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July/August 2016

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# SUNRISE, SUNSET

THE TROPICAL PLEASURES OF THESE CARIBBEAN DREAM DESTINATIONS WILL KEEP YOU ROCKING AND ROLLING FROM SUN UP TO SUN DOWN. BY JILL FERGUS



The Caves in Negril, Jamaica.

WITH CRESCENT-SHAPED BEACHES and translucent turquoise waters, who wouldn't want to spend their dream honeymoon on a tropical island in the Caribbean? These idyllic locales are usually enjoyed during daylight hours (along with activities like snorkeling cruises, hiking amid old sugar plantation ruins, lounging by the pool), but the fun doesn't have to end when the sun goes down. In fact, that's just when some islands really start to heat up. From fine restaurants to beach bars to live reggae music, salsa clubs and glitzy casinos, nighttime is the right time at these destinations. Here are four fabulous Caribbean getaways that will take you from a sun-splashed day right into a starry, excitement-filled night.

## JAMAICA

This lush island has the three essential R's: relaxing beaches, reggae music and

PHOTOGRAPHY: (FROM TOP) SANDY LANE HOTEL; COURTESY OF ISLAND OUTPOST



Sandy Lane, Barbados.

romantic resorts. Throw in a few ice cold Red Stripes, and you've got everything you need for a laid-back but thrilling honeymoon.

**DAY** Negril, on Jamaica's west coast, is known for its postcard-perfect Seven Mile Beach. Go parasailing, kayaking and snorkeling in the crystalline waters, followed by lunch (jerk chicken, anyone?) from a beachside grill. Climb to the top of the Negril Lighthouse for great views, and at the 50-foot-high Negril Cliffs, marvel at the high divers who make spectacularly acrobatic leaps into the sea below. You can even make a jump yourself, if you dare.

**NIGHT** Watch those daredevil divers from Rick's Café, a Negril institution, and stick around for its nightly sunset celebration. Order a few drinks, groove to live reggae bands and make some new friends with people from all over the

world. After a romantic dinner of grilled lobster at the clifftop **Rockhouse Restaurant** ([rockhouse.com](http://rockhouse.com); dinner for two, \$120), go barhopping along busy Norman Manley Boulevard.

**WHERE TO STAY** Unwind in one of the 12 stone-and-wood cottages at **The Caves**, dramatically perched on the limestone cliffs. Start your day with banana pancakes and a cup of strong Jamaican coffee, followed by a dip in the sea and an indulgent couples' aromatherapy massage. Then settle in for an unforgettable dinner in a cave aglow with candlelight. *Room rates start at \$480 a night; [thecaveshotel.com](http://thecaveshotel.com).*

## PUERTO RICO

Puerto Rico's beautiful beaches and sizzling, Latin-flavored nightlife are always a draw, and Old San Juan's colorful Spanish Colonial architecture and cob-

blestone streets never fail to charm.

**DAY** Hit the beach in the Condado resort area, where refreshing rum punches await. In Old San Juan, explore historic churches and shop for wooden *santos* (saints) and other traditional handicrafts. After a tour of the massive Castillo San Felipe del Morro, a 16<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish citadel, stop for a tamale at a mom-and-pop cart in the central square, then hop a ferry across scenic San Juan Harbor to have a tour and tasting at the Bacardi Rum Distillery, the world's largest.

**NIGHT** Once the sun goes down, Old San Juan really comes alive. Start off with a piña colada at Barrachina (the drink is said to have been invented here) on Fortaleza Street, and dine in one of the hip restaurants like Marmalade Restaurant & Wine Bar ([marmaladepr.com](http://marmaladepr.com); dinner for two, \$100) serving Puerto Rican fusion cuisine (the ceviche is a →



Barbados's beautiful coastline.

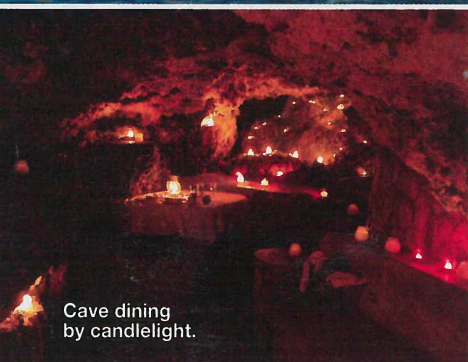
CURAÇAO LIQUEUR IS MADE FROM THE DRIED PEEL OF THE LARAHA, A **SMALL CITRUS FRUIT** GROWN ON THE ISLAND. IT'S COLORLESS, BUT FOOD DYE IS ADDED TO TURN IT A **BRILLIANT BLUE** IN THE BOTTLE.



