

- **Over the horizon from bustling South Beach lies a chain of Bahamian islands dotted with laid-back inns drawing**

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SPECIAL TO THE MIAMI HERALD

• **Marley Resort and Spa, Nassau.** Drive past the big resorts of Cable Beach, and hidden behind coconut palms and terracotta walls is a little resort bursting with personality and a soundtrack of reggae music.

The former governor's mansion, next to 200 feet of pristine white-sand beach, was bought by Rita Marley, wife of reggae superstar Bob Marley, in 1982, the year after Bob's death. The family had been spending summers in Nassau since 1976 when Bob was recovering from an assassination attempt in Jamaica. She and daughters Stephanie and Cedella turned their house into a fabulous inn in 2004, decorating the 16 guestrooms with mahogany furniture from the Caribbean, carpets from Morocco, and masks and wood carvings from Africa. Reggae plays in the Natural Mystic Spa and especially in the Stir It Up bar. In the Marley Boutique, you can buy clothes from Cedella Marley's Catch a Fire fashion line.

The popular Simmer Down Gourmet Caribbean Restaurant offers Lobster Duo with Jamaican ``rundown'' vegetables, Jamrock Jerk Chicken, Appleton Spice Conch Soup with fresh ginger and Jamaican curry, and Blue Mountain Coffee Bean Tart. Chef Devan McPhee traveled to every parish in Jamaica for inspiration for his dishes.

Details: 242-702-2800; www.marleyresort.com ; summer-fall rates start at \$295; winter, \$425. Ask about specials.

• **The Landing, Harbour Island.** The hotel comprises three stately houses, built next to the harbor in the early 1800s in lovely Dunmore Town. Verandas overlook the scenic city dock. The houses are full of character with polished dark wood floors, narrow stairways, a cozy library, and mahogany furniture. The chic interiors were designed by India Hicks -- English model, author and god-daughter of Prince Charles -- who lives on the island. The inn has a fine restaurant and excellent wine cellar. Internationally-known chef Ken Gomes' specialties include local lobster and pan-fried grouper with roasted sweet yam, organic baby bok choy and red Thai curry. (The restaurant is closed until Oct. 31.)

Details: 242-333-2707; www.harbourislandlanding.com ; rates start at \$175 for two people. Fly into North Eleuthera Airport from Miami on American Airlines, or from Fort Lauderdale on Continental, then take a 10-minute water taxi to Harbour Island.

• **Pink Sands, Harbour Island.** This complex of 25 pastel-colored cottages tucked among 20 verdant acres of tropical gardens is like a posh camp for really rich grownups such as Martha Stewart, Nicole Kidman and Duchess of York Sarah Ferguson who stay here. The real attraction is the gorgeous three-mile-long pink-sand beach. The resort's Blue Bar offers a view of beach and water -- and perhaps a rider on horseback galloping through the surf -- plus gourmet dishes such as pistachio-crust sea bass with curried blue crab or seared local grouper with steamed coconut sticky rice wrapped in a banana leaf. Dinner also is served in the sexy Garden Terrace restaurant with Moorish-style sofas piled with silk pillows and a huge mother-of-pearl chandelier that seems to spill from the ceiling like a glistening waterfall.

The cottages' décor is chic Caribbean with dark woods, and chairs and sofas in white linen. Activities are many - tennis courts, pool, gym, fishing and diving.

Details: 242-333-2030; www.pinksandsresort.com ; rates for two start at \$495 through Nov. 18; \$600 in high season.

• **Old Bahama Bay, Grand Bahama Island.** There are huge resorts in Lucaya, but Old Bahama Bay is 26 miles away in the fishing village of West End. The inn's 73 luxury suites are in two-story Bahamian-style buildings overlooking a pristine beach. The rooms are elegant Caribbean with dark wood beds and armoires, dark wicker on the terraces, and plantation shutters. One of the inn's owners is John Travolta, who lives nearby. Solange Knowles' wedding was here with sister Beyonce and her husband Jay-Z attending.

Read more: http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/09/12/1813705_p2/the-bahamas-getting-away-to-an.html#ixzz0zQ8B114P