

Survival Guide

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Accommodations

The Caribbean offers almost any accommodations choice you could wish for. Advance booking is always a good idea, especially if you're planning to visit in high season or are staying in a resort.

Hotels These range from simple local outposts to the most luxurious boutique offerings available.

Villas Private villa rentals are popular in the Caribbean, especially for groups, and can be found for most budgets.

Resorts Room only or all-inclusive resorts are a classic Caribbean offering, and come in family-friendly or adult-only varieties.

Guesthouses Small family-run guesthouses are a great way to get a taste of the local culture.

All-Inclusive Resorts

Born in Jamaica and now prevalent across the Caribbean, all-inclusive resorts allow you to pay a set price and then nothing more once you arrive. You usually get a wristband that allows you free access to the hotel or resort's restaurants, bars and water-sports equip-

ment. Many properties have jumped onto the 'all-inclusive' bandwagon, but don't necessarily supply the goods. Be sure to find out exactly what 'all-inclusive' includes.

- ➔ What is the variety and quality of food available?
- ➔ How many meals are included?
- ➔ Are all drinks included?
- ➔ Is 'free alcohol' limited to wine with dinner?
- ➔ Are there lots of extra-charge options at mealtimes (steaks etc), meaning that the regular food is uninspiring?
- ➔ What activities are included (an extra charge for snorkeling gear is a sign of stinginess)?

Booking Services

The following accommodations services can all book villas across the Caribbean:

Caribbean Way (www.caribbeanway.com)

CV Villas (☎ in the UK 020-7401-1010; www.cvtravel.co.uk)

Villas of Distinction (www.villasofdistinction.com)

Wimco Villas (www.wimcovillas.com)

Camping

Camping is limited in the Caribbean, and on some islands freelance camping is either illegal or discouraged.

Guesthouses

The closest thing the Caribbean has to hostels, guesthouses are usually great value. Often in the middle of a town or village and rarely alongside a beach, they offer good opportunities for cultural immersion.

Hotels

Across the Caribbean, hotel rooms can range from humdrum to massive 1000-room resorts to glorious villas hovering over the sea.

Rental Accommodations

If you're traveling with your family or a large group, you might want to look into renting a condo or villa. Villas are great because you have room to stretch out, do your own cooking and enjoy plenty of privacy. Prices start at about US\$700 per week and climb ever higher.

Seasonal Price Differences

During low season, May to mid-December, rates may be up to 40% less or the property may be closed.

BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodations reviews by Lonely Planet authors, check out <http://lonelyplanet.com/hotels/>. You'll find independent reviews, as well as recommendations on the best places to stay. Best of all, you can book online.