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Can't you see yourself and your family unwinding in this spacious two-bedroom suite at Eden Roc at Cap Cana in the Dominican Republic?

What's New in the Caribbean

Pull out your swimsuit and flip-flops and dust off your golf clubs. More than two dozen destinations across this sunny region provide ready excuses for a tropical change of pace this season with noteworthy new resorts, amenities, and attractions.

BY ELAINE GLUSACK | PHOTOGRAPHY BY TIM MAREK

Click here for images.

4 NEW RESORTS

How can you possibly resist? We tempt you with this season's most promising openings.

Puerto Rico: Dorado Beach, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve

Formerly the private estate of Laurance Rockefeller, this 1,400-acre, 115-room property debuted on the north coast in December under the Ritz flag, highlighting the natural surroundings, as well as service by personal room assistants. Attractions include an 18-hole golf course, two pools, a nature trail, and a mile of beach. From \$1,600. 800-836-3124; doradoeachreserve.com

Dominican Republic: Eden Roc at Cap Cana

This 34-room newcomer offers the intimacy of a boutique hotel with the full-scale amenities of the adjoining 30,000-acre Cap Cana development, including a spa, multiple restaurants, beach and kids clubs, and access to a Jack Nicklaus golf course. Each suite features its own swimming pool, outdoor shower, and golf cart. From \$660. 809-469-7469; edenroccapcana.com

Ambergris Caye, Belize: El Secreto

You'll travel 25 minutes by boat to reach this hideaway. Its 13 thatched-roof villas come with indoor and outdoor hot tubs, hammock-strung decks, and air-conditioning systems controllable by iPhone app. Get massaged in a two-story "spa tower," dine on organic fare from the garden, or dive the nearby reef. From \$550. 800-479-5037; elsecretobelize.com

Roatan, Honduras: Las Verandas Hotel and Villas

First came the Pete Dye golf course, opened in 2011. Next up: 36 rooms and 11 villas coming soon to this oceanfront north-shore resort. Villas feature private plunge pools, but all guests have access to two infinity pools, a 1,000-foot beach, two restaurants, and the Mesoamerican Reef just offshore. From \$295. 855-224-6620; las-verandas.com

ST. BARTH EATS

With bakeries that turn out crispy croissants and restaurants that skew to haute cuisine, St. Barth ranks as one of the Caribbean's best dining choices. We asked Ashley Lacour and Kristina Popova, who run Sibarth villas rentals and know the island inside out, to clue us into its top new dining options. Their two picks:

News Updates!



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Poll



Which pick, or possible spoiler, gets your vote for winning a 2013 major?

- Nicolas Colsaerts (Masters)
- Ernie Els (British Open)
- Rickie Fowler (PGA)
- Jim Furyk (U.S. Open)
- Brandon Grace (British Open)
- John Huh (U.S. Open)
- Dustin Johnson

- **L'Tsoletta**, in Gustavia, is the island's capital. The owners of the haute Italian restaurant L'Tsoletta spun off this casual neighbor, where you get the same suave vibe on a shaded terrace and casual fare (salads, pizzas, and the like) that makes this a perfect spot for lunch.
- **M&P**, on the road to Saline Beach. The moniker stands for Meat & Potatoes, the restaurant's chief items, including chateaubriand and crispy ribs. Think steakhouse, but in an open-air, island setting.

With its new Indigo Bar, the **Montpelier Plantation & Beach** on Nevis raises the bar in the islands for handcrafted cocktails. House-infused liquors feature local organics in combinations such as cucumber gin and watermelon vodka. Order them as bottle service for two in size-appropriate servings. Or try the Jellytini (above), featuring the coconut "jelly" fruit straight from the shell mixed with two kinds of rum. 869-469-3462; montpeliernevis.com

BEFORE AND AFTER

Whether under new ownership, rebranded, or remodeled, these five resorts are updated iterations of existing properties you want to know about.

Now: Beach House Turks and Caicos

Then: The Turks & Caicos Club

What changed: New management at the 21-suite Providenciales property promises laid-back sophistication and a foodie emphasis, including "laboratory dinners" in which guests pick ingredients from the garden, choose a region of the world, and commission bespoke menus. From \$532-855-946-5800; beachhousetci.com

Now: The Cove (Bahamas) Opening this spring

Then: The Cove

What changed: Knocked out by 2011's Hurricane Irene, the Bahamas' Cove was picked up by a New Orleans developer who boosted the room count from 24 to more than 50, installed a 110-foot infinity pool, and added residences on the island of Eleuthera, 50 miles east of Nassau. From \$189-888-776-3901; thecoveeleuthera.com

Now: Hard Rock Riviera Maya (Mexico)

Then: Aventura Cove Palace and Aventura Spa Palace

What changed: Two adjoining resorts south of Playa del Carmen will merge under the Hard Rock umbrella early this year, but each will play to separate audiences - families in the one with a zip line and video games in beach cabanas; adults-only in the one with a swim-up bar in the ocean. From \$171 per person, all-inclusive. 888-762-5002; hrhallinclusive.com

