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the It girls
grows up

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EXCLUSIVE
POLL

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Meghan
issue
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conquer or
divide?*

Lionel Shriver,
Lynn Barber, Afua Hirsch
& more take sides

Licence to chill

For a bit of laid-back hedonism, Jamaica is where it's at: the island ups the ante as its golden age of glamour is reborn

By DELILAH KHOMO

THE GRASS IS DEFINITELY greener in Port Antonio. This side of Jamaica is like a prelapsarian Eden, with magnificent waterfalls, tropical forests and mist-covered hills, and is famed for its starry history. In the 1940s the jet set, from Errol Flynn to Bette Davis, escaped uptight America and washed up happily on its shores. Flynn turned up in pure swash-buckling style when his yacht docked in Kingston during a storm. He decided to stay on the island, declaring that Port Antonio was more beautiful than any woman he had known.

Completely seduced, he bought a huge swathe of land east of the coastal town and would sail on the Rio Grande with Graham Greene, Sophia Loren, Truman Capote and Evelyn Waugh (who famously steered a bamboo raft in blue silk pyjamas and a Panama hat tied with a pink ribbon). Yet another resident of note was Baron Heinrich von Thyssen-Bornemisza, who purchased the tiny, nearby Monkey Island as a Valentine's Day present for his fiancée, the sultry supermodel Nina Dyer. She moved there with her pet panthers, only to divorce the Baron two years later and marry Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan.

So Port Antonio is steeped in sun-soaked golden age glamour,

but it's not pickled in aspic: the spotlight is once again on this part of the island (Portland, in particular), with a wave of fashionable new openings. Aside from its verdant, jungly landscape, another kind of greenery is now drawing the crowds. 'Herb is the healing of the nation,' declared Jamaica's national treasure, Bob Marley, in praise of marijuana.

This year, let's be blunt, his words have never rung truer. With CBD oil (a non-intoxicating chemical produced by the cannabis plant) being lauded as a wonder ingredient and held up as the biggest wellbeing trend, it is no surprise that the plant is thriving in Marley's homeland.

It's thanks in no small part to the billionaire banker Balram Vaswani, who has launched the first legal strain of weed on the island. His fabulously blingy medical marijuana company, Kaya, is being dubbed the Louis Vuitton of the herb world.

Vaswani's holistic herb shop is designed for pure relaxation and gentle, hedonistic pleasures. Here, a mixture of high-end CBD products and a THC line (THC is the principal psychoactive constituent of cannabis) are on offer. There's also an onsite marijuana doctor to prescribe the right strain of weed to treat a range of ailments (from emotional to physical), a pizza restaurant to satisfy the munchies, cabinets of prettily packaged holistic CBD beauty products, tinctures of oils and even pre-rolled joints.

The options for people looking to indulge in 'Green Therapy' are abundant, while for connoisseurs looking for a more immersive ▷



BAREFOOT LUXURY

Unleash your inner Bond girl on Jamaica's picture-perfect beaches



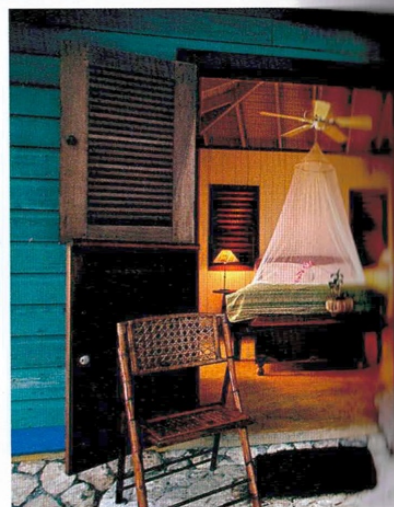
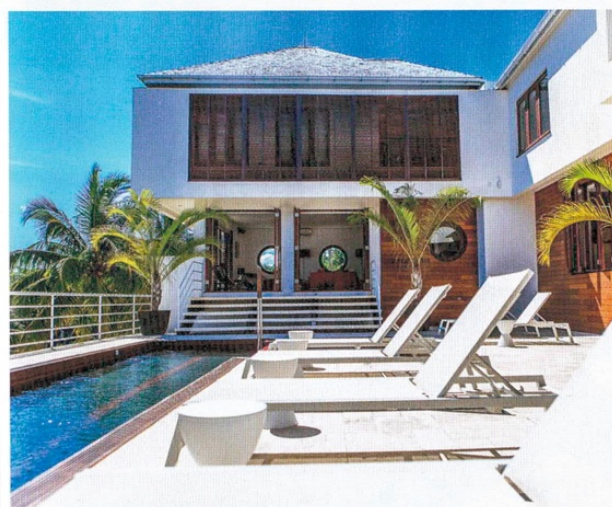
< experience, the world's first CBD spa and a Kaya marijuana dispensary, too, are scheduled to open next year in Port Antonio.

