

Wish You Were Here



Johnno's beach
bar, Anguilla.

WE LOVE THE CARIBBEAN'S HIGH-LOW MIX OF GLAMOROUS RESORTS AND LAID-BACK BEACH BARS. BOOK A ROOM AT ONE OF THESE NEW HOTELS, THEN GRAB A BAR STOOL (OR HAMMOCK) AT A CLASSIC WATERING HOLE. JUST SAVE A SPOT FOR US!

BY LAURA BEGLEY BLOOM

ANGUILLA

Boutique chic on a stunning stretch of beach

STAY When it comes to the archetypal island fantasy, no place delivers quite like Anguilla. And when you throw open the wooden shutters to step out onto your private terrace at Zemi Beach House, a dreamy expanse of white-sand beach and clear-blue sea lays out before you. Zemi is all about unique experiences, from the aromatherapy massages at the spa—in a 300-year-old house imported from Thailand, no less—to single-estate flights from more than 100 rums, curated by the hotel's "rummelier." *Rooms from \$350 per night; zemibeach.com.*

DRINK On an island that's legendary for its beach-bar culture, Uncle Ernie's is an institution: a pastel-painted shack where barefoot travelers and dreadlocked locals sit at tables on the sand, indulging in spicy ribs and rum punch. *uncleerniesbeachbar.com.*

ANGUILLA

Modern elegance and a side of reggae

STAY There's nothing like watching the sun dip into the Caribbean—even better if you're viewing it from the private plunge pool of your sleek room at the new Four Seasons Anguilla. This spectacular modernist cliff-top hotel gives you unobstructed views of the sea from every angle. At the beachfront Bamboo Bar & Grill, chef Rafael Gonzalez's cooking almost upstages the scene, with dishes like saffron-braised local snapper tagine and addictive rotis. *Rooms from \$500 per night; fourseasons.com/anguilla.*

DRINK If you love reggae, you'll fall head over heels for Dune Preserve, a ramshackle bar owned by Bankie Banx, a.k.a. Anguilla's Bob Dylan. Order a shot of Duneshine, the signature fermented ginger drink—we're not responsible for what happens next. *bankiebanx.net.*

ANDREW ROWAT



Jamaica's clear waters, spiny lobsters and iconic 3 Dives bar.



BARBADOS

Spa treatments and snorkeling

STAY Look, the phrase *all-inclusive resort* usually sends us packing, too. But in Barbados, a place known for its smart British sensibility mixed with cool island vibes, the Waves Hotel & Spa redefines the genre. This is a resort that just seems to get it, from the food (lamb paella, red Thai curry shrimp in a coconut bowl) to the white-on-white design scheme to the focus on wellness (nice touch: Every stay includes a free spa treatment). *Rooms from \$366 per night; eleganthotels.com.*

DRINK Ju Ju's Beach Bar is hard to find—and that's just how the regulars like it. A quintessential Bajan rum bar, it's set in a simple wooden chattel house right on Alleyne's Beach (though everyone calls it Ju Ju's beach). After a lunch of grilled flying fish, snorkel with the giant turtles right offshore, then stick around for mango daiquiris and an amazing sunset. *facebook.com/jujusbarbados.*

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Asian-style luxury and tropical rain forests

STAY While Punta Cana and its surrounding beaches are lined with massive resorts, the north coast of the Dominican Republic is surprisingly under the radar. On Playa Grande, seven miles of untrammeled coastline edged by dramatic 60-foot cliffs and 2,170 acres of pristine Caribbean jungle, you'll find Aman's new 25-casita Amanera, which marries the brand's signature Zen minimalism with Caribbean cool (cigar-rolling lessons with a local master, tours of the Ron Barceló rum distillery). *Casitas from \$950 per night; aman.com.*

DRINK Tucked into a sandy cove on the golden sands of Playa Grande is Amanera's Club de Playa. After a day of kite surfing, relax in a hammock under the coconut palms and order hand-kneaded fresh maize tortillas stuffed with fillings like Baja-style fish and roasted pineapple, and a passion-fruit caipirinha or three.

GRAND CAYMAN

Creative cooking by the sea

STAY The pristine waters and rich marine life of the Cayman Islands lure divers and anglers, while the eclectic food scene (and the Cayman Cookout culinary festival F&W hosts every January) attracts chefs like Eric Ripert and José Andrés. The new Kimpton Seafire Resort and Spa on Grand Cayman's Seven Mile Beach combines the best of both worlds: After diving and fishing, you can bring the conch and lobster you caught to the beachside restaurant, Cocoloba, for the chefs to prepare over an open fire. *Rooms from \$339 per night; seafireresortandspa.com.*

DRINK The Wreck Bar & Grill at the Rum Point Club, a castaway spot with colorful picnic tables under casuarina trees, is a short boat ride from Seven Mile Beach. Grab a mudslide, settle into a lounge chair and call it a day. *rumpointclub.com.*

