



A new view

Katie McGonagle rounds up the latest openings and refurbishments across the Caribbean

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Repeat guests are a big thing for the Caribbean, with visitors who come back year after year to the same resort – the same room, even – and expect everything to be just as they left it last time. There's no point persuading them to try something different – just enjoy the easy sell and move along.

For everyone else, it helps to have something new to offer, which is where this year's swathe of hotel openings comes in, from big-brand new-builds to long-awaited acquisitions and much-needed refurbishments.

While hoteliers are abuzz with activity, putting the finishing touches to their creations before the seasons start, it's time to get to grips with what's new in the Caribbean.

► OPENINGS

One of the hottest openings this year is **Silversands Grenada**, a departure from the Spice Island's colonial-style hotels with a chic, design-led resort on Grand Anse beach. Its 43 suites will feature minimalist decor and neutral tones, complemented by a 100m infinity pool, and a cigar and rum bar. It is set to open on November 1.

Similarly chic, **Hodges Bay Resort & Spa, Antigua**, promises to bring "contemporary luxury" to the island's north coast. It comes with a choice of adult-only infinity pool or family pool lined with daybeds and cabanas, and activities including wine-and-cheese pairing or a mixology workshop. It's due to open in the final quarter of the year, with rates from £677 per night.

Luxury travellers might also want to put **The Grand**

Reserve at Paradisus Palma Real, Dominican Republic, on their list. This \$110 million development, opening in December, offers high-end, all-inclusive accommodation in Playa de Bavaro, with 288 sizeable rooms, including swim-up suites, seven bars and restaurants, a spa and aqua park. Sister hotel **Melia Caribe Tropical** is also being divided into two distinct properties: one adult-only and the other more family-oriented.

Look out for the October opening of **S Hotel Jamaica**, a modern, 120-room resort in Montego Bay – expect a trendy crowd at the Sky Bar and Lounge.

Multi-resort development **Baha Mar** now has the final →



PICTURE: MAGDA BIERNAT PHOTOGRAPHY

3 OF THE BEST NEW ROOMS

Beaches Negril, Jamaica, has added nine room types, from the Negril Luxury King up to a Tropical Beachfront Two-Bedroom Grand Butler Family Suite, which has been recently renovated and includes private VIP in-room check-in and 24-hour room service.

True Blue Bay, Grenada, will add 22 eco-friendly 'Cocoa Pods', using rainwater and solar panels to make the rooms self-sustaining for water and electricity. Opening in January, prices start at \$238 per night.

Paradise Beach Resort, Nevis, has added five thatched Beach Houses on stilts over the private beach, featuring two bedrooms, a kitchen, wraparound deck and plunge pool.

➔ piece in its puzzle with the opening of **Rosewood Baha Mar, the Bahamas**, in June. The \$4.2 billion development features two more hotels and a huge casino. The 237-room property has some of the largest suites on New Providence, with balconies and butlers across all room categories.

Sunscape Star Cancun, Mexico, on the Caribbean coast, is one to watch when it opens on March 31, as a family resort where every room comes with an ocean view, plus four pools, clubs for kids and teens, and a surf pool.

MAJOR REFURBISHMENTS

Former guests at the **Fairmont Royal Pavilion, Barbados**, probably wouldn't recognise it this winter, following a multimillion-dollar refurbishment. The lobby and all 72 sea-view rooms and suites now have a more contemporary feel, new technology and private butler service. From December 18, the resort will also allow children to stay year-round (previously, under-10s could not stay from November to February). Rates start at £279 for an Oceanfront Deluxe Room.

Trade favourite **BodyHoliday Saint Lucia** has been closed since July 1 to refurbish its 76 rooms, adding some for solo travellers, and two new villas that can be hired in their entirety or split into an apartment and junior suite. Rooms feature new beds, rain showers, surround-sound speakers and eco-friendly air conditioning, while Asian restaurant Tao has had a facelift. Rates start at \$500 per person.

The high-end **Cheval Blanc St-Barth Isle de France** will have 19 new rooms available by December, fashioned by French designer Jacques Grange,



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along with new kids' club Le Carrousel, and revamped, sea-view restaurants.

While **Belmond Cap Juluca, Anguilla**, isn't a new-build – the brand took over the former Cap Juluca in May 2017, before Hurricane Irma hit the island – it might as well be, given the extent of renovation to the Maundays Bay resort, which together with the acquisition, totals \$121 million. Expect nods to Anguillian heritage in its decor and a 'disappearing spa' designed to blend into the landscape, alongside dining venues including the Italian-inspired

Cips by Cipriani. It will be welcoming guests from November 17, with a Deluxe Beachfront King from £523.

Island neighbour **CuisinArt Golf Resort & Spa, Anguilla**, is undergoing an overhaul before it reopens on November 1, with a spectacular entrance featuring a custom-made chandelier, refreshed room decor, new Moroccan-inspired lounge bar, and upgrades to its hydroponic farm.

It might surprise you to know that the renowned **Half Moon, Jamaica**, is 65 this year, but this island institution isn't ready to collect a pension just yet, with a \$75 million renovation providing quite the boost. A revamped entrance hall, 57 new rooms and suites – all with sea views and patio or balcony – a bigger beachfront, and adult-only pool have all been added. A seafood restaurant and beachside grill are among five new F&B venues.

HOTEL UPDATES

They might not have had a total facelift, but a nip here and tuck there can do wonders to making a resort feel fresh. **Marigot Bay Resort & Marina, Saint Lucia**, has dropped its Capella branding to become an independent member of Preferred Hotels & Resorts, offering an introductory 15% commission for agent bookings made by October 31. Updates include the new Hurricane Hole Bar & Restaurant and expanded dining terrace at its marina. Resort View Rooms start at £274.

Meanwhile **Atlantis Paradise Island, the Bahamas**, will start an overhaul of family-friendly hotel The Reef in late October. The work is due for completion by January. **tw**



PICTURE: ROBERT RECK

ABOVE:
Belmond
Cap Juluca

LEFT:
Marigot Bay
Resort & Marina