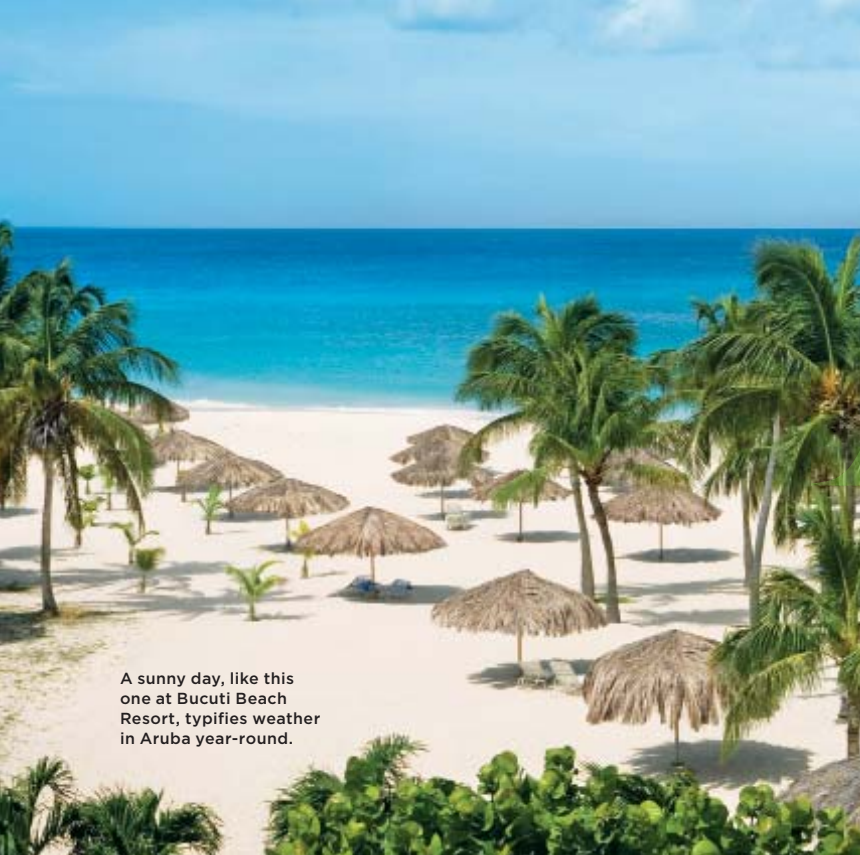




Uncrowded beaches make Nevis a popular destination for those seeking serenity.



A sunny day, like this one at Bucuti Beach Resort, typifies weather in Aruba year-round.

**ARUBA.** While the rest of the Caribbean prepares for hurricane season in summer and fall, Aruba attracts savvy visitors all year long, thanks to its reliably dry weather and location outside the hurricane belt. Even better, the island is full of authentically Caribbean properties that still offer low “hurricane season” rates. The new Cunucu Arubiano Eco-Lodge (from \$265 per night, [cunucuarubiano.com](http://cunucuarubiano.com)) is one such property—its charming collection of cottages is located within a donkey sanctuary. Bucuti Beach Resort (from \$250 per night, [bucuti.com](http://bucuti.com)), another traditional Aruban hotel, stocks locally made products from Aruba Aloe in its guest rooms.

**BEACHES.** The Caribbean is famous for some of the most beautiful public beaches in the world. With a little effort you can leave the crowds behind and enjoy a few of the region’s less populated gems. When it comes to crystal-clear water and stunning marine life, Aruba’s **Baby Beach** (near Seroe Colorado on the island’s southeastern tip) is a must. Fronted by a reef of ancient elkhorn coral that is home to thousands of brilliantly colored fish, Baby Beach will leave even the most jaded snorkeler slack-jawed by the underwater spectacle. (Note that while it is in proximity to an oil refinery, the splendor of the reef’s marine treasures make it worth a visit.) • With amazingly clean and placid water that gently laps a smooth shoreline, Grenada’s **Pink Gin Beach** (near the town of L’Anse aux Epines) is an ideal spot for families with young kids. • The term “unspoiled” gets tossed around readily in the Caribbean, but **Magens Bay** in St. Thomas (on the island’s north shore) deserves the moniker—and is certainly worth the \$4 entry fee. A gift to the people of the island from philanthropist and resident Arthur Fairchild, it is one of the most tranquil beaches in the U.S. Virgin Islands, highlighted by the sea turtles that call it home.

