



Sizzling Summer Values in the Islands!

Welcome to the Caribbean! While some may question a visit to a warm weather destination in the late summer, the reason is simple -- it's an excellent value and a thoroughly enchanting time to enjoy your piece of paradise. Because late summer is "low season" in the Caribbean, it is much less expensive; rates are usually lowest from April 15th to November 1st. Some even extend until November 15th or December 1st and savings can be significant -- 25% or more! While it is certainly hot, the Caribbean is cooled by trade winds, so the climate remains pleasant even in the summer months. The water, too, is remarkably refreshing. So, shake out your sarong and find your own Caribbean rhythm. There is something to suit every taste and whim, from lazing in a hammock beneath a shady palm to high adrenaline adventure, world-class diving, exotic cuisine, history and culture. Choose to indulge your personal vacation fantasy in the Caribbean.

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Singing in the Rain...and the Sun! Tips for Weather Guarantees

Many destinations and individual resorts recognize that, though the likelihood is slim, an errant storm can put the damper on your summer vacation. So, to assuage your weather worries, hurricane guarantees have become popular insurance against weather disturbances. Hurricane season officially runs from June 1 - November 30th, with the peak time for storms being August and September. While the terms of the hurricane guarantees vary widely, most are pegged to the official forecasts of the National Hurricane Center and the actual "definition" of a hurricane -- sustained winds of 74 mph or more. Most also only cover a part of your vacation. Nonetheless, some of the hurricane hot deals are worth exploring; a general travel insurance policy may also be a good bet since the value of a summer getaway to the Caribbean is still tremendous!

Super Clubs Sunshine Guarantee
 One of the most comprehensive guarantee programs, Super Clubs, the Caribbean's "super-inclusive" resort chain, not only offers a hurricane guarantee, but also a "sunshine guarantee". Each day that the sun doesn't come out, you receive a day's credit toward another Super Clubs vacation. Since sunny days are more likely in the summer, with or without hurricanes, the "Sunshine Guarantee" is a super deal. Super Clubs hurricane guarantee is also offered at most of its properties. (Be sure to check for participating resorts.) Guests receive vouchers for the number of nights disrupted by the storm. If you cannot arrive as scheduled, you can either tack on extra nights or receive a voucher good for future travel.

Club Med Hurricane Protection Program
 Club Med likewise offers future travel certificates for the number of days affected by a hurricane. The travel certificate is good for a year at a number of different Club Med Resorts.

Bermuda
 Bermuda provides excellent hurricane guarantees through its hotel association. Check www.bermudatourism.com for participating members and for the most current guarantee.

Rain or shine, summer is a great time to visit the Caribbean!

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Lighten Up! Some Tips for Light Packing to Ease Your Baggage Woes

With airline restrictions even on checked baggage increasing, everyone can benefit from lightening the travel load. While the real purists believe that you should be able to manage six weeks with nothing but a carry-on bag, it is certainly possible to cut way down on unnecessary items and to enjoy the freedom of a more simplified existence.

1. Invest in a small (and light) suitcase and take only what fits into it.
2. Always work from a packing list, beginning with essentials and indulging only scant non-essentials.
3. Plan ahead. Try to avoid last-minute packing when it is often easier to "throw it all in."
4. Stick to neutral colored bottoms -- primarily black since white spots too easily. Add colored tops for variety.
5. Buy small travel-sized toiletries or transfer from home stocks to small travel bottles.
6. Bring only two pairs of shoes. One should be acceptable in a slightly formal setting; one should be comfortable for walking long distances.
7. Pack small items in pockets and inside other things -- for example socks inside shoes.
8. Pack everything you think you'll need and then remove 1/4th.

Shed the pounds; shed the excess baggage!

