

ALL THE BEST FOR YOUR FAMILY

# Cookie

**OUR TOP  
33 KIDS' BOOKS**  
(YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF)

# 10

affordable  
ways to make  
over your  
family room

P. 98

## 3 CLASSIC DISHES MADE EASY

P. 86

## The coolest kids' rooms

P. 136

**AMBER  
VALLETTA**  
Supermodel,  
supermom  
P. 130

## HOW TO REALLY DROP THE BABY WEIGHT

P. 68

**PLUS**  
The best  
birthday  
cakes,  
bags, and  
beauty tricks

# SPRING AT LAST!

Relaxing vacations, light and delicious food & clothes you'll love



MARCH 2008 COOKIEMAG.COM  
DISPLAY UNTIL MARCH 24, 2008



A vibrant beach scene under a clear blue sky. In the distance, a sailboat with a colorful sail is on the ocean. The foreground shows children playing in the sand. One child in a pink shirt is leaning over, and another child in dark swim trunks is also leaning over, both focused on their activity in the sand. The sand is bright and textured, and the ocean waves are visible in the background.

# Idyll Time

The beauty of a trip to a beach resort lies in its simplicity. Your kids get to play in a larger-than-life sandbox, maybe get cornrows, while you're set for the week on a chaise. But even on blissfully lazy trips, you want a sense of place and culture. We've found two Caribbean hotels that deliver: Antigua's Carlisle Bay and Jake's, in Jamaica. At each place, you'll feel connected to the island, whether you're eating fruit grown just down the road or watching your kids join an impromptu local soccer game. So you truly experience your destination—without doing much more than putting on your flip-flops.

BY **MARIA SHOLLENBARGER**  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **DITTE ISAGER**



JAKE'S

This page: A game of dominoes over a cucumber juice, possibly the biggest item on your agenda during a day here.

CARLISLE BAY

Opposite: Digging for hidden treasures along the beach.







Top row, from left: Jack Sprat, a restaurant down the beach; the jerk shrimp there; one of the many mosaics at Jake's; the hotel's poolside dining area. Middle row: Little Ochie restaurant; a bedroom in the Abalone cottage; a red-dirt field typical of southern Jamaica's landscape; inside Abalone. Bottom row: The terrace of the Calabash Bay villa; children in an on-site mosaic class; an open-air bathtub in Calabash Bay; a member of the Treasure Beach Ital Grower's Association—a local organic-farm cooperative started by Jake's—at work.

## JAKE'S, JAMAICA

If you like the prospect of experiencing an authentic, quirky side of Jamaica, Jake's is your place. Located at Treasure Beach on the island's less-visited southern coast, the hotel has a community-driven ethos and a laid-back atmosphere. Owner Jason Henzell, a second-generation Jamaican, heads up a nonprofit called Breds—short for “brethren,” Jamaican parlance for “friends.” One dollar from the cost of every night you stay, every meal you eat, and every tour you book through Jake's goes to neighborhood schools and projects.

To a guest, the hotel's ease with its surroundings is palpable, and the simple act of hanging out will quickly make

you feel like part of the Treasure Beach community. Sure, your family can hang solo in one of the casual Moroccan-style cottages, which are a few steps from both the beach and the saltwater pool. But you can also stroll down the road to speculate on the day's catch with the fishermen. Or dive into a plate of searing jerk shrimp at the lively neighborhood haunt Jack Sprat. Your family will feel instant camaraderie with the hotel's easygoing staff, who on any given day might help you master the fine art of preparing pepper-pot soup during a cooking class, challenge the kids to Ping-Pong in the game room, or impart a few useful words of local patois.





**JAKE'S**

The entrance to the hotel, which epitomizes its lush, homespun charm.





## JAKE'S

The waters near the hotel, where you can hop on a tour boat (and where you may spot some dolphins).

