

TRAVEL

A barefoot chic vibe keeps guests returning to GoldenEye.

3 DREAMY *island getaways*

SEA, SAND AND INSPIRATION FOR YOUR NEXT CARIBBEAN ESCAPE



GOLDENEYE RESORT, JAMAICA

by JOSEPHINE MATYAS

IT WAS THE END to one of those pristine GoldenEye days—sunshine fading to a dramatic sky streaked with red and orange, and a gentle breeze rustling the palm fronds overhead. As dusk fell, staff lit the flickering candles and torches lining the curved walkways and villa patios, nudging the radiance of the tropical sun into the magic of a Jamaican nighttime.

When I need to switch on a Caribbean daydream—serenity and diversion from pressures of the outside world—GoldenEye is where my mind wanders. Set on a natural seaside bluff, the secluded 52-acre estate is the perfect marriage of quiet beaches, lush tropical gardens and a laid-back vibe. As one of the sumptuous Island Outpost properties—founded by record producer Chris Blackwell, who guided musical careers including Bob Marley, Cat Stevens and U2—at GoldenEye guests feel like they are relaxing at the home of good friends.

One of the things I love about GoldenEye (and the list is long) is how history effortlessly bridges the 20th century right into our present day. The name comes from the original owner, British naval officer Ian Fleming who visited in the early 1940s, fell in love with the unkempt, abandoned donkey racecourse and built his minimalist-style home overlooking the seaside.

It was in the Fleming Villa that the author latched the shutters of the huge windows, dug deep into his experiences in Britain's intelligence service and penned all 14 of the James Bond novels while wintering at his Jamaican getaway. Guests who rent the spacious main villa—with its private beach, media room, swimming pool and accommodations for ten—will find Fleming's original writing desk pushed up against the bare wall, just as he placed it to close out the distraction of the irresistible surroundings.

Soon after Fleming's death in 1964, Chris Blackwell bought the original estate in a somewhat roundabout transaction. The original buyer, reggae musician Bob Marley, backed away from the poshness of the surroundings, so Blackwell stepped in, crossed out Marley's name on the sale documents and entered his own. Over time, Blackwell has added a collection of well-spaced beach and lagoon villas, cottages and barefoot-chic beach huts, with winding pathways and shrubbery to ensure privacy.

It is this harmony of indoor and outdoor living that GoldenEye achieves so effortlessly. My lagoon-fronted cottage had deep verandas and shuttered windows that I left wide open to catch the soothing, tropical breeze, the rhythm of the ocean and the nighttime chorus of chirping tree frogs. Steps from an interior decorated with colourful fabrics and custom-designed Jamaican furnishings, was the most luxurious shower I'd ever seen—a very sexy “007-ish” outdoor enclosure of chest-height bamboo topped with a gentle rainfall showerhead, all cosseted by a small jungle of greenery.

In certain circles, GoldenEye is recognized as a hip place to stay. With the ultimate level of seclusion and discreet service, the property appeals to those escaping the cold in true Bond-style. Over the years, guests—including Michael Cain, Bill and Hillary Clinton, Pierce Brosnan, Quincy Jones, Harrison Ford and Willie Nelson—have supported Blackwell's not-for-profit Oracabessa Foundation by planting trees and making a donation to fund local education,



A secluded cottage at GoldenEye.

sporting and entrepreneurship programs. The tropical greenery planted throughout the grounds has become a botanical guest book as well as a much-loved GoldenEye tradition.

Before we lost the glow of early evening, I sat on the villa dock, swirled my toes in the bathtub-warm water before deciding to take out one of the blue kayaks tied up just an arms-length away. I paddled out to Snorkeler's Cove and looked back at the private beach shaped like a delicious French croissant, absorbing what Fleming called his “wonderful annual escape ... into blazing sunshine, natural beauty and the most healthy life I could wish to live.”

As dusk fell to darkness, I made note of the spots I'd indulge in a little snorkelling the next day. I tied up at my dock and—listening to the natural rhythm of GoldenEye that seamlessly blends the indoors and out—entered the calm envelope of my villa, preparing to step into the magic of that Jamaican evening.

IF YOU DREAM OF A VISIT:

GoldenEye's 45 units range from small beach huts to the iconic Fleming Villa. goldeneye.com

Guests can fly into Montego Bay and arrange for the 90-minute drive to GoldenEye. A much closer alternative is the private airstrip at the Ian Fleming International Airport (a seven-minute drive from the resort).

The resort is looking forward to the 2021 release of the 25th Bond film, *No Time To Die*, which was partially shot in Jamaica. The film opens with James Bond sipping Blackwell Rum, a dark rum that celebrates the Blackwell legacy on the island.