Now: Jewel Runaway Bay Beach & Golf Resort (Jamaica)

Then: Breezes Runaway Bay

What changed: Near Ocho Rios, this all-inclusive underwent a management change and family-friendly update including a new kids club, child's buffet, and cooking classes. Still to come: a water park. From \$350-800-758-2252; jewelresorts.com/runawaybay

Now: Sugar Beach, A Viceroy Resort (St. Lucia):

Then: The Jalousie Plantation, Sugar Beach

What changed: This resort at the foot of Petit Piton mountain saved its name change for last, having now completed a \$100 million redo since Roger Myers, former accountant to the Rolling Stones, bought it in 2005. The property-wide project included adding eight additional beachfront bungalows, two restaurants, and a treehouse-themed spa. From \$375-800-235-4300; sugarbeachviceroyresort.com

OUT TO SEA

The world's No. 1 cruise destination - the Caribbean - gets a new launch this season: the 3,090-passenger **Celebrity Reflection**, offering seven-night sailings out of Miami to San Juan, St. Kitts, and St. Maarten. Shipboard innovations include an expanded AquaSpa with an infrared sauna, aromatic steam room, and a DIY salt and herb exfoliation bar; plus mattresses in the suites that can be adjusted for pitch and elevation by using iPads provided in each cabin. From \$1,099 per person, double occupancy. 800-647-2251; celebritycruises.com

Other lines have expanded shore excursions, including these enticing picks:

(PGA)

Adam Scott
(Masters)

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- Design your own emerald adornment alongside experts at the Caribbean School of Jewelry in Cartagena, Colombia, with **MSC Cruises**. 877-665-4655; msccruisesusa.com
- Feed, watch, and hold stingrays at the Stingray Encounter on **Norwegian Cruise Line's** private island Great Stirrup Cay. 866-234-7350; ncl.com
- Ride around St. Maarten on a Harley-Davidson motorcycle with **Oceania Cruises**. 800-531-5619; oceaniacruises.com
- Tee off on up to eight new golf excursions from Antigua to St. Croix with **Silversea Cruises**. 877-276-6816; silversea.com

Q&A: TALKING BEACH TENNIS IN ARUBA

Played on a beach volleyball court with paddle-tennis rackets, depressurized balls, and a 5-foot, 7-inch-high net, beach tennis is quickly gaining new converts across the islands. Its Caribbean hub is Aruba, home to an international tournament each November. Here, Jochem Ros, the island's No. 1-ranked player and co-founder of Beach Tennis Aruba, talks about the sport's roots, learning curve, and Olympic ambitions.

Q: What are the origins of beach tennis?

A: The sport originated in Italy 20, 25 years ago. It came to Aruba 10 years ago and we played it with tennis rackets. When invited to Ravenna in 2008, I was there for two minutes and saw the big picture: They used paddle rackets. We switched, and it became a sport instead of a tennis sidekick.

Q: What's the difference between tennis and the beach version?

A: The beach version is a combination of volleyball, badminton, and tennis. The good thing about this sport is it's very accessible. It's not as technical as tennis, where you need training to get decent. Inside 10 minutes, everybody can play an official match.

Q: Who plays on Aruba?

A: Our guys are cool dudes! We have everyone from judges to beach bums playing it.

Q: Can visitors play?

A: Yes, we have a beach tennis club at MooMba Beach Bar with four permanent, lighted courts. At the beach tennis shop, it's \$5 for a paddle and a court. It's cheaper than the beer.

Q: Singles or doubles?

A: Doubles. Singles is getting more popular, but doubles is more fun. There's more action. It's faster.

Q: What's ahead for beach tennis?

A: To be a demonstration sport in Brazil during the 2016 Olympics. Our goal is to become an Olympic sport. If you see our rallies, it's more spectacular than beach volleyball.

More info: beachtennisaruba.com

DIGITAL DETOX

Put down the iPad. Ditch the BlackBerry. The nation of **St. Vincent and the Grenadines** is making a pitch for unplugged vacations to resorts like Petit St. Vincent, where 22 guest cottages deliberately lack telephones, Internet, and TVs. discoversvg.com

TIP: Use the time to develop new habits such as exercising or meditating. But to make them permanent requires 21 days of practice, says U.K.-based life coach Louise Gillespie-Smith. "You will have to make yourself do it to begin with, but after 21 days it will get easier as the habit forms."