### THE TOP FIVE REASONS TO VISIT JAKE'S

**1** You'll be greeted by name by the second day of your stay.

**2** Pineapple pancakes—you'll want to order them every morning.

**3** Sunsets so close and so spectacular, you'll feel as if they're being staged exclusively for you.

**4** You can belly up to a local bar for a Red Stripe—in the middle of the sea—at the Pelican Bar, built on a reef about a mile offshore, near the town of Black River.

**5** Your kids will get the chance to learn about pride of place, graciousness, and hospitality—all by example, on vacation.

For more details on Jake's (when to go, how to get there), see page 129.





CARLISLE BAY  
Fresh watermelon juice,  
part of the resort's  
complimentary breakfast.







Top row, from left: Carlisle Bay's pool at night; kids on a waffle-cone break; the bay at dusk; a palm-lined path through the property. Bottom row: One of the beachfront suites; a young guest about to tuck into some local specialties; the hotel's dock, a takeoff spot for water sports during the day and a place for private dinners at night; the children's buffet at Indigo restaurant.

## CARLISLE BAY, ANTIGUA

Fanned out along a pristine, powdery beach near the small farming village of Old Road, Carlisle Bay wasn't intended to be a family resort when it opened in 2003. From its modern teak furniture to its in-room Gaggia espresso machines, there's an abundance of the kind of "effortless chic" that actually requires painstaking forethought. But the hotel clearly made its mark on all the couples who originally came here on their honeymoons—because here they are again, back with their broods, splashing in the pool and sharing plates of mahimahi fingers. They're back because they've figured it out: Carlisle Bay doesn't require you to alter your definition of a luxury vacation just because it's appended

with the words "with the kids." To wit: 730-square-foot beach suites, a slick screening room, a spa, and incredible food (often a challenge to find on a small island).

Carlisle Bay matches its performance as a hotel with some impressive initiatives: It works with neighboring farmers to grow much of the produce used in its restaurants, runs a village composting program, uses gray water in its gardens, and is donating both money and man-hours to the construction of a community recreation center. And because the resort is located right next to the village, not miles outside it, getting to know the locals and the local flavor is a natural part of your stay.





#### THE TOP FIVE REASONS TO VISIT CARLISLE BAY

**1** The kids' club (shown) is packed with activities, operates all day, and is open to children 6 months and older—and free to those 3 years and older.

**2** The luxurious details, like chilled poolside towels and in-room espresso machines (handy for warming up milk or for a midafternoon pick-me-up).

**3** Local bands play in the evenings in the open-air lounge—and it's casual enough that your kids can dance around wildly.

**4** The rainforest is just steps away—you'll wake up to singing finches and go to sleep to chirping tree frogs.

**5** The kindred spirits you—and your kids—will meet at the pool and by the beach. You'll go home with lists of vacation-pal addresses.

For more details on Carlisle Bay (when to go, how to get there), see page 129.





**JAKE'S**  
A jumping-off point  
at the saltwater pool.

 **COOKIEMAG.COM**

For our complete directory  
of more than 175 favorite  
family-friendly hotels, visit  
[cookiemag.com/go/cookiehotels](http://cookiemag.com/go/cookiehotels).



islandoutpost.com

## JAKE'S



## GETTING THERE

Nonstop flights to Montego Bay depart frequently from several U.S. cities. There's little need to rent a car, as you'll probably stick close to Jake's; the hotel offers airport transfers for \$115 each way (the ride takes about 2½ hours).

## WHEN TO VISIT

Peak season is from December to April, when days are reliably balmy, with temperatures around 80° F. September and October are prime hurricane season.

## THE HOTEL

**THE ROOMS** Of the 45 cottages, the deluxe oceanfront doubles are the most stylishly kitted out, with patios and brightly painted wooden furniture. Large families or families traveling together should angle for Mussels, a three-bedroom, two-bath house (\$495 a night). Its interior is serviceable rather than special, but it has a covered terrace the size of a living room facing the sea, an outdoor shower, and an additional private sunbathing deck at the water's edge. You can request a crib.

