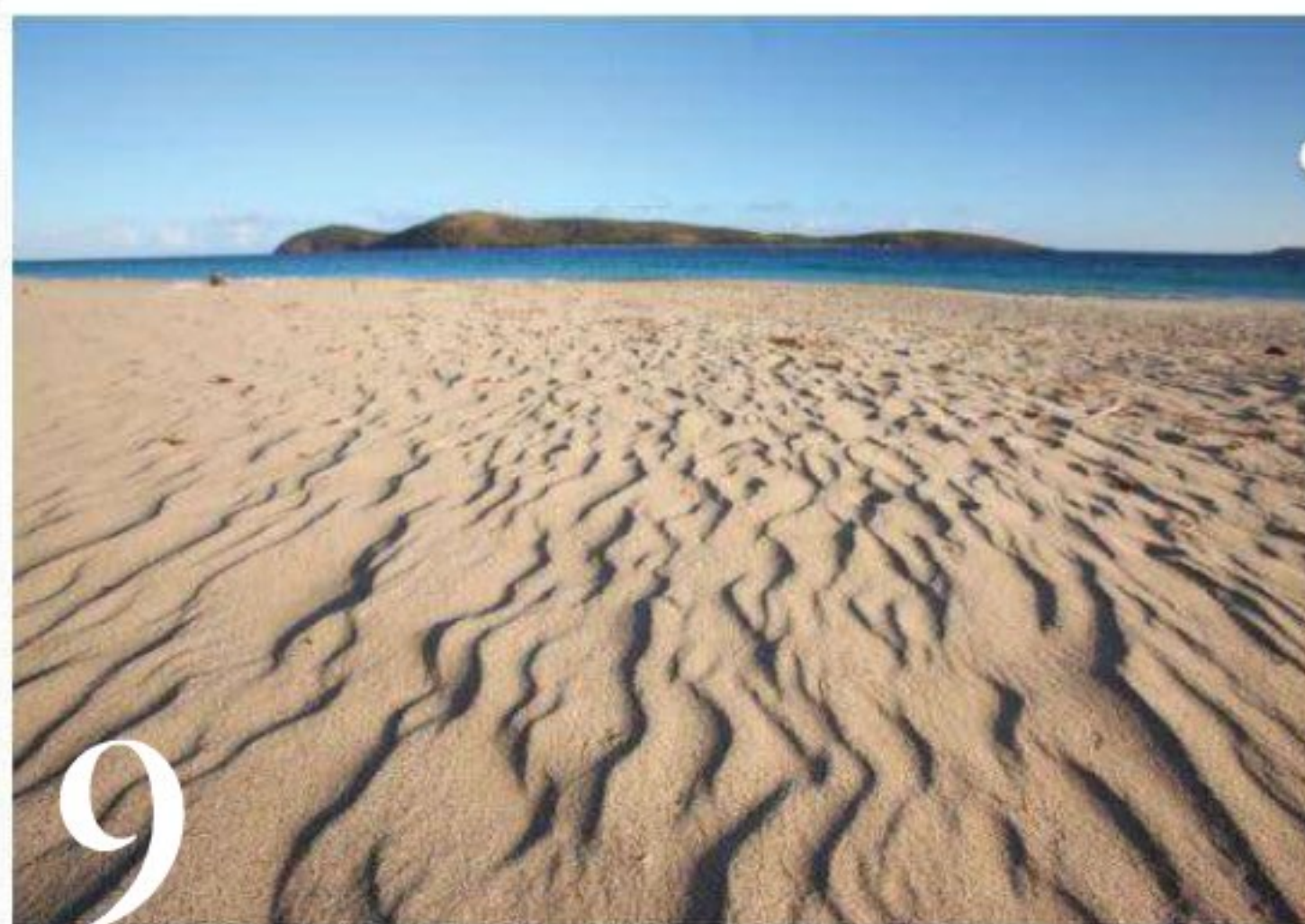
8 The Golden Hour

The best time to capture the water at its bluest is from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., when the sun is at its height. But that's also the worst time to photograph anything on the beach. For shots of your loved ones frolicking on the sand, you need the soft, warm light of early morning or late afternoon, specifically the "golden hour" just after sunrise and just before sunset.

DON'T GO TO EXTREMES

➡ If you try to capture shady spots and fully sunlit sand in the same shot, you'll end up with either a dark blot where the shade is or nuclear-bright sand.

DON'T GO AGAINST THE GRAIN ➡ Think twice before tossing your camera on your beach blanket or changing lenses at the beach. Sand is as unpleasant in your camera as it is in your bathing suit.



9 Keep Composed

Draw the eye deeper into your photo by using "leading lines" — a dock, a jetty or the line created where the water laps onto the sand are good examples. Also experiment with repeating patterns (think rippling sand) and textures, such as waves washing ashore.

10 GEAR TIP

To quickly burn AC-induced fog off your lens, point it directly at the sun; repeat for the eyecup. *Do not* remove the lens or filters first or try to wipe it dry with your shirt. Trust me.



JACK TERRY'S TOP 5 RUMS

Ron Zacapa XO

This Guatemalan rum is at least 23 years old. Hints of dried fruit and cinnamon make it perfect for newbies.

It's also a good transition rum for Scotch drinkers.

Pyrat Cask 1623

A mix of Anguillian rums, it's aged up to 40 years. It goes down smooth but packs a punch.

Dos Maderas PX 5+5

This blend marries five-year-old rums from Barbados and Guyana and is then aged an additional five years in sherry casks to give it a complexity and flavor unrivaled by any other.

El Dorado

This Guyanese brand features selections starting at five years old, but hold out for the 21-year-old rum. Aging it in whiskey and bourbon barrels lets the notes of dark chocolate and toffee really sing.

Vizcaya VXOP Cask No. 21

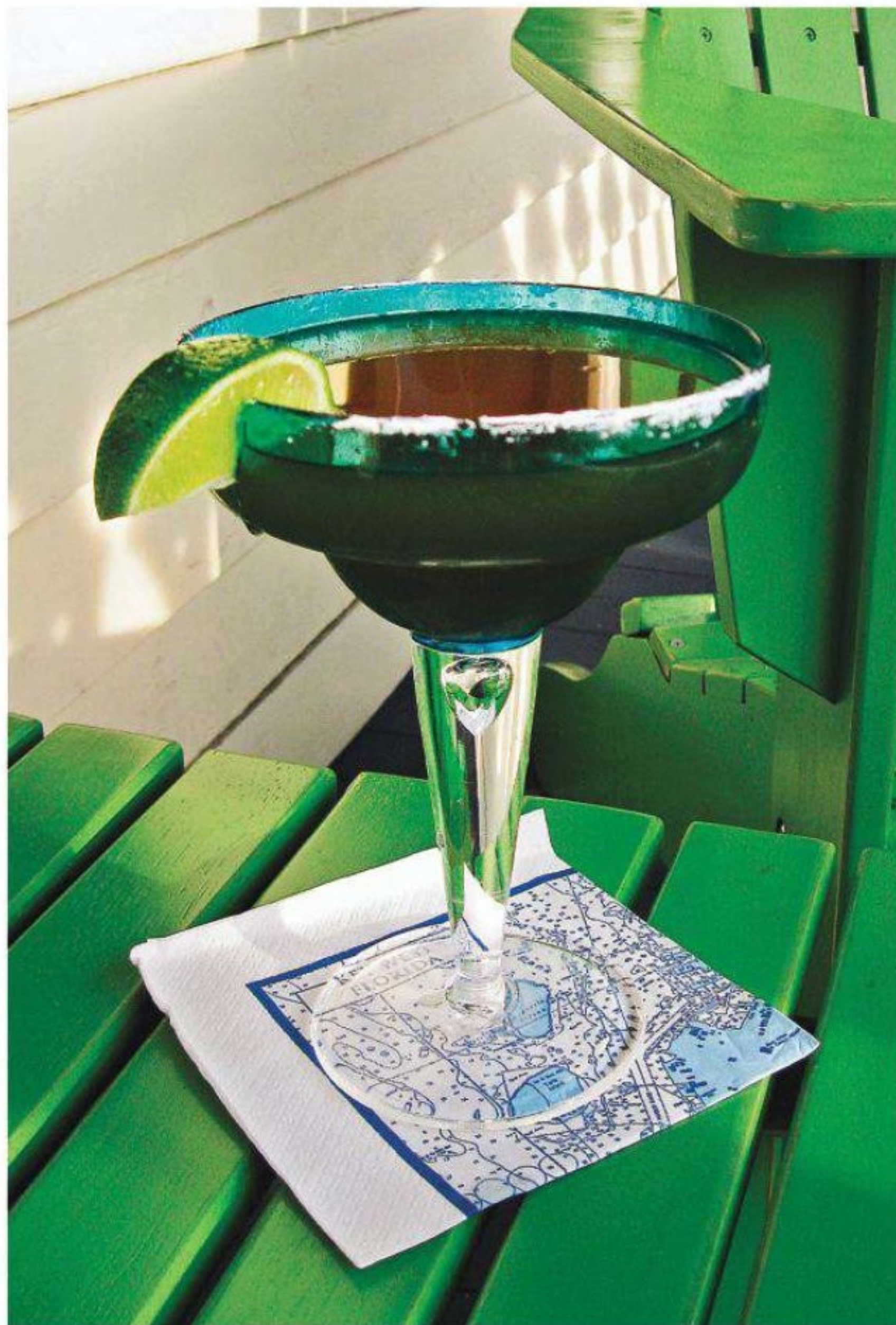
Hailing from Dominica but based on a Cuban formula, this is the sweetest of the list, blending rums with the flavors of maple, brown sugar and raisins.

No Chaser Needed

How one guy's rum passion landed him a frontman position at Tommy Bahama, a national tour and a nice chunk of change. *By Audrey St. Clair*

STATESIDE

BOOZE AND MONEY. TWO THINGS THAT GO A LONG WAY TOWARD MAKING OUR CARIBBEAN dreams come true. No one knows this better than the folks over at island-lifestyle favorite Tommy Bahama, as evidenced by their recent announcement of the first-ever Tommy Bahama Rumologist, Jack Terry. After three months of competition, thousands of votes and a few heinous hangovers, this Key West, Florida, transplant and longtime bartender at Duval Street's Bagatelle took the title and a \$50,000 grand prize for his extensive rum knowledge, winning cocktail and endearing personality. Jack will be traveling cross-country hosting events in the spirit of Tommy Bahama's motto, "Make Life One Long Weekend," and promoting new rum-inspired cocktails and culinary pairings sure to impress even the most accomplished rum drinkers. Follow the flavor to one of 13 new restaurant locations, the flagship set to open its doors in New York City in fall of this year.



"Anyone can study rum," says Jack Terry, "but it's the joy of living the carefree lifestyle that makes me different—that's my lifeline. It's what I've been doing my whole life, and now I can create a whole new generation of rum drinkers."

THE WINNING RECIPE

THE ELDER STATESMAN

2.5 oz. Tommy Bahama Golden Sun rum
1 oz. St-Germain elderflower liqueur
0.75 oz. agave nectar
0.25 oz. yuzu juice

Combine all ingredients in a shaker with ice. Shake, then strain into a chilled margarita or martini glass with a powdered-sugar rim.

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PUERTO RICO

A Green Scene

Serious eco sensibilities meet unparalleled luxury at this plush Puerto Rican tropical resort. *By Debbie Snow*

ST. REGIS BAHIA BEACH RESORT → FROM \$529 PER NIGHT

Golfers, beach buffs and nature lovers agree: In Puerto Rico, the St. Regis Bahia Beach Resort is the place to be. While the hotel's signature luxury, service and attention to detail are par for the course for the resort chain, what may come as a surprise is the property's painstaking preservation of its natural environment, a lush tract that sprawls between El Yunque rainforest and the Atlantic and was designated a nature preserve long before the hotel's opening in late 2010.

Keeping constant watch is St. Regis biologist Marcela Cañon and her "green team" of passionate ecologists, agronomists and landscape architects. They closely monitor the land usage, water quality and habitats of the

flora and fauna within the sanctuary's five distinct ecosystems, demonstrating an environmental commitment that has surpassed mere lip service to recently earn the resort accreditation as the Caribbean's first and only Gold Audubon Signature Sanctuary.

The 483-acre property features lakes, dense forests, a two-mile beach flanked by twin rivers, a challenging golf course, and a mere 139 rooms and butler-serviced

The only intrusions are the melodic trills of native birds and the chirps of the island's *coquí*.

suites in a dozen buildings, each of which rises no taller than the surrounding canopy. Nature's splendor is quite literally on your doorstep here, and you'll no doubt find yourself enchanted by the extraordinarily tranquil environment, where the only intrusions are nothing more than the melodic trills of native birds by day and the distinctive staccato chirps of the island's *coquí* at night.

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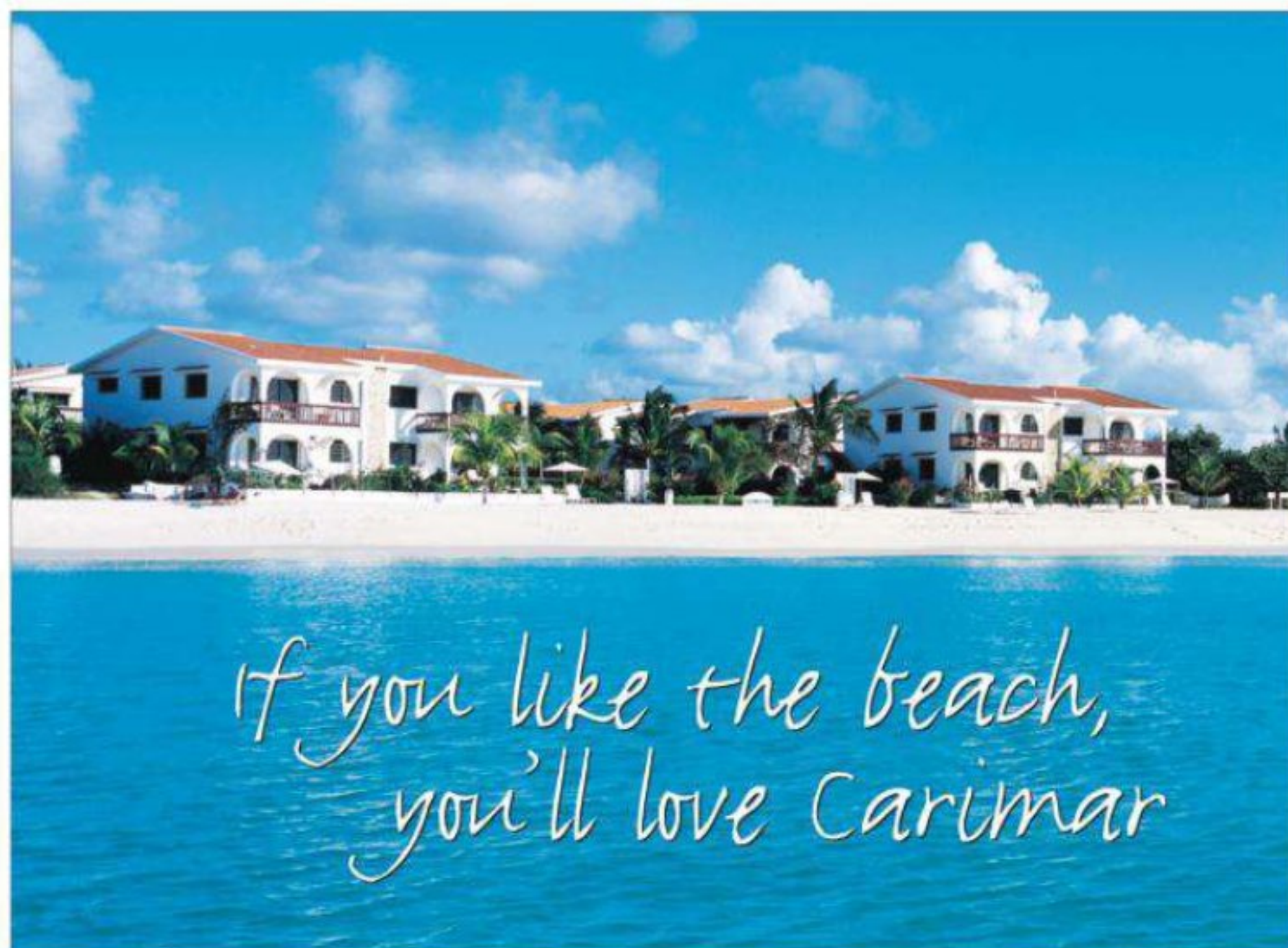
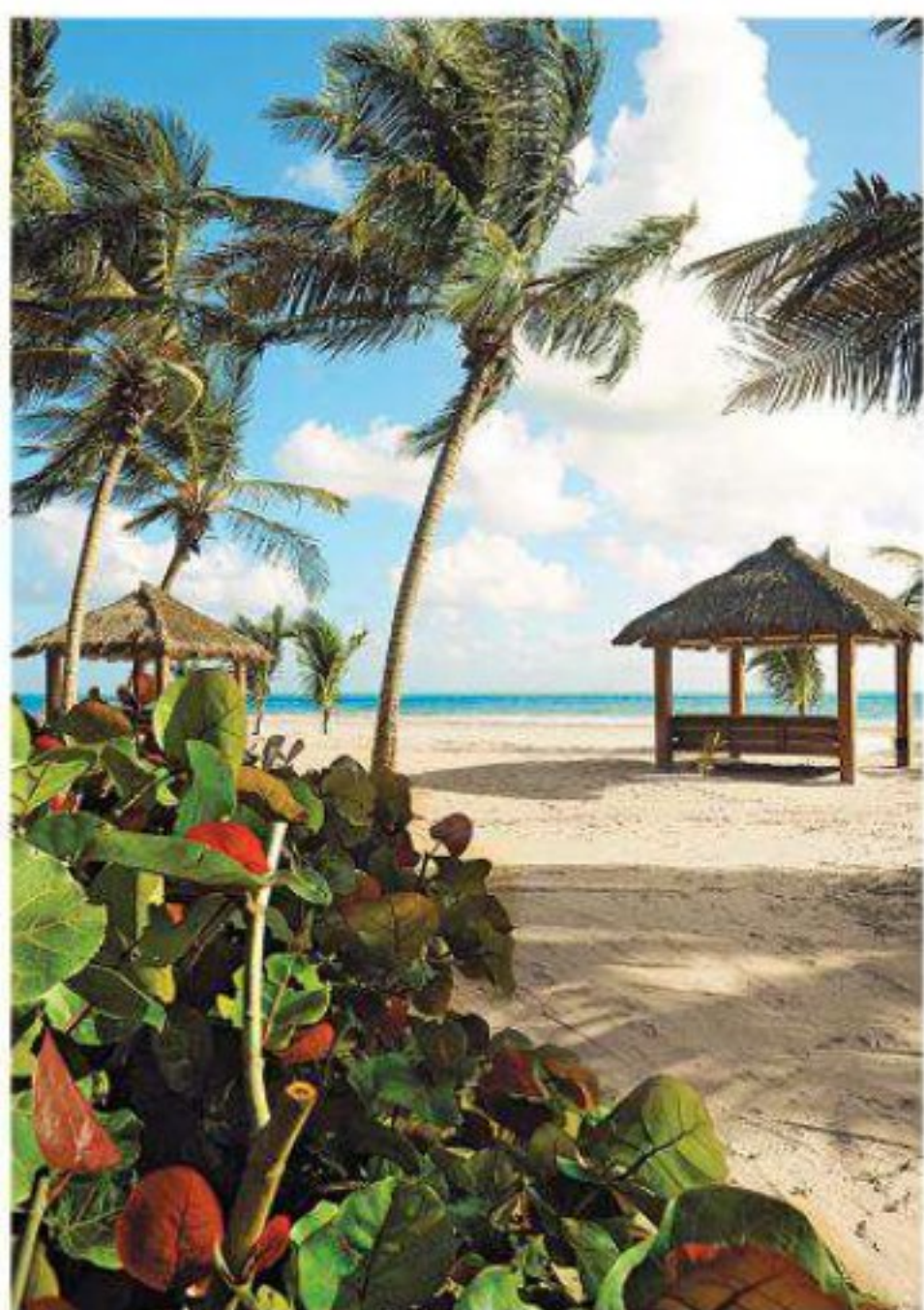
→ **EAT** A festive weekend crowd flocks to Fern, the restaurant with cuisine by Michelin-star chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten and local-hero executive chef Maycoll Calderon, who enhances seasonal menus that feature the freshest ingredients from local farmers and fishermen. Try the tasting menu, which might begin with salmon tartare atop avocado drizzled with ginger marinade and come to a delicious end with chocolate cake and vanilla-bean ice cream.

