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Where to stay

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JAMAICA GOLDENEYE HOTEL & RESORT

I spy with my little eye...

Ian Fleming's former home is now an intimate resort fit for a secret rendezvous, says Reggie Nadelson

ALTHOUGH nobody at GoldenEye really pushes the James Bond thing, Ian Fleming wrote the Bond books here. His house, from which the resort takes its name, overlooks the sea, and there are cottages with names such as Vesper and Solitaire (but no Pussy Galore).

Hidden away from the world at Oracabessa Bay on Jamaica's north shore, GoldenEye recreates and relishes the ambience created by Ian Fleming in the 1940s. His pal

Noël Coward had a house up the hill, Firefly, and a visit to what is now a kind of period museum filled with nostalgia is a must.

Between them, Fleming and Coward made this part of Jamaica a social centre for the likes of Graham Greene, Errol Flynn, Princess Margaret and Elizabeth Taylor. Black-and-white photos of them hang in the exquisite little lounge at GoldenEye. Oh, island in the sun! Oh for those big shorts and dashing panama hats, the silk

The new Field Spa at GoldenEye has only four treatment rooms

frocks and the unselfconscious glamour of a still-colonial Jamaica, hot, cool and exotic.

The resort is tiny, with the sea in front and a marvellous lagoon winding through it. There's a spa, a pool, a fine crescent of pristine beach. At nine each morning, a glass-bottom boat sets off for those who want to see the fabulous fishes. You can also ride a jetski, snorkel, fish and play tennis. But you don't come here for activities; this is the antithesis of a polished, ➤



The beach at Ian Fleming's house, the centrepiece of GoldenEye; below, one of the cottages

4 MORE PLACES TO STAY IN NORTH JAMAICA

TENSING PEN



As the name suggests, there's plenty of yoga at this relaxing and very cool little resort. The 17 bungalows are done up to reflect both Asian and Caribbean influences. Several of the rooms have fantastic sea views. 00 1 876 957 0387; www.tensingpen.com. Doubles from US\$132

ROUND HILL HOTEL & VILLAS



Jamaica's ultra polished hotel is on a 110-acre peninsula. It has bedrooms

designed by Ralph Lauren, private villas, a spa, a tennis court, fancy food and impeccable service. No flip-flops at dinner here. Go for one of the private villas with a pool. 00 1 876 956 7050; www.roundhill.com. Doubles from US\$279

ROCKHOUSE

Many of the 34 rooms here are in thatched-roof 'rock-house' bungalows on cliffs above the sea. Once a hippy hangout, Rockhouse is now a spiffy small resort. The houses have private patios; some have ladders down into the water, four-poster beds and huge windows. A cliff-edge spa is a recent addition. 00 1 876 957 4373; www.rockhousehotel.com. Doubles from US\$125

JAMAICA INN

With its traditional Caribbean feel, Jamaica Inn dates back to 1950. It has 47 sea-facing suites, refurbished in 2007; all have outdoor space, some a private pool. You can feel suitably colonial, as there's croquet on the lawns, polo lessons are available and there are no TVs. 00 1 876 974 2514; www.jamaicainn.com. Doubles from US\$299



‘The real joy of GoldenEye is its size: it’s so small it feels like a private estate. You need never see anyone’

➤ all-inclusive Jamaican resort, it's the kind of place to linger over dinner at the magical restaurant half open to the night. From it, you can see the whole property lit by flares as the sea turns to navy blue.

The guest accommodation is in pretty bungalows and villas in the hills and on the beach. Ian Fleming's house (three bedrooms, a private pool and a beach) is definitely the place for Russian oligarchs who have transcended bling. The new cottages on the lagoon are the ones to book (try Number 9). The lagoon itself is like a vast natural swimming pool, part fresh water, part salt. You can dive straight into it from your private dock, where the fantastically friendly staff will tie up a kayak for you to push off at will.

The decor is island chic. The huge bed is comfy, and the printed sheets and dressing gowns are delightful. The bathroom is large, with a capacious tub, plenty of cupboard space and two sinks. There is a rainforest shower just outside.

As I write, the newly renovated GoldenEye still has some kinks: the outdoor shower floor is pebbled, requiring shoes; the service is a bit haphazard (our breakfast tray wasn't cleared for days); the fresh

fruit included an anaemic melon – this in a lush, tropical country. I'm sure such things will be ironed out before long. My only other quibble is that the literature suggests you get down with nature, skip the air con (20 bucks a night back, if you do) and listen to the birds and the breeze. So what's with the big TV on the wall with 500 channels? Well, you can ignore it, of course.

Otherwise, the real joy of GoldenEye is its size: it's so small it feels like a private estate. You need never see anyone. Laze on your veranda day and night, feet in the lagoon, a cold Red Stripe in hand. You feel it's all yours. Maybe I'll settle in for a while and write a best-selling spy novel. That's Nadelson. Reggie Nadelson. **T**

