

AUSTRALIA'S EDGE • DUBAI'S ART WORLD • PERU'S BIG ADVENTURE

# Condé Nast Traveler

TRUTH IN TRAVEL

MARCH 2009

## EUROPE'S NEW RIVIERA

FABULOUS COASTS, BIG BARGAINS

ITALY

VILLA MAGIC

NEW ENGLAND'S

COUNTRY CHIC

MORE SUN FOR  
THE MONEY

28 LOW-COST  
ESCAPES

Mexico, Caribbean, Central America



# MORE SUN FOR THE MONEY

FROM A JAMAICAN BEACHFRONT BUNGALOW TO A JUNGLE LODGE IN HONDURAS, HERE ARE 28 EASY-TO-REACH WARM-WEATHER GETAWAYS THAT WON'T BREAK THE BANK



**18**  
FOR UNDER  
**\$200**  
A NIGHT!

Photograph by Julien Caponcel

# CULTURE

SEVEN SPOTS WHERE YOU'LL FIND AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES AND A UNIQUE AND VIBRANT SENSE OF PLACE

which is the setting for yoga classes arranged by the hotel.

**Book:** The Banyan Cottage for dinner on your own veranda (758-455-1244; balenbouche.com).

**Best for:** Organic fanatics who want to see authentic St. Lucia in all its natural glory.

**Rental car:** Required—it's cheaper than taking taxis, and you'll want it to get to nearby beaches. 🚗 🏠

## FOND DOUX HOLIDAY PLANTATION • Soufrière

**Price:** Cottages, \$150–\$400  
Fond Doux Holiday Plantation, one of the oldest working cacao plantations in the Caribbean, is a verdant retreat set in a cool valley between St. Lucia's imposing Piton mountains. You can still see some of its original sixteenth-century features, but the focus here is on the island's natural beauty, the best of which is just outside your door. The world's only drive-in volcano is literally around the corner from the property, as are a host of sulphur springs and warm-water tropical waterfalls. Guests who prefer to stay put on the 135-acre estate can hike one of three trails that wind around ruins and jungle flora or simply laze by the pool. The seven cottages epitomize tropical luxury, with four-poster beds, private baths, and louvered windows to let in the night breezes.

**Book:** The Cinnamon Cottage has space and privacy that you'll appreciate after a day of exploring (758-459-7545; fonddouxestate.com).

**Best for:** Travelers looking for nature without crowds.

**Rental car:** Not required. 🚗 🏠



Harvesting cacao on Fond Doux's plantation.



Surf, sun, and fun are always on the menu at Jake's Resort.

[ JAMAICA ]

## JAKE'S RESORT • Treasure Beach

**Price:** Doubles, \$115–\$325

There's plenty to keep you from roaming at Jake's, an eclectic mix of rooms and cottages a two-and-a-half hour drive from Montego Bay, on the south coast. There's the free-form pool fronting the property's private beach as well as colorful rooms (without phones) decorated in a Moorish meets West Indian style and featuring minibars and CD players. But with the charms of the surrounding fishing community of Treasure Beach so close at hand, staying put would be a mistake: Have breakfast at the local eatery, shop for crafts, and, on public holidays, hear local musicians performing before returning to the resort to enjoy the catch of the day. **Book:** An ocean-view one-bedroom—you'll be able to see the waves lapping just off your private outdoor lounge area (876-965-3000; jakeshotel.com). **Best for:** Couples in search of the real Jamaica. **Rental car:** Not required. 🚗 🏠

## ROCKHOUSE • Negril

**Price:** Doubles, \$160–\$185.

No one goes to Negril, Jamaica's party capital, looking for peace and quiet. But two and a half miles from town, Rockhouse has its own distinct, easy-going vibe. With its stunning location on the water and its relaxed air, this clutch of rough-hewn villas and low-slung hotel buildings abutting a limestone cliff attracts sun-worshipping music-indus-

try types (the Rolling Stones stayed here in its 1970s heyday) and other glamorous globe-trotters. Paths carved out of the rock lead from guest rooms to the 60-foot infinity-edge pool, the new spa pavilion, and the turquoise waters that reveal a coral reef just offshore. All rooms have four-poster beds, private sun-decks, discreet outdoor showers, and air-conditioning. Rockhouse isn't far from the action in Negril,

but many guests check in and don't leave the premises until their departure. Days can begin with sun salutations at the yoga studio and proceed in a relaxed progression from lunch to sunset cocktails to moonlit dinners of Jamaican fusion creations such as upmarket jerk pork and crab turnovers with mango salsa.

**Book:** A studio for a water view at the best price (876-957-4373; rockhousehotel.com).

**Best for:** Laid-back yogis and surf seekers who like their food and drink served with a side of sun.

**Rental car:** Not required. 🚗 🏠

[ MEXICO ]

## CASA DE LEYENDAS

Mazatlán, Mexico

**Price:** Doubles, \$99–\$125

On the edge of Mazatlán's sleepy historic district, this old-fashioned Mexican hacienda was restored a few years ago by owners Glen and Sharon Sorrie. Now the persimmon-hued two-story building is a casually elegant bed-and-breakfast with six large guest rooms and plenty of common areas. Take your coffee in the quiet inner courtyard with wrought iron tables and a petite plunge pool, or curl up with a magazine on a comfy couch upstairs. There are thoughtful details such as a constantly refilled snack basket, an on-site laundry, and free Internet and calls to the United States and



Colorful Casa de Leyendas.

Canada. The daily breakfast is a lavish affair with fruit, eggs, and pastries. The property is well situated for both beachgoers (the sand is just blocks away) and antiques hunters, plus the city's small art museum is just across the street. The Sorries know just about everyone and can easily arrange boat cruises, restaurant reservations, or anything

### AT A GLANCE

## MEXICO

**Nonstop flights:** Cancún is four to four and a half hours from Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York; Mazatlán is two and a half hours from Houston and Los Angeles; Puebla is two and a half hours from Houston.

**The draw:** Just about three times the size of Texas

and featuring geography that ranges from mountains and coast to rain forest and desert, America's neighbor to the south has perennial appeal for its endless variety. Its Pacific coast is the country's original Riviera, where for decades celebrities have flocked to beach resorts like Acapulco (currently enjoying a renaissance). High-end resorts of more recent vintage dot the tip of the desert-covered Baja Peninsula in Los Cabos, set on the Sea of Cortés. Inland, sprawling, irrepressible Mexico City and quiet Puebla have culture, history, and ur-

ban energy. On the Caribbean side, Americans have long sought shelter from the cold at the many fine resorts in Cancún and Cozumel. Easy access, endless beaches, excellent diving and water sports, nonstop nightlife, and the nearby Mayan ruins at Tulum make them an obvious choice.

**When to go:** Mexico can be hot and humid in summer, and destinations in the interior can be chilly during the winter months. On the coasts, you'll find the best weather October through May.