→ **SWING** Designed around a network of lakes, lagoons and ponds, the Robert Trent Jones Jr. golf course (his first in Puerto Rico) features manicured greens surrounded by a native maritime forest of almond, sea-grape and coconut trees. Most holes offer a stunning view of El Yunque rainforest, while the final three holes give way to staggering ocean vistas.

→ **SPLASH** The boathouse and its large lagoon are the hub for all things aquatic, and guests can enjoy unlimited use of paddle boards, sailboats and kayaks (\$60 per day). A catch-and-release program gives anglers a chance at freshwater snook, tilapia, tarpon and jack.

→ **RELAX** The Remede Spa is nestled in a tropical garden setting decked out with outdoor showers, hot and cold plunge pools, a sauna and steam room. The soothing sounds of cascading water and birdsong promote profound levels of relaxation and rejuvenation long before the treatments even begin.

→ **EXPLORE** Sign up for a bird-watching tour, or a take a kayaking expedition along the Espiritu Santo River. Numerous nature trails, jogging paths and elevated walkways make exploring the resort easy, and you can always venture off on your own to discover vast lakes filled with tropical fish, manatees and waterfowl.



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ST. THOMAS, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

Food
WATCH

Pumpkin Soup

The ultimate Caribbean comfort food is traditionally made from the native squash *calabaza* (a round gourd with yellow-green skin and sweet orange flesh) and enhanced with coconut milk, vegetable or chicken stock, herbs and garlic.


Callaloo

Trinidad and Tobago's national dish features taro leaves, okra, coconut milk and hot peppers. Callaloo is also served in Barbados, Grenada, the French Caribbean and Jamaica, where local spinach stars as the staple ingredient.


Conch Chowder

This iconic soup is most popular in the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands. The conch (also known as *lambi*) is combined with onions, celery, carrots and fresh herbs; add a dash of hot sauce for an extra kick.


Pepper Pot

This hearty Guyanese stew combines slow-cooked chunks of tougher cuts of beef, mutton or pork, cassareep (a syrup made from boiled-down cassava) and, of course, as the name suggests, plenty of hot peppers.

Soup's On!

Cold weather calls for hot soup, Caribbean style. *By Ramin Ganesbaram*

WARM UP

IT'S A CARIBBEAN CURIOSITY THAT, DESPITE THE REGION'S SIZZLING HEAT AND high levels of humidity, locals love nothing more than a piping-hot bowl of hearty soup. In fact, soup's place in West Indian cuisine dates back to the colonial era, when coal pots simmered over open flames to provide a substantial meal for the slaves after their backbreaking labor in the fields was finally finished. Everything was thrown into the mix: native produce, scraps of meat and bones from the plantation owner's table, and almost anything else that could be foraged or fished. Eventually, no matter how poor the original ingredients, this long, low and slow cooking method would yield results that were not only flavorful but filling. Today these thick soups (which are eaten for breakfast, lunch or dinner) have become regional staples, delicious evidence of a centuries-old tradition that defies the modern culinary convention of eating to suit the climate. And at this time of year, as temperatures plummet in our corner of the world, they're also a fitting way to bring some Caribbean warmth to your table.

Click it! Go to
caribbeantravelmag.com/soup-for-recipes.

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Photo courtesy of Aruba Tourism Authority

Rhythm and Muse

All the world's a stage for the Caribbean's hottest artists — but when it comes to their favorite music festivals, there's no place like the island they call home. *By Baz Dreisinger*

JUNE > St. Kitts Music Festival BASSETERRE, ST. KITTS

THE STAR: He's not yet 30, but **King Konris** (below) is a Kittitian legend. The virtuoso calypsonian and vigorous performer — he's been penning songs since he was 10 — has won the island's Calypso Monarch title four times in a row. In the words of his most recent winner, he's an "Unstoppable Force."

THE TAKE: "The St. Kitts Music Festival is a world event. It allows local artists like me and international superstars from all corners of the world on a single stage. You could not possibly find a better way to enjoy St. Kitts — 'the next Caribbean adventure,' as we call it."

MUSIC FESTS

MARCH > Moonsplash

DUNE PRESERVE, ANGUILLA

THE STAR: **Ruel Richardson** is the frontman for British Dependency (one part soul, one part funk, one part reggae, all parts sweet music), whose mentor is local celebrity Bankie Banx, the dreadlocked, cowboy-hat-clad founder of Moonsplash and owner of its venue: uber-funky beach bar Dune Preserve.

THE TAKE: "Moonsplash is all about spontaneous music, like the time we had a surprise performance by John Mayer. It allows my band a performing outlet — Bankie supports local acts, which is part of why he created Moonsplash — and great Caribbean artists perform every year, legends the Moonsplash audience would kill to see. The intimate venue lets us connect with our audience. When it comes to an end, everyone looks forward to the next one."

MAY > St. Lucia Jazz Festival

VARIOUS VENUES, ST. LUCIA

THE STAR: Humanitarian, poet, musician: **Taj Weekes** wears all of these hats with equal ease. And the golden-voiced reggae artist does more than sing about peace and love — he spreads it via his foundation, They Often Cry Outreach, dedicated to improving the lives of needy St. Lucians.

THE TAKE: "It was great to be able to participate in the 25th anniversary of the festival and play before my home audience after having played to other people for

such a long time. The level of energy we received was tremendous. It was really gratifying to bring my band, all from various Caribbean countries, to visit my hometown and people and be greeted by such amazing energy."

JULY > Reggae Sumfest

MONTEGO BAY, JAMAICA

THE STAR: Sometimes called Jamaica's Stevie Wonder, **Beres Hammond** can make women swoon at the drop of a note. With his signature honeyed vocals and oh-so-seductive songs, the 56-year-old has been serenading crowds with classic lovers rock tunes for more than two decades.

THE TAKE: "I could never retire from performing — how can any artist retire? Performing is what we were sent here to do. I did that for three hours straight at Reggae Sumfest this year, and I could've gone even longer. The energy of the crowd keeps me going, and there is no crowd like the one at Sumfest. Tens of thousands of people who love reggae staying with you all night, from sunset to sunrise. And because it's Jamaica's biggest show, everyone is counting on you to give a quality performance. We all know this as artists, which is why Sumfest delivers the best performances by the best reggae artists out there — period."

Click it! For a free download of the song that made Konris the king, visit his Facebook page at facebook.com/konrismusic.

APRIL > Tobago Jazz Experience

VARIOUS VENUES, TOBAGO

THE STAR: **Machel Montano** (left), the undisputed king of soca — the frenetic, intoxicating dance music of Trinidad's Carnival — has been a star since age 9, when he appeared on *Star Search*. He's electrified stages all over the world but says shows in his sweet T&T will always be his favorite. **THE TAKE:** "Tobago is where Trinis go to unwind; it's a whole different vibe from the hustle and bustle of Trinidad. So the Tobago festival is a perfect mix of Trinidad-style partying: We have soca artists bringing the Carnival energy, along with international ones doing R&B — like Chaka Khan one year — and Tobago chill-out vibes. You can rock out all night and relax on the beach all day. It's perfection."



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Activity WATCH

It's All Uphill from Here

It's not just a cute name: St. John's 8 Tuff Miles footrace really is that long — and that hard. Here's a rundown (pun intended) of what to expect as you bound across this scenic U.S. Virgin from bay to bay. *By Rebecca Strauss*

WHAT

8 Tuff Miles traverses St. John along Centerline Road from Cruz Bay to Coral Bay. The idea was hatched when founder Peter Alter quit smoking and decided that a jog up and over the island would be just the thing to distract himself from the cravings. He then convinced a few friends that the experience would be “fun,” and the first race was run in 1997 with just 21 competitors.



TIP
Quit smoking
before the race.

WHERE

Beautiful **St. John** is many things: lush, pristine, ringed with alluring beaches — and covered with steep green peaks. Runners start their journey at **Virgin Islands National Park** headquarters (elevation: five feet above sea level) and must ascend a lung-busting 999 feet in the

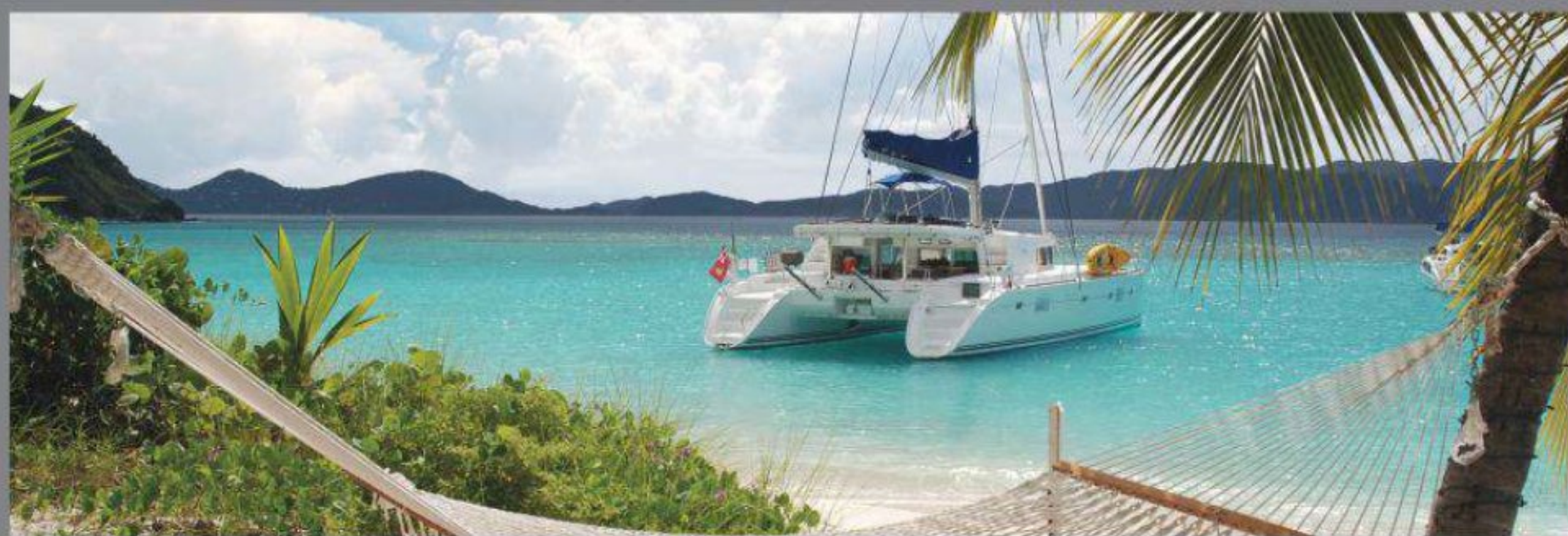
first half of the race — that's almost as high as the Empire State Building. In the second half, a downhill canter into Cruz Bay compensates.

WHO

Toeing the start line are athletes, recreational runners and anyone else who rightfully believes that after running eight mountainous miles, you can **eat and drink pretty much anything you want** for the rest of your vacation, calories be damned. Want to know what an undertrained and slightly sunburned runner is thinking as she slogs it out in tropical temps? Here's a little insight:

FROM LEFT: STEVE SIMONSEN (2); JAMES SCHWABEL/ALAMY; STEVE SIMONSEN

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MILE 0

Here's the first hill, and it isn't so bad! Wait, is that another hill? We're not even out of town yet! I'll just walk this one then.

MILE 1

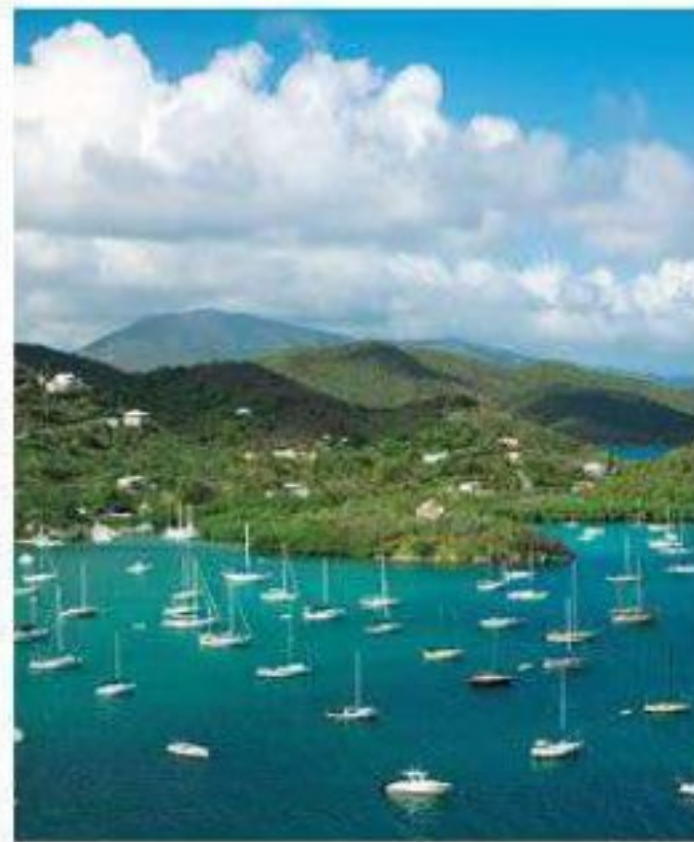
We're only at mile one? Are you kidding me?

MILE 4.5

This is officially the worst idea of my entire life.

MILE 7.9

Are they really passing out cans of beer at the finish line? I can do this!

**WHY**

Halfway through, about 1,000 feet above sea level, I finally emerge from the forest and am greeted by a magical scene. From here, high atop St. John, a dreamy vista of the other Virgin Islands appears, sparkling and hazy as a mirage. For the rest of the race, **misty mountains and**

shimmering water peep out at me from between the trees, encouraging: "You're almost there! It's all downhill from here!" Nope, this definitely isn't your hometown Turkey Trot. And the finisher's medal is a bottle opener. Sweet.

WHEN

The race is held on the last Saturday of February; this year, that's **Feb. 25**. Good luck out there, runners. And don't forget to put that medal to good use.



Click it! To find the best places on St. John to recover post-race, go to caribbeantravelmag/stuff.

After running eight mountainous miles, you can eat and drink pretty much anything you want for the rest of your vacation, calories be damned.



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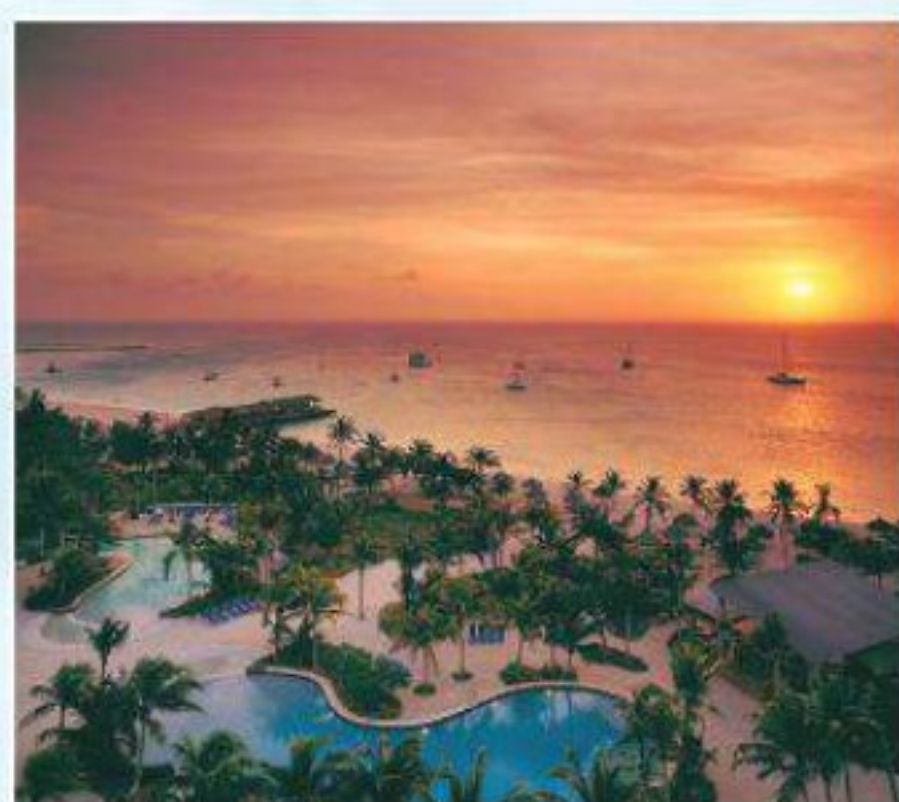


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The Essential Souvenir-Hunting Guide

If you didn't buy something while you were there, did you ever *really* go? We don't think so. Take these tips for snagging fab Caribbean mementos at the very best prices.

By Sarah Greaves-Gabbadon

Don't Touch

THE FIRST RULE OF SHOPPING LOCAL food and craft markets: If you don't want it, don't touch it! You'll only get the vendor's hopes up and invite possible pressure to buy. But not touching also applies even when you *do* want that woodcarving or basket of spices, because every seller worth her salt knows that if you pick something up, you're much more likely to buy it. If you really want to win at the retail game, play it cool and be prepared to walk away; you'll likely score the best price.

Wheel and Deal

THINK HAGGLING WORKS ONLY AT THE market? Think again. Negotiating skills can come in handy in those fancy duty-free jewelry stores too. In our experience, the price on that diamond ring's tag is just a starting point, so don't hesitate to ask (respectfully) if the merchant can do any better. And before you start wheeling and dealing, make sure you know the item's MSRP where you live, because a duty-free price doesn't necessarily mean it's a deal; sometimes you can do just as well online or at the mall.

Go Local

TRUST US, NO ONE REALLY WANTS a made-in-China figurine or a "No Problem" shot glass. Think beyond the two-for-\$20 T-shirts and consider nontraditional items such as food, signs, art and books by local



writers. Check out artisans' studios, browse roadside stands, and don't discount grocery stores and gas stations, which are excellent and inexpensive sources of authentic local snacks

that make great gifts for foodies. And don't forget your hotel gift shop — some really do have merch worth buying.

Regret Nothing

LIKE IT? WANT IT? BUY IT! YOU'RE MUCH more likely to regret something you left behind than what you bought. And as far as we're concerned, it's far better to come back with something not quite right than to be sitting on the plane home kicking yourself because you didn't buy that watercolor that caught your eye. So what if you occasionally bring back a dud? That's what eBay's for.

MAKE A SPLASH ➡

Designer Trina Turk has created a capsule collection of leisure clothes and swimwear in a limited-edition print inspired by the colors and lifestyle of the Turks and Caicos Islands and one of Providenciales' premier resorts, Grace Bay Club. Snag yours at the hotel boutique or online at trinaturk.com.





