



# JAMAICA

KAREN HALABI TAKES A LOOK AT THE PLACE USAIN BOLT CALLS HOME.



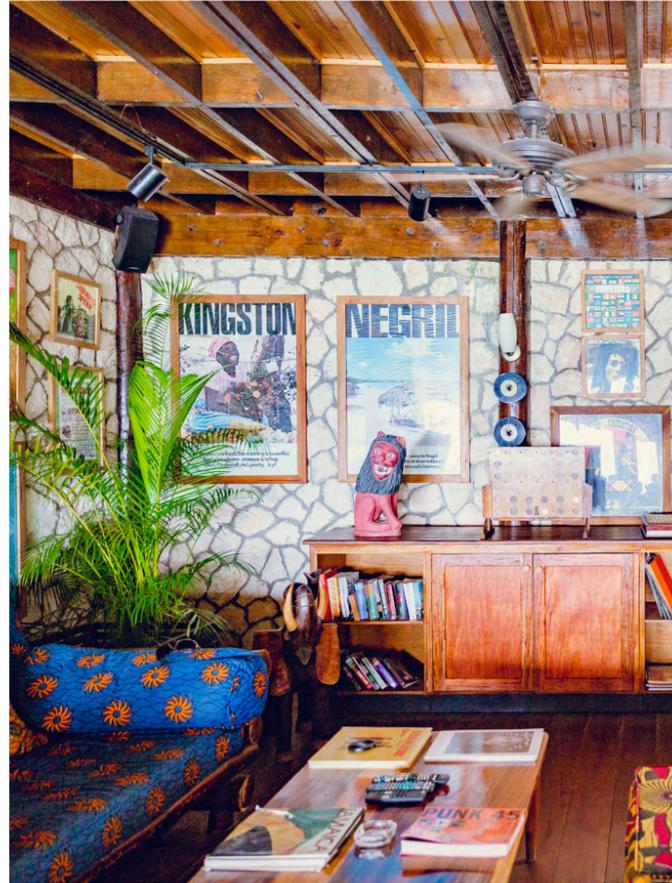
**This page,** aerial view of Spa & Fitness Centre , Round Hill  
**Opposite,** paddleboarding the clear cerulean waters of Pristine Cove near the Rockhouse and The Cliff

**A** West Indies island in the Caribbean, **Jamaica** is synonymous with reggae, rhythm and romance, bold colours, Rastafarian culture and a laid-back Caribbean lifestyle. Grace Jones, Sean Paul and Naomi Campbell all have Jamaican roots.

The birthplace of reggae music and the home of legendary musician Bob Marley, Jamaica is also where Ralph Lauren goes on vacation at his holiday house at *Round Hill*, another fabulous resort outside *Montego Bay*.

Noel Coward and Ian Fleming of James Bond fame also had their homes here. Fleming's house has since been turned into a fabulous resort, *Golden Eye at Oracabessa* on the northern coast.

At **Negril** on the western tip of the island, the island's newest stunning luxury property, *The Cliff* recently opened. It's at West End, the quieter, more private part of Negril where you can swim off the cliffs and explore rock inlets and caves. There's no beach, but the deep Caribbean azure waters full of tropical fish are a



refreshing break from the heat.

Well known chef Cindy Hutson who created Cuisine of the Sun and has a string of Caribbean inspired restaurants throughout Florida and Grand Cayman is now executive chef at *Zest The Cliff's* destination restaurant. The food is the best on the island.

Negril is world famous for cliff jumping, a nightly spectacle at nearby *Rick's Cafe*, Jamaica's most popular gathering spot for sunset. Local cliff jumpers clamber to the top of tall poles to jump from dizzying heights into the water below. You can also listen to reggae well into the wee hours or at nearby *Push Cart*, part of *Rockhouse*, an Australian-owned resort. Rockhouse is a collection of rustic thatched stone villas dotted along the volcanic cliffs of Pristine Cove with steps and ladders down into the serene waters of the Caribbean sea.

Other popular spots on the island include *Montego Bay*, *Ocho Rios* and *Portland* with its unspoilt beaches. Stay in Portland at *Great Huts*. Modelled on an African village, you can choose from mud huts, tents or tree houses. Also here, the exclusive *Geejam* where many recording artists have recorded tracks.

Drive to the *Blue Mountains* where Jamaica's famous coffee is grown, swim in a blue hole or, even better, *The Blue Lagoon*, my favourite spot in Portland where the movie of the same name was filmed. Take a spectacular raft trip across the lagoon with Jason to the mineral water ponds, *Monkey Island* or just to see the deep pristine crystal blue waters. If you have more time, *Treasure Beach* and the rum distillery at *Appleton* are worth a visit and the *Bob Marley museum* in Kingston and nearby *Port Royal* of pirate fame are unmissable.

But the real reason to go to Jamaica is the people - as warm, sensual and colourful as the Jamaican flag, as intoxicating as its signature rum and as spicy as its national dish - jerk chicken. You can probably find better food and beaches somewhere else but the Jamaicans move from their heart, not their heads.

**This page, from top**, Theresa, owner of the Just Natural Cafe, jokes with local reggae artist Frezi at her popular Rastafarian eatery set in an all natural garden just around the corner from The Cliff; One of the gorgeous modern rooms with poster beds at The Cliff **Opposite, clockwise from top left**, the villas at The Rockhouse perch on the edge of the volcanic cliffs; the lounge area at The Pushcart, the reggae bar at the Rockhouse; rafting the famous Blue Lagoon with Jason - he uses a bamboo pole to push the bamboo raft around the lagoon; Deluxe Villa Interior, Round Hill

