



Condé Nast Traveller

JUNE 2016 £4.30

MY OWN PRIVATE VENICE

THE BEST APARTMENTS, PALAZZOS & VILLAS TO TAKE OVER AS YOUR OWN



Everybody loves the sunshine

EXCLUSIVE REVIEW OF THE NEW AMAN

GO OFF-GRID IN GREECE

**SMART HOTEL OPENINGS
IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE**

MALLORCA'S BEST WEEKEND HOTSPOT

**EPIC ADVENTURE ON THE
GREAT BARRIER REEF**

ON HOLIDAY WITH
{ ROSE BYRNE
SALMA HAYEK
JESS GLYNNE }

SCANDINAVIA • CROATIA • JAMAICA • AMALFI COAST • DEVON

WAY OF LIFE

WILD WORLD

He made stars out of Bob Marley and Grace Jones, and is behind the barefoot Jamaican hotels where the jet set come to tune out. Now Chris Blackwell has opened the gates of his private estate

By Ondine Cohane. Photographs by Julien Capmeil





Clockwise from this picture: organic produce from Chris Blackwell's Pantrepant estate; Blackwell outside Ian Fleming's villa, GoldenEye; lunch on the veranda at Pantrepant; curried lamb and garlic okra. Opposite, Blackwell's own house at Pantrepant



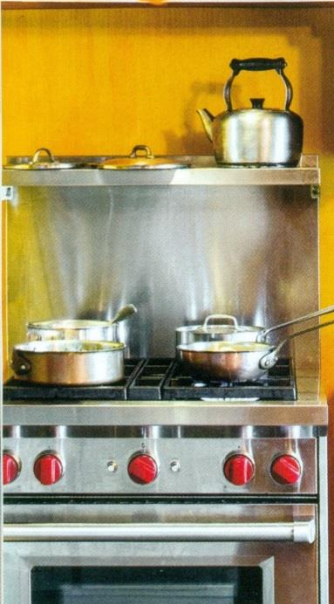
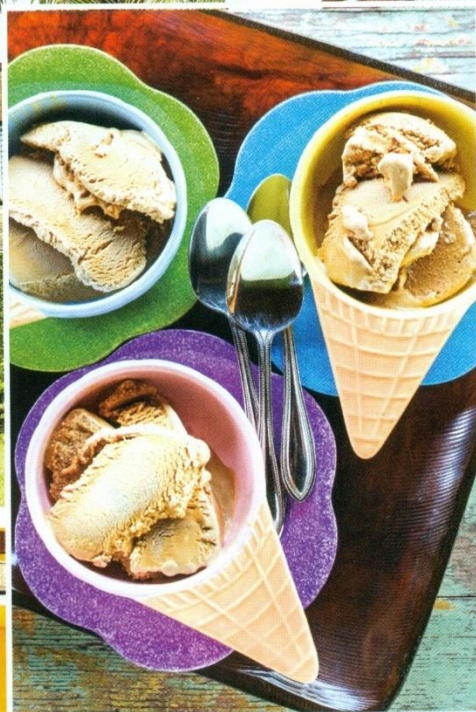
MY CAR MOVES SLOWLY along a bumpy road lit only by stars until finally I see the glow of a guesthouse around the corner. A perfect roast chicken with mashed potatoes and a plate of steamed callaloo awaits, served alongside a glass of cold white wine in a cosy kitchen. And then it's time for bed.

The next morning I'm woken up by birdcall, and as I sit on the veranda with a coffee, hummingbirds flit by. My only companion is a large iguana with a bright-blue crest. On the Pantrepant estate there are 2,500 acres of farmland, rainforest and the majestic Martha Brae River; my closest neighbours are herds of burnished-mahogany cattle and doe-eyed, white Brahman bulls. The trees are monumental and varied: pineapple, breadfruit, lychee, West Indian cherry, black banana, coconut and cashew. The background lowing of the cows and gentle hum of cicadas are all that break the silence.

Perhaps it makes sense that this is where Chris Blackwell would choose to retreat after a noisy career in the music industry. Thirty miles inland from Montego Bay, it's the antithesis of everything slick, packaged and crowded. He bought this former cattle farm about 25 years ago, just after selling Island Records, at the time one of the world's largest independent labels, to Polygram for £207 million. 'I was looking for a house by a river,' he says. 'I was taken to a 17th-century property that was beautiful, but way too big. So they brought me to this farm with a *busha* (plantation manager) house, which was dwarfed by the largest tree I had ever seen. I bought the tree really.'