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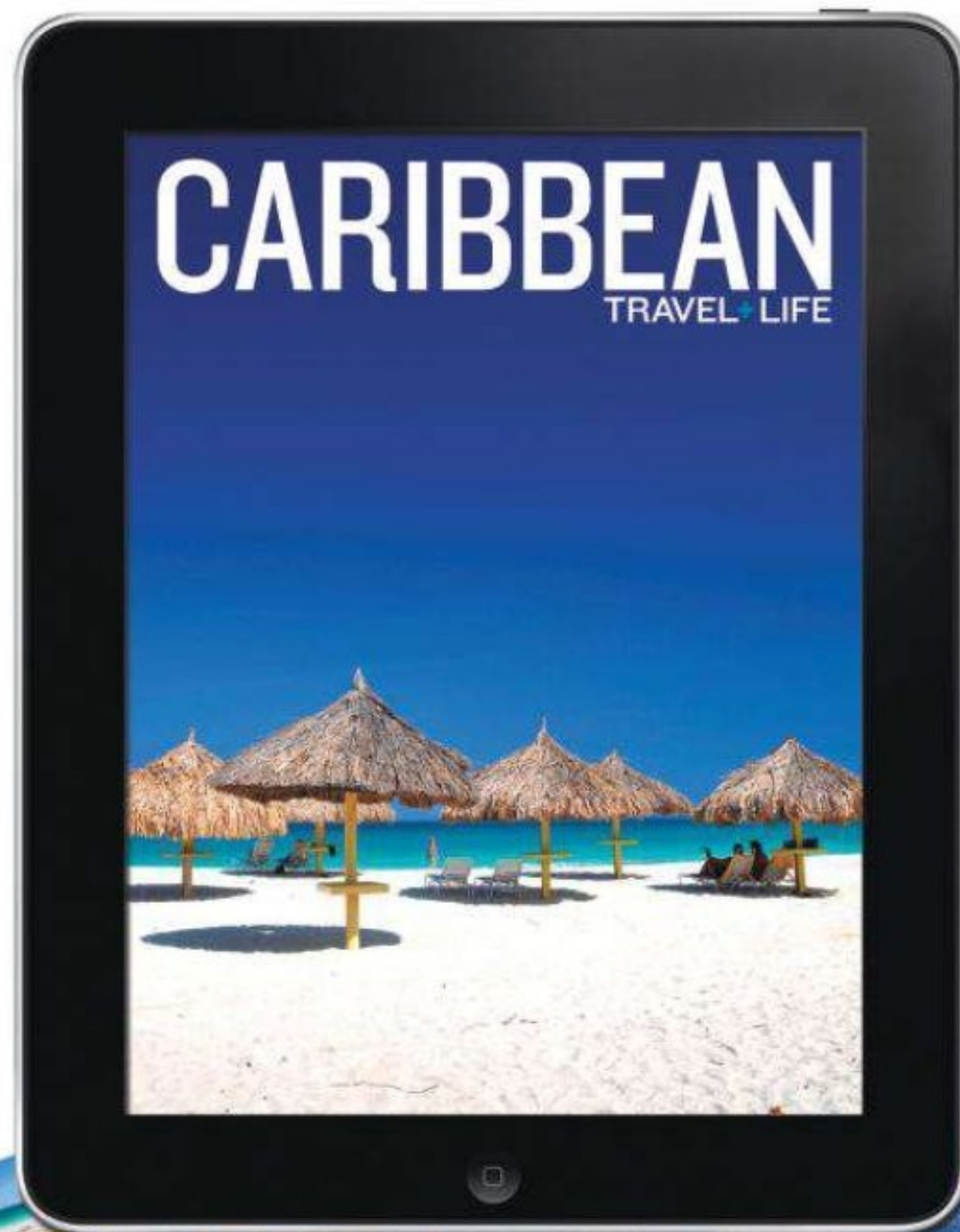
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Bottom Bay
BARBADOS



BARBADOS

➔ **Bottom Bay Beach** The 92 miles of Barbados' coastline are trimmed with 80 beaches, from tranquil to tempestuous. Picture-perfect Bottom Bay, on the island's east coast, is very much of the latter variety. A more rollicking version of nearby Crane Beach, Bottom Bay is 180 yards of pearl-white sand fronted by thundering, translucent waves whose path has remained unbroken across 2,700 miles of open Atlantic. Fancy a swim? There's an old Bajan saying that goes, "De sea ain't got nuh back door." In other words, once you're in, you're in: Swim here at your own peril. Fortunately, beaches have uses that extend beyond bathing (wink, wink), and this one is romance-novel gorgeous, backed by coral cliffs and dancing palms. Pack a picnic; grab a blanket; get friendly.



BARBADOS

➤ **Crane Beach** Named for the long-gone crane that once unloaded cargo from ships, this splendiferous and oft-photographed (see our October 2011 cover) quarter-mile of pink and white sand sprawls out below the grand old resort of the same name on the island's rugged southeast coast. Swimmers appreciate the cliffs that bookend Crane Beach; unlike the surf that crashes along the aforementioned Bottom Bay Beach, the roiling Atlantic here is kept in check. Sun, splash and, if you can afford the splurge, grab some sushi at the Crane Resort's Zagat-rated Japanese/Thai restaurant, Zen. thecrane.com/dining

➤ **Mullins Beach** Facing the placid Caribbean, the west side of Barbados is known as the Platinum Coast, thanks to a string of tony resorts here. And yet there's an egalitarian charm to pretty Mullins Beach, just south of Speightstown. Make a day of it on the sand with a lively mix of locals and tourists, then grab a drink or linger over dinner at the excellent Mullins Restaurant as the sun sets over the Caribbean. mullinsbarbados.com

➤ **Bathsheba Pools** The open waters off the east coast of surf town Bathsheba are famously treacherous, so swimming is a definite no-no.

Lounging for hours in the effervescent inshore pools here, however, rum concoction in hand, is the island's most emphatic yes.

➤ **Bath Beach** A happy anomaly on the east coast, reef-protected Bath Beach (named for the town of Bath) is a swimmer's delight. And just off the sand, look for the remains of the Barbados Railway, which hauled cargo and people between Bridgetown and Bathsheba from 1867 to 1937.

➤ **Accra Beach** With plenty of soft sand and surf conditions that are spirited without being lethal, Accra (aka Rockley) is the place to be on the south coast. There are food and tchotchke vendors, along with water-sports outfitters of all sorts renting boogie boards, Hobie cats, snorkeling gear, you name it. You'll find windsurfing and kiteboarding here too, though serious wind seekers should discover nearby Silver Sands (see [p. 46](#)).

Crane Beach
BARBADOS



THE BEST BEACH BARS

► FOXY'S BAR, JOST VAN DYKE, BVI

If the assortment of shirts, flags, undies and whatnot hanging on the walls says anything, it's that Foxy Callwood is a popular guy. His rickety little bar in sleepy Great Harbour is a magnet for dance-into-the-night fun junkies from all over the world. foxysbar.com

► **ROGER'S, GRENADA** Located on tiny Hog Island, off Grenada's south coast, and reachable only by boaters or strong swimmers, this driftwood shack is a glimpse back in time. There's no jukebox or running water or powder rooms. Yet despite its lack of frills, you'll be happy to know (especially if you just swam the channel to get here) that the alcoholic essentials are present and accounted for.

► **KARAKTER, ST. MAARTEN** Every now and then, a jet airliner will rev its engines and this school bus turned beach bar will vibrate to its frame. Nobody seems to notice. On this sliver of sand between the international airport runway and turquoise water, the Amstel is cold, the food is good and a relaxed, forget-your-bikini-top vibe prevails. karakterbeach.com

► **ELVIS' BEACH BAR, ANGUILLA** Every beach bar in the world aspires to be just like this one: a decommissioned wooden racing boat on permanent shore leave set on a moonlit bay and surrounded by blissed-out patrons swaying to the music and downing rum punch. elvis-beachbar.com

► **TAMBOO, RINCON, PUERTO RICO** In the world of surfing, an epic break is measured not only by consistency, direction, size and hazards but, more importantly, by the quality of the nearby bars. For surfers must have a place to trade stories, display their scars and admire the opposite sex. On Rincon's Sandy Beach, that place is Tamboo. besidethepointe.com

► **LAUGHING FISH, PLACENCIA, BELIZE** At his Turtle Inn resort, Francis Ford Coppola proves he gets it. Devour a brick-oven pizza in the restaurant, and then order a tall cold one and watch the moon rise from this beachfront oasis. coppolaresorts.com/turtleinn

Foxy's Bar
BVI

ANGUILLA

➤ **Shoal Bay East** A day on the island's most famous beach is an irresistible proposition. Beachside eateries and bars, water-sports ops and beach-chair rentals, not to mention coral reefs for snorkeling, mean there's something for everyone.

➤ **Meads and Barnes Bay** A handful of small hotels and high-end resorts, such as the jaw-dropping Viceroy, dot the southwestern portion of the island and these neighboring sandy strips. You'll also find fine eateries such as Straw Hat and Blanchard's, whose owners helped make Anguilla a household name with their book *A Trip to the Beach*.

➤ **Little Bay** The journey just adds to the reward of reaching this tiny cove backed by rocky cliffs and island scrub ablaze with red turk's-head cactus. Getting here requires taking a boat, maneuvering down a rope ladder or negotiating a goat path. Bring your provisions, as there's nothing there but sand, water and pelicans.

➤ **Sandy Ground** This narrow stretch lines a strip between the salt pond and the bay, so many people overlook the golden beach, where calm waters cradle bobbing boats at anchor. A villagelike atmosphere attracts an eclectic and international crowd to the patchwork of shops, eateries and hot spots such as Elvis', Johnno's and the Pumphouse.

➤ **Maundays Bay** Beaches here are open to the public, but the warm waters of Maundays Bay appear to be reserved for guests of Cap Juluca, which presides over the silky sands. Scenic strolls, long naps, listening to lapping waves and calm cerulean seas make this beach a winner.





THE BEST BEACH EATS

► **FLYING FISHBONE, ARUBA** The island's first toes-in-the-sand restaurant oozes romance with candlelit tables for two under palm trees and with pathways flanked by tiki torches. Those who prefer to remain shod can head inside, but who can resist fine food with bare feet? We love the Peruvian ceviche infused with orange and ginger. 297-584-2506; flyingfishbone.com

► **MANGO, FOUR SEASONS, NEVIS** Perched on rocks with a view of St. Kitts, this picture-perfect eatery is the pinnacle of seaside dining. Located along Pinney's Beach and within shouting range of the resort's 18th hole, the spot draws a crowd at sunset. Try the mango-infused barbecue ribs with papaya slaw and sweet-potato fries. 869-469-1111; fourseasons.com

► **HAVANA BLUE, ST. THOMAS, USVI** Cool blue lights and a sleek mod atmosphere define this upscale eatery at the Morning Star Beach Club. Pacific Rim flavors accent Latin American-inspired dishes with an emphasis on Cuban favorites. Savor the mojito skirt steak with "Thai-jito" dipping sauce accompanied by a glass (or two) of sangria and the sound of the waves crashing below. 340-715-2583; havanabluerestaurant.com

► **DAPHNE'S, BARBADOS** Zagat-rated and dish-licking good, this beachfront beauty serving innovative modern Italian fare is the Platinum Coast sister to the acclaimed Daphne's in London. Worth remembering: Daphne's is part of the Elegant Hotels Group, like its neighbors, the House and the remodeled Tamarind; rate specials at those hotels often include meals at Daphne's. 246-432-2731; daphnesbarbados.com

► **MAYA'S, ST. BARTS** Watch the yachts steam by at this French-Creole mainstay on Public Beach (that's its name, pronounced *pooh-BLEEK*, though, like all beaches here, it is open to the public). In a hurry? Try Maya's takeout branch, Maya's To-Go, in St. Jean. Maya's: 590-590-29-83-70; mayas-stbarth.com; Maya's To Go: 590-590-29-83-70; mayastogo.com



Flying Fishbone
ARUBA

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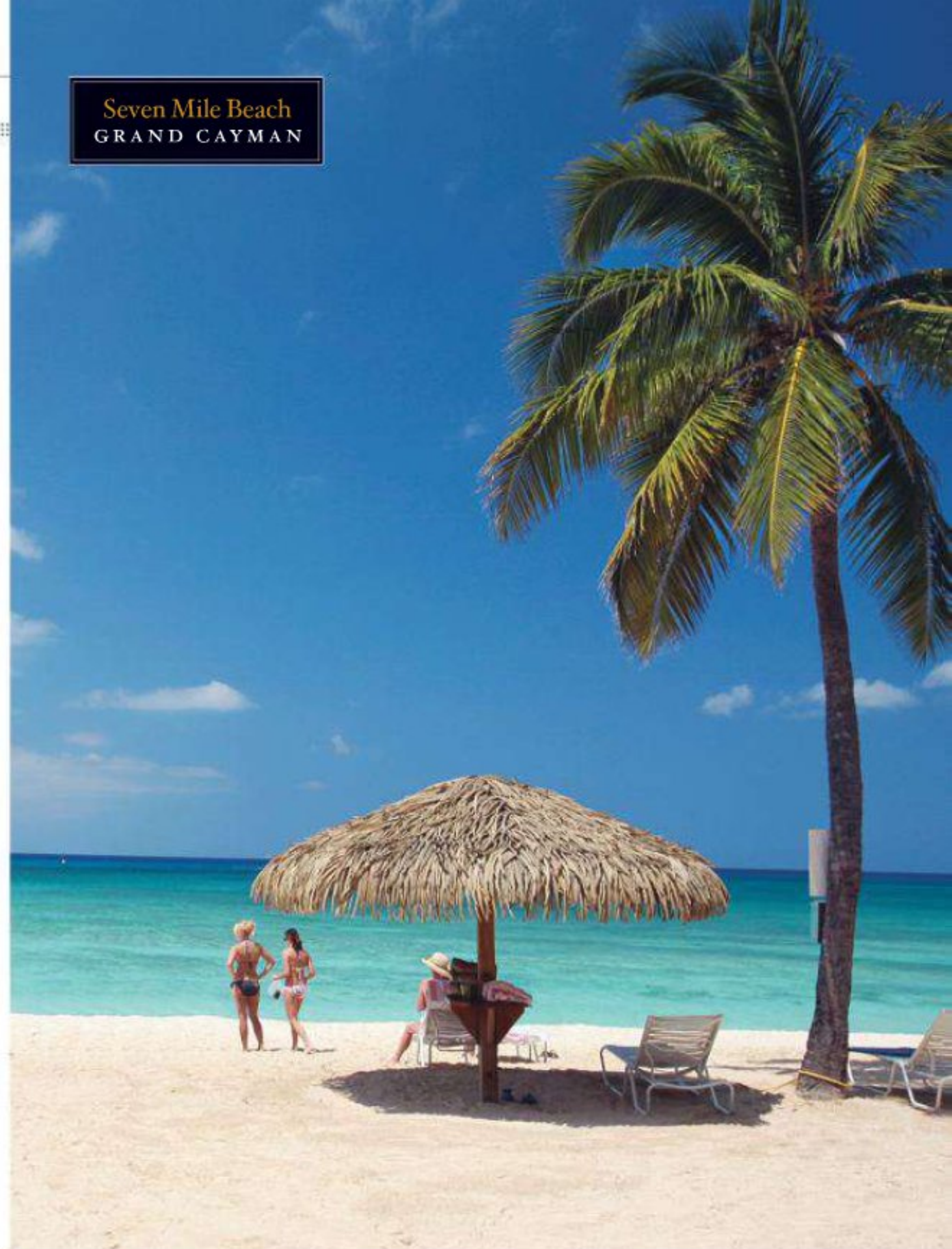
GRAND CAYMAN

➤ **Seven Mile Beach** Sugar-white sands and a sapphire-striated sea make Grand Cayman's marquee strip a no-brainer. The scene revolves around a constant parade of characters: badge-wearing conventioners escaped from the air-conditioned confines of the resorts that front the sand, cruise-ship day-trippers glistening with tanning oil, and Euro tourists in tiny trunks and ginormous jewelry. Reggae-flavored syncopations fill the air; there's a beach bar every few paces (we're partial to Calico Jack's); and the coconutty sweetness of suntan oil perfumes every passing breeze. Seven Mile is an obvious choice — and a fine one.

➤ **Rum Point** Crowds flock here like cling-cling birds to an unattended plate. With a small beach dominated by a bar and restaurant, it's a magnet for cruise-ship passengers on excursions to nearby Stingray City. Get here in the morning, however, and you'll experience the Point's lesser-known side: blissfully serene, vacant vanilla sands stippled with casuarina needles that resemble chocolate sprinkles and neat rows of sorbet-colored picnic tables at the water's edge. By midday, Top 40 tunes will blare from the speakers and lines for the signature Mudslide will start to form. But for now, the beach — and the booze — are all yours.

➤ **Smith's Cove** At this pristine oasis just minutes from the Seven Mile strip, yet light-years apart, chickens peck beneath the almond and sea-grape trees that shelter the shore from along the road while, on the ironshore that embraces the heart-shaped cove, boys somersault fearlessly into the clear waters below. This is where employees from Seven Mile Beach hotels take refuge on their precious days off. So if you go, please don't tell them we sent you.

Seven Mile Beach GRAND CAYMAN



Smith's Cove GRAND CAYMAN



Arashi Beach
ARUBA



Eagle Beach
ARUBA

ANNUAL
**BEACH
LOVERS**
GUIDE

ARUBA

➤ **Eagle Beach** Strolling the plush, deep sands of this wide strand — which is the longest on the island — offers your calf muscles a surprisingly strenuous workout. But it's a small price to pay for a day spent on the bone-white soft sands at this family-friendly beach. There's an international flavor courtesy of a contingent of expats who come for months at a time to eat, sleep and drink within paces of the beach. Other popular activities include zoning out under the shade of swaying palm trees, palapas or umbrellas and, for the more energetic crowd, hitting up one of the many water-sports outfitters that offer catamaran sails, snorkeling excursions and dive trips.

ARUBA

➤ **Palm Beach** Aruba's interior is arid and rocky, peppered with scrub and cactus. But the west coast is graced with sandy shores that are the pride of the island, and the most famous of these is Palm Beach. Strolling the high-rise-lined two-mile stretch is de rigueur on this tourist-friendly island and provides ample opportunities for people watching. A palpable carefree vibe encourages lazy afternoons spent napping on a float bobbing on gentle waves.

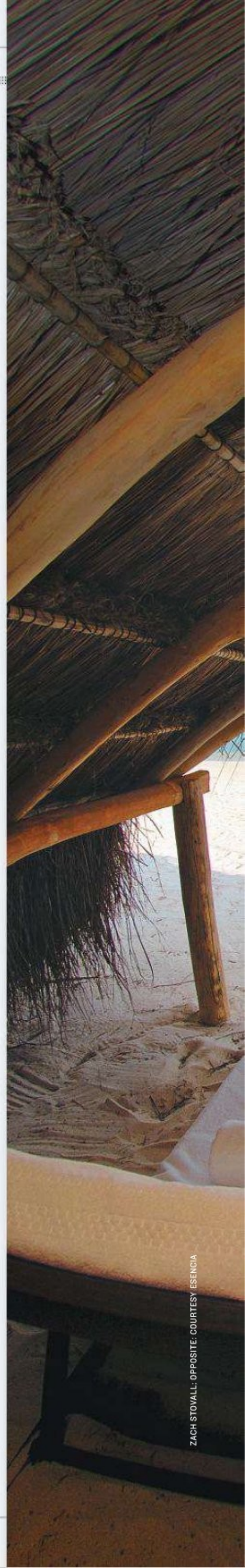
➤ **Fisherman's Huts** Long before the appearance of the tall hotels that buffer the offshore winds so

cherished by windsurfers, this beach was festooned with brightly colored sails. And even before that, fishing boats laden with the day's catch lined the shore, their captains sharing fish tales and negotiating fish sales. Today both parties share the sand: Seasoned windsurfers and kiteboarders streak across the horizon while beginners hang close to shore, trying to avoid close encounters with the boats anchored along the coastline.

➤ **Arashi** As you head northwest toward California Lighthouse, this is the last stretch of sand before the terrain begins to resemble a rugged moonscape. Bring your own umbrella or make this a morning stop, as only a handful of palapas dot Arashi's sands. Brave those scorching beige sands, and you'll find yourself in one of the island's best snorkeling spots, with the wreck of *Antilla*, a 400-foot German freighter.

➤ **Baby Beach** On most days, there isn't much of a scene here, and for some that's the big attraction. (Note, however, that this tranquil spot is less so when cruise ships are in port, and it's popular with locals on weekends.) Aptly named, with placid, bathtub-warm waters and soft, silky sand, the shallow bay invites even the most timid swimmer. A man-made reef enhances the allure of the natural coral formations, making this one of Aruba's best snorkeling spots. Grab a mask and look for parrotfish, blue tang and the occasional octopus.

Palm Beach
ARUBA



ZACH STOVALL: OPPOSITE: COURTESY ESENCIA

THE BEST BEACH HOTELS & VILLAS

HOTELS

➤ ESENCIA, RIVIERA

MAYA A stunning private beach and ultra-luxe setting distinguish this estate hotel, but it's the Zen-like atmosphere and top-notch service that truly enchant — don't miss the holistic spa treatments. From \$499. hotelesencia.com

➤ SPICE ISLAND BEACH RESORT, GRENADA

Opt for the new suites literally steps from the water's edge at this elegant yet casual spot. You might never leave it, except to wander the resort's two-mile golden strand that's among the isle's best. From \$860. spicebeachresort.com

➤ NISBET PLANTATION, NEVIS

The island's only beachfront plantation inn attracts a devoted following as much for the afternoon tea and "veddy British" vibe as for the silky sands. From \$291. nisbetplantation.com

➤ COVECASTLES, ANGUILLA

Obscured by a grove of sea grapes, the entrance to this refuge easily goes unnoticed. Beyond the greenery sit sand-castle-like buildings along the grains of Shoal Bay West, where privacy and seclusion await. From \$595. covecastles.com

➤ SUGAR BEACH RESORT, ST. CROIX, USVI

Part earthy eco-boutique, part Miami swank, this newly rebranded luxury resort is nestled in the Pitons on a UNESCO World Heritage Site. From \$155. sugarbeachstcroix.com

VILLAS

➤ CONCH PEARL, TURKS + CAICOS

Families feel right at home in this three-bedroom villa on Provo's Grace Bay beach. When (if?) the kids tire of the Wii and pool slide, there's snorkeling just steps away. From \$6,750 per week. wimco.com

➤ FORTLANDS POINT, JAMAICA

This Discovery Bay compound isn't simply on the beach — it has three beaches all its own. A seven-bedroom estate, wedding gazebo and outdoor kitchen make it perfect for large gatherings. From \$14,000 per week. jamaicavillas.com

➤ LA PERLA CLASSIC, ST. MARTIN

Located on Baie Rouge Beach, this chic one-bedroom makes a secluded nest for lovebirds, with a gated entry, an oversize shower and a pool deck overlooking the sea. From \$7,000 per week. frenchcaribbean.com

➤ THE SAND CLUB, ST. BARTS

Sleek and simple, this minimalist masterpiece boasts six bedrooms and an open layout designed to make the most of its enviable setting on pristine Flamands Beach. From \$100,000 per week. villasofdistinction.com

➤ RITZ-CARLTON CLUB, ST. THOMAS, USVI

Enjoy the comforts of a two-bedroom villa and the perks of an upscale resort — guests have access to all amenities at the neighboring Ritz-Carlton — all on Great Bay. From \$4,200 per week. mclaughlinanderson.com

Esencia
MEXICO



St. Jean Beach
ST. BARTS

ST. BARTS

➤ **Shell Beach** A stroll from the shops of Gustavia, Shell is St. Barts' "city beach." Blanketed not by sand but by seashells (hence the name), it's the nontraditional beauty among the island's many beaches. Its unique allure owes more than a little to its resident eatery, the irrepressibly groovy DO Brazil. *dobrazil.com*

➤ **Anse de Petit Cul-de-Sac** The locals' little secret, this cove on the island's northeast coast is a complete charmer. And although sunning and swimming are the obvious pursuits, these warm waters are part of a vibrant (and highly protected) marine park, making Petit Cul-de-Sac a snorkeler's dream.

