

ForbesLife

DECEMBER 2010



12 Days of Giving (and Getting)

**THE HIDDEN
CARIBBEAN**

**RICHARD MILLE'S
WATCHES
OF TOMORROW**

**HOLIDAY
COCKTAILS 2010**

**DEER VALLEY
VS. PARK CITY**

**SANTA'S LIST FOR
WORLD LEADERS**

ESCAPES

GEEJAM Port Antonio, Jamaica

HIDDEN CARIBBEAN

It Ain't About Golf," say the staff T-shirts at Geejam, a slogan that transcends the obvious—the place is perched like a pirate's lookout on a steep seafront hillside—as a statement of attitude. Starting with its goofy name and hip version of luxury, Geejam has the genius of being able to hold several contrasting thoughts and moods in harmony. The miniresort's centerpiece is a professional recording studio with travel-poster views that has attracted guests like Gwen Stefani (whose band, No Doubt, recorded the album *Rock Steady* there) and Grace Jones. (During my stay it seemed to be attracting photo shoots with modelly singers like flypaper.) But the studio is routinely available by appointment to regular-old guests (they can make you *happen*, brah), and the showbiz insidery-ness doesn't distance a staff that pampers little kids and indiscriminately dusts civilians with star treatment.

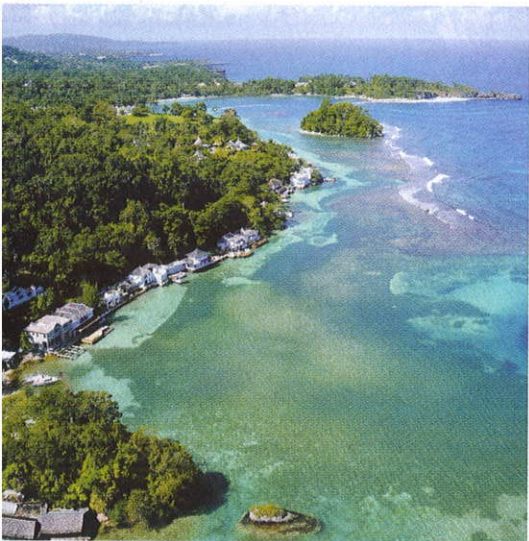
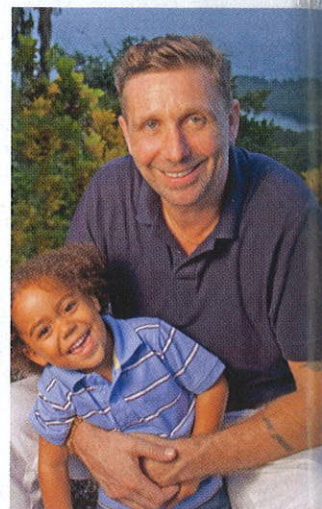
Geejam occupies a privileged six acres on Jamaica's northeastern coast, where the rain forest-covered mountains above legendary spots like Frenchman's Cove and the Blue Lagoon all but tumble into the sea. The resort is a modest scattering of buildings tucked away in an artfully cultivated jungle setting where the horticultural names alone knock you out: parrot heliconia, soursop, ginger rose. Down below lies a private, gated cove of white sand and turquoise water and easy-does-it snorkeling spots.

Geejam is the brainchild of founding partner Jon Baker, a British-born hip-hop record producer (Gee Street Records) based in New York and Jamaica. There were only four accommodations when I visited (18 more are planned) and an outside level of service. Wander out to the beach and a cooler and stack of towels appear within moments; inquire about activities and one of the personable drivers turns up to whisk you off to splash in a nearby waterfall or raft

on the Rio Grande (with a linger-awhile crawfish-and-coconut and jerk-chicken beach barbecue). On my last morning I awoke at 5:30 to find a warm pot of coffee, fruit, and fresh-baked bread already placed on my terrace.

I holed up in the Drum & Bass Suite beneath the main recording studio, a kind of home design-magazine version of a cliff dwelling, with its Philippe Starck bathtub, multiparticipant steam shower, and white-on-white bedroom looking out over the Caribbean. Open the folding wall of Brazilian cherry-wood-framed window panels and the sprawling, crescent-shaped deck becomes an extension of the room.

Meals and social life center on the Bushbar, a burnished wooden tree house platform carpentered around a pair of centuries-old fig trunks. You could imagine a house party breaking out here almost by accident. I sat down for dinner beside the railing, mojito in hand, and tucked into a tangy onion bisque and spicy lobster pasta. As I waited for dessert, Albert Minott, the seventysomething lead singer of Baker's new/old act, the Jolly Boys, tuned up a few feet away. He plays *mento* music, a reggae and ska precursor with a slower-paced, clipped, chugging sound. Minott would ultimately launch into a stately "Ring of Fire," and do it proud. But just at that moment the counterpoint between the tree frogs and the blender behind the bar was spot-on perfect. —RICHARD NALLEY



THE DETAILS

\$655 - \$1,895

Contact
888-4GEEJAM,
geejamhotel.com

PHOTOGRAPHS: JON BAKER (BLUE LAGOON); COOKE KINKHEAD (TEXTURE); WILLIAM RICHARDS (INTERIOR); ANTONIO OLIVOS (JON BAKER AND SON CHE)

Jungle perch: The tree house-like Ska Cabin (top); the interior of Rock Steady Cabin (center); co-owner Jon Baker and son Che (right). Above: Villas along the Blue Lagoon near Port Antonio.