GRENADINES

A lavish resort without the crowds

STAY With residents like Mick Jagger and Tommy Hilfiger, Mustique has long been a hideaway for the ultrarich. Its sister island, Canouan, with its lush green peaks and neon azure water, has remained one of the best-kept secrets in the Caribbean, but not if Pink Sands Club has its way: It has poured \$120 million into this elegant 26-suite beachfront property with eight restaurants and plenty of sipping spots. Our favorite is the Lagoon Café, where carafes of Pimm's No. 1 Cup are always sitting out on the bar. *Suites from \$1,400 per night; pinksandsclub.com.*

DRINK The tiny nearby Tamarind Beach Bar is a thatched slice of paradise serving potent rum punches. Farther afield on Mustique is one of the most famous beach bars in the world, the Balinese-style Basil's Bar, frequented over the years by everyone from David Bowie to Prince William. *tamarindbeachhotel.com; basilssbar.com.*

JAMAICA

Bluff-top views and legendary jerk

STAY The Cliff hotel on the undeveloped west end of Negril is a refined departure from the local Robinson Crusoe style of lodging. Sink into luxe rooms, meticulously landscaped grounds and pools that would look right at home in Palm Beach. Cindy Hutson, of Miami's Ortanique on the Mile, and Delius Shirley, son of the famous Jamaican chef Norma Shirley, put a global spin on local cuisine at Zest—think curried octopus with jackfruit pilau and charred okra. *Rooms from \$260 per night; thecliffjamaica.com.*

DRINK Just a few miles up the road, 3 Dives Jerk Centre is an open-air cliff-top shack with spectacular Caribbean views. Be prepared to shift to island time as you wait for grilled lobster in garlic butter and jerk chicken smothered in spicy “granny sauce.” Help yourself from a cooler loaded with Red Stripe. *maherconsulting.com/3dives.*

MEXICO

Tropical tranquility in a buzzing beachside town

STAY Playa del Carmen can feel like a disco on the sea. For some serenity in a sophisticated setting, escape to Thompson Playa del Carmen, which runs a pair of hotels here. At the main property in the center of town, you can lounge by the pool on the sprawling roof deck and order food from the team behind Catch restaurant in NYC. Two blocks away, the boho-chic oceanfront Beach House feels like a members-only club. *Hotel rooms from \$249 per night, Beach House rooms from \$349 per night; thompsonhotels.com.*

DRINK The Blue Parrot is an iconic and enduring hangout that hosts nightly fire shows on the sand. A tip: If you want to enjoy your margarita in peace, go early in the day. *blueparrotplaya.com.*

Anguilla Raises the Bar

No place nails beach-bar vibes like this petite island. Here are four more laid-back spots we love.



JOHNNO'S (left and on p. 36) Known for its grilled whole snapper and prime location in the heart of Sandy Ground, as well as live music on Sundays, when everybody seems to stop by. *johnnosatpricklypear.com.*

SANDY ISLAND Accessible by private boat or a \$10 local shuttle from Sandy Ground beach, this island bar is famous for its tropical drinks. *mysandyisland.com.*

ELVIS' BEACH BAR A 16-foot boat serves as the bar at this popular spot. And, yes, Elvis (the owner) is usually in the building. *elvisbeachbar.org.*

SCILLY CAY Also located on its own island, just a couple of minutes offshore. Try the grilled crayfish and lobster. *scillycayanguilla.com.*

The stunning Amanera resort in the Dominican Republic sits at the edge of a pristine rain forest.



MEXICO

Mangroves and margaritas

STAY As the small riverboat meanders along a narrow waterway through thickets of mangrove-dotted jungle, you'll feel like you're in the Amazonian rain forest. Mayakoba, an eco-chic hotel development in Riviera Maya, was carefully built into the coastal landscape so as not to harm the fragile environment. The latest property to come onboard is Hyatt's luxury boutique brand Andaz, which brings a youthful energy to the scene. Look for elevated street food at Olla Taco and a tequila bar at Olla Ceviche. *Rooms from \$500 per night; mayakoba.andaz.hyatt.com.*

DRINK You wouldn't expect to find a bar like The Beach Shack at a luxury resort like the Banyan Tree Mayakoba. But there it is, right on the sand: a thatched desert-island fantasy that serves the most perfect margaritas. *banyantree.com.*

ST. BART'S

A small island hotel with big style

STAY The singularity of Villa Marie Saint-Barth is apparent the second you walk into one of the breezy bungalows and clock the vintage-style claw-foot tub, the seashell-macramé chandeliers, the bed draped in palm-frond fabrics and the high-backed rattan chairs. The hotel is the creation of Jocelyne Sibuet—the Martha Stewart of France—who has created a vision of the Caribbean circa 1969, complete with a restaurant that serves dishes like fresh-grilled Caribbean lobster and langoustine flambéed with aged rum. You'll never want to leave, except that would mean you'd miss everything that superstylish St. Bart's has to offer, from stunning white-sand beaches to incredible shopping. *Bungalows from \$560 per night; saint-barth.villamarie.fr.*

DRINK Owned by French tennis legend Yannick Noah, Do Brazil is a sexy open-air restaurant and bar set right on Shell Beach, a crescent of sand covered with (you guessed it) seashells. Order the wahoo tataki and a mojito and prepare for some of the best people-watching on the planet. *dobrazil.com.*