➤ **Anse de Grande Saline** The heavyweight champ of beaches on St. Barts, nudist-frequented Grande Saline (named for the expansive salt pond that sits behind it) is 550 yards of sublime white sand caressed by crystal-blue water that's a reliable 84 degrees Fahrenheit year-round.

➤ **Anse de Colombier** You'll have to don your hiking shoes (or your boat shoes) to get to this cove, also known as Rockefeller Beach, on the island's far western tip, but the reward — a wholly gorgeous and largely unfrequented crescent of white sand — is well worth the effort.

➤ **Baie de St. Jean** St. Barts' "it" beach, St. Jean is a Caribbean take on France's chichi Cote d'Azur. It's a broad arc of sand where bronze-tone beautiful people bask in the sun and nurse \$25 cocktails. Party like the proverbial rock star at the Nikki Beach club (*nikkibeach.com/stbarths*), or take a room at the celeb-laden Eden Rock hotel (*edenrockhotel.com*).

ACTIVITIES

WIND SPORTS ➤ Silver Sands, Barbados On the island's happening and (between November and July) predictably breezy south coast, Silver Sands is home to former Olympic windsurfer Brian Talma, whose remodeled deAction Beach Shop rents and sells wind-sports gear of all sorts. Enlist Talma himself, or one of his able instructors, to teach you the basics of kiteboarding and windsurfing. 246-428-2027; briantalma.com

SNORKELING ➤ No-Name Beach, Klein Bonaire Just off the west side of Bonaire, this unpeopled little isle — accessible by rented boat or the twice-daily water taxi (\$15) from the town pier in Kralendijk — is a snorkeler's paradise. Off the white sand of the north shore's No-Name Beach

(also known as Playa Neme), snorkelers feast their eyes on rays, schools of fish and a vast array of corals as they drift with the current. 599-788-8501; goodreturnbonaire.com

SURFING ➤ Chatarra Beach, San Juan, Puerto Rico The island's west coast — Rincon, specifically — tends to get all the ink when it comes to great surf beaches, but metropolitan San Juan has a world-class spot of its own. Just east of the airport, Chatarra has one of the best left-hand breaks in the Caribbean. Waves — which can be epic here — break in shallow water, and the competition among surfers can be mighty intense, so novices are well advised to grab a cold Medalla and play the role of spectator.

SKINNY-DIPPING ➤ Orient Beach, St. Martin The Caribbean's most celebrated nude beach lives up to its fame. Unfortunately, however, its days as an end-to-end heinie haven are over: Full nudity is tolerated only along the southern stretch, in front of the clothing-optional Club Orient resort. 877-456-6833; cluborient.com

PEOPLE WATCHING ➤ Grace Bay Beach, Turks + Caicos Provo's most picturesque beach boasts 12 miles of sexy sand to stroll and scan for the glitterati who come here in droves to hide out in posh digs. As sunset nears, hit Grace Bay Club's 90-foot-long Infiniti Bar, the longest (and maybe the coolest) in the Caribbean. 800-946-5757; gracebayresorts.com/gracebayclub







A traditional feast
of jerk chicken with
callaloo and rice
and peas at 3 Dives
restaurant. Opposite:
Dramatic views
and fine dining
at Rockhouse.

STORY BY STEVEN PETUSEVSKY ■ PHOTOS BY ZACH STOVALL

EATING NEGRIL

THE
FOOD
OF
THE
CARIBBEAN

There's a "food democracy" in Negril I've not found anywhere else on Jamaica. Perhaps that's why this easygoing beach town is my sweet spot, the epicenter of everything culinary on my favorite Caribbean island. It's the simplicity, the almost hedonistic environment, of intersecting ocean and jungle, where fresh ingredients surround me as I walk along the cliffs or on the beach. In places where large hotels are predominant, local cuisine is obscured; homogenized resorts make food that makes their guests comfortable. But here in Negril, where no hotel can be built higher than the tallest palm tree, everyone can find the same fresh dishes, whether tourist or local, regardless of income or social status. When ➤





you eat on the streets of Negril, everyone is the same and food is the common denominator.

As a chef, I find this completely fascinating. The cuisine reflects the national motto, “Out of Many, One People.” Almost every plate reflects the island’s rich cultural tapestry. The Spanish, first to conquer, left behind escovitch and other vinegary marinated dishes. From the English came the patty, the Jamaican turnover inspired by the English pasty. The Maroons, former slaves, cooked over open fires, contributing to the birth of jerk cooking over allspice wood. Then there is curry, brought by West Indian indentured laborers, and Rastafarian ital cuisine — totally vegetarian, devoid of salt and extremely flavorful.

This is why I always return to Negril. I can completely immerse myself in the culture. Even before the bus embarks on the familiar ride from the airport in Mo’ Bay — a trip I’ve made at least 50 times over the past 35 years — my sense memory takes over and sets my heart racing with pleasure. The fumes of congestion give way to the earthy, exotic aroma of tropical vegetation mingled with the wood fires of roadside jerk stands; reggae rhythms pulse through the open windows as we pass through small towns. Our bus stops more than once for crossing goats. I am home.

My first night here, I walk to Best in the West jerk-chicken shack. I take a seat under the hut’s thatch roof, a high-powered Los Angeles attorney on one side of me, a Chicago stockbroker on the other. The captain of a sailing vessel is tucking in across from me, and there’s a group of pot farmers from Mendocino, California, nearby. We savor the spicy food, dipping our soft, sweet coco bread into the fiery sauce. Our playing field is level. None of us cares what the others do; we are bound by simply knowing this jerk shack is here and by the contentment of just being.

It’s the same sense of well-being I felt on my first visit 35 years ago, only now I feel smarter too. I started coming to Negril as a young art student during the early 1970s, searching for peace, paradise and fellow creative spirits. I’m still an



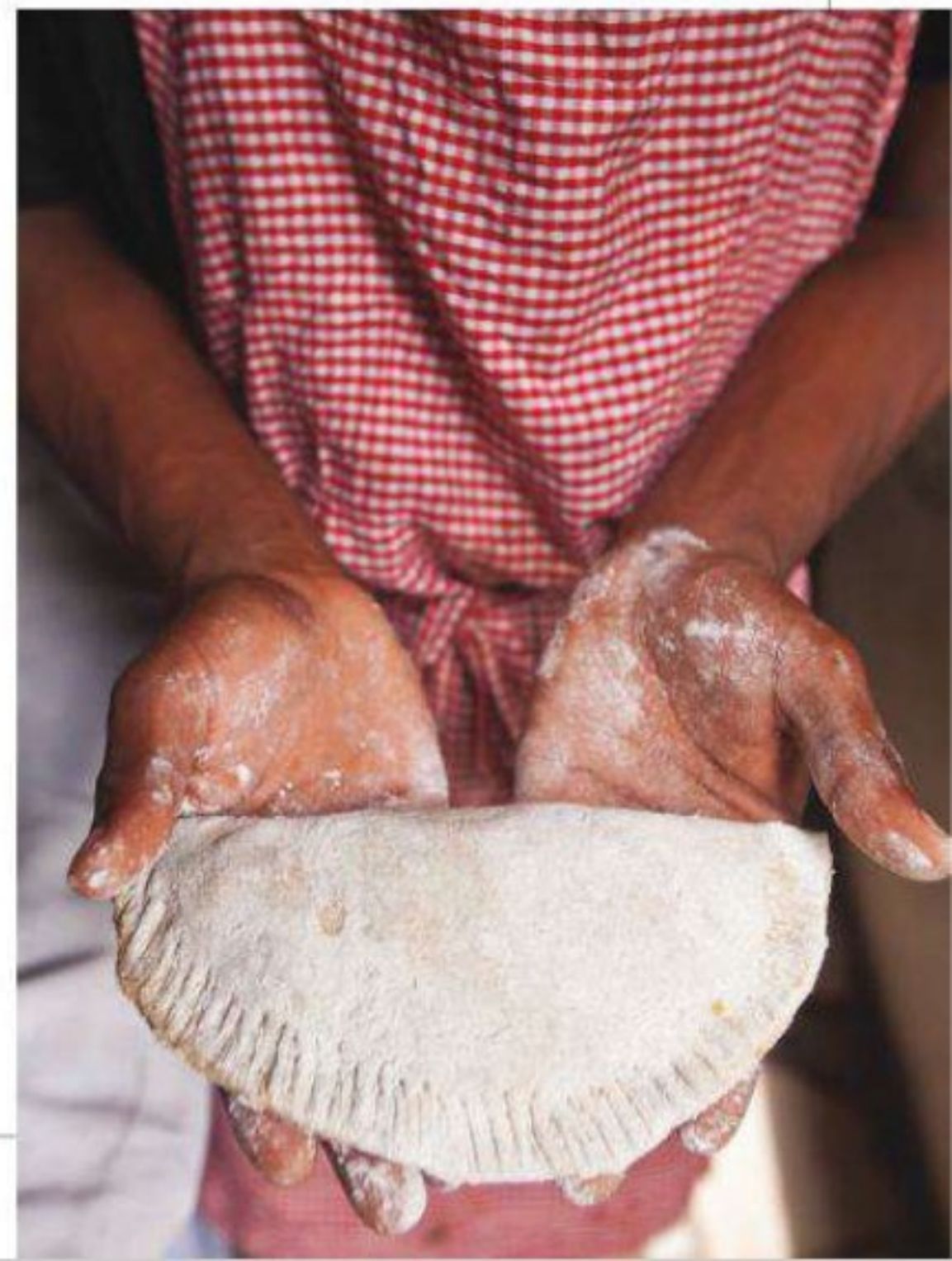
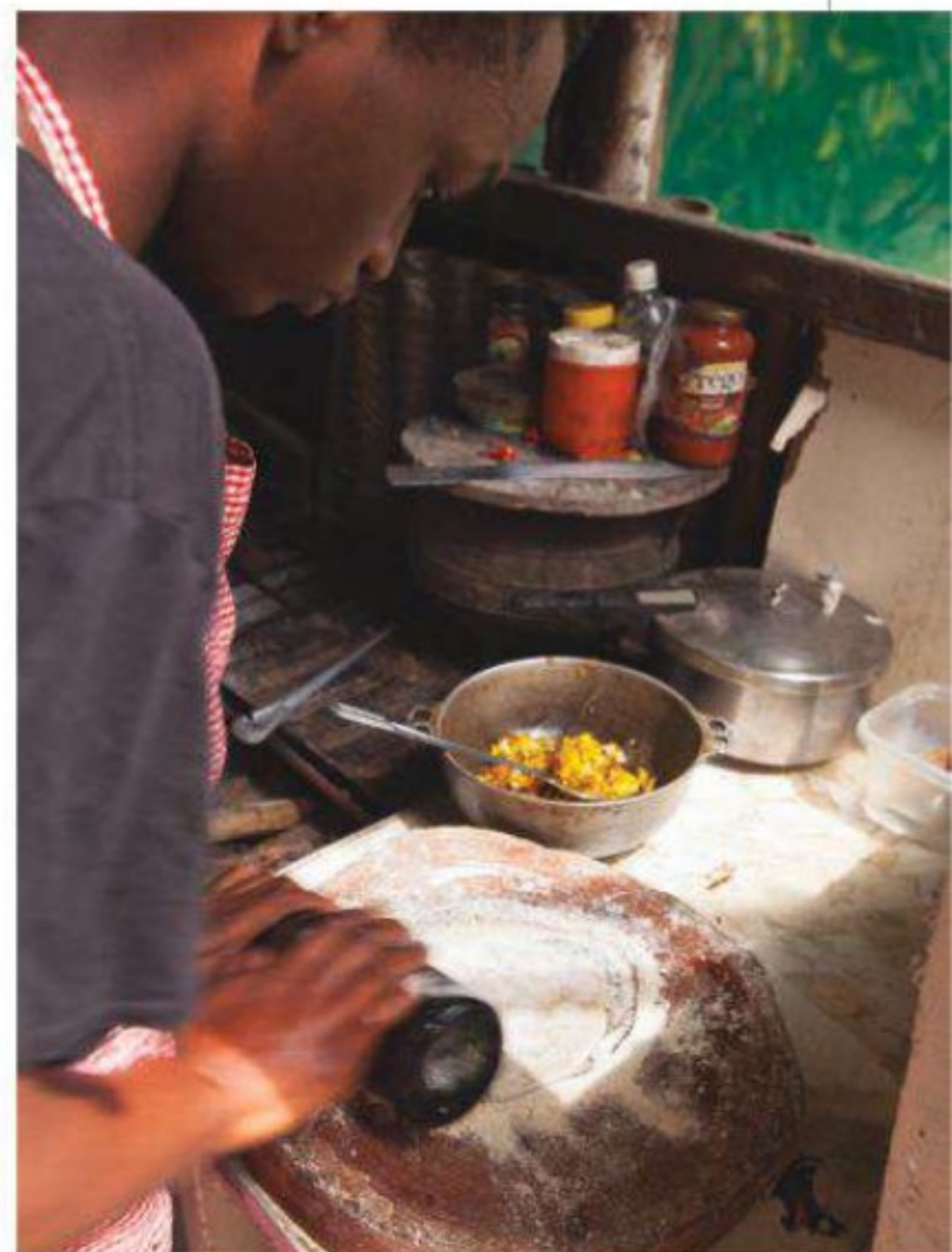
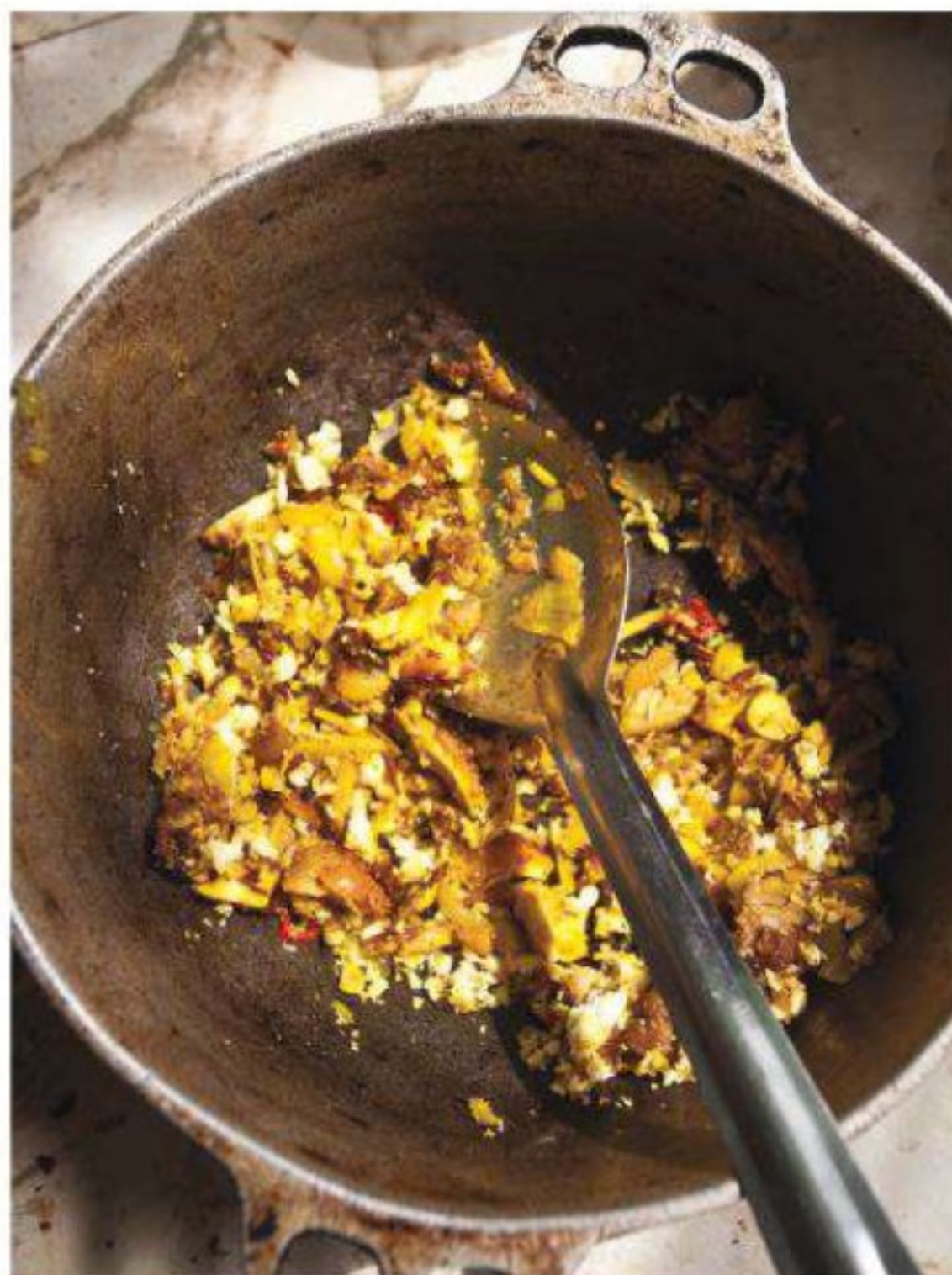
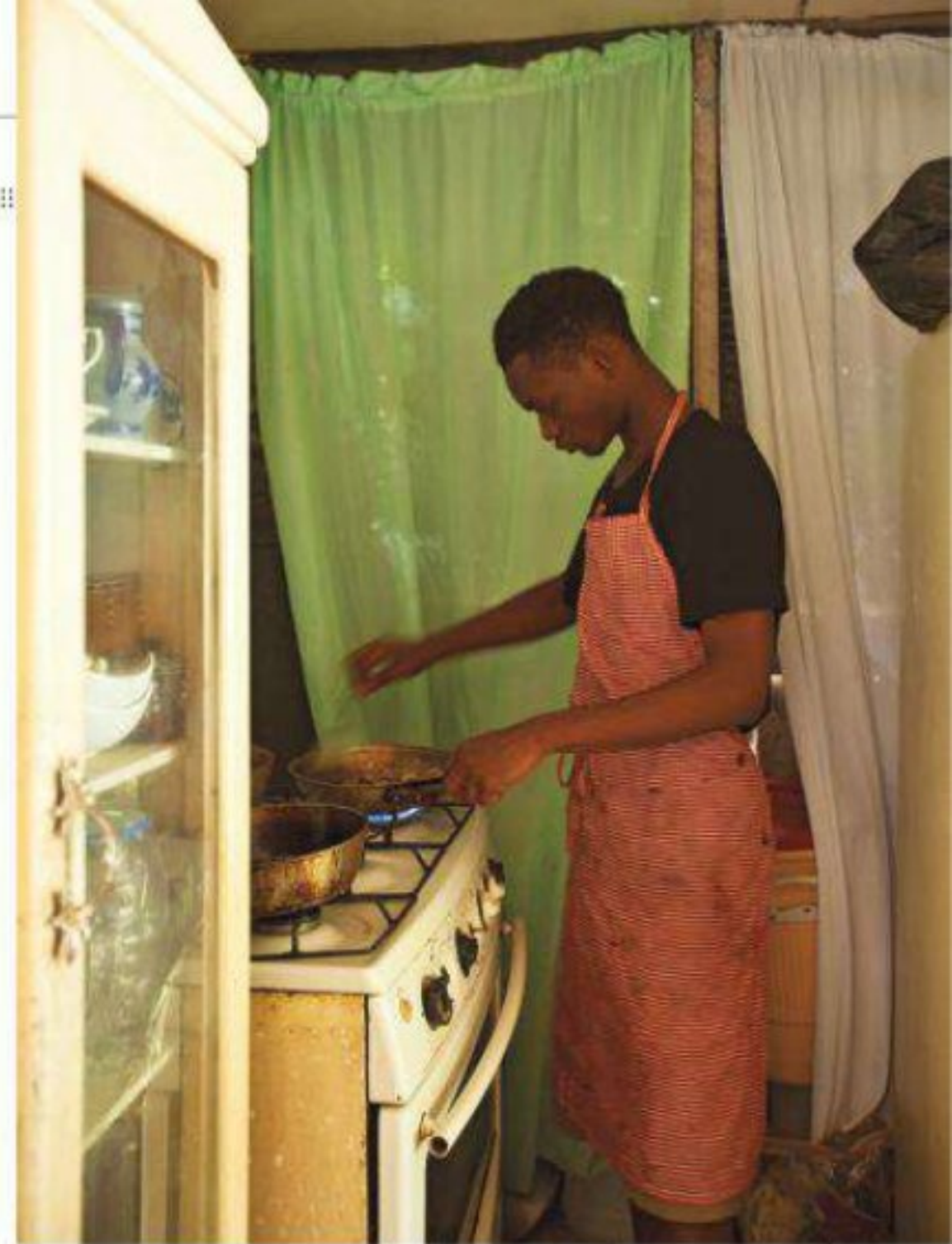
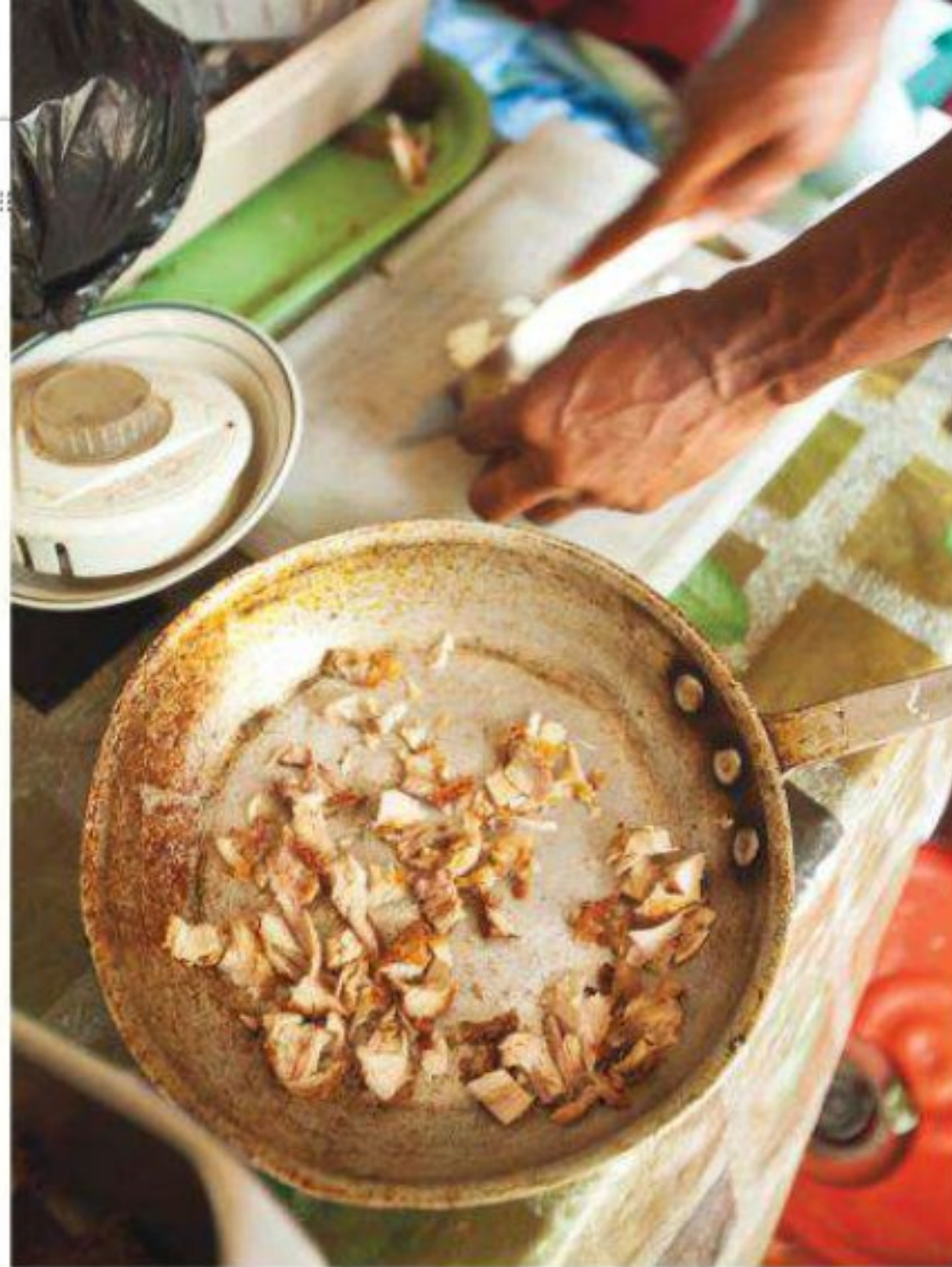
artist at heart, but now I’m a professional chef, a relentless student of global cuisine and a fresh-food fanatic by sheer desire. Every trip to Negril is both a culinary and emotional journey for me.

