

WHAT'S NEW FOR 2026



British holidaymakers can't get enough of the Caribbean, judging by the escalating interest from operators. "Each island has its own personality and something special to offer," says Jim Robertson, senior regional manager for long-haul beach product at Kuoni, which recently added St Kitts and Nevis and Turks and Caicos to its portfolio of island escapes.

Meanwhile, Marella Cruises has introduced itineraries sailing from Barbados this winter and Virgin Atlantic is enhancing inter-island connectivity by partnering with local carriers InterCaribbean Airways and Caribbean Airlines.

Sunshine, warmth, white-sand beaches and bewitching turquoise seas are the classic lures of the Caribbean, closely followed by exuberant scenery, spicy cuisine and a stellar soundtrack. While some clients like to explore new places, others are serial repeaters who check in to the same resort – and often the same room – year after year.

But even customers who like to stay somewhere familiar will find something new in their destination, as 2026 is shaping up to be a bumper 12 months for Caribbean openings. Here are just three islands with even more to offer this year.



Antigua

Easy to reach, with plentiful beaches and an abundance of all-inclusive resorts, Antigua is in a buoyant mood. Expect the island to be busy this year as it hosts the Caribbean Travel Marketplace in May – the regional equivalent of World Travel Market – followed by the vivid Antigua Carnival (July 25-August 4).

"Last year, UK arrivals rose by 5% and the average length of stay was 12 days," reports Colin James, chief executive of the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority.

British Airways is offering more seats to the island on its daily flights from Gatwick. A new cruise terminal

is also taking shape, having opened its first phase in January, with more shops, restaurants and a day club to be added by July. The facility is expected to help the island break cruise records, with more than a million passengers forecast to pass through Antigua this year.

The focus is firmly on the mid to upper end of the market, a step up reflected in a wave of new-look resorts. On the south coast, Carlisle Bay has refreshed 48 of its suites with minimalist interiors in classy natural tones, and will renovate the rest of the rooms and public areas by 2027. A strong selling point of Carlisle Bay is the numerous

complimentary treats clients can enjoy, including sunrise Pilates, sailing adventures, island hikes with transfers provided and afternoon tea delivered wherever guests wish.

At nearby Curtain Bluff, an £8 million renovation has been completed, centred on 42 suites redesigned in a seaside-chic style with vintage prints. As an added bonus, its all-inclusive rate now extends to Taittinger champagne.

Book it: Elegant Resorts has seven nights at Curtain Bluff from £6,265 per person all-inclusive, based on two sharing, including Virgin Atlantic flights from Heathrow on March 9. elegantresorts.co.uk

"Barbados remains our number-one destination," says Paul Cleary, chief executive of specialist operator Caribtours, which is now running its biggest-ever programme to the island.

He welcomes the steady return of seven former Elegant Hotels resorts on the island, now renovated and run by Marriott, including "much-loved favourites" such as Crystal Cove (which opened on February 1) and Turtle Beach (opening May 1). Most of these revamped properties are all-inclusive, except Luxury Collection member Colony Club, which opened last July and comes with appealing lagoon-style pools set in mature tropical gardens.

New resorts include the five-star Blue Monkey Hotel and Beach Club in Paynes Bay

(opening in April), a boutique property with an exclusive feel thanks to just 28 suites, a Zen spa and signature Lebanese restaurant. Along the coast, the 220-room, adult-only Royalton Vessence resort will open beside the beach in Hometown on July 1, offering a buzzing rooftop, romantic late-night swims and even an art studio. Meanwhile, golfers' favourite Apes Hill has added 14 hilltop villas and a beach club in Speightstown.

Foodies can also delight in new epicurean experiences, including the rustic Hopewell Distillery, five minutes' drive from Harrison's Cave, which is now producing artisanal rum and gin; and the revamped Dine with a Bajan experience launched by Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc in December. Designed to

connect visitors with an authentic, home-cooked taste of Barbados, this initiative is typical of a bustling, go-ahead island that is constantly adding new and exciting things to do.

On my recent visit, Barbadian home cook Jools Jeffers laid on a generous spread that included punchy pumpkin soup and shepherd's pie made with local black belly lamb. Then she brought out a bowl of her cinnamon-spiced pudding, capped with vanilla ice cream, as a deliciously decadent finale. "It's basically rum with bread in it," she joked.

Book it: Caribtours offers seven nights at Colony Club from £3,499 per person, based on two sharing, including breakfast, transfers and Virgin Atlantic flights from Heathrow on March 10. caribtours.co.uk



Barbados

Malliouhana resort

HOT FOR
2026

Opening on **Grand Cayman's** Seven Mile Beach on May 1, the Grand Hyatt Grand Cayman Resort will feature 382 rooms, six restaurants, a spa and kids' club.

In **Jamaica**, 70% of the island's hotel accommodation has reopened following Hurricane Melissa in October, the tourist board confirmed.

Punta Cana in the **Dominican Republic** has a wealth of resort openings in 2026: Moon Palace The Grand will feature 2,171 rooms, adult-only Secrets Macao Beach will have 406 rooms and suites, while the Lopesan Group is expanding its Costa Bavaro complex with three new properties due to open in May.

One of the world's longest cable car rides will open in **Dominica** later this year, offering a 20-minute ascent to the steaming waters of Boiling Lake.

Grenada, the Spice Isle, will stage its first National Flower Festival from November 8-15, highlighting its many gardens and floral beauty.

Anguilla

Prized for its immaculate and rarely busy white-sand beaches – there are 33 of them, no less – this British Overseas Territory is now setting its sights on rivalling high-end Caribbean destinations such as St Barts and Grand Cayman.

To increase accessibility, a new international airport terminal opened in December. The runway is also set to be extended this year to take larger aircraft, to improve on current access links that require visitors to fly to Antigua then take a 50-minute hop west, or travel

via Paris or Amsterdam to Sint Maarten then catch a 25-minute ferry. Work is also underway on a standalone private jet terminal and the 118-berth superyacht marina Port Nimara in Maundays Bay.

These transformations have been accelerated by an unusual windfall. In 1995, Anguilla was allocated the internet country code .ai, a suffix now in high demand as artificial intelligence booms. The revenue from website registrations in 2025 is estimated at £141 million.

Anguilla comes just as well-endowed with luxury resorts,

including established brands such as Belmond, Four Seasons and Hilton's LXR Hotels & Resorts. Newcomers over the next few years include Ani Private Resorts, which has already broken ground at Shoal Bay.

Anguilla has no all-inclusive resorts but its upscale properties invariably come with complimentary treats and experiences. One standout is the 63-room Malliouhana, set on cliffs beside Meads Bay Beach, which includes expert-led stargazing and rum and chocolate tasting in its pricing.

For families and sports-loving

couples, the vast Aurora Anguilla Resort comes with a large beach, golf course, water park and 11 pickleball courts. Complimentary activities include fitness classes, fishing trips and a three-hour round-island bus tour. Large villas suitable for multigenerational groups are another star attraction.

Book it: Red Savannah offers seven nights at the five-bedroom villa Indigo from £4,816 per person, based on 10 sharing, including breakfast, transfers and flights via Paris from Heathrow on April 13. redsavannah.com **TW**