

# HOUSE & GARDEN

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## DESTINATIONS



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HOUSE  
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## ZIMBABWE IS BACK

and unveiling **MAGICAL** *new lodges*

WILD ADVENTURE | THE BEST BEACH IDYLLS | SEYCHELLES BY BOAT  
BURMA ON THE IRRAWADDY | MODERN COLOMBIA  
SHORT HAUL BLISS | COUNTRY RETREATS



## Redemption song

THE CARIBBEAN'S WILD-CHILD ISLAND IS GROWING UP, SAYS JUDY BASTYRA

Jamaica has raw beauty and vibrancy in abundance, and her rich and complicated history infuses cuisine, art, literature and the ubiquitous reggae. Having long been perceived as a left-of-field Caribbean destination, the island is re-embracing its elite-hideaway roots. Chris Blackwell's Island Outposts, and the hotels Geejam and Jake's led the way, and now that innovative, creative influence is building momentum. Jamaica's slow, tectonic shift to grown-up luxury has been building for some time. Now, even the Ministry of Tourism has caught on. For 2017 it has officially announced that it is turning its attention away from resorts to concentrate on 'rustic luxury'. New direct flights from Scotland and parts of the United States, and a new highway between Montego Bay and Kingston, cleave open possibilities of arrival and departure.

Jamaica has always done luxury with panache. Winston Churchill and Noel Coward recharged their batteries at Jamaica Inn, Round Hill and the recently renovated Trident Hotel in Portland, and age has not diminished their impeccable service and timeless elegance. The sine qua non of boutique Jamaica is Chris Blackwell, who also shone as a record producer, signing Bob Marley and the Wailers in 1972. His Island Outpost portfolio, which includes The Caves in Negril and Strawberry Hill in the Blue Mountains, is a beacon of cool comfort.

Bond author Ian Fleming's GoldenEye villa, available for fully catered rental, was the inspiration behind Blackwell's GoldenEye Resort and has now expanded to include 26 beach huts that seamlessly merge outdoor and indoor living with octagonal structures, private verandas, oversized louvered windows and high ceilings. On top of this, Blackwell set the door ajar of his 2,500-acre solar-powered estate, Pantrepant, 30 miles inland from Montego Bay, which he has owned for 25 years. In 2013 he opened the place up for quiet lunches prepared by the estate chef Mamma J; and now you can stay overnight in a rustic-luxe two-bedroom guesthouse. Fresh fare from the estate's soil is a major focus. But, Blackwell adds, untouched landscapes aside, what makes Jamaica great 'is its people. They are the heartbeat of this fascinating place that I am fortunate enough to call home'. ▀

### Note worthy

**The biennial May Calabash Literary Festival at Gaudiesque Jake's Hotel in Treasure Beach draws literary stars such as Salman Rushdie, Andrea Levy and Geoff Dyer. It's free, and therefore offers a chance to connect with a cross section of Jamaican society.**

Kingston on the Edge (KOTE) is an enriching, little-known urban festival in mid-June; a ten-day showcase of art, dance, music and other expressions.

**For culinary thrills, head to Portland, home of jerk seasoning. Stop for roasted yam and salt fish at Borough Bridge as you go south, boat down the Black River for stuffed crab backs, detour to one of the Spur Tree Hill restaurants for the famous mannish water and curry goat, and drive up to the Blue Mountains to drink coffee.**