Summer Escape 2019 - Issue 33
Catherine Fairweather
out of this world

ONE DAY THAT SUMMER

GoldenEye, Jamaica, 1962

When they famously Bonded on a deserted beach in Dr. No, the sexual chemistry between SEAN CONNERY and URSULA ANDRESS captured the world’s imagination— as did the hedonistic delights of Jamaica’s northern coast.

When they sped across the exhilarating turquoise waters of Oracabessa Bay in a Lyman Runabout near Bond creator Ian Fleming’s villa—or slipped marina—fitted on a beach and covered in waterfalls—Sean Connery and Ursula Andress were teasing the high jinks and excesses of the jet-set crowd who loved to holiday there (Yvonne Furneaux, Marilyn Monroe, Liz Taylor, Sophia Loren, Noël Coward, to name a few). The lush island and lush tropical gardens, the vibrant sun and sparkling beaches—this was the heady real-life backdrop for a stage set of fun, games and misbehavior.

Dancing under the stars at Errol Flynn’s villa, naked swimmers and gambling at Fleming’s (GoldenEye) or at Noël Coward’s Roxtail, cocktails at swanky Bluebeards Roxtail Villa. Indeed, Blanche was the inspiration for Fleming’s Honey Ryder, the original Bond girl, island babe and beachcomber, as immortalized by Ursula Andress emerging from the beach in the most iconic film in cinema history. Andress was enchanted by the company of the elegant Brits Coward and Fleming, at whose villa she spent most of her time. “They were easy to be with,” she remembers. “Two great personalities with a sense of humor, witty and interesting.”

Today, GoldenEye belongs to music pioneer Chris Blackwell. Blanche’s son, who was only 24 when he landed a job as location scout on Dr. No. A hotel since the Eighties, it is a symbol of cultural mixing, from the mojito roller to the quiet families from the Home Counties and Manhattanite honeymooners. Though Winston Churchill’s favorite turtle soup is no longer available, you will instead be able to witness turtle hatchlings making a break for the ocean in one of the conservation projects that is close to Blackwell’s heart. Instead of gas-guzzling Bond-style speedboats, guests can help themselves to kayaks, paddleboards and non-motorized boats to glide out over Oracabessa Bay, honoring the marine life that the Oracabessa Foundation was set up to protect in 1997.

True luxury, it turns out, is not so much about an infinity pool or lobster thermidor and a bucket of champagne, but more about the sense of unhooded time that is at the heart of GoldenEye. Guests are encouraged to engage with the community and the landscape, whether it’s planting a tree that can be named after you or enjoying the organic farm and self-sustaining fruits that come from Blackwell’s admirable self-sustaining private estate. Photographer Alex Blackwell said, GoldenEye was a place where you can connect, where you can be needed and appreciated, where inspiration can grow, where, ultimately, when you visit, “you feel alive.”

Elegant Resorts can organize a seven-night stay at GoldenEye from £2,200, including return British Airways flights from London, elegantresorts.co.uk/goldeneye.com

The PORTER guide to luxe island life

CHILL-OUT ZONE. GoldenEye has three beaches and three bars to suit different moods. Enjoy a Blackwell Rum spritz at the Bamboo Bar, sipping down to flood for the best music, or watch the sunset at Shabana bar from its laid-back rooftop terrace. Lunch at Button Beach is a must.

HOLIDAY HIDEAWAY. Family group or friends should consider renting the three-bedroom Strawberry House, in the sea next to Fleming’s house. This is possibly the loveliest and most private villa, nestled in a grove of mango and banana trees and open to the elements and sound of the sea. Belonging to artist Pauline Arace, it is furnished with antiques from Kingston, her paintings, a beautiful gas-burning room and a private swimming pool with direct access to the sea.

COUNTRY LIVING. Ride the fenceless fields and rainforest terrain in a Cogshall Country and spend a couple of nights at the rustic pestle cottage at Plantation, Chris Blackwell’s private estate and working farm, where he raises Red Polo cattle, sheep, chicken and geese. From farm-to-table dining and long hitches to swimming in the river and old sugar-plantation ruins, the experience is all about unbridled freedom and being close to nature. Plantation.com

CITY LIFE. Let Blackwell’s personal driver take you on a trip to Kingston, immortalized in the opening scenes of Dr. No, which is just as colorful and vibrant now as it was back then.

MOUNTAIN MAGIC. Make like the crew of a Bond film, who stayed in the mid-century Blue Mountains at Strawberry Hill. This 23rd-century country plantation house offers the quintessential Jamaican experience, with four-posters and views some might recognize from the Live and Let Die Bond film. Strawberryhill.com
SHAKEN NOT STIRRED
Sean Connery and Ursula Andress are towed to safety in the final scene of *Dr. No*. 