

YOLO

JOURNAL

Travel Planners

Our Caribbean Island Travel Planner

Dec 6, 2024

I first went to the Caribbean with Matt in the late '90s, when he was on assignment for *Departures* to shoot an all-Caribbean edition, which was so big they ran it over two consecutive issues. He was gone for weeks zigzagging all over, but I got to join for part of one trip. My favorite memories were of the Meridian Club in Turks and Caicos, which had the most beautiful water, and the K Club in Barbuda, which was best known because Princess Diana had vacationed there. I remember how complicated it was to get from one island group to another—lots of connecting through Puerto Rico and overnighting in some places because there just weren't easy connections. It didn't really matter, though—we really fell in love with the islands, and the journey to get to wherever we were going was just a part of it.

Since I was an early convert, I was always surprised when I'd tell friends how much I loved it there—really, everywhere—and they'd shrug and say that if they wanted a warm-weather vacation in the winter, they'd rather go to Mexico. The most common complaint was that there wasn't good food there, it was too expensive, too complicated, etc. I just couldn't understand how an entire group of islands could be written off like that, but then again, I'd heard people say that about Greece. They assumed the Greek island experience was Mykonos or Santorini, and couldn't imagine that there was a completely different experience beyond that. Last year, we tackled the expensive question in our [Costa Meno Caribbean](#) edition, where we shared our favorite inexpensive places to stay, and the year before we did a deep dive on the [Bahamas in this Black Book](#). But for this winter season, we wanted to tackle your questions, and the ones we hear the most frequently from our friends. We're pretty sure you'll find your place in the sun somewhere in this incredibly extensive list. —Yolanda

Best Caribbean hotels for a honeymoon? I'm thinking small/boutique, ideally no kids.

For luxurious and secluded, [Amanera](#) in the **Dominican Republic** is perfection. Designed for couples, it features stark, minimalist architecture that contrasts beautifully with the lush, vibrant jungle and the dramatic ocean views. Facing the powerful waves of Playa Grande, it's a sanctuary for those who appreciate tranquility, nature and understated design. If your dream is a more authentic, cottage-style experience, there's the [Playa Grande Beach Club](#). This enchanting hotel offers charming beach cottages equipped with their own kitchens, inviting you to fully immerse yourself in the laid-back Caribbean lifestyle. Designed by Celerie Kemble in collaboration with local artisans, every detail reflects a balance of authenticity and sophistication, making it a paradise for lovers of elevated yet unpretentious interior design. —*Alban Roger*

I'd love to find a cottagey Caribbean hotel that feels charming, not at all flashy.

These have been mentioned earlier, but would definitely include [Playa Grande Beach Club](#) on the north shore of the **Dominican Republic**, and [Bequia Beach Hotel](#) or [Spice House](#) on the tiny island of **Bequia** in St Vincent's and the Grenadines. —*Alex Postman*

ISLAND SPECIFIC INTEL

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

**I'd love to visit the DR, but I don't know where to start!
Any ideas for places away from the hordes of tourists in
Punta Cana?**

The Dominican Republic is brimming with charming destinations where you can experience its natural beauty, vibrant culture, and relaxed vibe far from the usual crowds. On the Samaná Peninsula, Las Terrenas is a gem that blends pristine beaches with a cosmopolitan atmosphere. Renowned for its French and Italian expat communities, it offers a mix of exceptional international cuisine and traditional Dominican fare. Stroll along the breathtaking Playa Bonita and Playa Cosón, known for their turquoise waters and tranquil ambiance. For a touch of adventure, visit the stunning El Limón Waterfall or take a boat trip to Playa Ermitaño, a secluded paradise accessible only by sea.

For those seeking peace and natural beauty, Playa Grande on the north coast is an idyllic escape. Its dramatic cliffs and golden sands create a serene setting, while accommodations like the Playa Grande Beach Club and the luxurious Amanera offer perfect retreats to enjoy the area's raw, powerful beauty.

Meanwhile, Cabarete has become a hub for kiteboarding and windsurfing, offering an active yet laid-back vibe. Visit Kite Beach to learn the sport or watch the experts in action, and head to Encuentro Beach for world-class surfing. The lively town center is filled with unique shops, beachside cafes, and casual dining, all surrounded by a thriving expat community that adds to its charm. —*Alban Roger*

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