They’ve seen Jamaican culture before, these kids, but not like this. Growing up in Brixton meant school trips to market stalls heaving with plantains and mangoes, summers on the street, dodging the river of fish juice on Atlantic Road, and playing out to its overblown dancehall soundtrack. But the real thing was so much better, neighbours kept telling us. Not for us the cultureless postcard beaches of Antigua, the megayacht bling of St Barth’s or the too-hard-to-reach coasts of Tobago. We wanted the real West Indian deal, the hustle and bustle, the spicy jerk and the rastas and their One Love message, toasted for tourists but resonant all the same. And we wanted comfort, too.

So we’ve come to Goldeneye, famous among Caribbean hotels for its funky vibe and barefoot millionaires. It may once have been rejected by Bob Marley for being ‘too posh’, but unlike the region’s plasticky manicured hotels, this is a place of understated chic, where cabins are brightly coloured and guests get refunds for not using the air-conditioning, where the Dalquiris are heavy on the rum and reggae beats float on the breeze. It doesn’t take long to be lulled into a soporific, dreamy state.

We discover the lagoon, the very word conjuring up Smalls and Amazonian-style adventures (with hotter sun and better snacks). With mangrove plants in a riot of over-saturated turquoise and green, the tropical vegetation is so thick its tendrils creep, snake-like, onto the water. Our kayaks glide out across the blue as my eldest child takes the oars and donks and splooshes erratically across the paths of paddle-boarders, rudely bumping the peace of anyone snoozing in the hammocks of the shady villas.

Gibraltar beach, a few coves away, is almost completely hidden from the road. To get to it, you have to navigate through the lobby and rooms of a deserted hotel, its peeling paint and crumbling floors giving in to a veil of green leaves, its walls a playground for butterflies. This beach isn’t in the guide books and most people leave it alone, which makes it a great nesting spot for endangered hawksbill sea turtles. Protecting them from being turned into turtle soup is the work of Mel, a retired teacher from England who provides a hands-on lesson in conservation. The kids can hardly believe it as miniature heads emerge from strangely soft eggs and the baby turtles hurry on tiny flippers down the sand towards the sea. It’s like something out of Planet Earth. This kind of natural encounter is a balm for parents trying to sidestep the dished crayons and crafts approach of the average hotel kids-club offering.

Up the road from the hotel you can stroll past walls covered with thick bougainvillea, giant palm leaves bowing on the ground, and dozens of stray dogs which the kids want to take home. There are rickety painted wooden restaurants vibrating underneath huge speakers blasting out Bajan Banton and serving only jerk chicken. Don’t worry if Dangal’s is actually better than Chris’s Cook Shop down the road but it puts on a good show of authenticity. The children sit on its steps slapping slowly on tropical rhythms, their lips turning orange, their heads gently nodding to a soundtrack of Skip Marley (Bob’s grandson) and waves. This liming thing? They’ve got that down. EMILY MATHIESON

BOOK IT! JTC Luxury Travel offers seven nights at Goldeneye from £2,359 per family, based on two adults and two children sharing a two-bedroom Beach Hut, including flights to Kingston, transfers and breakfast. +44 1244 355227, jtcluxurytravel.co.uk