

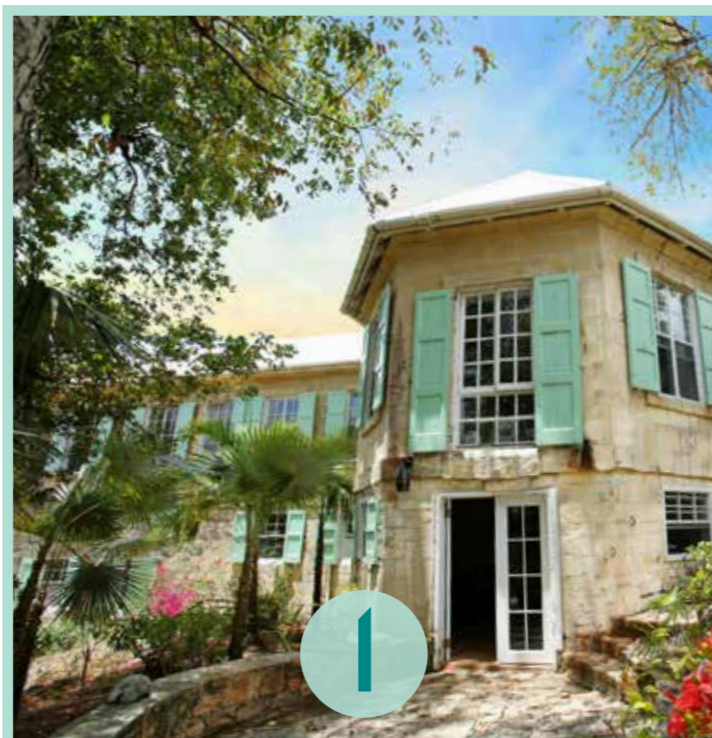
of the BEST

OFF-BEACH ESCAPES

The best Caribbean boltholes aren't always by the beach, finds **Katie McGonagle**

Ask anyone to describe their ultimate Caribbean holiday, and the answer will likely centre on sandy beaches, swaying palm trees and sun-warmed waves lapping gently at their feet, perhaps with an obligatory pina colada in hand.

But beautiful as they are, restricting yourself to the Caribbean's beaches is like nibbling around the edges of a jam doughnut then missing out its gooey middle – tasty enough, but not the whole story. There are plenty of smaller hotels tucked into tiny, untouristed nooks that are just as worthy of attention as the bigger resorts. Here are a handful to consider, offering all the winter sun your clients could want, but with a different kind of Caribbean charm.



1

STAY ON A SUGAR PLANTATION IN ANTIGUA

The Caribbean is awash with new-build, high-end resorts featuring all the mod cons, so it's rare to find somewhere that offers a window onto the Caribbean's storied past. With more than 350 years of history, The Great House Antigua certainly has some tales to tell. It was built in 1670 on Mercers Creek sugar plantation using stone shipped from the Cotswolds by British merchant Philip Watkins, and more recently, was a family home that hosted the likes of Humphrey Bogart, Greta Garbo and the Kennedys. These days, the eight-bedroom boutique hotel is replete with antique silver and glassware and 18th-century French four-poster beds, with four garden cottage suites added this year.

Book it: Rates start from \$425 per night full-board in a Garden Suite, based on two sharing.
thegreathouseantigua.com

PICTURE: AR Photography



2

ENJOY THE VIEW 1,000FT ABOVE SEA LEVEL

Not being on the beach doesn't mean not having a sea view. Just look at the panoramic vistas from the private wraparound verandas at Belle Mont Farm in St Kitts, which sits at 1,000ft elevation, between Mount Liamuiga and sweeping views of the Caribbean Sea below. It's set on a 400-acre organic farm and takes its eco credentials seriously, with cottages, villages and farmhouses designed to blend into their natural surroundings, and a strong farm-to-table ethos, working with responsible fishermen and farmers in the community. Selling points include outdoor rainwater showers and pull-down projector screens so each room becomes a mini cinema.

Book it: Carrier offers seven nights from £2,935 per person based on two sharing a Luxury Cottage King with Pool on an all-inclusive basis, with transfers, BA flights from Gatwick and fast-track meet-and-greet service, based on a departure on May 2, 2020.
carrier.co.uk

3

WATCH CRUISE SHIPS COME AND GO IN CASTRIES

Saint Lucia's Pitons are famous the world over, but they're not the only knockout view on the island. Try being in the hills above Castries, surrounded by lush greenery and abundant birdlife, with a view of the city below. Bel Jou is new to Funway Holidays' brochure, and product destination manager Malcolm Davies says: "This hillside boutique hotel above the capital city, Castries, has a local community feel. One of my favourite things about this place is the amazing views it offers from Vigie Point to Pigeon Island, particularly at night when the lights go on in the many hillside houses and you can watch the cruise ships depart from the dock."

Book it: Funway Holidays offers a week at the adult-only, all-inclusive resort from £1,545 including Virgin Atlantic flights from Gatwick, departing March 6, 2020.
funway4agents.co.uk



4

HEAR THE BIRDS TWEET IN TOBAGO

Tobago is known for its back-to-nature vibe, but few resorts could boast being just a stone's throw from a protected bird sanctuary. The Villas at Stonehaven, however, sit next to 260 acres of forest filled with blue-crowned motmots, sunshine-yellow bananaquits and all manner of other birdlife flitting through the trees. Each of the 14 villas has its own veranda, plus there's an 18-hole golf course nearby and an infinity pool overlooking peaceful Stonehaven Bay.

Book it: Travel 2 offers a week in a one-bedroom Luxury Ocean View Villa on a room-only basis from £1,629, including British Airways flights from Gatwick and shared transfers, for travel between May 4 and June 1, 2020.
travel2.com



DESTINATIONS

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GET PAMPERED IN SAINT LUCIA

Overlooking a stretch of sea once described as “the most beautiful in the Caribbean” by novelist James A Michener, Marigot Bay Resort and Marina proves that an off-the-beach resort can be every bit as relaxing as an escape on the coast. Before guests arrive at this 124-suite hotel, a personal assistant will call to find out their preferences, and be on hand to arrange everything from a treatment in the spa to a private meditation session in the treehouse. Spa-goers can make the most of three couples’ treatment rooms, plus a steam room, sauna, yoga deck and outdoor Jacuzzi – all overlooking a bay that had a lasting influence on the island’s fortunes, playing host to a series of naval battles between the British and the French that saw Barbados change hands 14 times between the late 1700s and early 1800s.

Book it: Caribtours offers seven nights from £1,675 per person based on two sharing a Resort View Junior Suite, with breakfast, flights, private transfers and access to a UK airport lounge. The price is valid for selected bookings made by December 31; terms and conditions apply. caribtours.co.uk



PICTURE: Robert Reck



SLEEP IN A BAJAN BOUTIQUE

The chance to bed down in an early 20th-century sugar plantation should be a sure-fire hit for history fans, but add proximity to Barbados Museum and the Unesco-listed Garrison area and you’re on to a winner. Sweetfield Manor is a protected colonial-era building that has been modernised into a 10-room boutique hotel with rooms split between the original house, stables and other outbuildings, plus fine-dining restaurant Pavao. Each room is individually decorated, with original pine floors, mahogany antiques and a private patio or terrace with daybed. Look out for sweeping views of Carlisle Bay and the south coast, and perhaps even a peacock or two roaming the grounds.

Book it: Premier Holidays offers seven nights at Sweetfield Manor from £1,499 per person on a bed-and-breakfast basis, including BA flights and private transfers. premierholidays.co.uk