## Dominican Republic.

With its blend of Caribbean, Latin American, and African cultures (not to mention beautiful beaches and tropical rainforests), the Dominican Republic is quickly becoming the next “it” destination of the region. New resorts and spas are announced monthly on the country’s eastern coast, where the beaches are graced with fine white sand and turquoise waters. The Cygalle Healing Spa at **Casa de Campo** (from \$178 per night, [casadecampo.com.do](http://casadecampo.com.do)) focuses on wellness with its own organic product line and extensive water circuit. • **Dreams Punta Cana Resort & Spa** (from \$460 for two nights, [dreamsresorts.com/drepc](http://dreamsresorts.com/drepc)) caters to couples and families with spacious suites, all-inclusive packages, and a pool that flows from the lobby to the beach. • The **Sanctuary Cap Cana** (from \$370 per night, [sanctuarycapcana.com](http://sanctuarycapcana.com)) is a stunning suites-only resort complete with a yacht marina and Jack Nicklaus golf course. Still fairly quiet, Cap Cana will be teeming with jet-setters when Ritz-Carlton and Trump properties debut there in 2011.

New spas and hotels in the Dominican Republic are drawing guests from around the world.

BOTTOM: COSMO CONDINA/GETTY IMAGES

**Eco.** Since 2008, when the international nonprofit Green Globe began certifying spas in addition to hotels and resorts, the Caribbean has emerged as a leader in green wellness options. Long an eco-conscious brand worldwide, Six Senses gained a bronze rating for its spa (one of the first certified in the region) at **Puntacana Resort & Club** in the Dominican Republic (from \$84 per night, [puntacana.com](http://puntacana.com)). In Aruba, **Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa** (from \$169 per night, [manchebo.com](http://manchebo.com)) earned certification (gold, no less) thanks in part to its protection of local sea turtles. But a nod from Green Globe isn't the only indicator of environmental responsibility. Antigua's **Hermitage Bay** (from \$700 per night, [hermitagebay.com](http://hermitagebay.com)) and Anguilla's **CuisinArt Resort & Spa** (from \$400 per night, [cuisinartresort.com](http://cuisinartresort.com)), for example, have attracted eco-conscious guests through their advanced conservation initiatives.



Hillside suites take advantage of the views at Hermitage Bay. ABOVE: An Aruba local.

**GUERLAIN.** Set to open soon, Spa Chakra Bimini at **Bimini Bay Resort and Marina** in the Bahamas (from \$250 per night, [biminibayresort.com](http://biminibayresort.com)) will be the only spa in the Caribbean to offer beauty products and

treatments from French skincare powerhouse Guerlain. You can look forward to revitalizing treatments (ranging from \$200 to \$550) perfect for skin that has enjoyed too much sun and sea, such as the Exceptional Orchidée Impériale facial. The

treatment features Guerlain's exclusive massage technique and beauty-boosting orchid extracts for not only better-looking skin but also ultimate relaxation. The result? You'll be rejuvenated in more ways than one.

*FAMILY TIME.* Quality options for the whole family abound in the Caribbean. The new RockResorts Spa at **The Landings St. Lucia** (from \$238 per night, [landings.rockresorts.com](http://landings.rockresorts.com)), for instance, offers treatments for kids ages two and up. For families that like to get out and be on the water together, the **Grand Isle Resort & Spa** on Great Exuma Island in the Bahamas (\$380 per night, [grandislevillas.com](http://grandislevillas.com)) provides a staffed 35-foot boat. Book an oceanfront family suite at **Club Med Punta Cana** in the Dominican Republic (from \$340 per night, [clubmed.us](http://clubmed.us)), and the kids—from babies to teens—will enjoy daylong programs created just for them.