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Conched Out! Much More Than a Shell

The Queen Conch (pronounced "konk"), with its delicate petal-pink flutes, is a time-worn symbol of the Caribbean. For more than 1,000 years, since the time of the Arawak Indians, conch has served as an important food source. Its shell has also been used to make tools, jewelry and various ceremonial objects. Trumpets are formed from conch shells and conch-blowing contests are still held throughout the Caribbean. It remains a staple in the Caribbean diet and is believed to be an aphrodisiac more powerful than oysters. Served in a variety of different dishes, conch is to the Caribbean as apple pie is to America.

The world's only conch farm is located on Providenciales in the Turks & Caicos Islands. Founded in 1984 by Chuck Hesse, the Conch Farm raises conch from egg to adult and exports them internationally. The initial vision of Hesse and the mission of Trade Wind Industries, Ltd., the company he heads, is to develop a regional mariculture industry that will provide jobs for local people, supply a low-cost, high-protein food source and will protect the wild conch from over-fishing. By growing adequate supplies of conch on franchised farms throughout the Caribbean, wild populations will have the chance to recover and the increased demand for conch meat will be satisfied.

Visitors can learn everything about the conch in daily tours of the Turks & Caicos Conch Farm. Tours are offered Monday - Friday from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., and Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. The Conch Farm is closed on Sundays and holidays. www.caicosconchfarm.com or call 649-946-2643.

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San Juan -- The Capital of the Caribbean Check out JetBlue's special deals below.

San Juan, Puerto Rico is not only the hub of Caribbean travel for both air and sea, but it is an enchanting vacation spot in its own right. The second oldest city in the Americas after Santo Domingo, San Juan was founded in 1521 and is known as "la Ciudad Amurallada - the Walled City," its imposing fortresses date back to the late 1500's.

Today, San Juan is a vibrant and cosmopolitan city where nearly five hundred years of history still stands in powerful juxtaposition to its modern appeal. San Juan boasts numerous fortresses and 17th century Spanish colonial buildings (some 400 throughout the city). El Morro dominates these structures; rising 140 feet from the sea, El Morro is a National Historic Site and the Caribbean's largest fortification with a labyrinth of tunnels, barracks and dungeons as well as the massive fort itself. It is open to the public daily from 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Old San Juan, with its cobbled streets and venerable buildings is both charming and fascinating and is now the site of some of the city's best restaurants and shopping.

San Juan's primary hotel zone is the fashionable Condado area with gleaming beaches and 5-star resorts, nightclubs and restaurants that edge the Caribbean Sea. Many hotels have casinos and one of the most stylish is the El San Juan. Visit this hotel's classic lobby bar as well.

Combining old and new and island flavor with a sizzling Latin flair, San Juan offers Caribbean star power!

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The Bahamas Out Islands Are Out of this World!

The beautiful islands of the Bahamas may be close to home -- only a short flight from the U.S. -- but they are a world away in ambiance. The Out Islands are the most remote in the Bahamas archipelago and give you a true Bahamian experience; you can chill all day or dance all night as the mood dictates. Snorkel among clouds of fluorescent fish in water so clear you can count the fridges on your toes as they dig into the velvet sand bottom or catch the ultimate adrenaline rush as you fight a Blue Marlin. Do both -- it's no worry. The Abacos are the dominant group of cays (pronounced "keys"). Originally settled in the late 1700's by British loyalists from New York, the Abacos meld the architectural design of New England with the bright color and flair of the islands. Fly to Marsh Harbour and settle into the island rhythm. Catch a ferry to Hopetown (accessible only by water) and see its quaint candy-striped lighthouse. On your way, stop at Miss Emily's Blue Bee Bar, the place that originated the Goombay Smash -- the Bahamian National Cocktail -- a potent concoction of rum and fruit juices. A visit to Green Turtle Cay is a step back in time; its quaint store in New Plymouth mirrors New Plymouth, Massachusetts. Guana Cay boasts some of the most beautiful beaches in the world, though traveling through these magical cays and islets, you might have a hard time choosing which beach is paramount. Each is more dazzling than the next.

So, get out and about in the Bahamas Out Islands! A short trip takes you a long way from the everyday.

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