My work as a chef and writer has allowed me to cook throughout the world. I’ve found that Jamaica offers something unique to the cooking world that others strive to achieve. Most tourists coming from the States know that the vogue right now is to eat local: “Farm-to-table” fare is the fashionable craze. But in Jamaica, there is no other way. Almost everything is grown and harvested within minutes of where it is cooked and eaten. You can see this natural supply chain from the moment you leave the airport. The roadsides are dotted with tiny fruit and vegetable shacks selling seasonal bounty. What appears simply as beautiful flora lining the road is actually ackee, breadfruit, mango and other delicious edibles.

The island bursts with fruit and vegetables wherever you look. Breadfruit hang precariously

“THE VOGUE RIGHT NOW IS TO EAT LOCAL: ‘FARM-TO-TABLE’ FARE IS THE CRAZE. BUT IN JAMAICA, THERE IS NO OTHER WAY.”

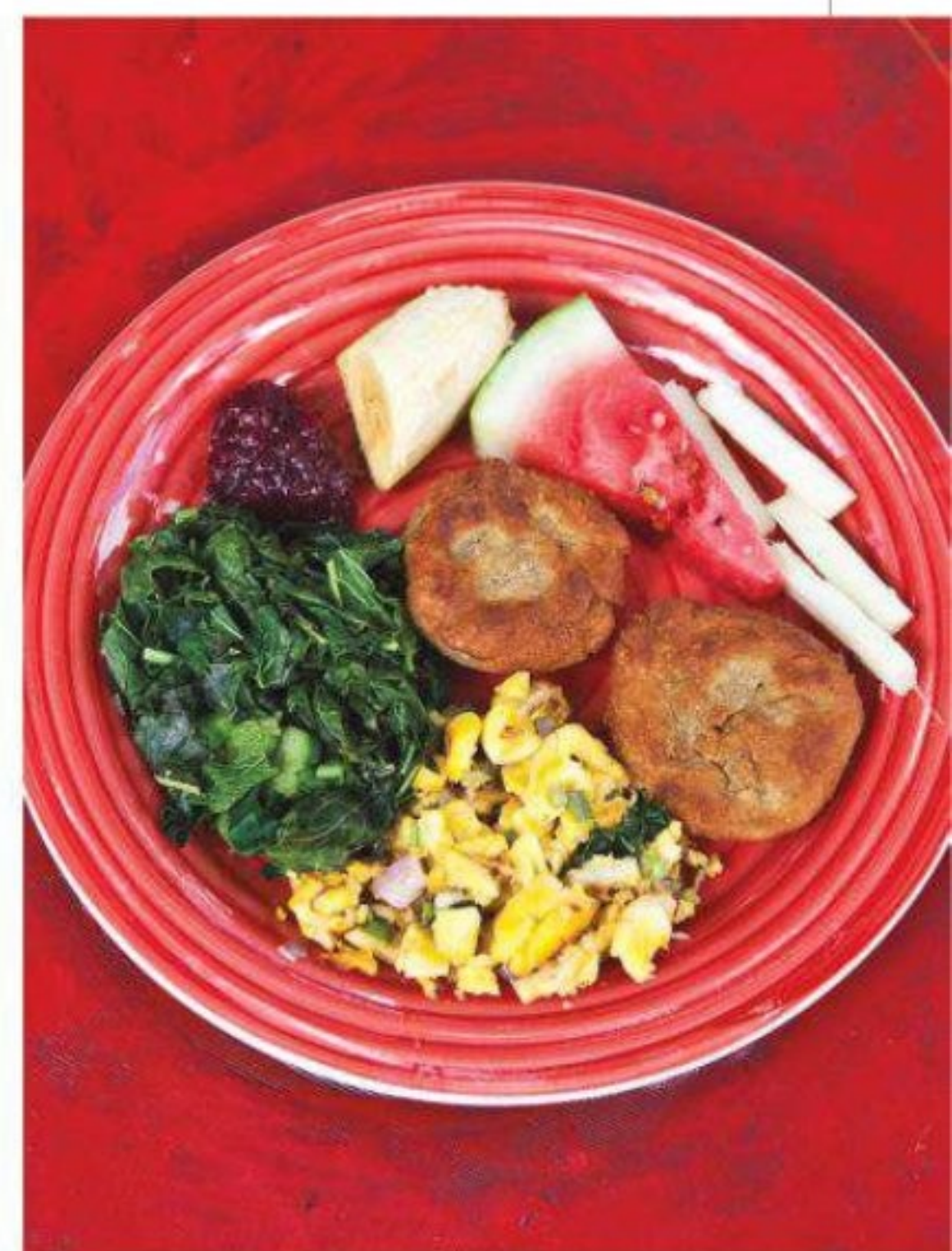
Locally caught lobsters ready for the grill. Opposite: Miguel, one of the three “jerk brothers” at 3 Dives, poses with the day’s catch before the trio sets to work making the jerk sauce, grilling the lobster over allspice charcoal and serving it with a smile.





The Perfect Patty One reason I feel so attached to Negril is the importance of local cooking traditions. The people who make my food have been doing so for as long as I've been coming here. After all these years, they're still jerking chicken, rolling out patties and stewing conch in a rich curry broth, often passing the torch (or rolling pin) to the next generation. Maybe that's why Miss Sonia's (that's her on the top left, opposite) is my pick for a sit-down lunch. I've been coming to her place for years, and she makes some of

the best patties on Jamaica, with all the spectacle that *National Geographic* specials are made from. The process takes time, but that's part of the experience. It's amazing to watch as the patty dough is rolled out in her outdoor kitchen with a bottle on a board cut from a tree stump, then filled with fresh, expertly cooked ingredients. How fresh? If you want a lobster patty and she doesn't have any lobster, she'll send out one of her kids (or grandkids, like Brian, top right, opposite) to get one and then cook it while you wait. Really.



Just Natural is not idly named — the family-owned restaurant sticks to local ingredients for menu items like its fresh fruit smoothies and ackee and saltfish. Opposite: The Mango Lady and her basket of fruit are a welcome fixture on Negril's beach.

from trees. Unbelievable amounts of avocados pack tree branches, waiting to be plucked and eaten. And all around is the smell of fragrant allspice wood smoldering in roadside jerk pits, where chicken is slowly cooking. It never fails: As a local-food advocate — and someone who just loves real, good food — I reach my happy place as soon as I inhale the aroma of fresh thyme, green onions and spicy Scotch bonnet chile peppers on my way through the palms lining the beach.

I've had the pleasure of cooking alongside Negril's "bush cooks," from whom I acquired so much valuable cooking wisdom. The traditional dishes of Jamaica are intense in flavor and uncluttered in taste, relying on ultra-fresh ingredients and simple, age-old cooking methods. It's a singularly natural way of eating. One thing you'll notice is you never feel full or bloated after a good Jamaican meal. My entire soul smiles after I eat here. I feel rejuvenated, sated but healthful, as if I've done something good for myself.

In the beginning of my love affair with Negril's food, I simply appreciated it. When I became a professional chef, the global culinary kaleidoscope came into focus with each plate. Now, as an adherent of the local-food philosophy, I think every meal here is truly sublime. When I order a callaloo patty, I know the fresh greens will be pulled straight from the ground and

prepared simply. If I'm in the mood for seafood, I count on the fact that my snapper, parrotfish or shrimp (sometimes called "swims") are coming from a little dugout docked off the beach. In fact, I may have met my snapper-escovitch lunch earlier in the day while snorkeling in the intense blue-green waters. And as I stroll the landscape, I take care to walk around the patches of fresh thyme and green onions so as not to disturb them before they go into my rice and peas.

Eating in Negril is improv theater at its finest. There's hustle and bustle in every corner. As you walk along the jungle where it meets the beach, you'll come across food shacks selling freshly cut fruit, tropical drinks, grilled lobster or just-baked patties. Reggae music blasts along the shore and through the bush, providing a melodic backdrop. Small boats drift ashore with the daily catch; food vendors walk the sand carrying baskets of fruit picked moments ago or coco bread just pulled from the oven. It's a nonstop spectacle of people and food.

Negril is divided naturally into two zones: beach and cliffs, each with its own rhythm. Many people like the cliffs — their elevation and dense, jungly vegetation lend a secluded, laid-back vibe. But while I prefer the beach for its constant action and breathtaking turquoise water, being

**EATING IN
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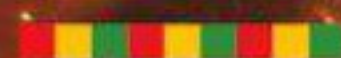
Street Food, Negril Style

Negril is one of the few places I've been where the food comes to you. Just pick a spot on the sand and wait for the food hawkers to come by with handmade Jamaican patties, flaky coconut pastries called *gizzada*, grilled lobster or ripe fruit — all delivered to your lap. My favorites are fixtures on Negril's beach whose nicknames are their calling cards:

The Mango Lady wears a giant basket of fruit on her head. You have never tasted a mango like this, ever. Huge, super-sweet and filled with nectar and creamy bright-orange flesh, they almost taste like artificial mango candy.

The Patty Guy pedals around with a warming box mounted to his bicycle, selling incredible patties: curried pumpkin, ginger-spiked curry-chicken roti and beef patties that will have you breaking into a sweat in three bites.

The Bakery Man walks the beach with a large cardboard box on his head filled with soft white coco bread, coconut pies, banana bread, pastries and other goodies, including gizzardas and other traditional local sweets.



Best Beach Jerk Sauce

Jamaicans almost never share their family jerk secrets, but this recipe was given to me years ago (albeit reluctantly) by my Jamaican sous-chef, Chris, and I've tweaked it myself through the years. Puree the ingredients listed below in a food processor or blender until smooth, then rub it on chicken, pork, fish, tofu, shrimp or red meat and marinate the protein overnight; any leftover sauce will keep for weeks in the refrigerator.

1/4 CUP peanut or canola oil; **2 TBSP.** fresh thyme; **1 BUNCH** scallions, chopped; **1-INCH-THICK** piece fresh ginger, chopped; **4-6** garlic cloves, peeled; **2** Scotch bonnet peppers; **8** allspice berries, smashed; **1 TBSP.** black peppercorns; **1 TBSP.** nutmeg, ground; **2** cinnamon sticks, broken; **2 TBSP.** soy sauce; **2 TBSP.** ketchup; **1/4 CUP** dark brown sugar; Juice of **2 LIMES**

TIP: *Wear gloves when handling peppers!*

Chef Steve's Glossary of JAMAICAN Food

Ackee One of Jamaica's national treasures, this fruit is an island favorite. The flesh must be eaten ripe, or it is very toxic. It's often cooked with saltfish but is wonderful on its own too. It is buttery and much like scrambled eggs.

Allspice A dark brown berry, known locally as *pimento*, that incorporates the flavors of nutmeg, clove and cinnamon. It's used in many local recipes. Allspice (or pimento) wood is also the traditional jerk-fire choice; you can smell the aromatic smoke throughout Negril. **1**

Bammy Deep-fried cassava bread that's typically served with fish or on the side with breakfast.

Breadfruit This large round fruit is seen hanging from many a tree all over the island. It was once viewed as a nuisance (and was the cause of the mutiny in the movie *Mutiny on the Bounty*) but is now a staple of the Jamaican diet. Starchy and comforting, it's typically roasted over an open fire or made into soups and stews.

Calabaza Known to Jamaicans as pumpkin, it has a rich flavor and bright-orange flesh, and is found everywhere. It's used to make soups, stews and patties. **2**

Callaloo This healthy green is reminiscent of spinach and frequently used in patty fillings or as a side dish with fish or ackee. Sauteing it with garlic and hot peppers brings out the flavor. **3**

Chayote Known locally as cho cho, this delicately flavored gourd takes on the flavors of whatever dish it's in; it's often cooked in soups or stews, stuffed, or steamed with carrots and fresh thyme. **4**

Conch Served all over Negril, this massive gastropod with the iconic shell is like a clam on steroids. Impossible to chew until tenderized, it makes incredible soups and stews and is also delicious when curried or grilled.

Escovitch Named for the Spanish word for pickle, *escabeche*, this cooking method is usually reserved for fish: The fillets are browned, then marinated overnight in vinegar, spices, chile peppers and oil. (For a shrimp version, go to citravelmag.com/shrimpecovitch.)

Jerk A method of cooking as well as a seasoning, jerk is served

all over the island, and whether using chicken, pork, shrimp or fish, jerk masters each have their own secret recipe. (Such as the one I swear by, opposite.)

Okra Originally imported from Africa, okra grows across the island and is typically found in soups and stews. **5**

Peas Jamaicans call any bean a "pea." Most common are pigeon peas (also referred to as gungo peas) and kidney beans, which are used in classic rice-and-pea dishes. Rice and peas accompanies almost all Jamaican dishes and is a valuable source of protein.

Rundown A thick stew, usually made with fish, that always includes coconut milk, green onions, thyme, chile peppers and vinegar. It is heaven on earth.

Saltfish Also known as *bacalao*, this dried cod is a national dish when combined with ackee. It's also made into fritters.

Scotch Bonnet Fiery, fruity and an integral ingredient in many Jamaican recipes, this small pepper packs a powerful punch — eat with caution your first few days. (My Jamaican friends taught me to put out the fire with sugar on the tongue, but downing some dairy also cools the heat.) **6**

Sorrel This is not the green sorrel leaf stateside cooks are familiar with but the petals of a deep red flower called roselle. At Christmas, it's made into a sweet drink that's like nectar.

Stamp and Go Another name for a hot and spicy fritter that can be made from a great variety of ingredients — fantastic as a snack.

Yam Not to be confused with the orange staple of kitchens throughout the American South, this starchy tuber is huge, with white flesh. It is often roasted over open fires or made into hearty soups.





“
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WHEN I
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”

able to enjoy the best of both is yet another facet of Negril's enduring appeal for me. My personal game plan is to stay on the beach, then head up to the cliffs for dinners and side trips when I'm ready for something a little different.

This, for me, is the real Jamaica. There's an air of immediacy, a culinary primitivism here that I don't feel in any other place. In Negril I find complete contentment in just walking the beach and scoping out where the food shacks are and what they're serving that day, knowing it's coming to me straight from the earth — or sea. When the mood strikes, I find an accommodating spot and do as I please: grab a bite, go for a swim or bask in the sun like a lizard, then repeat the process in any order through the morning and into the afternoon.

If eating here is an organic experience, drinking is no different. Ting, the local grapefruit soda, is the way I start my day, but as afternoon approaches, I graduate to Red Stripe or, better yet, head for one of the ubiquitous rum huts along

the beach. I watch as the barman pulls a fresh banana from the bunch, adds a ripe papaya and a soursop, then purees it all with ice and Jamaican rum. It's local food — and drink — at its finest.

My dining routine in Negril is a way to reconnect with the people and food I've come to cherish. For a foodie like me, it's a daylong affair. In the morning I head to the beach to wait for the Mango Lady (see p. 55) to come by and peel a fresh mango or papaya for me. Then I move on to a cup of homegrown Blue Mountain coffee, which, thankfully, is served everywhere, along with a dense banana or other fruit bread.

