

FEBRUARY 2018

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Island Getaways



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at Doha Mac
in the Bahamas

ST. KITTS
ARUBA
JAMAICA
THE BAHAMAS
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GRAND CAYMAN
ST. LUCIA
THE GRENADINES

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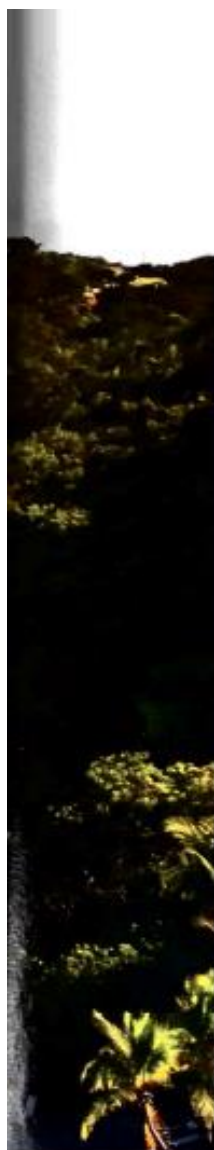


COME BACK SOON

Beloved resorts, like Rosewood Little Dix Bay, in the British Virgin Islands, may be in rebuilding mode, but there has never been a better time to visit, says *Jacqueline Gifford*.

LITTLE DIX BAY HAD ALWAYS BEEN ON MY LIST. To me, the resort, opened in 1964, by noted conservationist Laurence Rockefeller on Virgin Gorda, in the British Virgin Islands, always represented the beauty of travel in a slower, pre-digital age. Ever sensitive to the environment and appearances, Rockefeller insisted Little Dix blend into its surroundings, and so the rooms—blissfully free of TVs—were tucked among the groves of trees and hills bordering the unspoiled, half-mile crescent of beach.

In May 2015, I finally visited Little Dix with my husband on a honeymoon. The beach was end-of-the-earth quiet, free of fancy infinity pools or rum bars. It looked as if it must have 50 years ago (and that was the point). Our room, one of Rockefeller's original tree-house suites, set on stilts and close to the shore, was



Above: Rosewood Little Dix Bay on Virgin Gorda, BVI, is one of the original RockResorts, Laurance Rockefeller's collection of nature-focused luxury hotels.

a cocoon from reality. The staff, many of whom had worked there for decades, were gracious without even trying: it's just the Caribbean way.

Shortly after our trip, Little Dix closed for a renovation and was slated to open this month. I was planning to profile the hotel in this very issue. But then Hurricanes Irma and Maria wreaked havoc in the British Virgin Islands, where many residents lost their homes and businesses. Resorts like Little Dix weren't spared, either.

The tourism industry is the economic lifeblood of the Caribbean, its single biggest employer. As an editor who has been covering the region for more than a decade, I've had many friends ask me how they can help. And I say one word: *go*. Make the conscious choice to vacation there, because every dollar matters. Seventy-five percent of the region was unaffected, including favorites like Aruba and the Cayman Islands. The stories that follow, on those two destinations as well as others, will give you plenty of inspiration. What's more, many of the impacted destinations, including the BVI, are ready for visitors right now. Voluntourism is gaining ground, too. (See sidebar.)

I can only imagine how devastating the damage must have been for the Little Dix team. They spent months building and landscaping away to get the resort ready for its loyal fans, who come from all over the world to sit on that beach, to be still and present with loved ones. But here's a bit of good news: Little Dix plans to reopen for the festive season at the end of the year. I plan to be one of the first to check in.

Jacqueline Gifford is the travel director of Travel + Leisure.



AFTER THE STORMS

Many of the islands hit by Hurricanes Irma and Maria are open for business again—and are welcoming visitors. Here's an update on those that were most affected.

ST. BART'S

The French territory is on the road to recovery. Most restaurants and shops in the capital, Gustavia, are now open. Many beachfront resorts (Le Guanahani, Le Berthélemy) are projecting reopenings later this year; some smaller properties (Le Village, Salines Garden) are already up and running. saintbarth-tourisme.com.

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

Irma made a direct hit, and many resorts remain shuttered. But you can still go on a sailing vacation, since companies like Virgin Motor Yachts and Festiva Sailing Vacations are operating. Many restaurants, including Foxy's Tamarind Bar, are serving customers. bvitourism.com. Visit bvlvolunteers.com for voluntourism opportunities.

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

St. Thomas and St. John bore the brunt of both Irma and Maria, while St. Croix fared better (the Buccaneer Resort there reopened November 1). Though many hotels remain closed, travelers can stay in villas and Airbnbs or on charter yachts. Cruise ships are calling in St. Thomas, and some St. John beaches, including Trunk Bay, are ready for swimmers. visitusvi.com. For the status of individual properties, see usviupdate.com.

PUERTO RICO

Tourism will be crucial in helping the U.S. commonwealth rebuild. Seventy-six percent of hotels endorsed by the Puerto Rican Tourism Co. are open, including San Juan landmarks like the Condado Vanderbilt, in addition to the cruise terminal and 4,000 restaurants. Charter-yacht company the Moorings also resumed its sailings to Vieques and Culebra this month. puerto-ricanow.seepuertorico.com.

DOMINICA

Maria passed right over Dominica, destroying homes, hotels, and some reefs. Still, there are more than 20 places to stay, and voluntourism opportunities are plentiful. Travelers with Cool Breeze Tours help clear the Waitukubuli National Trail; those with Cobra Tours work on restoring the Indian River. dominicaupdate.com.

ANGUILLA

Some hotels, including Ce Blue and Frangipani Beach Resort, already welcomed travelers this season. More than 70 percent of restaurants are running, and the beaches are clean. Top properties, including Zemi Beach House and the Reef by Cuisinart, expect to reopen this spring. visitanguilla.com.

ST. MARTIN / ST. MAARTEN

On the Dutch side of the island, the cruise port is open, as are many of the shops in the capital of Philipsburg and the bars and restaurants in Simpson's Bay. On the French side, some guesthouses are back in business, while larger resorts hope to be operational by April. st-martin.org/vacation. stmaarten.com.

BARBUDA

This island was one of the hardest hit, with all of its 1,600 residents forced to relocate to sister island Antigua, but a rebuilding effort is under way. Barbuda Belle, selected by T+L as one of the year's best new hotels in 2016, plans to reopen in November. The government is encouraging travelers to visit Antigua to help support the recovery. visitantiguabarbuda.com.

For more information, including the latest updates on hotels, attractions, and tours, visit caribbeantravelupdate.com.