

The one for fidgets



Writer Decca Aitkenhead doesn't do lying on beaches. Her idea of a holiday is something a little more energetic

'Jamaica: laid-back, chilled-out, the land of "no problem". So hang on, what am I doing braving a triathlon here on holiday? And you know it isn't an ordinary race when the entrants all pause for an opening prayer, "May God protect you from the creatures in the ocean."

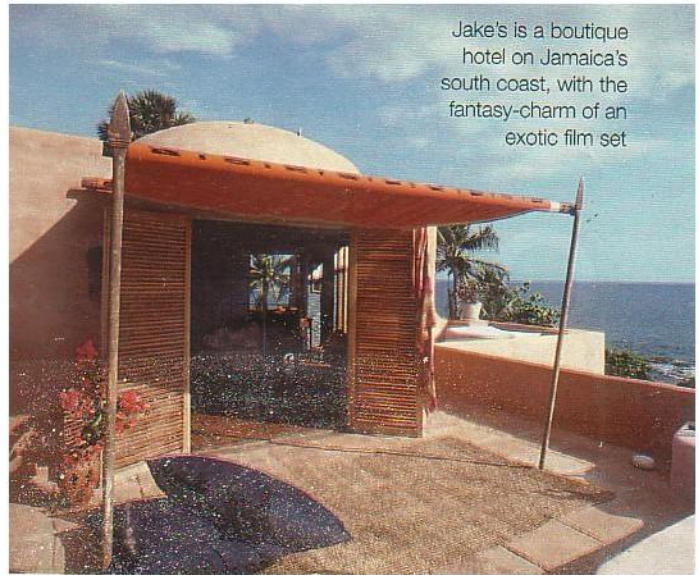
'Jake's is a family-owned boutique hotel on Jamaica's south coast, and their famous annual triathlon has become quite a tradition. The sun's fierce, but the route, through meadows full of goats and almond trees, is lined with Rastas and children cheering us all on. Before I know it, I've made it over the finishing line and am enjoying the first of the day's many rum punches.

The triathlon's a brilliant excuse to come to Jake's, but you don't really need one. Situated in the sleepy village of Treasure Beach, Jake's is an eclectic assortment of cottages clustered around a tiny cove, with the fantasy-charm of an exotic film set. It's also the first place in the world to offer a unique new form of exercise, christened Reggaealates – a clever fusion of Pilates and Jamaican dancehall moves.

'For the more leisurely minded, Treasure Beach has plenty to offer. There are little boutiques selling island fashion and handmade jewellery, and tiny bars offering live reggae bands. Half an hour inland you'll find YS Falls, a cascade of waterfalls buried deep in rural farmland. Head up the coast to Black River, a small coastal town, and join a boat at the mouth of a river to cruise through dense avenues of mangroves, past wild crocodiles, and on to a tiny bamboo bar selling freshwater crab.

'One of the highlights of my stay was the Pelican Bar, built on stilts a mile offshore in the ocean, where you can dine on fresh lobster as stingrays circle beneath your feet.'

Decca stayed at Jake's hotel, rooms from £60 per night. Call 001 876 965 3000; www.islandoutpost.com/jakes. British Airways flies twice-weekly from London Gatwick to Montego Bay. www.ba.com; 0844 493 0787 ▶



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