Old San Juan.



Colorful Handelskade in Willemstad's harbor.



Cave dining by candlelight.



A guest room at the Hotel El Convento.

must). Try your luck in the Condado casinos, and if you still have energy, hit the salsa clubs to try out your dance moves.

**WHERE TO STAY** **Hotel El Convento**, a convent-turned-boutique hotel, is definitely the most romantic place to stay in town. The 58 rooms overlook an inner courtyard, and have tiled floors, wrought-iron chandeliers and wood-beamed ceilings. Be sure to take a peek at the former nuns' chapel where weddings now take place. *Room rates start at \$195 a night; [elconvento.com](http://elconvento.com).*

## BARBADOS

This sophisticated former British outpost has miles of pristine sand beaches and quaint traditions like afternoon tea, but maintains its own distinct West Indian vibe and a buzzy bar scene.

**DAY** Spend the day on a catamaran cruise, go snorkeling with sea turtles above a 19<sup>th</sup>-century shipwreck and afterwards enjoy an onboard Bajan-style buffet lunch. Back on terra firma, explore Barbados's lush highlands known as the Scotland District, and stop at a rustic rum bar to chat up some locals. Rum lovers can also visit and tour the Mount Gay Rum distillery, which makes the world's oldest brand of rum.

**NIGHT** At the Friday night fish fry in Oistins, tuck into grilled flying fish and pigeon peas and sip ice-cold Banks beers

while listening to the infectious sounds of steel drums. For a more intimate experience, dine on fresh oysters and coconut-crusted yellowfin tuna at the elegant waterfront Tides Restaurant (*tidesbarbados.com*; *dinner for two, \$150*), then head to St. Lawrence Gap, a rocking nightlife strip, for live music and dancing until the wee hours.

**WHERE TO STAY** Expect to be pampered at the ultra-luxurious, 112-room **Sandy Lane**. Perks include a Rolls-Royce airport pickup, beach butlers dispensing sorbet and icy towels, a hydrotherapy pool in the spa and an award-winning golf course. Plus the staff will arrange for a torchlight dinner on a private area of beach, complete with chilled champagne, prawns and foie gras. *Room rates start at \$1,200 a night; [sandylane.com](http://sandylane.com).*

## CURAÇAO

Part of the ABC island chain that includes Aruba and Bonaire, this Dutch-Caribbean island is coming into its own as a fabulous destination with spectacular beaches, plenty of history and a lively capital that make it a pleasure-packed getaway.

**DAY** Curaçao has dozens of beaches—Gas Abao and Jeremi are two standouts. Other activities include hiking to the summit of the 1,240-foot Mt. Christoffel (on a clear day you can see Venezuela) and a boat trip to Klein Curaçao, an offshore is-

PHOTOGRAPHY: (FROM TOP) BARBADOS TOURISM MARKETING; PUERTO RICO TOURISM COMPANY; CURAÇAO TOURIST BOARD; COURTESY OF ISLAND OUTPOST; HOTEL EL CONVENTO

The terrace at Rockhouse Restaurant.



**REGGAE MUSIC** ORIGINATED IN JAMAICA IN THE 1960s, AND THE **BEST-SELLING** REGGAE ALBUM OF ALL TIME IS **BOB MARLEY'S LEGEND**.

land with fabulous snorkeling and diving. In the capital Willemstad, pastel-colored Dutch colonial houses line the inner harbor of this UNESCO World Heritage site where you can visit the oldest synagogue in the Western Hemisphere. The duty-free shops are worth a look for souvenirs like wooden clogs and bottles of blue Curaçao (a citrus-based liqueur).

**NIGHT** Join fellow tourists on the Handelskade, a harborfront street lined with festive, open-air restaurants. Grab a terrace table at the casual Iguana Café (*dinner for two, \$60*) for a front-row seat to the gorgeous sunset while dining on the catch of the day. Late night, pop into Willemstad's various cocktail lounges, jazz clubs, casinos and clubs.

**WHERE TO STAY** The 83-room **Sonesta Kura Hulanda Village & Spa** is a high-end boutique hotel housed in beautifully restored 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century Dutch colonial buildings. Combine it with a few days at sister property Kura Hulanda Lodge & Beach Club, set on a secluded cove on the island's westernmost point, for a taste of the island's breathtaking white coral beaches. *Room rates start at \$289 a night; kurahulanda.com.* ■



Sonesta Kura Hulanda Village & Spa, Curaçao.

Seafood feast at The Tides Restaurant, Barbados.



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