When I crave a traditional Jamaican breakfast, I venture to my favorite breakfast place, Sweet Spot, for a plate piled with ackee and saltfish, roasted or boiled banana, sauteed callaloo, and bammy or festival, local doughnuts of sorts, heavy but wonderful. For lunch, I improvise on either the beach or the cliffs. Miss Sonia's (see p. 53) is a must on every trip, but I also stop by the small beachside huts for fresh-baked patties or a bowl of chunky soup. I often succumb to some of the beach hawkers too, whether I indulge in a pumpkin patty or a bag of freshly roasted peanuts.

Dinner is my favorite part of the day, when I visit my go-to haunts, eat amazingly fresh food and catch up with the owners I've befriended through the years. It also inspires a dream I've held almost as long as I've been coming here: a beautiful little seaside restaurant that serves modern Jamaican food with a twist called Kojak's on the Beach (in honor of the nickname my local friends have given me and my bald head). I'm not taking reservations just yet, but check with the Mango Lady the next time she strolls by.

Steven Petusevsky, aka Chef Steve, is a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America and a passionate advocate of local food and natural cooking. He is a frequent contributor to Relish.com, pens the Vegetarian Today column for the Chicago Tribune News Service and is the author of The Whole Foods Market Cookbook (Clarkson Potter, \$25.95).

The eggplant special with a side of fried plantains and bammy at Just Natural. Opposite: Pushcart, the casual restaurant at Rockhouse, serves up Jamaican street food (hence the name) in a slightly more refined setting.



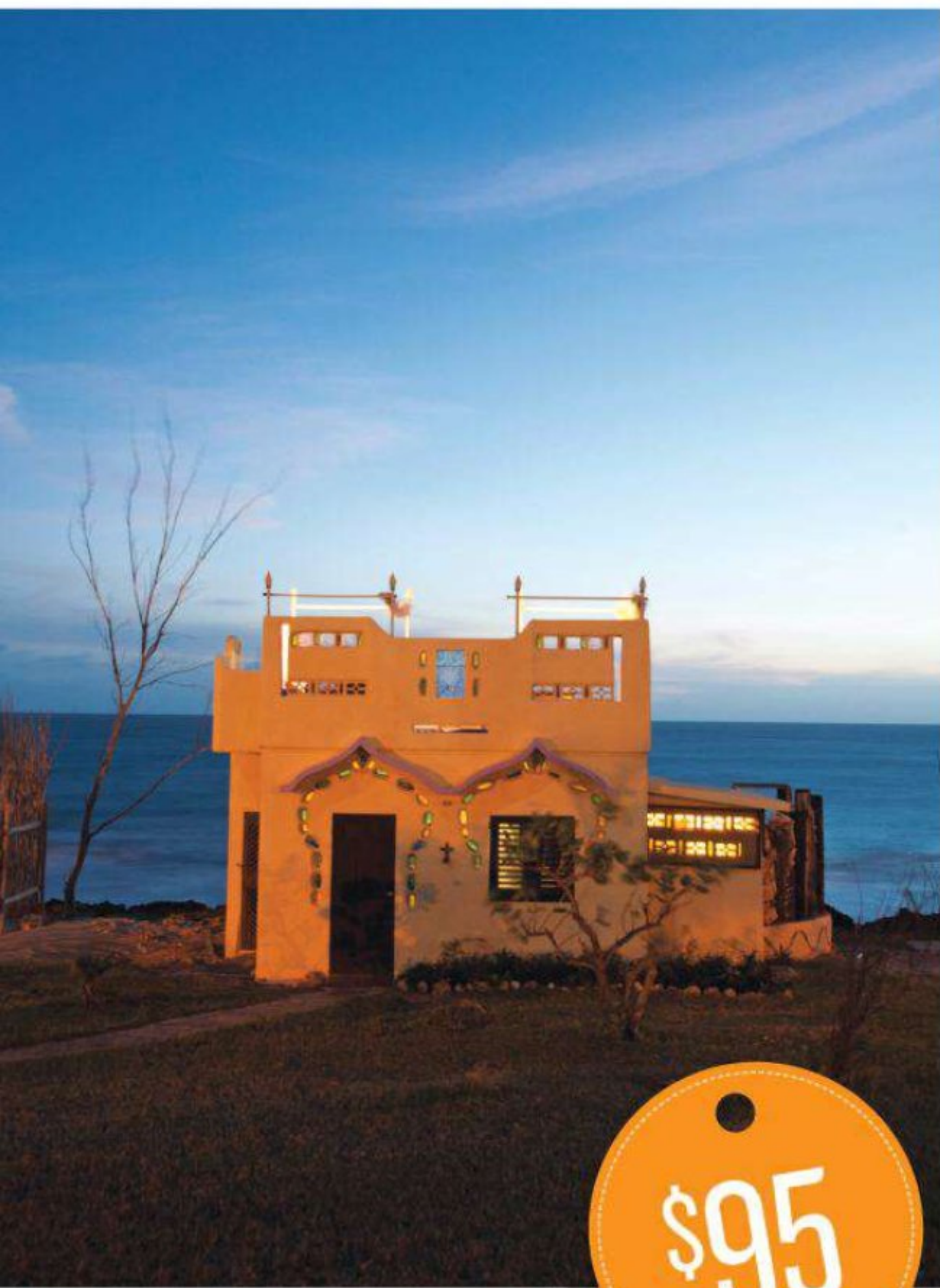


A room with a view
at Jamaica's Jakes.
Opposite: On Antigua,
the sands at Siboney
Beach Club.

20 *Awesome* Beachfront Hotels

BY SARAH GREAVES-GABBADON & DEBBIE SNOW





Nueva Vida de Ramiro TULUM, MEXICO

\$70 No hot water, phone, TV, Internet or air conditioning. Power comes courtesy of generators and solar and wind energy. Yet for 14 years, Nueva Vida has been one of the best-loved hotels in the off-the-grid enclave of Tulum. Chalk that up to the eco-resort's bordering-on-comatose vibe, fostered by an owner who insists that guests "come here and get lazy; this is a place to do nothing." So feel free to while away the hours surveying bone-white sands from the balcony of your seaside bungalow, napping on a hammock slung between coconut palms, swimming in the limpid turquoise waters or lingering over a bowl of *sopa de lima* at Casa Banana restaurant. Doing "nothing" has never felt so rewarding. 52-984-877-8512; tulumnv.com



Jakes

TREASURE BEACH, JAMAICA

Jakes is synonymous with Treasure Beach, a sleepy village on Jamaica's untrammled south coast for which the funky and fashionable boutique hotel's chilled-out, no-problem ambience is a perfect fit. Studding the compact coastal compound are eclectically decorated (think Morocco meets Mo' Bay) rooms, cottages and villas with evocative names such as Starfish, Octopussy and Cowrie. And in the open-air water's-edge Driftwood Spa, everyday cares are whisked away on every ocean breeze. 877-526-2428; jakeshotel.com

Numero Uno Guest House

OCEAN PARK, PUERTO RICO

\$89 This romantic 11-room inn, formerly a private home, sits on one of Puerto Rico's less traveled beaches, and although buzzy San Juan is just minutes away, guests here can hole up in blissful tranquility. Pamela's restaurant serves Caribbean fusion cuisine at interior or beachfront tables, while the second-floor deck is the perfect spot for sunset cocktails and stargazing. 866-726-5010; numero1guesthouse.com

Tranquility Bay Resort

AMBERGRIS CAYE, BELIZE

\$99 In the midst of Ambergris Caye's 15,000-acre Bacalar Chico National Park, this 11-cabana retreat is just 12 miles from the tourist hub in San Pedro, yet a world apart. It'll take you at least two flights and a boat ride to get here (jet into Belize City and puddle-jump to San Pedro, then it's 30 minutes by boat), but it'll be worth it, if only for the once-in-a-lifetime chance to dive the spectacular Great Blue Hole or the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef, just five minutes away. There's also excellent snorkeling just steps from the resort's largely deserted white-sand shore, which is the perfect place to kick back with a Belikin and toast the sunset. 888-843-2293; tranquilitybayresort.com

Frenchman's Cove Resort

PORT ANTONIO, JAMAICA

\$100 With its sugary sands, lush gardens bisected by a gurgling river, and calm, bathtub-warm seas, the grounds at Frenchman's Cove have long been a CT+L favorite. Now that the 45-acre estate's hotel has reopened, we welcome the chance to extend our visits past sunset. And since there are only 16 cottages and a dozen rooms, we're fairly confident that, come sunrise, the cove's tranquil atmosphere — blissfully absent of vendors, water-sports operators and loud music — will still prevail. 876-993-7270; frenchmanscove.com

Sibonne Beach Hotel

PROVO, TURKS AND CAICOS

\$110 A roost on the most famous beach in one of the Caribbean's priciest destinations that doesn't cost a king's ransom? Yes, such a thing does exist here, at what was the first hotel to go up on Providenciales' 12-mile strand, Grace

Bay. At Sibonne, you'll be staying right on the very same beach as the (not so) poor saps in the neighboring wallet-wrenching high-rise resorts — but for about a quarter of the cost. Enjoy Grace Bay's talcum sands, turquoise waters and sophisticated yet relaxed vibe, all made even sweeter by the savings. Just promise us you'll resist the temptation to gloat. 888-570-2861; sibonne.com

Velero Beach Resort

CABARETE, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

\$114 Cabarete is a water-sports mecca, but you don't have to be a water-sports junkie to appreciate the charms of these boutique digs smack in the middle of the boho beach town. Twenty-two apartments and seven penthouses offer front-seat views of all the action out on the water, but seaside Bali beds, a decent restaurant and spacious, elegantly appointed suites (among Cabarete's finest) make staying put a pleasure too. 809-571-9727; veleroibeach.com

The Golden Lemon

DIEPPE BAY, ST. KITTS

\$120 It doesn't get much more quaint than this 17th-century merchant's manse turned island inn, where seven cozy rooms feature a (you guessed it) yellow color scheme, netting-draped beds and views of the lush landscape filled with fan palms, frangipani and flamboyant trees. Less historic (though equally comfortable) is a clutch of seven modern two-bedroom villas, each with a private pool. But whether you're staying in the main house or the villa annex, the quiet black-sand beach is right outside your doorstep. Rate based on single occupancy.* 869-465-7260; goldenlemon.com

Divi Dutch Village

EAGLE BEACH, ARUBA

\$159 It might be part of a hotel chain, but this all-suite low-rise is as boutique as it gets. Guests enjoy an intimate garden atmosphere and access to highly acclaimed Eagle Beach, where nonmotorized sports abound. At sunset, go next door to the beachfront Bunker Bar, a thatch-topped watering hole that's the perfect place to watch not only the sunset but also the playful antics of your fellow rum-punch-imbibing revelers. 800-367-3484; diviresorts.com

*Unless otherwise noted, all rates are quoted per room per night, double occupancy.



\$130

Natura Cabana

CABARETE,
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Halfway between Cabarete and Sosua, secreted in a seaside garden, Natura Cabana's 11 thatch-roof cabins instantly charm with their whimsical touches, such as marble walls, bamboo furniture and shower curtains fashioned from garlands of seeds and shells. Wander through the untamed grove of almond and palm trees to discover a compact spa, a yoga pavilion and a tranquil strip of sand to call your own. Rate based on single occupancy. 809-571-1507; naturacabana.com





\$130

Idle Awhile

NEGRIL, JAMAICA

Bigger isn't necessarily better on Negril's famed strip, where, despite being surrounded by large all-inclusive resorts, this boho-chic boutique still manages to hold its own. Idle Awhile's small wonders include a sun-splashed palette of vivid hues that show up on everything from floor tiles to wall-mounted vases in the 14 rooms; a welcoming staff that makes you feel like long-lost family; and excellent ackee and saltfish at Chill Awhile, the hotel's beachfront dining deck. 877-243-5352; idleawhile.com



Chenay Bay Beach Resort

CHRISTIANSTED, ST. CROIX

\$161 A mile-long crescent of white sand surrounds a group of gingerbread cottages set on a former sugar plantation at this family-friendly retreat. Each cottage has its own kitchenette, but if you don't feel like cooking, nearby Mahi's Sea-side Seafood Bar & Grill serves three squares a day. Explore the coastline by kayak, or day-trip it to nearby Buck Island Reef National Park to discover coral reefs marked by underwater trails. 866-226-8677; chenaybay.com

Sorobon Beach Resort

LAC BAY, BONAIRE

\$175 There was a time when this resort was known only to Dutch naturists, who'd come to get an all-over tan before returning to the ice and snow. Windsurfers discovered the place in the '80s, and since then, Sorobon Beach has become a favorite of super-fit kayakers, kiteboarders and windsurfers, who flaunt their physiques at the beach bars on the strand between sessions on the water. Now the longtime au naturel hotel draws active adventurers, and while you can still venture to the nudie beach, the timid can take comfort that suited-up guests are now in the majority. 011-599-717-8080; sorobonbeachresort.com

Tres Sirenas

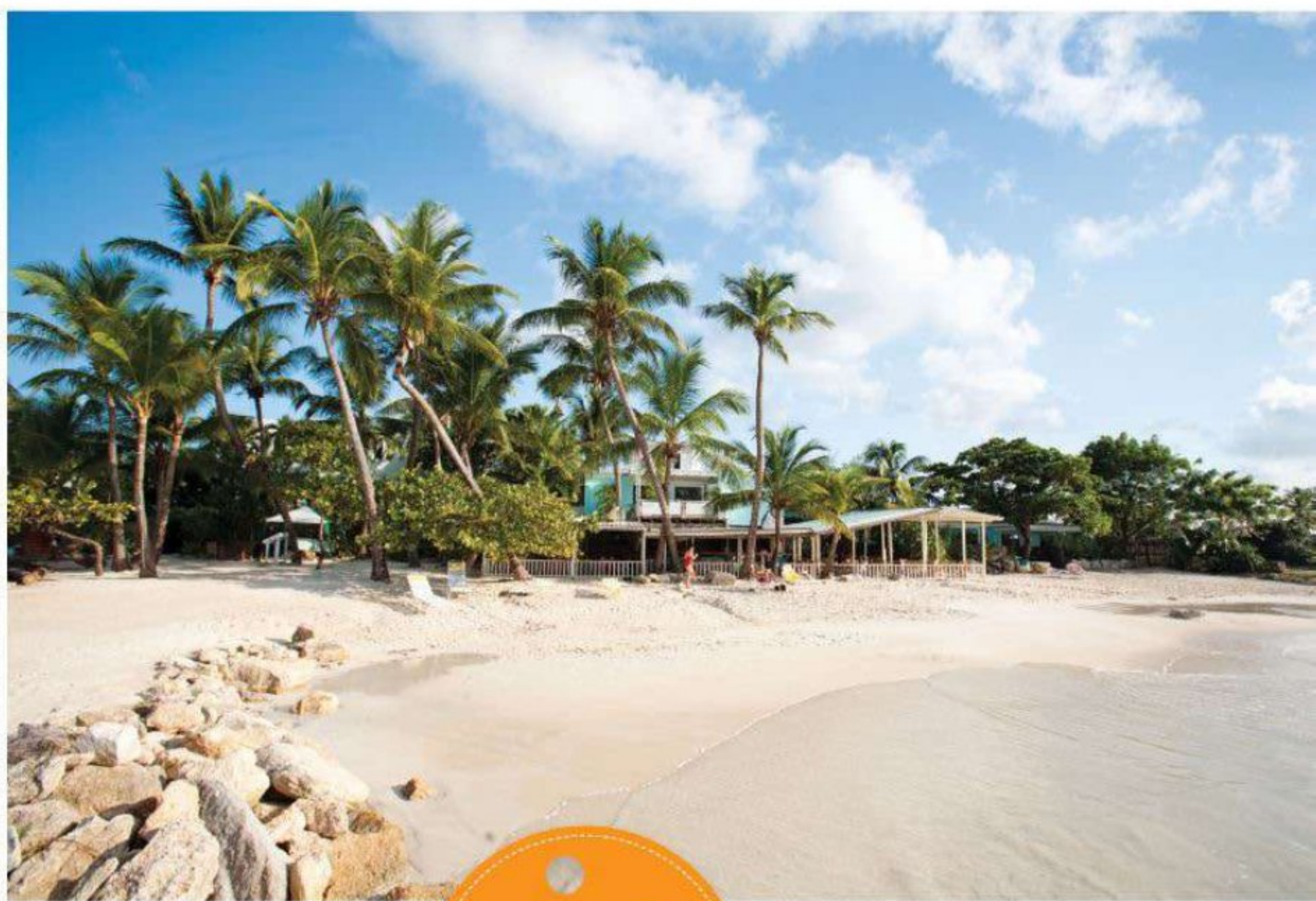
RINCON, PUERTO RICO

\$180 Visions of mermaids may dance in your head at this beauty, where life-size wooden sirens greet you at the door and mermaid paintings and sculptures add a dash of whimsy. Each of only four rooms offers a picture-perfect view of the water, and the sound of waves lapping at the shoreline is a natural sleep machine. Gourmet breakfast, served each morning on the waterfront terrace, is an added treat. 787-823-0558; tressirenas.com

Oualie Beach Resort

OUALIE BAY, NEVIS

\$185 Blue-and-yellow cottages with patios front the sand at this cozy and family-friendly retreat on what many consider Nevis' best strand. Local athlete Winston Crooke runs a thriving water-sports operation next door, renting windsurfers, kayaks, Hobie cats and bicycles. Tuesday-night lobster beach barbecues pull



in a good local crowd, so you can check socializing off your list too. 869-469-9735; oualiebeach.com

Las Palapas

PLAYA DEL CARMEN, MEXICO

\$190 Thatch roofs, Mexican-tile floors and a laid-back atmosphere attract European bohemians to this spot, where rooms in one- and two-story palapa-style buildings are surrounded by 15 acres of tropical jungle. Lazy afternoons call for a siesta in the hammock strung on your patio or a mojito at the beach bar, with your toes in the sand. When you're ready for some action, head to Avenida Quinta, at the northern end of the 13-mile *playa*, where a variety of bars, restaurants and shops satisfy any craving. 52-984-873-4260; laspalapas.com

Hamanasi Adventure & Dive Resort

HOPKINS, BELIZE

\$195 If you're looking to dive Belize's spectacular Mesoamerican Barrier Reef or snorkel the waters around its many offshore islands, Hamanasi is the perfect base. Its location — near Hopkins, in a coastal forest fringed by a 12-mile beach — makes it convenient for day trips not only out to the

\$150**Siboney Beach Club**

DICKENSON BAY, ANTIGUA

Charming owner Tony Johnson and his staff make sure your stay at this homey 12-room enclave set amid frangipani, flamboyant and breadfruit trees feels like a visit with old friends. When you tire of lazing in your patio's hammock, get a massage in the peaceful Zen garden, take an early morning walk along Dickenson Bay or snorkel the reef just offshore. Dining at Coconut Grove restaurant is a simple yet elegant experience just paces from the water's edge. 800-533-0234; siboneybeachclub.com

reef and atolls but also to inland attractions, including a waterfall and a jaguar preserve. 877-552-3483; hamanasi.com

Secret Harbour

ST. THOMAS, USVI

\$195 Each condo in this privately owned collection has been uniquely updated, and the property now boasts new assets, including the Cruzan Beach Club, where Caribbean-Southwest fusion fare, as well as beachside service, await. Let your food digest before you hit up Aqua Action Dive Center for snorkeling or diving in the clear waters around Secret Harbour. 340-775-6550; secretharbourvi.com

Carimar Beach Club

MEADS BAY, ANGUILLA

\$199 Bougainvillea-draped terraces, tropical gardens and friendly staff are sure to impress at this villa-style 24-suite gem, where beach lovers will swoon over the prime location on the sands of Meads Bay. Restaurants are within walking distance, but many guests use their private kitchens, all recently updated. Frequent potluck beach barbecues bring visitors and locals together. 866-270-3764; carimar.com

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SPECIAL PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

ROMANCE


Under the Caribbean Sun



The Caribbean's soothing seascape is the ideal backdrop for amorous escapes.

Enchanted by the spell of the sea's calm waves and the sun's warming rays, couples find Caribbean vacations inherently romantic. Whether you lounge on the sand or splash in the pool, swing in a hammock or ride active surf, sail among islands or gaze at the sunset, you'll find your time here relaxing — and bonding. Dine under the stars with your toes in the sand or gobble up conch fritters from a roadside shack. Indulge in spa treatments created from tropical bounty or ride over challenging terrain in an ATV. Hide away in a secluded cottage or join new friends in activities around a freeform resort swimming pool. Dive

to see treasures under the sea or soar over the treetops on a zip line.