The spa will be in the glorious Geejam hotel, a place that is as sybaritic as it is spiritual. Cantilevered across the steep hillsides of the quietly elegant San San neighbourhood, Geejam draws the likes of Beyoncé and Jay-Z, Drake, Rihanna, Florence Welch and Harry Styles. They come seeking peace and privacy, to record in the hotel's decadent studio or to unwind in the spectacular, newly built infinity pool that's positioned overlooking the rainforest. And there's more to come: this winter, there will be 12 loft-style rooms (the Rhumba Studios), a waterside restaurant, Bentley's Yard, a re-imagined Bushbar for CBD Martinis, plus a new beachside spa.

The atmosphere is electric, thanks to hotelier Jon Baker, a music industry maestro and cultural lynchpin who can open up the island for you. Baker is able to, for example, prepare a lavish, five-course butler-served dinner by the Reach Falls on a whim; arrange full-moon raft rides under towering bamboo arches past fern-shrouded groves to a secluded spot that Flynn named Lovers' Lane; or a hammam-style experience in sacred hot springs in the hills with the Rastas – a restorative treatment that leaves you feeling reborn.

Baker will also organise private tours to the Blue Mountains' coffee plantation owned by Rohan Marley (Bob Marley's son), then on to Errol Flynn's sprawling estate, now managed by his grandson, Luke Flynn – a Ralph Lauren model and screenwriter who's planning to open a farm café next year.

A highlight of a stay here is a trip to see the huge marine conservation effort of Francesca von Habsburg. As part of her Alligator Head Foundation, she has not only introduced an impressive fish sanctuary and cleaned up the surrounding coral reefs with her Marine Lab, but has also created an artist-in-residency, which has seen Biennale artist Claudia Comte create underwater



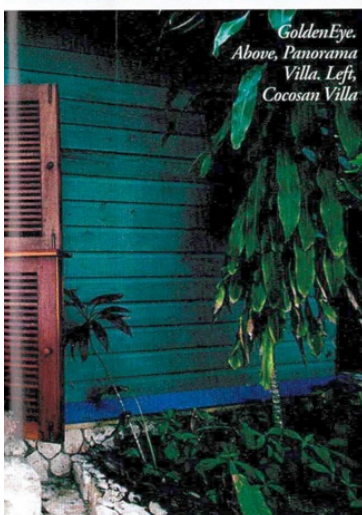
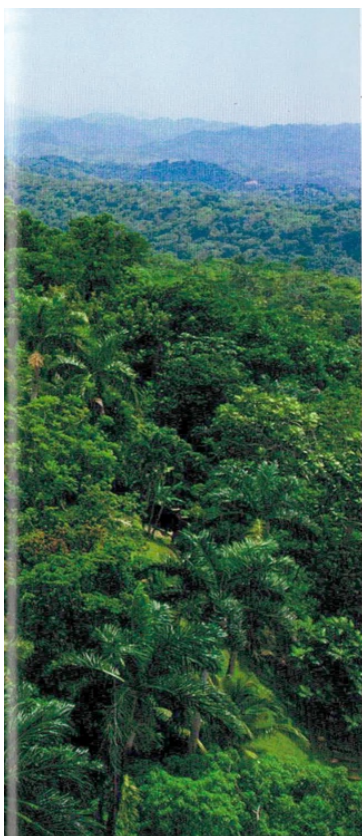
sculptures that Baker's guests can now snorkel up to 'see. Or just revel in the hi-lo spirit of the place, like Beyoncé and Jay-Z, who loved nothing more than kicking back in the hidden lagoons, eating spiny lobster and swimming in water the colour of jade. They even chartered a chopper to the area's very own 'River Café', headed by local chef Belinda. At this barefoot bohemian riverside shack, she cooks food on a wood-fired grill for passing rafters. Signature dishes include cur-

ried crayfish the size of lobsters, chicken fricassee and roasted breadfruit dumplings. Johnny Depp was so blown away by the whole 'rafting and Rio Grande' experience that he held the *Pirates of the Caribbean* wrap party here.

With so much to explore in the Portland area, guests often find it near impossible to leave the blissful environs of Geejam. No wonder: there's also the glorious, low-slung 1960s Panorama Villa that both Audrey Hepburn and Mick Jagger

were known to rent. And then there is Cocosan, a six-bedroom villa high on the hills of San San. Filled with limited-edition vinyls and contemporary art, the villa is every music mogul's Jamaican-idyll dream come true, complete with an infinity pool and various hangout spaces, crisp white bedrooms the size of a Manhattan loft, and balconies that jut out over the estate. Daniel Craig decamped here while shooting the upcoming Bond film, *No Time to Die*, nearby.

