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Condé Nast Traveller

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THE GOLD LIST 2019

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GOLDENEYE JAMAICA

Music producer Chris Blackwell, who introduced the world to Bob Marley back in 1973, also founded this oceanfront island hideaway a few years later, based around the cliff-top villa where Ian Fleming wrote all his Bond novels. In the decades since its reach has grown and grown. There's no sign at the entrance, which is part of the low-key charm. It's easy to see why many music and film stars make their way here: this is a sweet spot with a very independent flavour, a world away from the oversized all-inclusives, and more honed than Blackwell's companion hotel, Strawberry Hill, in the Blue Mountains. Couples tend to hole up in the wooden beach huts; families and friends take over the massive villas; industry bigwigs feel right at home in Fleming's former house, which has three bedrooms and a personable, clued-in staff. There are a few nods to 007 – black-and-white photos of Bond in reception plus novels and films on loan – but GoldenEye is mainly about Jamaica, a sensibility found in the blazingly coloured fabrics, breezy breakfasts on the verandah with cups of Blue Mountain coffee, and heaps of tropical fruit. The sheltered bay for morning swims is just a few paces away across immaculate sands. It says everything that Blackwell still lives here (guests have been known to unwittingly roll up to his villa and ask for a drink, which is always obligingly provided). And why would he leave? He gets to enjoy a highly original hangout that is entirely of his making. This is that rare beast: a hotel that balances heritage and hip and gets away with it. +1 876 622 9007; goldeneye.com. Doubles from about £525