





Bluefields Villas Bluefields, Jamaica

If there is a pot of gold at the end of one of Jamaica's most winding, bumpy roads, it has to be **The Villas on Bluefields**. It's worth every mile it takes to get you to this superb haven, which seduces you from the moment you arrive. Unlike the much-populated northern coast where resorts abound, this all-inclusive has no walls and is surrounded by small villages on the southern coast of Jamaica, just an hour-and-a-half from Montego Bay's international airport.

Simply known by many repeat guests as Bluefields, this romantic enclave overlooks the Caribbean Sea, giving you non-stop ocean views from nearly every room. The tropical grounds consist of coral vine, heliconia, frangipani, as well as banana trees. And wherever you go, you never lose sight of the serene blue-green sea. All five villas express a feeling of bygone days in Jamaica with touches of carved sideboards, native mahogany furnishings, antique armoires, embroidered Irish linens, and king-sized poster beds. Completing the picture are Oriental rugs, terra cotta tiled floors, and artwork and photographs showing the history of this tropical island. Louvered windows, ceiling fans and constant ocean breezes guarantee to keep you cool.

What makes it work are the husband-and-wife team, Debbie and Braxton Moncure who have spent many years developing Bluefields into a tranquil setting in the Caribbean. "It's really not a hotel, it's a home," Debbie explains. "Each cottage creates a sense of place." And with a staff of 45 to look after 21 bedrooms, it's certain you'll have the best possible stay. You really do fall in love with each other—and with the people! From ensuring that their guests are met at the airport to being on hand to make sure everythings runs smoothly they see to every detail. Guests have their own private staff consisting of chef, butler and maid.

And dining at Bluefields is quite an experience. Guests have their private villa staff of chef, butler and maid. Meals, which can be tailored to your needs, are expertly served at linen draped tables.

If you want to experience the "real" Jamaica, make your reservations at the Villas on Bluefields. It's not a place to come if you want to party all night, ride madly on jet skis or play volleyball in the pool. Rather, you come to soak up the enticing aromas of the flowers and the views of the sea and hills.

For more information on the Villas on Bluefields, call 703-549-6517 or www.bluefieldsvillas.com. Rates are seasonal and vary among the five villas—The Hermitage, Milestone Cottage, Cottonwood Cottage, San Michele and Million Cove.

—Patricia Canole

Touchstone Inn

Taos, New Mexico

Taos, New Mexico, where Julia Roberts recently married, is an artists' paradise and the soul of the Southwest. Its bright turquoise skies, spectacular sunsets, dazzling winter snows, and brilliant rainbows all conspire to provide the most romantic of backgrounds for **Touchstone Inn.**

Picture a ten-room adobe estate alongside a sacred river secluded among tall ponderosa pine, elm, willow, and cottonwood trees with unobstructive views of the magnificent Taos Mountains. Then a cozy room filled with candles, antiques, a woodburning Kiva fireplace, private patio, cowhide and oriental rugs, a colorful tiled Jacuzzi tub with domed skylight, and oversized down pillows and comforter. Fresh flowers, fruit and homemade cookies await your arrival. The perfect love inn for two.

A complimentary vegetarian breakfast is served on lace-topped tables in the intimate gallery overlooking the courtyard, which brims with original art by noted watercolorist Bren Price, the gracious proprietor of Touchstone. Let her make some spa appointments for you, perhaps a heated stone massage in the garden, a wet herbal wrap in the new indoor spa, or an energizing Shiatsu treatment *a deux* in the privacy of your room. You'll want to wind down after to soothing music inside the state-of-the-art sauna.

Bren might suggest a meeting with the resident psychic who reads palms and Tarot cards in the lovely Leopold Room where, in the late afternoon, you can leaf through the library's historical books and novels in front of the fire or mingle with fellow guests entertaining themselves around the baby grand piano. Make sure she points out to you the cuddle-up hammock for two near the outdoor fountain, best enjoyed by the light of the moon.

Hard as it may be to break away, there are many exciting activities for a couple to enjoy in Taos. Float above it all in a hot-air balloon. Visit the sacred Taos Pueblo and witness life as it was led by Native Americans thousands of years ago. Browse through the many art galleries, museums, and shops in the downtown Historic District. Whitewater raft down the Rio Grande. Take lessons at Taos Ski Valley. Hike nature trails, ride horseback, fly fish, mountain bike. And what a pleasure it will be, on your return, to relax, perhaps with a glass of champagne, in Touchstone's outdoor hot tub.

Dinner is not yet served at the Inn. Two highly recommended restaurants are *Doc Martin's* at the historic **Taos Inn**, which serves casual Southwestern fare and the best chili in town, and the *Stakeout Grill*, where margaritas and cowboy steaks on the terrace, enjoyed as the sun goes down are treats not to be missed.

When it comes time to depart, as it invariably does, Bren offers you a personal touchstone as a keepsake. Memories are made of this!

For more information on Touchstone Inn, call 800-758-0192 or log on to www.touchstoneinn.com.

—Tania Grossinger