PHOTOGRAPHS: DENNIS BROWN AND HANS ZIMMERMAN; ANDREW GREY; PREVIOUS PAGES: TONYA YOUNG; JACQUES



GoldenEye.
Above, Panorama
Villa. Left,
Cocosan Villa

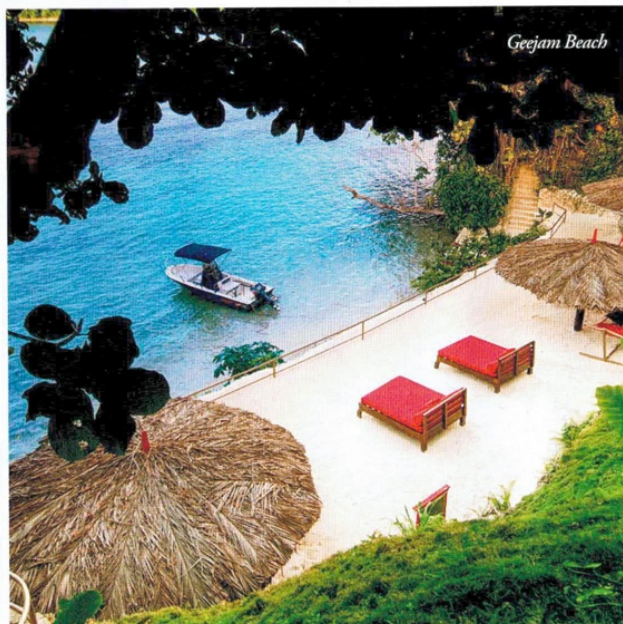
But for a truly immersive Bond-style experience, head further along the coast to the original GoldenEye resort. This was Ian Fleming's beachside home in the tiny town of Oracabessa. With its cute Button Beach and neighbouring James Bond Beach, it is unmissable for 007 fans. Fleming, from 1946 to his death in 1964, spent two months every year here, swimming and carousing with his neighbour Noël Coward. In his quieter moments, Fleming wrote 12 of the Bond novels

and short stories at GoldenEye, famously declaring 'Would these books have been born if I had not been living in the gorgeous vacuum of a Jamaican holiday? I doubt it.' Coward and Fleming may be long gone, but the louche, fun-loving spirit lives on, especially at Coward's enchanting home, Firefly, on land which once belonged to pirate Sir Henry Morgan and remains marinated in 1940s glamour. A highlight of any stay at GoldenEye is sunset drinks at the playwright's former home-turned-museum, where Coward's piano still stands, his 78s remain on a turntable, his Hawaiian shirts, silk PJs and dressing gown hang in the wardrobe.

Since the 1980s, it has been run by Island Outpost, the hotel group owned by Chris Blackwell, the legendary producer who launched Island Records, made Bob Marley a star and also was a location scout on *Dr No*. Blackwell is pure Jamaican aristocracy: his heiress mother, Blanche – the rumoured inspiration for Pussy Galore – belonged to one of the island's oldest families and he grew up on their estate near GoldenEye. Blackwell's own private retreat, Pantrepant, is in Cockpit Country, further inland, where GoldenEye guests can now stay in a two-bedroom cottage.

Jamaica continues to captivate guests with its hedonistic delights. Rupert Everett comes here regularly to unplug and write, while Hailey Baldwin, Sofia Richie and Kendall Jenner can be seen here beachcombing and frolicking on the sands, like modern-day Honeychile Ryders. And those daredevil trepanners, the Earl and Countess of Wemyss, relations of Fleming's wife, Ann Charteris, still holiday at their house in San San.

A laid-back luxury permeates the air and keeps people coming back, hazily content. It is the perfect place to reboot, with landscapes so exhilarating the spirit soars – especially after some of Kaya's finest greenery (the place is nicknamed 'GoldenHigh', after all). In the words of Bob Marley, Jamaica truly 'satisfies your soul'. □



All the buzz

The most idyllic escapes on Jamaica's chilled-out northern coast

WHERE TO STAY

Geejam Immerse yourself in the natural beauty of Port Antonio at this clubby yet sophisticated hotel, with its fabulous treehouse-style cabins, new loft-style Rhumba Studio rooms, or the two luxury villas, Cocosan and Panorama, which are available to rent through Geejam. There are waterfalls, wild beaches – such as the paradisiacal Frenchman's Cove – and jungle hillsides to explore, plus a host of other adventures that most of us can only dream of. Thanks to the imagination of visionary hotelier Jon Baker, you can experience a side of this island like nobody else. From £245 per night for the Rhumba Studios, including private transfers from Kingston. geejamhotel.com

GoldenEye The spirit of pleasure-mad Ian Fleming, Noël Coward and the 1940s jet set still lives on in Oracabessa, home to the most perfect barefoot luxury escape for the world-weary traveller. At GoldenEye, stay in one of the chic new beach huts or the dreamy lagoon villas. To really act out those James Bond fantasies, rent the glorious Fleming Villa, complete with the author's original writing desk. The villa sleeps up to 10 guests, has a pool and private beach, and comes with its own butler and staff. Inspiring Travel Company offers a seven-night stay at GoldenEye from £2,235 pp, based on two adults sharing a beach hut, including flights and private transfers. inspiringtravelcompany.co.uk

