

THE WEEK

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THE BEST OF THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN MEDIA

Travel

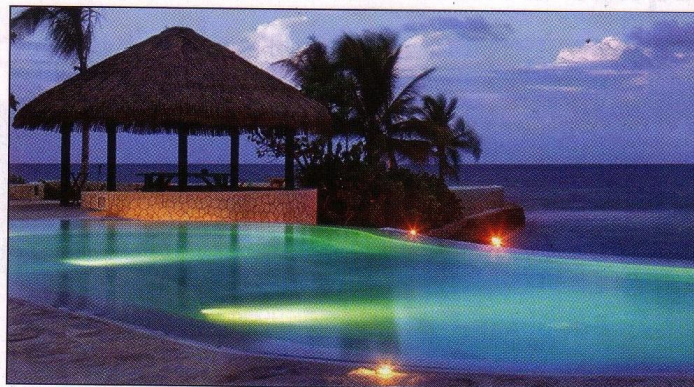
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This week's dream: James Bond's Jamaican birthplace

Ian Fleming fell in love with Jamaica when he was sent to the island during the Second World War, and in 1946 he bought a house amid the tropical vegetation of its north coast, and named it GoldenEye (after a Naval intelligence operation he had been involved with). It was here that he dreamed up James Bond, and wrote the 007 novels. Today, the villa forms part of a "full-scale" luxury resort, says Sophy Roberts in the Financial Times – yet the spirit of the place remains.

Wandering along the estate's verdant cliffs and flawless beaches, beside a sea that is "clearer than a martini", you feel as if a vision in a white bikini will, at any moment, emerge from the surf, and that "the cocktails will be perfect and the sex even better".

Since 1976 the estate has been owned by Chris Blackwell, the Jamaica-raised, Harrow-educated founder of Island Records (which introduced Bob Marley to the world), and these days its aura of "colonial 1950s glamour" is shot through with "Afro-



The pool at GoldenEye, where Fleming wrote the 007 novels

Caribbean cool". At night, the distant sound of reggae "reverberates across the water", mingling with the murmur of guests' voices, the clink of ice in tumblers and the enveloping chorus of crickets and frogs.

Most of the resort's staff come from a nearby town, Oracabessa; its kitchen serves Jamaican classics "tweaked" by the chef, Conroy Arnold, a locally born graduate of Nobu in New York. Guests stay in Fleming's own villa, or in one of the new

cottages that border a larger beach and lagoon nearby, some with "private pontoons" from which to dive straight into the water. Nearby is Noël Coward's hilltop home, Firefly. Its interior is "held in a Mary Celeste-state of suspended animation" while the glories of Jamaica's hinterland – rivers, waterfalls and towering peaks – beckon outside. *Virgin Holidays + Hip Hotels (0844-573 2460, www.vhiphotels.co.uk) have seven nights at GoldenEye from £1,949pp b&b, incl. flights and \$200 resort credit.*

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