If you both enjoy sand, sun and sea, the Caribbean has a satisfying vacation for you. The region's islands are American, Dutch, French, British and more. The beaches are white, golden and even black. You can stroll through markets and duty-free boutiques in quaint cities, immerse yourselves in rainforest adventures or simply sit on lounge chairs along the shore. Museums, music festivals, rum tastings, culinary lessons ... the Caribbean's diverse destinations offer an incredible array of escapes. 

Aruba Escape, just the two of you, for a wedding, a honeymoon or a romantic getaway to Aruba, a worry-free destination. On Aruba, the sun always shines, the trade winds continuously caress the shorelines, the residents are naturally friendly, and the settings are gorgeous — beach, desert and caves. What's more, people in love have so much to enjoy on Aruba. You can stroll on pristine white beaches. Party with a lively crowd. Try your luck in casinos. Tackle exciting water sports. Take sunset cruises. Toast your future over romantic dinners. And end each day watching beautiful sunsets.

If you're celebrating your nuptials or your anniversary with an amorous Aruba vacation, invite well-wishers to gift you with special activities. Log onto Aruba.com, where you can set up a registry for free. Request couple's massages, room upgrades, shopping extravaganzas, sightseeing tours, catamaran sails ... you name it.

It's simple to marry on Aruba. Many resorts offer affordable wedding packages that include dreamy ceremonies and celebrations. For a more offbeat event, work with a wedding planner to say your vows at an unusual site, such

as a natural bridge or a secluded cove, or in a religious one like a church or a synagogue; follow up with a butterfly release, a dance party or a wine dinner. The possibilities are endless.

Honeymoons on Aruba are not only heavenly, they're often "free." More than a dozen hotels participate in an island-wide "One Free Honeymoon" program. Simply let their staffs know you're newlyweds and they'll treat you to a bottle of bubbly, a souvenir gift and a night's anniversary stay; many include additional extras. One Happy Island makes for many happy couples. aruba.com

Jamaica With beautiful grounds, spacious accommodations, incredible service and an ideal location, **The Jewel Dunn's River Beach Resort & Spa** is the ideal wonderland. Adults-only and all-inclusive, The Jewel is indeed an inspiring escape for friends, couples, honeymooners and idyllic weddings.

Whether you stay in a spacious guest room, concierge guest room or butler-service suite, you'll be free to dine in six superb restaurants from beach casual to white-glove sophisticated — and all scrumptious. Guests play

under the pool falls, relax on a pristine beach, putt on a nine-hole golf course, champion a game of beach volleyball, and take to the sea for snorkeling and kayaking. If you're an explorer at heart, The Jewel's Tours and Activities desk can help you choose the perfect tours and attractions for you. Or, indulge in pampering at the full-service Radiant Spa. The spa offers treatments to enhance and restore the radiance of your body, mind and soul.

Choose to marry at The Jewel and you'll have several sophisticated packages from which to choose. The events team will customize your ceremony and reception. Walk down an aisle sprinkled with rose petals, or add live musical accompaniment to your ceremony. Platinum Sunset weddings include spa treatments and a Romance by Night turndown. If you can dream it, The Jewel wedding planners can make it happen. You'll have full confidence that, while you relax, every detail of your wedding will be executed to perfection.

During your time under the sun, expect a pool concierge to stop by with fruit kebabs, chilled face towels, even eucalyptus-infused water. You might spend one night watching a "dive-in movie" from your pool float while noshing on jerk-spiced popcorn. Day and night, The Jewel mixologists whip up creative cocktails, fondly called "Gem of the Day," with flavors such as Jamaican ginger, lychee and satsuma. The Jewel delivers a luxury vacation unlike any other. 800-951-2997, jeweldunnriverresort.com



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British Virgin Islands Imagine your romantic escape on a private island, where luxurious rooms, villas and suites offer access to three beaches, an indulgent spa, and both casual and fine dining. This haven is called **Scrub Island Resort, Spa & Marina**. Only one year old, Scrub Island is a couples' paradise, where guests of the 50 accommodations are the only ones on the entire British Virgin Island.

Honeymoons are big here — and not only because one twosome a day can reserve Honeymoon Beach, a sandy sensation reachable only by kayak. The resort is a lovers' paradise, where, hand in hand, you can swim in two pristine pools, unwind at two swim-up bars, and sail, dive and snorkel from the marina. Dine on veal Oscar, coq au vin, coconut

curry shrimp or the catch of the day. Or, relax over a Caribbean, Tapas 'n Tinis, or Cheeseburger in Paradise buffet at Tierra! Tierra! A ferry runs hourly to Tortola, only a mile away. The resort host staff will happily arrange for excursions, from sightseeing experiences to the Caribbean Pub Crawl, hitting on several well-known BVI bars.

Sign on for the seven-night honeymoon package and your stay will be better yet. After being greeted at and transported from the airport, you'll be met at the resort with tropical cocktails followed by a bottle of sparkling wine. You'll lodge in an upgraded one-bedroom ocean-view suite, receive breakfast and dinner daily, and be treated to three special experiences: a 60-minute couple's massage with private continental breakfast in the spa, a poolside dinner for two, and a snorkeling trip. 877-890-7444, scrubisland.com 

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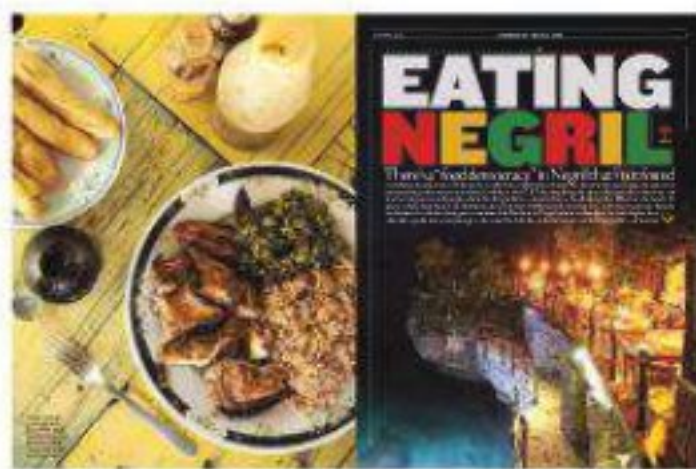
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Essentials

> **P. 70** EATING NEGRIL > **P. 72** THE FRONT > **P. 73** STOP THE PRESS



Negril > The food in Negril is extremely fresh and very simple; the emphasis on local ingredients and techniques means that most restaurants offer similar menus. Many places in Negril are little more than thatch huts with open cooking areas and jungle scenery, which is all part of their charm. There are some fancier spots, both on the cliffs and at the beach, but the focus is on real food harvested right here in Negril. For a special meal, try Rockhouse, Kuyaba or the Caves. You'll find a bit more polish with the local flavor — along with more expense. Note: Restaurants in Negril don't really have numerical street addresses, but if you're not sure how to get to your eatery of choice, don't worry. Just hail a taxi and tell the driver where you're headed; Negril cabbies know where everything is.



WHAT TO KNOW

Tourist Information 800-526-2422;

visitjamaica.com

Documents Passport required

Getting There Negril's nearest airport, Sangster International, is a good 50 miles east in Montego Bay; the drive usually takes about an hour. Daily nonstop flights are available from American (Dallas, Miami), Delta (Atlanta), United (Charlotte, Houston, Newark and Philadelphia) and US Airways (Charlotte).

Currency Jamaican dollar (US\$1 = 85.55 JMD)

Dialing In 1 + 876 + seven-digit number

Getting Around You can rent a car from major outfits (Avis, Budget, Hertz) at the airport, but be forewarned that driving in Jamaica is on the left and not for the faint of heart. Walkers should note that the Negril strip is about seven miles long from one end to the other and has no shortage of traffic; stick to short jaunts or the beach. The most convenient option is to take a cab. Official taxis sport a red license plate; always negotiate the fare in advance. Note: There are two kinds of taxis in Negril — private cabs and route taxis, which are cheaper but run preset circuits and often stop to pick up additional passengers.

WHERE TO STAY

Catcha Falling Star The resort's breathtaking cliffside locale beckons a friendly crowd to seven cottages that sit along winding paths in a tropical garden setting. There's also a private snorkeling cove and fine dining at Ivan's (see opposite). From \$95. 876-957-0390; catchajamaica.com

CocoLaPalm This property boasts a prime location right on a sugar-sand beach in the center of Negril, as well as a friendly staff and 76 generously sized rooms in funky octagonal buildings arrayed around two courtyard pools. From \$85. 800-320-8821; cocolapalm.com

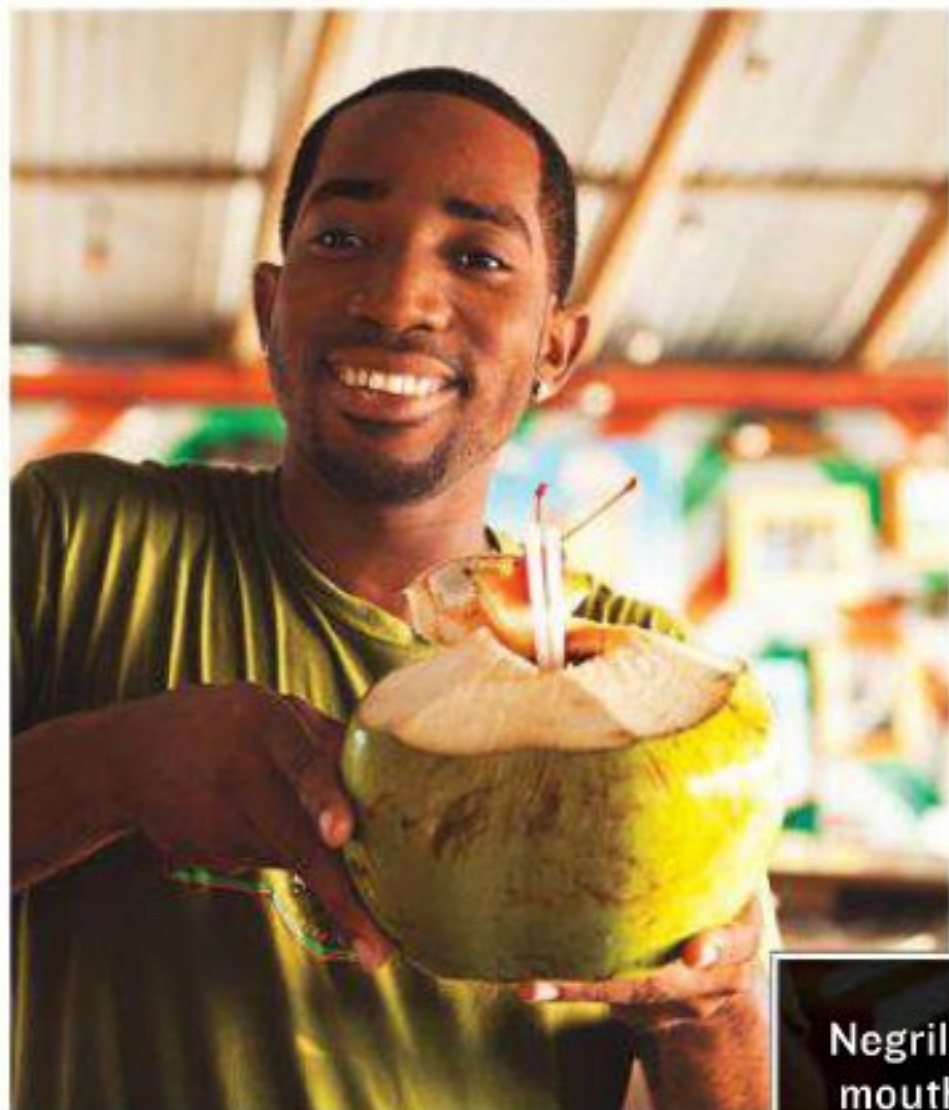
Country Country Choose from 20 artsy cottages along the beach, each done up in quintessential Caribbean style. The on-site restaurant serves local favorites — try the banana pancakes for breakfast. From \$156. 876-957-4273; countryjamaica.com

Rockhouse Perched on a cliff overlooking the aptly named Pristine Cove, this boutique hotel offers 34 rooms (including 20 villas), all with private balconies or terraces. A spa treatment "on the rocks" is not to be missed. From \$125. 876-957-4373; rockhousehotel.com

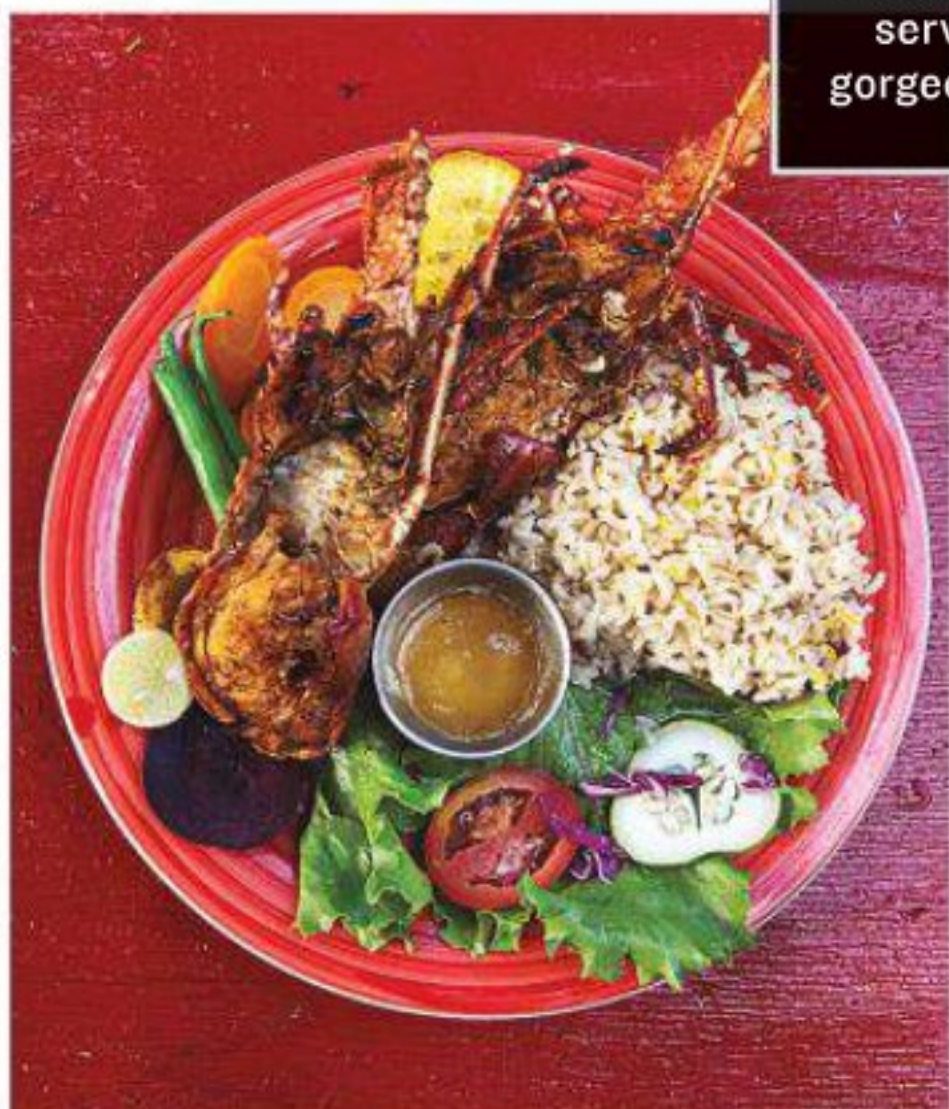
WHERE TO EAT

Many popular local haunts are pretty casual, but any lack of physical trappings is more than made up for in the extremely fresh, flavorful food. You can't call ahead to some of these spots, but you don't really need to. Just show up with a healthy appetite and enjoy.

Best in the West The name says it all: This unassuming jerk stand across from the CocoLaPalm resort serves up some of the best jerk



Negril serves up mouthwatering meals, friendly service and gorgeous views.



chicken, coco bread and rice and peas you'll ever have. It always has plenty of cold Red Stripes on hand too. Grab a seat, crack open a beer, eat some chicken and break into a sweat — you'll know you're in Negril.

Hungry Lion One of the more polished restaurants in Negril. The specialty here is the killer vegetarian and ital cuisine, but there's also seafood for the pescetarian crowd. For views as scrumptious as the food, sit on the roof patio balcony overlooking the jungle. 876-957-4486; [facebook.com/hungrylionjamaica](https://www.facebook.com/hungrylionjamaica)

Ivan's Bar Restaurant The spectacular setting on the cliffs at Catcha Falling Star resort makes a fitting backdrop for great food — especially the fresh fish — with a touch of romance. Watch the sunset, sip a great cocktail and enjoy the excellent service. 876-957-0390; catchajamaica.com

Just Natural Set in a garden on the cliffs, this eatery boasts tasty food that's made from

scratch with fresh local ingredients by people who really care about what they serve. Start with pumpkin soup, then have the curry conch and shrimp — they're amazing.

Miss Sonia's Sit on Miss Sonia's porch, place your order and then watch her (or one of her kids or grandkids) roll out your patty with a glass bottle on a big block cut from a tree. Have the curry, callaloo and ackee (in season), and make sure you don't miss the fresh fish.

MANY PLACES AREN'T MORE THAN *THATCH HUTS* WITH JUNGLE SCENERY, WHICH IS PART OF THEIR *CHARM*.

Sweet Spice In the center of town, this is a great place to hang out; locals and tourists mix in their common quest for authentic Jamaican food. You'll be served traditional mannish water (goat's-head soup) when you first sit down; follow it up with grilled fish or curried swims (shrimp). 876-957-4621

Sweet Spot Don't bother trying to find this one on your own — every cabbie knows where it is because it's where they all eat. Along with sister restaurant **Cool Spot** (which is just down the road), this is hands down the place to go for true local food — not to mention amazing authentic Jamaican breakfasts — served in a kind of jungle truck-stop setting.

3 Dives Simple and rustic, with a fantastic clifftop location, alfresco seating and lovely water views, this spot is known for its great jerk with rice and peas. But when lobster is in season, have it grilled with lemon and thyme. 876-782-9990; maberconsulting.com/3dives

The Front

FROM RANDOM COOLNESS (P. 10-11)



Belcampo Lodge, Belize The resort formerly known as Machaca Hill Rainforest Lodge offers a truly wild experience, with 12 suites that are not only embedded in the surrounding rainforest but also decked out in natural, locally

sourced materials. From \$330 (including breakfast). 501-722-0050; machacahill.com

The Caves, Jamaica Situated on the cliffs of Negril's West End, the resort enchants guests with 11 eclectically appointed one- and two-bedroom cottages, a luxe four-bedroom villa and a host of amenities within the site's caves, including a rum bar, a hot tub for two and private dinners by candlelight. From \$420. 800-688-7678; islandoutpost.com/the_caves

The Crane, Barbados The sprawling property's original historic hotel features 18 oceanfront rooms, several of which (including the splendid Room 8) feature rough-hewn coral-stone walls that are more than 200 years old. From \$150. 866-978-5942; thecrane.com

The Current

FROM SAND IN MY SADDLE (P. 13)

Trikk Pony Stables, Grand Bahama Island 90-minute rides from \$125 per person. 242-374-4449; trikkpony.com

Tropical Trail Rides, Puerto Rico Two-hour rides from \$55 per person. 787-872-9256; tropicaltrailrides.com

Spicelands Equestrian Centre, Bermuda 60-minute rides from \$60 per person. 441-238-8212; spicelandsriding.com

Chukka Caribbean Adventures, Jamaica 2½-hour rides from \$74 per person. 877-424-8552; chukkacaribbean.com

Ocean Echo Stables, Barbados 60-minute rides from \$70 per person. 246-433-6772; barbados-horse-riding.com



FROM TOP: ZACH STOVALL; ISTOCK

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Stop the Press!