**I**NCLUSIVE. Once notorious for color-coded wristbands and bottom-shelf alcohol, all-inclusive resorts have recently grown up: a crop of upstarts are shifting the focus to sophisticated dining, spas, and design. Regularly appearing on “world’s most romantic resorts” lists, **Sandals Grande Antigua Resort & Spa** (from \$406 per person per night, [sandals.com](http://sandals.com)) is even better known among repeat guests for its cuisine. And with 24-hour room service in its top suites, you might need to spend extra time in its fitness center and Red Lane Spa. • **Renaissance Aruba Resort & Casino** (from \$223 per night, [renaissancearuba.com](http://renaissancearuba.com)) offers Aruba’s only private beaches. Covered with flocks of curious pink flamingoes, its exclusive Renaissance Island has a mangrove-shrouded Spa Cove that’s just right for a sunset massage. • Tai chi (along with yoga and meditation) is offered daily at **LaSource**, along Grenada’s Pink Gin Beach (from \$330 per person per night, [theamazingholiday.com](http://theamazingholiday.com)). You’ll also get the best of all-inclusive with a Pevonia Botanica spa treatment every full day following your arrival.



With its recent boon of new spas, Jamaica’s wellness-oriented options are growing.

**JAMAICA.** In addition to its reggae and rum, Jamaica is fast becoming renowned for its spas. Four opened on the island last year alone, and March marks the arrival of the exclusive **Solís, The Palmyra Resort & Spa** (from \$189 per night, [solisthepalmyra.com](http://solisthepalmyra.com)) in Montego Bay. There, a 30,000-square-foot spa will continue the modern Jamaican spa tradition of incorporating local rituals and ingredients into lavish treatments.



Hammered silver furnishings and a soaking tub for two highlight the bridal suite at Kurá Hulanda on Curaçao.

**K**

**KURÁ HULANDA.**

Located in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Willemstad on Curaçao, **Hotel Kurá Hulanda Spa & Casino** (from \$260 per night, [kurahulanda.com](http://kurahulanda.com)) occupies 65 meticulously restored 18th- and 19th-century Dutch Colonial buildings collectively known as Project Kurá Hulanda. Merging modern innovations with its traditional surroundings, the spa offers an exciting mix of therapies, including Water-Chi Massage (\$125, 45 minutes)—acupressure massage in water—and the age-combating Aromatherapy and Eye Contour Facial (\$95, 60 minutes).

**ONE&ONLY.** The plantation-style **One&Only Ocean Club** in the Bahamas (from \$515 per night, [oneandonlyresorts.com](http://oneandonlyresorts.com)) sits within landscaped gardens inspired by the Chateau de Versailles on the mile-wide Paradise Island. Within one of eight treatment villas (each featuring a waterfall shower, daybed, and whirlpool tub in a private garden), guests receive a ritual footbath before their services. An island-inspired standout, the Drifting on an Ocean Breeze treatment (from \$250, 140 minutes) refreshes skin with an exfoliating lime, ginger, and salt scrub.



**PINK SAND.** The rosy powder on some Caribbean beaches will enchant even the most worldly of travelers. Its pink hue is due to the shells of microscopic animals (foraminifera) that live on the reefs and seafloor. Guests in the 25 funky cottages that comprise **Pink Sands** (from \$750 per night, [pinksandsresort.com](http://pinksandsresort.com)) have immediate access to a three-mile stretch of pink sand beach on Harbour Island in the Bahamas—not to mention the undeniably cool feel of staying in rooms designed by uber-hip British fashion designer Barbara Hulanicki. On Bermuda, the rosy grains are put to good use in a body scrub as part of the three-hour Ocean Wave Ritual (\$480) at The Spa at **Elbow Beach** (from \$315 per night, [mandarinoriental.com/bermuda](http://mandarinoriental.com/bermuda)).