In many ways Blackwell has been a key player in putting Jamaica in the spotlight. After selling ska singles from the ➤

WAY OF LIFE

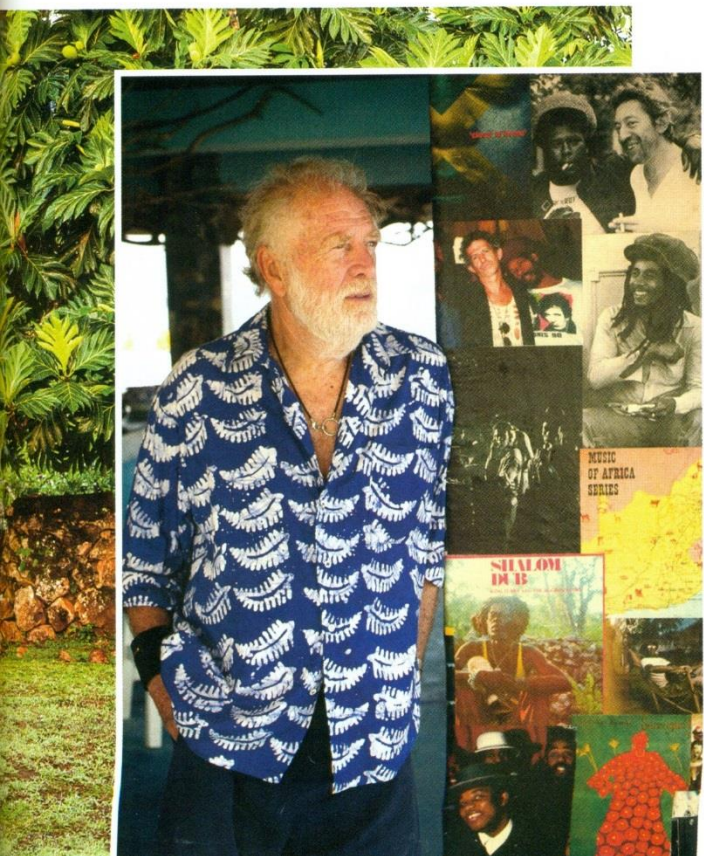


Clockwise from this picture:
horses at Pantrepant;
the kitchen at Blackwell's
home; a building on the
estate; a bedroom in
the guesthouse; homemade
coffee ice cream. Opposite,
from top: the guesthouse
at dusk; breadfruit tree;
Blackwell at GoldenEye





IT MAKES SENSE TO RETREAT HERE AFTER A CAREER IN MUSIC. IT IS THE ANTITHESIS OF EVERYTHING SLICK, PACKAGED AND CROWDED



► back of a Mini Cooper, his first hit was Millie's 'My Boy Lollipop'. Bob Marley and the Wailers were signed in 1972, joining names such as Jimmy Cliff and Toots & The Maytals. Then, as a hotelier, Blackwell built and sold his empire in Miami's South Beach to concentrate on opening Strawberry Hill, The Caves and Ian Fleming's former villa GoldenEye, where Jay Z, Beyoncé, Kate Moss, Naomi Campbell and others have all come to hide away.

Despite his success, Blackwell remains a very private man. He opened up Pantrepant for farm-to-table lunches quietly in 2013, and only since the end of last year has offered overnight stays in the two-bedroom guesthouse on the estate. The look here is simple and organic, a sort of country Caribbean, which was created by his go-to architect Ann Hodges who worked with him on GoldenEye. Most of the furniture was made using indigenous timber; crockery and linens are from Royal Hut, founded by Blackwell's late wife, Mary Vinson, a Parsons-trained fashion and textile designer (Grace Jones introduced them in the early 1980s). Old maps of Jamaica hang on the wall alongside paintings by local artists including Albert Artwell. But at its heart, Pantrepant is still a working farm. Luis Rojas, the farm manager and graduate of Costa Rica's Earth University, shares the same philosophy as Blackwell – free-range and no pesticides – to provide the estate and hotels with homegrown produce and meat. Rojas points out the variety of vegetables and herbs that had to be imported in the past: the soil brims with bok choy, kale, radish, basil, rocket, broccoli, lettuce, okra and marigold flowers. The idea to showcase Jamaica's diverse food makes sense for an island mostly known for jerk chicken. And with a recycling programme and the introduction of solar power, the farm is a hugely successful example of sustainable tourism.

After a stroll around the estate, I head along the river to the swimming hole. Between dips I stretch out in the little shaded pavilion or on blankets and pillows strewn on the grass. There is a cooler stocked with everything from rum punch to fresh coconut juice. I think of Blackwell's routine here: 'A walk with my dogs. A swim in the river. A big breakfast. A walk around the grounds. A light lunch. A nap. Another walk with my dogs. Another swim. A lot of emails and phone calls. Soup for dinner!'

The 200-year-old guango tree that towers behind Blackwell's home is an arboreal superstar and the site for leisurely lunches prepared by Mamma J, who has been cooking at Pantrepant for nearly 20 years. Eggplant ratatouille, stuffed yellow yam, garlic okra and her signature curried lamb are served under the guango's long branches to a playlist of Blackwell's reggae and Ethiopian favourites. When I can't possibly eat any more, the music stops and I flop into a chair on the veranda to watch the light slowly disappear.

'It's very otherworldly,' says Blackwell. 'It feels like you're in a hidden valley. There are only natural sounds: the wind, parrots and the odd donkey bray.' All of which is now the music legend's preferred soundtrack.

TO RENT The guesthouse at Pantrepant sleeps four and costs from £2,430 per night full board. To book lunch on the estate and overnight stays here (exclusive to guests of GoldenEye), email reservations@islandoutpost.com or visit pantrepant.com

For a dose of sunshine music, go to cntraveller.com/playlists to listen to our exclusive selection of Island Records hits.