HIGH-OCTANE ADVENTURES

For many travelers, a beach chair plus buckets of sunshine and a no-brainer novel equal paradise. But for those of you who can't sit still, new attractions and activities aim to get the adrenaline flowing. Two especially spine-tingling ones:

• **Bonaire: Harbour Village Beach Club** now offers fluorescence diving and snorkeling. Night divers carry blue lights and wear filtered masks that make marine life appear to glow in the dark. 800-424-0004; harbourvillage.com

• **Bahamas:** Guests of Kamalame Cay resort can now take lessons in spearfishing, free-diving up to 50 feet to target snapper and grouper. It's satisfying, says Kamalame Cay director David Hew, but not easy. "You have to be able to stay down at a distance from the fish - but not too far - and not spook it. You need to strike it from the side where there's more area for the spear. Once you hit the fish, you need to then retrieve it and the spear." 800-790-7971; kamalame.com

TOP 5 NEW AMENITIES

1. The latest cocktail venue at Cap Maison on **St. Lucia**: a natural pool created by surf surging over the rocks in which a bench has been submerged and ice buckets carved. 758-457-8670; capmaison.com
2. Squirrel monkeys you can feed, coming to the Secret Village on magician David Copperfield's private Bahaman island of **Musha Cay**. You'll enter the mysterious jungle habitat via obscured tunnels and winding staircases. 208-908-1106; mushacay.com
3. Water taxis shuttling between Fairmont, Rosewood, and Banyan Tree resorts at the Mayakoba development on Mexico's **Riviera Maya**. mayakoba.com
4. A just-opened agritourism center featuring master classes in chocolate tempering, coffee roasting, and jam making at Belcampo in **Belize**. 011-501-722-0050; belcampoinc.com/bz
5. Complimentary bikes now mounted with removable wooden picnic baskets at Jumbo Bay in **Antigua**. 268-462-6000; jumbybayresort.com

ISLAND HERBALISM

Curacao native Dinah Veeris grows more than 300 species of indigenous medicinal plants in her island garden, Den Paradera, attracting those interested in buying her healing tonics or having her cleanse their auras. Now the herbalist's unique treatments are being exported to Aruba at the new **Zoia Spa at the Hyatt Regency Aruba Resort & Casino**. A series of herb-based baths channel spiritual aims such as "Help me to see and understand my emotions without criticism" and "I need to regenerate my strength." New to the spa: A "spirit garden" where guests can see and smell the herbs used in Veeris' treatments. 868-591-1234; aruba.hyatt.com

WE BET YOU'LL LIKE THIS

About 60 miles from Miami, the **Bahamas' Bimini chain** is poised to emerge as the next quick getaway destination: A new 10,000-square-foot casino is scheduled to open this spring at Bimini Bay Resort & Marina. The gaming outpost brings glitz to Bimini, where locals get around in golf carts, divers jump off boats to explore wrecks, and anglers cast for bonefish in the flats. From \$149. 877-666-2574; biminibayresort.com

Cuba travel permits have notably slowed in the past several months, prompting many reputable tour operators to cancel or delay 2013 trips. But Alabama-based International Expeditions managed to secure licenses for 15 departures from Jan. 10 through March 19. The 10-day trips focus on the arts and island heritage. Meet with ballet dancers, visit an art school and Ernest Hemingway's former home, and dine in paladares, home-based restaurants. From \$4,198 per person. 800-234-9620; ietravel.com

REALLY POSH DIGS

Virgin Gorda, British Virgin Islands

Villa: Bayhouse

Selling points: Three-bedroom south coast home spread across two buildings connected by outdoor terraces. Pool and outdoor shower, plus perched just above an isolated beach. From \$6,300 per week. bayhousevilla.com

Jamaica

Villa: Stella by the Sea (available soon)

Selling points: Seven-bedroom hilltop villa near Montego Bay with a pool and oceanfront "tide pool" that fills at high tide, private beach, and access to golf and tennis club. From \$16,000 per week. 800-238-5290; tryallclub.com

SEEN ENOUGH FISH?

Two underwater parks colonizing the depths have added new artworks in a visual arms race for snorkelers' attention.

Grenada Underwater Sculpture Park

Scope: 65 sculptures sunk up to 82 feet

New works: Two including Christ of the Deep commemorating the 1961 sinking of the Bianca C cruise ship and the efforts of islanders to save passengers and crew onboard

How to see it: Beach entry from Dragon Bay

Museo Subacuático de Arte (Cancun)

Scope: 491 pieces from 9 to 30 feet down in two locations or "galleries"

New works: 66 from artist Jason deCaires Taylor, including Silent Evolution, an artificial reef created from 400 life-size human sculptures installed 30 feet below sea level

How to see it: Scuba and snorkel tour operators, including Aquaworld

CRUISING SPLURGE

Crowd-sick? Charter the ship. Upscale travel company Brown + Hudson debuts a **swashbuckling sailing trip** this season aboard a triple-masted, 180-foot schooner. Channeling the Pirates of the Caribbean movies, the 10-day Treasure Island Adventure (\$225,000 for up to eight passengers) departs Great Exuma in the Bahamas for waterfall treks on the Dominican Republic, cave exploration in the British Virgin Islands, snorkeling in the Turks and Caicos, and forest treks on Dominica. 011-44-203-358-0110; brownandhudson.com