**QUIET TIME.** When the desire to get away from it all includes escaping the sound of your own voice, a meditation or yoga retreat will take the hubbub down a notch. **Maho Bay Camps** (from \$80 per night, [maho.org](http://maho.org)) on St. John in the U.S. Virgin Islands draws yoga groups from northern parts of the states where the winter climate isn't conducive to sitting or stretching outdoors. Look for programs from the Omega Institute in January each year, Yoga Adventures in February, and Mystic River Yoga in March. Maho Bay's resident teachers also lead \$10 drop-in classes daily.

- On the Caribbean coast of Mexico in Tulum, **Rolling Meadows** hosts seven-night retreats (from \$995 for accommodations, meals, and all sessions; [rollingmeadowsretreat.com](http://rollingmeadowsretreat.com)) that focus on yoga, meditation, and the sound of the sea without the distractions of electricity and technology.
- Join the **Blue Star** ashram in Claxton Bay, Trinidad (by donation, dormitory accommodation only, [blue-star.org](http://blue-star.org)) for a more rustic retreat experience. The meditation hall opens each day at 4:45 a.m. for silent meditation followed by chanting, guided yoga, vegetarian meals, and spiritual discussion groups.


✦ For details see The Source, page 110.



Pink is the new white on the beaches of Bermuda and the Bahamas.

# Sanctuary.

Poking out of the jungle, with views of St. Lucia's iconic Piton peaks, **Jade Mountain** (from \$850 per night, [jademountainstlucia.com](http://jademountainstlucia.com)) seems more like the retreat of a famous artist than a resort. Sweeping hideaways of tropical woods and crushed coral interconnected by elevated walkways float in the rainforest canopy. Technology-free and environmentally conscious, the resort's 30 suites are each absent a fourth wall, allowing guests to truly be at one with nature. • **Parrot Cay** (from \$575 per night, [parrotcay.com](http://parrotcay.com)) has long been the favorite private island refuge of celebrities. But the resort isn't just for those looking to avoid the paparazzi and spend the night at designer Donna Karan's villa (The Sanctuary, from \$24,000 per night). Parrot Cay's Como Shambhala Retreat ([parrotcay.como.bz](http://parrotcay.como.bz)) with its women-only outdoor Jacuzzi, one-on-one Pilates instruction, and Ayurvedic specialties is a splendid escape for the rest of us. • On the largest private island in the British Virgin Islands, **Peter Island Resort** (from \$590 per night, [peterisland.com](http://peterisland.com)) provides a sublime setting to renew your spirit or rejuvenate your body. A Kur treatment (\$285, 150 minutes) in its ocean-view spa is a divine experience designed to improve overall health with medicinal mud, mineral water, seaweed, and an essential oil massage.



Privacy reigns at Parrot Cay in Turks and Caicos, where the famous have long sought refuge.





Raffles Resort Canouan Island in the Grenadines features the Caribbean's first, and only, overwater spa bungalows.

# water.

When it comes to describing the colors—aqua, indigo, azure, cerulean, cobalt—of their gorgeous water, Caribbean locals truly have limitless options. As a visitor, it won't be until you're getting a massage in an overwater bungalow in the Grenadines, snorkeling off the coast of Aruba, or cliff diving in Jamaica that you'll understand how the sea can even be sapphire, turquoise, lapis—or just indescribably dreamy.

**OVERWATER HEAVEN** If a massage in sight of the surf isn't enough to soothe your water-hungry soul, a treatment in one of two glass-floored treatment rooms at **Raffles Resort Canouan Island** (from \$495, [rafflescanouan.com](http://rafflescanouan.com)) in the Grenadines may quench your thirst. The spa's signature Amrita Balance massage (\$159, 60 minutes) integrates Eastern and Western modalities to leave you floating on air.