



PARADIS

JAMAQUE

INTERNATIONAL PAN-CARIBBEAN
LUXURY LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

“A tramp, a gentleman, a poet,
a dreamer, a lonely fellow, always
hopeful of romance and adventure.”
— Charlie Chaplin ”

EXCLUSIVE

THE ATLANTIC ANNIVERSARY REGATTA
CELEBRATES THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF ONE OF THE
WORLD'S OLDEST & PRESTIGIOUS YACHT CLUBS

A PICTURE PERFECT TABLE SETTING

VISTA ALEGRE

KEEPING YOUR CARIBBEAN VILLA AND YACHT
STOCKED WITH TRENDY ELEGANT TABLEWARE

THE GENTLEMEN'S QUARTER

OVERLOOKING KINGSTON AT NIGHT,
PHOTO COURTESY OF STRAWBERRY HILL

FROM JUNGLES IN BELIZE FILLED
WITH PROWLING BIG CATS; TO
SAVANNAHS IN CENTRAL CUBA
PERFECT FOR BIRDWATCHING; TO
HIKING IN GUADELOUPE TO VIEW THE
ACTIVE VENTS OF LA SOUFRIERE
SULPHUR VOLCANO; TO TREKKING
THROUGH TOBAGO'S FOREST NATURE
RESERVE ESTABLISHED IN 1763; AND
DUNE BUGGYING THE ARID INTERIORS
OF BONAIRE FILLED WITH CACTI,
CARIBBEAN LANDSCAPES TRANSCEND
COASTLINES OF LAPPING WAVES WITH
TURQUOISE WATERS.

STRAWBERRY HILL

A FABLED MOUNTAIN RETREAT
IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS



“
Set on a plateau of over 2,000
feet, just above Irish Town,
Strawberry Hill Retreat has a
small collection of elegantly
appointed guest cottages.
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THE BLUE AND JOHN CROW MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK WAS
DESIGNATED IN 2015 A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE.
PHOTO COURTESY OF JCDT/MCGES

THE LUSH BLUE MOUNTAINS AND TRAILS
FROM YOUR MOUNTAIN RETREAT VERANDA,
PHOTO COURTESY OF STRAWBERRY HILL

Often seen in the distant horizon from beach side hotels, interiors are filled with thickets, dense foliage, and soaring mountains in the backdrop. With tour desks offering adventures well beyond their shorelines, and an increasing number of boutique hotels tucked away into hilly terrains, emerald green valleys and on dry plains, visitors to the Caribbean can now increasingly discover the heart and soul of their tropical islands.

Destination, Strawberry Hill

Landing at Kingston's airport set on a peninsula, as I drive away from the shoreline, ascending the winding foot hills of the misty Blue Mountains, the air breaks the stifling city heat with a slight chill and the scent of pine trees envelops my senses as we pass rivers and mossy embankments heading to my mountain Retreat.

Set on a plateau of over 2,000 feet, just above Irish Town, Strawberry Hill Retreat has a small collection of elegantly appointed guest cottages set into the hillside offering breathtaking views of the city and surrounding mountains with scenic views of Newcastle that once served as a British army base. Located in the coffee growing belt of the world famous Jamaica Blue Mountain coffee, the waft of roasted beans and fresh brew perks your senses to the abundance of nature which envelops the hotel with its manicured gardens and forested lands.



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The owner of Strawberry Hill is none other than Chris Blackwell, founder of Island Records,
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of Strawberry Hill is none other than Chris Blackwell, founder of Island Records, who has successfully brought to fame not only Marley, but also Grace Jones and U2 among others. In this festive atmosphere we enjoy Blackwell's signature rum over the rocks and blended into cocktails as we reminisce on concerts we attended over the years, with Jones' electrifying performances the most memorable.

Dinner is on the pepper light lit Courtyard with the guest chef from Spain who is preparing a mouthwatering seafood paella fragrant with saffron and Jamaican jerk seasoning over an open flame. As we dine, a live band plays Valencian and Jamaican folklore music, and a 'fiesta atmosphere' fills the courtyard with couples — flutes of champagne in hand — dancing the night away.

Hikes and Treks with Mountain Cuisine

Rising at daybreak with a mug of aromatic Blue Mountain Coffee in hand, I sit on my cottage veranda to enjoy the fresh mountain air, and to listen to song birds flittering through the gardens, feeding on seeds and berries in the Retreat's lush landscape. Joining my guide for an early morning walk, he takes me on a journey of discovery on trails and pathways through rural communities, coffee farms, fruited orchards, cascading rivers, and mountain chalets. We stop to exchange pleasantries with local residents and visitors who are mostly from Europe and Asia, who venture in the nooks and crannies of the island, far away from the seaside resorts as they seek to discover the real Jamaica.

