Rock on in Negril

Warm up with a quick Jamaica getaway

BY HARIJITRAI SHAR
Last Updated: 10:37 AM, January 20, 2012
Printed: 11:00 AM, January 20, 2012

We don't blame you for trying to escape NYC this time of year. Between post-holiday stress, the melancholy Christmas tree graveyard and the sub-zero wind chill, the idea of jetting snow in the city just isn't appealing anymore. We've found a solution—the perfect weekend getaway where “everything’s right” and you won’t need another vacay from your vacay—Negril, Jamaica. We know what you’re thinking—tourist central, all-inclusive bargain hotels, families galore, pristine greenery. Yes, there’s that side if that’s what you’re into, but just up from the Seven Mile Beach lies the rocky territory. The cliffs, as this area is known, are perfect for a boho chic holiday. One love.

**STAY**
The Rockhouse boutique hotel (winter rates from $160, rockhousehotel.com) stretches dramatically across the cliffs of Pristine Cove on 8 acres of tropical gardens. For a truly luxurious experience, get a premium suite ($460 in winter)—with its private outdoor shower—perched on the water’s edge. Steps away, you can dive off the bridge (connecting the villas to the rest of the hotel) into the clear aquamarine water or snorkel along the rocks adjacent to the property. Monkeys, parrots and other feathered friends are performed off-site, dolphins leap pool-side and detectable diving is always enjoyed outside. The hotel is built from locally quarried cut stones (hence the name) and runs on a foundation to build local schools in the community (rockhousefoundation.org).

**EAT**
For jerk goodness and a side of tamale (traditional Jamaican flatbread), hit up the Rockhouse’s hotel restaurant or its newer Pushcart restaurant and run bar, inspired by the street food of Jamaica and located right next door at Pristine Cove. If it’s true nite, look outside you’re craving, we encourage Three Dives (viewencesconsulting.com/sloops) for the curvy goat, Brics for the best jerk basket, De Bar for proper street-BBQ jerk chicken and Sips and Bites for a traditional Jamaican breakfast. (Other more “upscale” dining options include Devaan’s at Catcha Fallin Star (catchajamaica.com), the Lodge at Tensing Pen and Hungry Lion.)

**DRINK**
While most restaurants and hotels offer cozy bars overlooking crashing waves, Rick’s Cafe (rockesjamaica.com) at sunset can also be quite entertaining. Touristy (but not in a bad way!), but between the insane cliff divers and the jammer reggae bands, Rick’s is worth a pre-dinner drink stop. Or for a different kind of adventure with your crew, check out Floyd’s Pelican Bar (floydspelecanbar.com). You’ll need a fisherman’s best to transport you to this “shack” in the sea.

**SEE**
Even though you could be thoroughly content sunbathing by the pool while sipping on umbrella-garnished cocktails, take the time to explore what the terrains of Jamaica have to offer. To ease you into vacation mode, start by taking a tour of the oldest rum producer in the Caribbean (200 years)—Appleton Rum Estate (appletonestate.com). The 90-minute tour takes you through the rum-making process from both a historic and current perspective and finishes with sampling some of the product. And if you feel like chasing waterfalls, then check out YS Falls (ysfalls.com)—a superior alternative to the other tourist photo-bombed falls. A series of 10 waterfalls on the YS River located about 30 minutes from the Rockhouse, here you can swing on ropes and swing into the cave beneath the falls. Best to visit YS early in the morning before the tour buses start to arrive.

If you miss Negril immediately after you leave, you can get a little taste of it—minus the weather—at NYC’s Miss Lili’s restaurant, where partners include Rockhouse owner Paul Salomon. That will have to be enough to tide you over until you return.