Late-breaking news from around the Caribbean that's just too good to leave out. *By Matt Phenix*



JFK to La Romana

JetBlue is one of our very favorite airlines (if you've flown it, you know why). The carrier has just launched Wednesday and Saturday service from New York's JFK International Airport to the **Dominican Republic's La Romana International Airport**. The Wednesday flight leaves at a bright-and-early 8 a.m.; the Saturday flight departs at a more civilized 2:30 p.m. jetblue.com



Cruisin' to the Oldies

It's not too early to book a cabin for Holland America Line's 2012 Malt Shop Memories Cruise aboard the *MS Eurodam*. Setting sail from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on Oct. 27, the cruise includes performances from a gaggle of jukebox favorites, including **Frankie Avalon, Bobby Rydell, Ronnie Spector and Dion**. The seven-night itinerary includes stops in the Turks and Caicos, Puerto Rico and the USVI, and at the cruise line's private isle, Half Moon Cay, in the Bahamas. Rates start at \$1,900 per person, though if you book before March 31, you can enjoy big savings with the early admission rate. hollandamerica.com; maltshopcruise.com



BEYC's New BMOC

I'm pleased to announce that one of this magazine's good friends and one of the very best hotel managers in the business, Mo Sallah, has landed at one of our favorite resorts, the Bitter End Yacht Club, in the BVI. Formerly the general manager of the Lighthouse Bay Resort, on Barbuda, Mo is uncommonly gifted when it comes to running a tight ship. I expect him to make a stay at Virgin Gorda's famed nautical resort even more memorable. Welcome aboard, my friend. beyc.com

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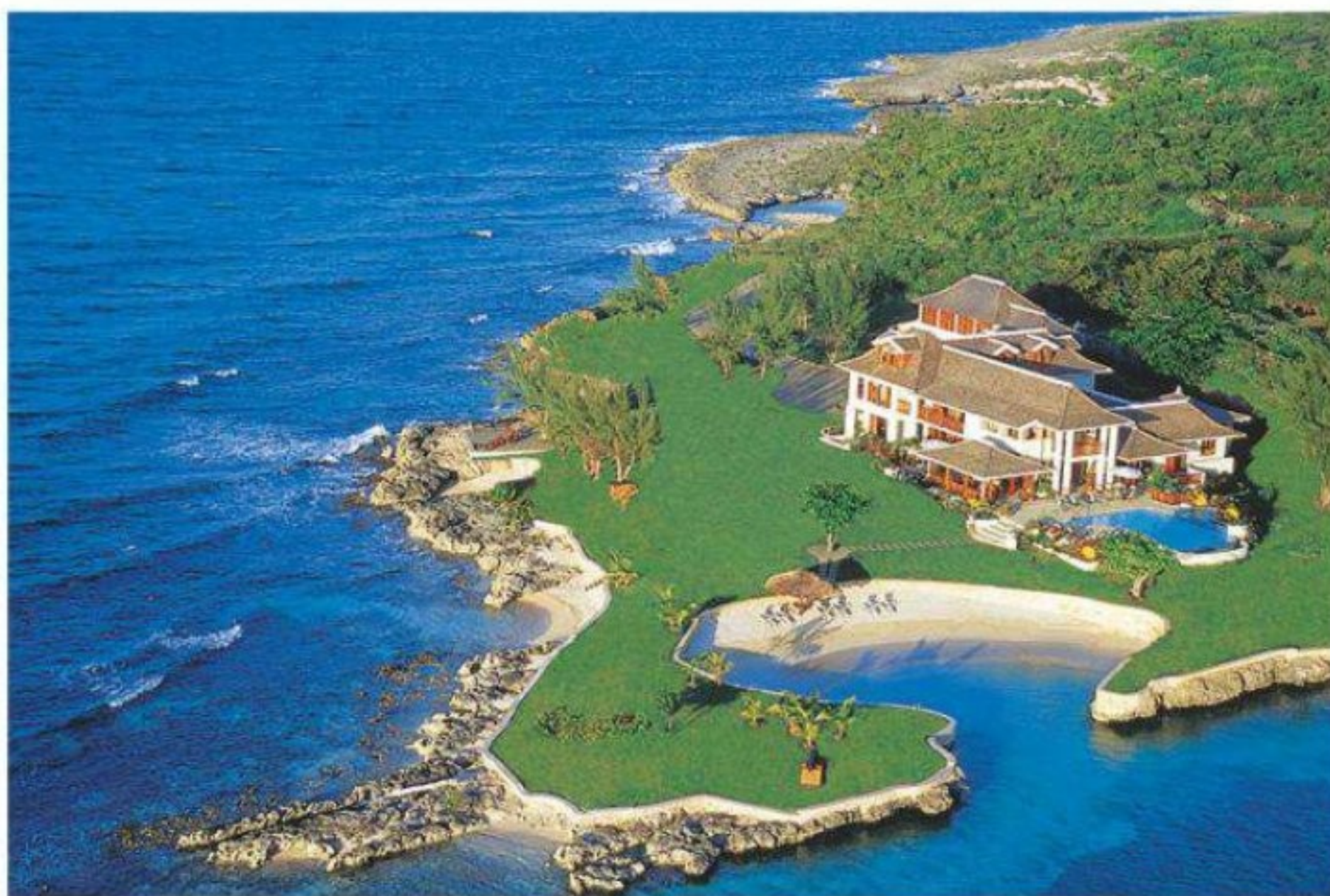
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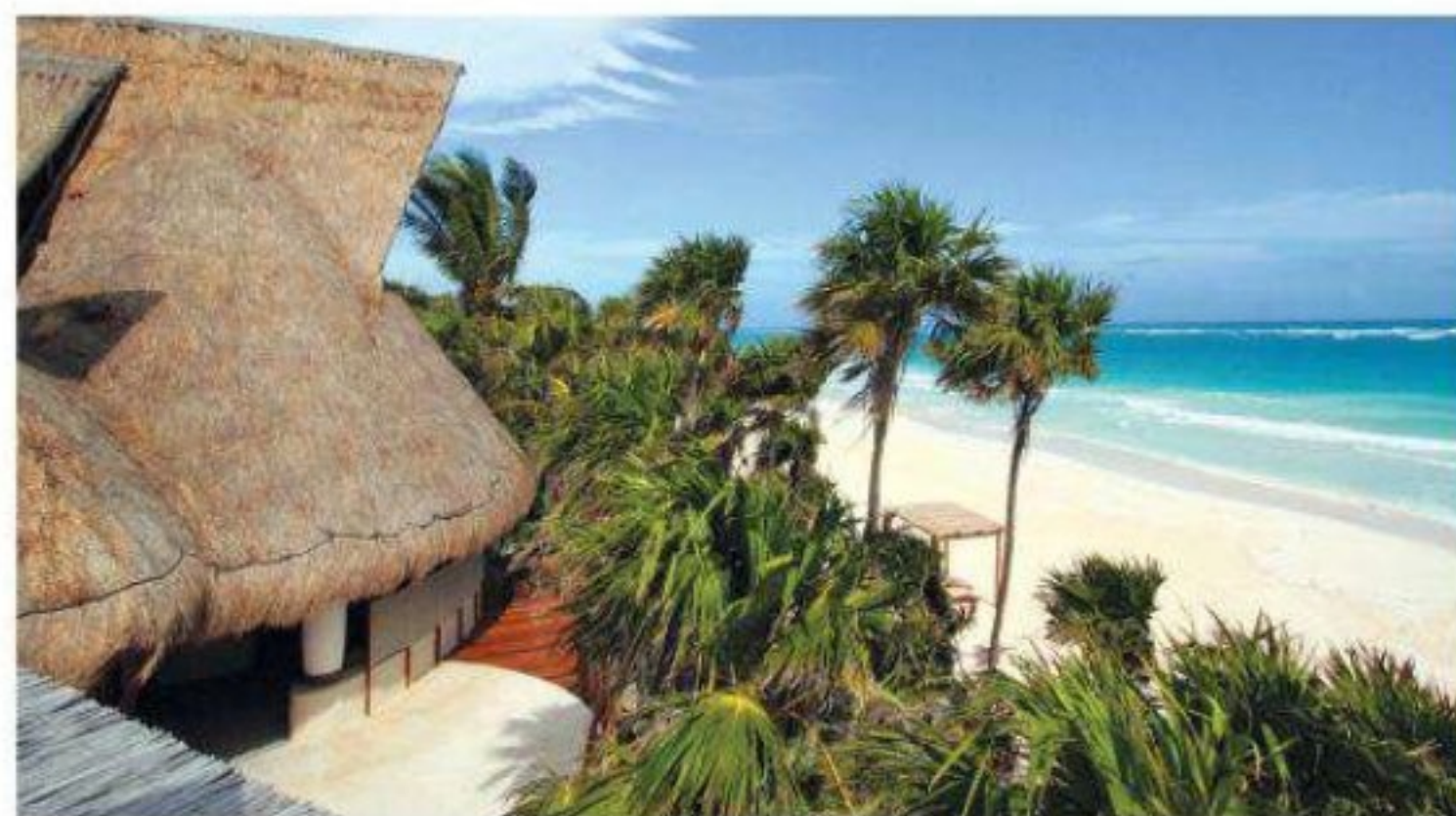
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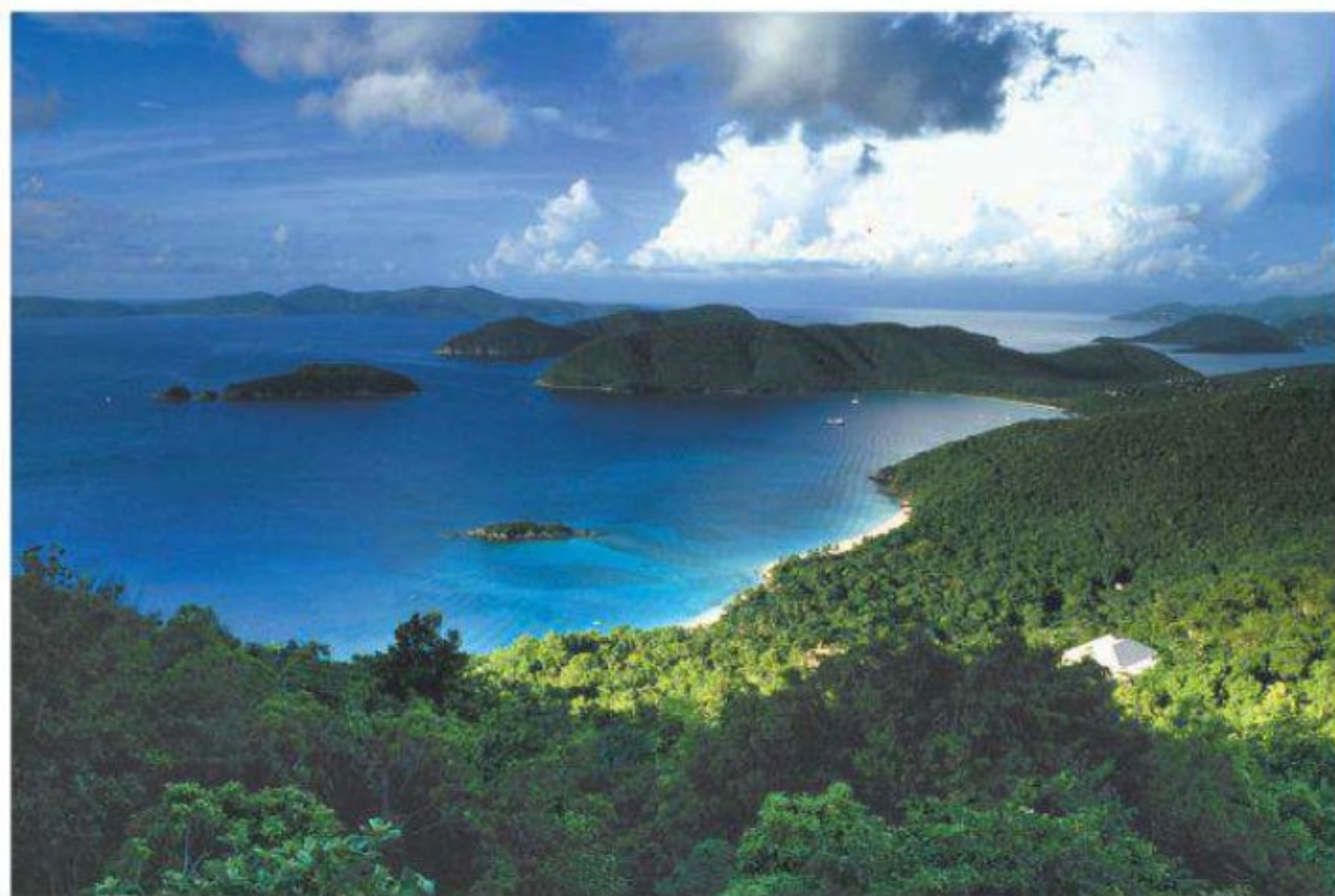
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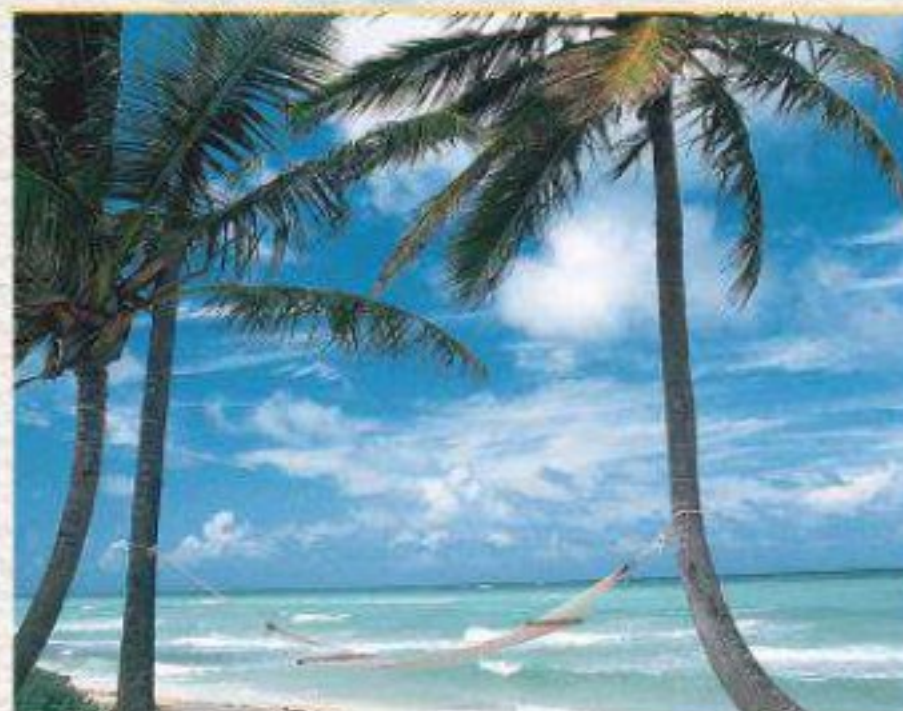
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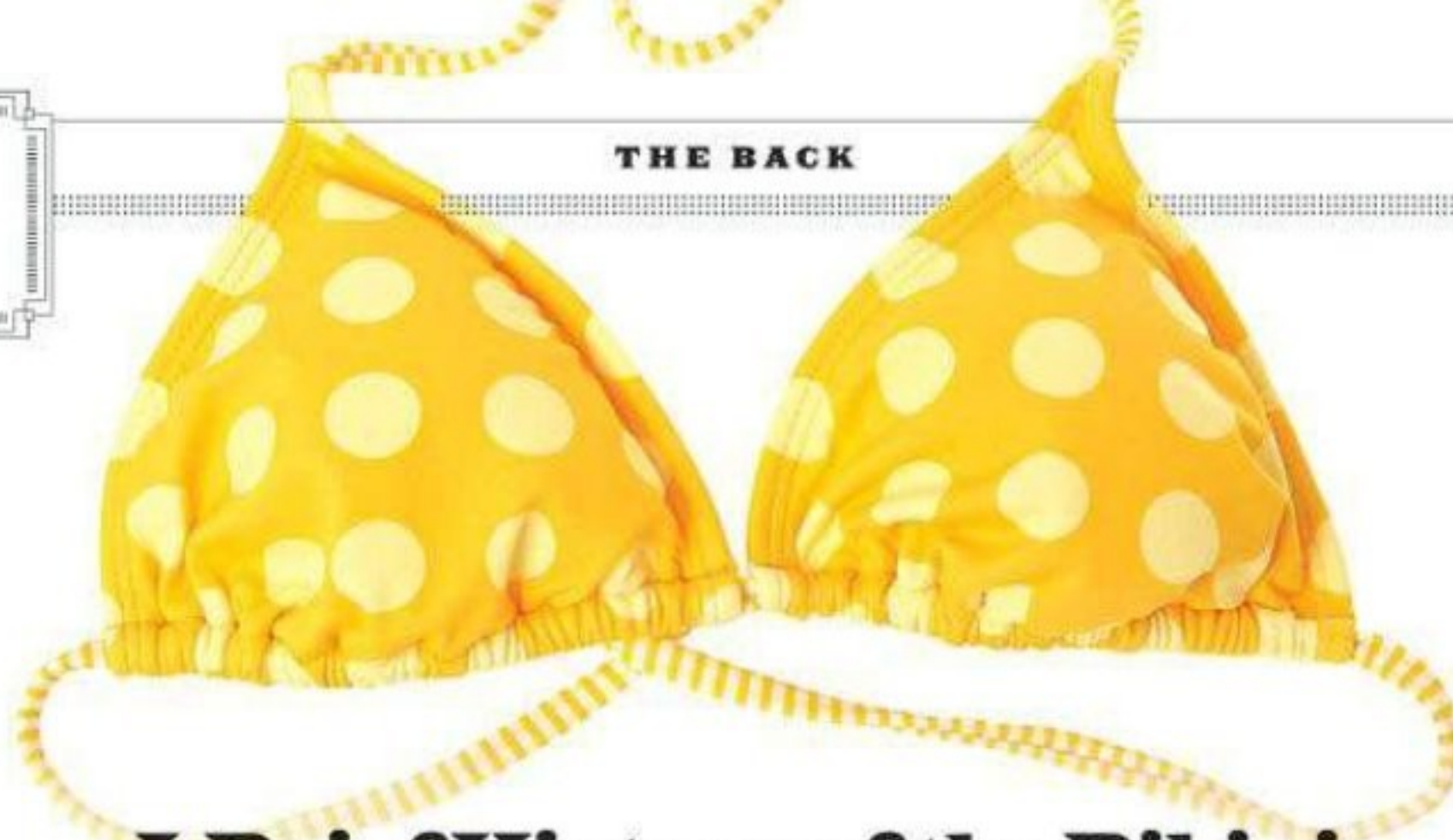
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A Brief History of the Bikini

An itsy-bitsy, teeny-weeny chronicle of the world's most influential article of clothing. *By Matt Phenix*



A.D. 400

A mosaic in Sicily's **Villa Romana del Casale** depicts 10 women in bikinis engaged in all sorts of athletic pursuits.



1951 POPE PIUS XII

calls skimpy two-piece swimsuits immoral after bikini-clad Swede Kiki Hakansson takes the crown in the first Miss World pageant. Beauty pageants worldwide ban the bikini.



1960

Brian Hyland's "Itsy Bitsy Teeny Weeny Yellow Polka Dot Bikini" reaches the number-one spot on the **BILLBOARD HOT 100** on August 8.



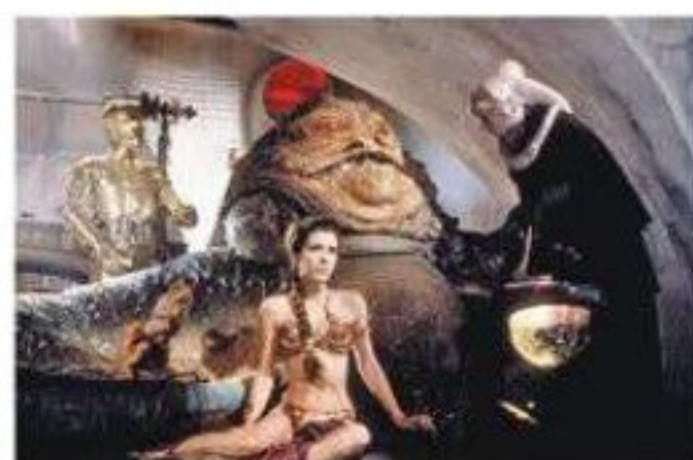
beautify the cover of the first *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue in January.

1964 BABETTE MARCH

and her white two-piece

1983 CARRIE FISHER,

as Princess Leia in *Return of the Jedi*, joins the ranks of bikini idols Brigitte Bardot and Ursula Andress thanks to a metallic ensemble she calls the "titanium thong."



2006

Actor **Sacha Baron Cohen's** Borat hits the beach wearing a chartreuse "mankini."



1994

The bikini becomes the official uniform of **women's Olympic beach volleyball**.



1966 RAQUEL WELCH

fills out an animal-pelt bikini in the cheese-ball British cave-man flick *One Million Years B.C.*



1997 MISS AMERICA

contestants don two-piece swimsuits for the first time since 1947.

2011

On a quest for the perfect fit, New York-based **Continuum Fashion** ditches the sewing machine and spandex for a computer-controlled laser "printer" and a flexible plastic called Nylon 12. The futuristic result — dubbed the N12 bikini — is the world's first ready-to-wear article of 3-D printed clothing, custom-crafted to a woman's exact dimensions.

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