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This Resort is Jamaica's Best Kept Secret

See a new side of the island at Strawberry Hill.



By **Lauren Alexis Fisher** Jun 27, 2018



All-inclusive resorts and frozen daiquiris on the beach are typically what come to mind when considering a trip to Jamaica. But hoisted high above the island's many beaches is the real hidden gem of Caribbean hot spot: **Strawberry Hill**.

Nestled in Jamaica's Blue Mountains, the secluded getaway offers an island experience you just can't get at Sandals. And although vacationing at a Caribbean beach resort is always appealing, there's something to be said for an off-the-beaten-path destination that's serene, adventurous, and luxurious at the same time. Strawberry Hill manages to tick all those boxes in one—and then some.



The view from Strawberry Hill's scenic infinity pool.

Like most of us in 2018, my vacation criteria consists of scenic ways to escape social media, the never-ending news cycle, and basically, my phone in general. As soon as I arrived for a long weekend at the picturesque sanctuary that is Strawberry Hill, I knew it was exactly the kind of vacation one looking to escape the wrath of Trump's tweets needs.

After a winding but spectacular hour-long drive up the Blue Mountains (an experience in itself thanks to twisty roads and many local market stands along the way), I found myself in the complete opposite of New York City: total peace. From an infinity pool offering panoramic views of Kingston and a soothing spa surrounded by the sounds of nature to the private cottage oasis that is your "room," you're greeted with relaxation in every form at the hotel.

BOB MARLEY FOUND PEACE AT STRAWBERRY HILL TOO

Along with its stunning views, Strawberry Hill boasts quite the history. Dating back to the 18th century, the resort originally belonged to British royalty before Chris Blackwell, the founder of Island Records label, purchased it in the early '70s and transformed it into the ultimate oasis for rock 'n' roll icons. Musicians from Mick Jagger to Willie Nelson to Bob Marley flocked to Strawberry Hill as a creative refuge to find peace and record music in the resort's hidden studio.

In fact, Strawberry Hill was where Bob Marley recovered after being shot in 1976. At the resort, the legendary Jamaican artist found renewal and rejuvenation before planning his iconic One Love concert, which took place in 1978. If it's a good enough place for Marley to find peace from the world's turmoil, it's good enough for any of us to unwind—from our phones, at the very least.

THE ROOMS ARE ALL PRIVATE COTTAGES

If private, swoon-worthy retreats are your sort of thing, welcome to your dream vacation spot. Every room at Strawberry Hill is a standalone private suite, cottage, or villa nestled in the mountains, complete with stunning views from an altitude of 3,000 feet. My room had its own private balcony enveloped in trees, perfect for reading a book and sipping a cup of Blue Mountain coffee (more on that in a bit).



THE SPA IS WHAT DREAMS ARE MADE OF

Of course, a getaway like this wouldn't be complete without a spa experience. Secluded down a tree and flower-lined path, **Strawberry Hill's spa** is located in its own set of cottages, which offer the tranquil sound of water fountains as you get a massage, facial, or body treatment.

Along with its services, the spa also hosts mountaintop yoga and wellness treks through the area's many trails.

COFFEE ADDICTS REJOICE: THIS IS YOUR SPOT

The Strawberry Hill Restaurant does a delicious take on Jamaican cuisine—from Oxtail Shepherd's Pie to calaloo, jerk chicken, and warm bread pudding soaked in Blackwell rum—but it's the Blue Mountain coffee that's really game-changing. As a coffee fiend, I can honestly say that the coffee here is the best coffee I've had in my life. I didn't want to leave because it was *that* good (okay, the views and my private cottage might also have something to do with that).

Along with relishing in the provisions the hotel has to offer, you must also go on a coffee tour of the Blue Mountains, which are famous for growing some of the best coffee beans in the world. The hotel actually offers a "**Jamaica On A Platter**" **Coffee and Culinary retreat**, a tour of the area's best coffee estates and local markets and cafes in Kingston. I took part in the four-day, three-night "Jamaica On A Platter" trip and it was truly just that—a relaxing, private oasis paired with an authentic taste of the island's culture and food. For those looking for something more than just another beach resort vacation, Strawberry Hill is exactly what you need. In fact, Strawberry Hill is exactly what we all need in 2018.