Having built up a hearty appetite, we stop at EITS Café for a wholesome farm to table lunch on a slow cooked smoked chicken, seasoned with natural herbs and spices, accompanied by vegetables and roots grown on property in the lush valley over which the restaurant looks. Fondly described as 'Europe in the Summer' — for its picturesque mountain setting — the café is an idyllic location to enjoy a leisurely afternoon with friends over pints of locally brewed Red Stripe beer. Robyn Fox, proprietor of the Café, joins me for dessert and shares with me that guests can stay overnight or a few days to relax at her Mount Edge Guest House, just a few footsteps away with its rustic ambiance in a rural setting.

Following a nap in a hammock on my cottage veranda, I continue my foodie journey in the late afternoon with a visit to the Belcour Lodge, renowned for their all-natural sauces, preserves, and gourmet condiments made in small batches from fruits, fresh produce, herbs and spices. Richard and Robin Lumsden, who started Belcour Preserves, source ingredients from their Blue Mountain farm and also purchase from small scale farmers. I join them at their residence for a home cooked dinner — with an industrial kitchen from where they create new recipes — bold and tropical flavours bring back memories of my Grandma's homely kitchen treats, with their Honey-Ginger-Pepper-Sauce my favourite.



STRAWBERRY HILL'S DELUXE GEORGIAN STYLE COTTAGES

EITS CAFÉ, RUN BY FATHER AND DAUGHTER MICHAEL AND ROBYN

BELCOUR BLUE MOUNTAIN PRESERVES HONEY & GINGER PEPPER SAUCE

STRAWBERRY HILL POOL OVERLOOKING THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

PHOTOS COURTESY OF STRAWBERRY HILL, EITS CAFÉ AND BELCOUR BLUE MOUNTAIN PRESERVES.

The World's Best Coffee

After settling into my airy cottage with arresting views of the clouds draping and wreathing the mountains in an endless show of nature's playful whimsy, the hotel concierge escorts me to the nearby Craightons' Coffee Estate to sample their coffee and tour the farm. The tour guide gives me a history of coffee over the years, explaining in Jamaica the Arabica beans are grown rather than Robusta beans that are used in espresso and has a bitter taste with high caffeine levels. In contrast the Arabica beans — in particular their farms' variety — is low in caffeine and naturally sweet with a mellow taste, making it a perfect beverage for a relaxing afternoon high tea service offered to visitors on the sweeping veranda of their great house.

As the sun falls towards the Caribbean Sea in the distance turning the city of Kingston into a shimmer of lights, I return to my hillside sanctuary to get ready for a tapas and paella themed evening of dining under the stars.

A Fiesta of Music and Food

With a light sweater in hand to ward off the chill of the night, I join an eclectic gathering of guests in the Lounge for pre-dining drinks and canapes under framed albums and pictures of musical legends that include Bob Marley who often visited the property in the 1970s. The owner



HOLYWELL CABINS, PHOTO COURTESY OF JCDT/MCGES

ENJOYING THE VIEW FROM OATLEY MOUNTAIN TRAIL,
PHOTO COURTESY OF JCDT/MCGES

OATLEY MOUNTAIN TRAIL, HOLYWELL PARK,
PHOTO COURTESY OF JCDT/MCGES



UNESCO World Heritage National Park

The next morning I start the day with breakfast in Strawberry Hill's library with Jamaica's national dish of ackee and codfish and a cup of hot cocoa tea. I then set off with my guide to explore Hollywell Gardens & Campsite located over 3,000 feet above sea level that serves as the gateway to the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park, which in 2015 was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The National Park, recognised for both its natural and cultural significance, is the only mixed site in the Caribbean and covers over 100,000 acres, and includes the Blue Mountain Peak, towering at over 7,400 feet. Hollywell (some 25 acres of the National Park), is an escape for Kingstonians seeking a break from the hustle and bustle of city life. It is here they come with their families to enjoy the crisp, clean mountain air, in a lush terrain with vibrant wildlife, have picnics, trek through nature trails, camp out in log cabins, attend musical events in the hills, and to learn about the culture of the Maroons — former slaves who fled the plantation estates for the mountains when the Spanish lost Jamaica to the British in the year 1655.

In the afternoon, on returning to Strawberry Hill, I am ready for my spa massage and reflexology treatment to soothe my aching muscles and feet from all the hiking and trekking, having discovered blissful settings in Jamaica's World Heritage National Park. With windows open wide in my treatment room to scenic vistas of rolling hills and inquisitive hummingbirds I doze off and on, musing about my mountain retreat stay in Jamaica's famed Blue Mountains. My island paradise has so much more to offer than sand, sea, surf, and sun. #strawberryhillhotel JP•AUT/18

