

# TOWN&COUNTRY

## Unwind at Ian Fleming's famous Jamaican retreat

There's plenty to spark the imagination at the beach that inspired James Bond

BY BONNIE CULBERTSON — 27/05/21



Named in homage to the property's earliest patron, **GoldenEye** is a collection of beach huts, cottages and private villas located on the pristine beaches of Oracabessa, Jamaica. Here, the same sensual sophistication and effortless savoir faire that made Fleming's title character so seductive can be found at every turn. Yet it's the unfussy quality of luxury GoldenEye provides that keeps a certain cadre of jet-setting creatives – Richard Branson, Sting and Bono among them – coming back for more.



Fleming famously happened upon his future haven while serving as a naval intelligence officer in World War II. After the war he returned to buy several acres of property along the beach and erected his **eponymous villa**. The gorgeous property is set apart from the rest of the resort and can house up to 10 at a time. Guests of the villa can lounge by the pool or descend the steps to a private beach and grotto. A large table located in the villa's sunken back garden is perfect for a celebratory meal or slow mornings spent over steaming mugs of local, Blue Mountain coffee (available across the resort).





Of course no matter where you rest your head here, every stay at GoldenEye is special. When the music impresario Chris Blackwell of **Island Records** took over the property in the 1970s, he made sure there was a place for every type of traveler lucky enough to visit. Larger villas with full kitchens are perfect for families, while lagoon cottages come with a private kayak that guests can use to paddle directly up to the spa for treatment. For couples, the intimate beach huts are simple and cosy, with private terraces for snuggling during sunset while sipping the resort's signature Blackwell rum cocktails.



Most meals should be enjoyed at the on-property Bizot Bar, an open-air café overlooking the Caribbean sea. The buttery Johnny cakes are a local favourite, and definitely spring for anything on the menu from Pantrepant, Chris Blackwell's sustainable farm. On Saturday nights, guests gather for traditional Jamaican Jerk barbecue and a live DJ. Even when it isn't mealtime, the bar brings guests together for conversation, an easy familiarity extending as much from the island's 'one love' philosophy as the ever-flowing piña coladas.

For something further afield, in-the-know diners head to Chris's Cook Shop, situated just up the street from GoldenEye, for lobster, oxtail or curried goat. Anthony Bourdain made a point to stop there for an episode of his hit show, **Parts Unknown**. Another can't-miss meal is the seasonal menu offered at nearby **Stush in the Bush**, which offers authentic local flavours in a farm-to-table dining experience infused with Rastafarian ethos.



Days at GoldenEye can be as laid-back or adventurous as you like. Beach-front yoga classes and stand-up paddle boarding make for a workout as memorable as it is serene. Or spot sea turtles and barracuda while snorkelling the reefs that GoldenEye works hard to protect through its **foundation** – only reef-safe sunscreen, purchased at the gift shop, is allowed for swimmers. For those able to manage a longer stay, **Regenerative Resorts** offers an itinerary inclusive of a stay at **Strawberry Hill**, Blackwell's other property in Jamaica's Blue Mountains, where guests can go on guided hikes and partake in local coffee tastings.

Slow days, long nights and easy mornings are the routine at GoldenEye, making a return to the hustle and bustle of everyday life a hard transition. Still, I'm happy to keep the sense of island time I revelled in here, among other memories, in my heart for a rainy day. After all, it only takes one breath of sweet, Jamaican air for you to start feeling that, "every little thing (is) gonna be alright".

*GoldenEye, from about £370 a room a night. For more information and to book, visit [www.goldeneye.com](http://www.goldeneye.com).*