

Caribbean Islands Have Plenty Of Sunny Deals In Low Season

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By David Swanson, special to [courant.com](#)
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Today's travel non-news: Luxury is out; cheap destinations are in vogue. We all know why, and Caribbean outposts like the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Mexico — with their abundant good deals and all-inclusive options — deserve this moment in the sun.

But before you settle for a bargain-basement package at a no-name resort where the swim-up pool bar is the star amenity, consider this: Mid-April marks the start of the Caribbean's low season, when value comes out to play, even on the most expensive islands. Through mid-December, when high-season rates kick in again, you'll find hotel deals regionwide, and, in a nod to the global economic slump, the special offers are extending to new frontiers, like dining and activities.

Sure, it helps to pack a well-endowed wallet when you land on St. Barths. But you don't have to in low season. Here's how:

Anguilla

Anguilla is the beach-lover's destination of the Caribbean. You'll find mile after mile of silky white sand ringing this slumbry isle, one of the smallest outposts of the British Empire. What you won't find is a surfeit of attractions and activities; there's little in the way of shopping, gambling or colorful island culture to distract you from a pursuit of sun, sea and sand. But the island has a fleet of swank resorts that set the pace to an investment banker's whims. Is there room at the inn for the rest of us?

Strategies: Anguilla's best attraction is free: the beaches. Plan your visit for low season and you'll find most hotels drop rates 40 percent or more. If airline prices direct to Anguilla seem high, compare them with flying in to nearby St. Maarten and ferrying over — an \$18 taxi transfer from the airport takes you to Marigot in St. Martin (same island, French-side spelling) and the 20-minute hop to Anguilla costs \$12 per person. There are great (and pricey) restaurants on Anguilla, but you can keep the tab down to a moderate figure, especially if you invest in accommodations with a kitchen. Or check into takeout from Fat Cat Gourmet (264-497-2307; [fatcat.ai](#)), where you'll find sandwiches and salads by the pound for under \$10 and entrées for reheating at dinner.

Sensible option: A short walk from the island's ferry dock, the Ferryboat Inn has seven units that sit close to an excellent, uncrowded beach facing St. Martin, a carpet of twinkling lights at dusk. Accommodations include two spacious one-bedroom apartments, plus a quartet of 1,200-square-foot one-bedroom apartments in a two-story building. The apartments are \$99 to \$115 in summer

plus 20 percent tax/service (\$176 to \$198 in winter). Larger still is a two-bedroom, two-bath cottage that steps right onto the sand, rented for \$195 (\$308 in high season).

Information: 264-497-6613; ferryboatinn.ai.

Splurge option: Situated smack on gorgeous, 2-mile-long Shoal Bay Beach, Kú is a coup for travelers of moderate budgets. The 27 rooms are identical, whitewashed 775-square-foot suites, with pastel aqua and lavender trim. Each has plush bedding, CD/DVD player and fully equipped kitchen. A 75-foot-long bar parallels the shoreline, and live music percolates several nights a week. When you want a change of scene, it's a short walk to recumbent beach bars. Doubles start at \$180 plus 20 percent tax/service (\$315 in winter).

Information: 800-869-5827 or 264-497-2011, kuanguilla.com.

Additional information: 800-553-4939; anguilla-vacation.com.

St. Barthélemy

Blessed with a clutch of picture-perfect beaches, the Caribbean's best dining and shopping that sizzles with Parisian haute couture, St. Barths is the region's jet-settiest landing. While doing St. Barths on the cheap may not be fashionable, it is possible, if you're willing to make a few compromises.

Strategies: Renting a car is costly, but this is a petite isle, so a central location like St. Jean or Gustavia will allow you to walk to the beach and restaurants, St. Barths' principal lures. And consider a villa: Four can share a two-bedroom home for less than a comparably appointed resort, and you'll have kitchen facilities to prepare meals. One-bedroom villas from Wimco (866-850-6140; wimco.com) start at \$1,200 per week in summer (\$1,700 in winter) and two-bedrooms with pool start at \$2,200 (\$3,500 in winter) — the per-person costs drop as you add bedrooms.

Sensible option: Situated in the scenic port of Gustavia, the Sunset Hotel overlooks the harbor. There are 10 rooms, all with air conditioning, satellite TV, hair dryer and phone. Plenty of restaurants and shops are nearby, Shell Beach is a 10-minute walk, and the ferry from St. Martin docks right in front. Doubles range \$95 to \$103 plus 5 percent tax, prices calculated at 1 euro equals \$1.30 (\$128 to \$155 in winter), with discounts for weeklong stays.

Information: 011-590-590-27-77-21; saint-barths.com/sunset-hotel.

Splurge option: Stay within shouting distance of the island's daytime social hub without breaking the bank at Village St. Jean, one of St. Barths' most endearing inns. Run by the Charneau family that built it in 1969, the hillside location offers 25 rooms in a cluster of stone and wood cottages above St. Jean Bay. Rooms range from six standard hotel units with twin beds and a mini-fridge to one- and two-bedroom cottages with a full kitchen. A pool and moderate priced restaurant round out the facilities. The bustling beach is a 10-minute walk down the hill. Doubles start at \$176 including continental breakfast, plus 5 percent tax (\$286 in winter).

Information: 011-590-590-27-61-39; villagestjeanhotel.com.

Additional information: 011-590-590-27-87-27; saint-barths.com.

Barbados

You won't find a warmer welcome than in Barbados, the island that represents the Caribbean's most irrefutable link to the spirit of England. Toss in miles of velvety white sand beaches, a flourishing restaurant scene, an array of museums and sightseeing opportunities, and Barbados is revealed as one of the region's most well-rounded objectives.

Strategies: While posh berths like Sandy Lane get the ink for name-drop crowd, Barbados reaches out to visitors of all budgets, with affordable lodgings concentrated along the south coast, just east of Bridgetown, the capital. Good beaches, watersports, moderately priced dining and night-life options are found along the 2-mile stretch surrounding pedestrian-friendly St. Lawrence Gap. The island also has extensive bus transportation, and the fare is just 75 cents (U.S.) per trip. And in low season, obtain the free Barbados Gourmet Card for a 25 percent discount at more than 20 restaurants (barbadosgourmetcard.com).

Sensible option: Situated across the street from one of the island's most popular beaches, Southern Surf Beach Apartments is a four-story, 12-room property overlooking busy Rockley Beach. The 12 rooms have been renovated in the last two years and feature air conditioning and sea-facing balcony. For a few dollars more, deluxe units add a bit more floor space, but note there's no elevator (request a lower floor if stairs are an issue). There's a pool in back but no other facilities on-site; watersports operators and food vendors are usually in full-force along the beach. Doubles are \$120 to \$130, including tax/service (\$135 to \$148 in winter).

Information: 246-435-6672; southernsurfbarbados.com.

Splurge hotel: A short walk from St. Lawrence Gap in the Worthing neighborhood, Blue Orchids Hotel is a three-story building that hugs the sand, with 31 rooms ranging from studios with kitchens to one- and two-bedroom apartments. Rooms are smartly decorated in bright tropical prints, and every one boasts an ocean-view balcony — some large enough for dining — plus cable TV, phone, iron and free Wi-Fi in the lobby area. There's a small pool, a gym and a restaurant, while lots of dining options are within walking distance. Doubles start at \$123 plus 17.5 percent tax/service (\$170 in winter), but check the hotel website for specials; 246-435-8057; blueorchidsbarbados.com.

Additional information: 800-221-9831; visitbarbados.org.

David Swanson is a contributing editor to National Geographic Traveler and writes the "Affordable Caribbean" column for Caribbean Travel & Life magazine.