

CARIBBEAN COOL

White sands, azure sea and soul-satisfying cuisine: what's not to love about the Caribbean? From garden tourism to the best hotels to book, it's time to embrace island life

WORDS BY ANGELINA VILLA-CLARKE



TOP: the secluded Eden Roc Estates in the Dominican Republic
ABOVE: Soho Beach House Canouan - the brand's first Caribbean outpost **BELOW:** relax at the Bequia Beach Hotel



Most under the radar CANOUAN ISLAND

One of the best-kept secrets in the Caribbean is Canouan - a tiny island in St Vincent and the Grenadines that stretches to only five square miles. With a jet-set following, it has an air of exclusivity with its clutch of luxury hotels that attract an A-list clientele. The remote archipelago has no crowds, pristine, palm-fringed beaches and plenty of untouched nature.

Most visitors stay at Canouan Estate, which is made up of three luxury resorts: Mandarin Oriental, Canouan Estate Resort & Villas and Soho Beach House Canouan - the first outpost from the brand in the Caribbean, where you do not need to be a member to stay. The 'invisible key' concept means you can access all the facilities - whether you want spa treatments or barefoot dining - across each address.

canouan-estate.com

Most authentic BEQUIA

Another island that makes up the 32 islands of St Vincent and the Grenadines, Bequia (pronounced 'Bek-way') feels wonderfully untouched. There are no big

resorts here, instead you can opt to stay at a small guest house or the family-run hotel that is Bequia Beach Hotel.

As well as its beachfront rooms and cosy cottages, this year the hotel has upped its luxury stakes with a new adults-only, ultra-boutique retreat carved into the Grenadine Hills. With just eight suites, it works as either a tiny, boutique hotel or as a private villa, when exclusively booked. Designed with a Scandi design ethos, the villa has plenty of indoor-outdoor spaces, an infinity pool, cinema, Pilates room and gym.

Hop onboard the hotel's *Sandy Toes*, a new custom-built catamaran for day cruises, sunset sails and scenic sea transfers from Saint Vincent.

bequiabeachhotel.com

Most happening BARBADOS

The Brits' favourite hangout, Barbados never sits still. New for this year is the Dine with a Bajan project, which invites tourists into local family homes to eat authentic home-cooked meals as a way to experience true Barbadian hospitality.

While the island is known for its beautiful shoreline, Barbados is also home to a number of standout gardens, including Hunte's Gardens, a magical retreat where you'll encounter local birds, green monkeys and many species of plants.



When it comes to where to stay, the O2 Beach Club is putting the South Coast on the map with a five-star all-inclusive offering focusing on local experiences, from hiking nature trails to visits to artisans.

Meanwhile, near the historic Holetown, the family-friendly Coral Reef Club hotel, known for its luxury sea-view suites, has just completed a new refurb. The refresh includes new interiors by designer Susie Atkinson found in a clutch of beachfront cottages, a revamped oceanfront terrace and artwork from local artists throughout. dinewithabajan.com; huntesgardens-barbados.com; o2beachclubbarbados.com; coralreefbarbados.com

Best for foodies ST LUCIA

With BA offering more seat capacity to St Lucia for winter 2026/27, there's no better time to head to the breathtaking island. The 600-acre beachfront estate, Jade Mountain, has an innovative, sustainable approach to hospitality, with much of the food served at the resort sourced from its own organic farm. Its unique design also features open-air architecture so guests have uninterrupted views of the dramatic peaks, beaches and the night sky.

New for this year is the just-launched *Jade Serenity* catamaran for guests to enjoy adventures at sea and a Rum & Roots culinary festival taking place in September. Expect rum-centred experiences, including a walking history tour with heritage rum punch tastings. ba.com; jademountain.com

In the spotlight DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The Dominican Republic is shaking off its mass-tourism reputation with luxury resort, Eden Roc Cap Cana, leading the charge. The beachfront property is the

only two Michelin Key resort on the island and offers a host of immersive island adventures – from private eco-tourism safaris and helicopter flights to rainforest horseback riding and humpback whale encounters at the Samaná Bay Sanctuary. New for this year, it has launched Eden Roc Estates – a collection of 16 residences with private pools and an organic design by acclaimed architects, SAOTA. Each comes with access to the hotel's facilities.

The hotel's new gastronomy tour includes learning to cook Mofongo, a tasty plantain-based local dish; a rum and cacao tasting session and a foraging experience. It culminates with lunch at Amigo del Ajuala, in Santo Domingo, with chef Saverio, a pioneer in modern Dominican cuisine. edenroccapcana.com

Best for adventure GRENADA

The 'Spice Island' is a destination of the senses: where nutmeg scents the air, the sands are like sugar underfoot and where you can trek the dense, rainforest-covered heartlands. Grenada's Grand Anse Beach is repeatedly voted one of the best in the world, while a swim to the Molinere Underwater Park, with its 75 ocean sculptures, brings a spectacle of another kind. Want more? There's volcanic peaks to explore, chocolate factories to find and untamed coastlines to soak up.

On the south of the island lies one of its hospitality gems: Calabash Hotel. Grenada's only Relais & Châteaux member and the only two Michelin Key hotel, the property is owned and run by the Garbutt



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: stunning views at Jade Mountain St Lucia; Coral Reef Club Hotel in Barbados; Calabash Hotel in Grenada in; yoga by the sea at Antigua's Carlisle Bay



family, who have been at the helm for almost 40 years. This year, it unveils six new suites, designed by Grenada-based IK Architecture. Expect spacious rooms, sea views and personalised service. calabashhotel.com

Best hideaway ANTIGUA

Following on ongoing multi-million-pound refurbishment, Carlisle Bay – one of the most noted hotels in the Caribbean – has introduced new suites by London-based designer, Miminat Shodeinde. For total seclusion, the adults-only Bay Suites, on the edge of a horseshoe-shaped cove, are private enclaves with four-poster beds and freestanding bathtubs.

The hotel is also focusing on its wellness offering with a new collaboration with Irish brand, GROUND Wellbeing at its CARA Organic Spa. As well as signature rituals, such as the Sleep Ritual and the the Secret River of Health, guests can also enjoy sun-rise meditation, yoga overlooking the bay and therapeutic sound baths. The resort also offers full moon gatherings, such as moonlit yoga sessions and fire pit ceremonies, inviting guests to slow down and experience the restorative energy that defines island life. carlisle-bay.com