**THE AMENITIES** A saltwater pool (with a generous shallow end) stretches from the breakfast terrace to the thatch-roofed bar. In high season, Jason Henzell's wife, Laura, teaches yoga in a seaside pavilion; there's also the new Driftwood Spa, with two treatment rooms and a "sweat hut" for Jamaican-style detox.

**THE RATES** From \$115 a night for a one-bedroom garden cottage.

## THE FOOD

**AT THE HOTEL** From the fruit salsa to the callaloo for the pepper-pot soup, nearly every ingredient comes from organic farms located within five miles of the hotel (okay, the olive oil comes from Italy). Meals are served in a sweet and simple dining room

with picnic tables and a painted concrete floor or on the breakfast terrace. For day trips, request a picnic lunch (from sandwiches to lobster) a day ahead.

**JACK SPRAT** Located down the beach from Jake's, this is an established local hangout as well as an island-wide attraction. The jerk-spiced seafood is eye-watering; for less adventurous palates, there's a selection of delicious thin-crust pizzas. *Treasure Beach*, (876) 965-3583.

**LITTLE OCHIE** Hire a Jake's staffer to drive you the 45 minutes to this island institution. You'll hand-pick your fish, crab, or lobster, specifying one of its many preparations. Then sit under the thatched roof and order up sides such as *festival* (fried flour-and-cornmeal dumplings, like savory doughnuts) and *bammy* (a starchy pancake made from cassava). *Alligator Pond, Manchester*, (876) 965-4450.

## THE ACTIVITIES

**BLACK RIVER BOAT RIDES** Jake's organizes a two-hour private canoe ride along the southern coast of the island (keep cameras at the ready for dolphin sightings). It continues up the Black River, where you'll spot crocodiles as you cruise among huge islands of purple water lilies. If you have younger, antsy children, opt for the 75-minute pontoon-boat tour offered by J. Charles Swaby's Black River Safari. *Jake's tour*, \$120 for two people (children under 8 free); *J. Charles Swaby tour*, \$16 per adult and \$8 per child 3 to 12 (children under 3 free), (876) 965-2513.

**WATERCOLOR LESSONS** From January to April, Jake's artists-in-residence, Ginny O'Neil and Tom Menihan, provide private tutelage with kindness, patience, and humor—for up to four students at a time. Their cottage or yours. *Book through Jake's; twoboats gallery.com.*

**YS FALLS** A tractor-drawn jitney (which is, of course, a draw in itself for the kids) trundles along a road to a seven-tiered spring-fed waterfall, punctuated by shallow swimming holes. For older kids, there's tubing (approximate level of difficulty: bunny slope) in the stretch of river below the falls. *Book through Jake's; \$80 for transport to the falls, \$14 per person for admission and the tractor ride.*

carlisle-bay.com

## CARLISLE BAY

## GETTING THERE

Depending on the season, nonstop flights to Antigua's St. John's Airport are available on certain days from Newark, Atlanta, Charlotte, or Miami. Arrange for a pickup through Carlisle Bay; from the airport, it's a 45-minute drive to the hotel.

## WHEN TO VISIT

High season is from December to March, but consider going in late spring or early summer, when it's less crowded. The temperatures rarely climb above the mid-80s even in June, and nice breezes blow most of the year.

## THE HOTEL

**THE ROOMS** Ground-level beach suites are the ones to book, with 730 square feet divided into a master bedroom; a bath and dressing area; and another, smaller bedroom with one or two twin beds and, on request, a crib. Each opens onto a private terrace directly in front of the beach, with a chaise and a table for alfresco dining.

**THE AMENITIES** The pool, which has a two-foot-deep ledge around its perimeter, is the unofficial social hub for the under-10 set (and their parents); it's just the place to perch and chat while the children play Marco Polo. Tennis courts, a top-notch spa, an art tome-lined library, a screening room, and an open-air yoga-and-Pilates pavilion round out the picture.

**THE RATES** From \$775 a night for a beach suite (includes daily breakfast, afternoon tea, and a children's supper). Special weekly all-inclusive rates are available.

## THE FOOD

**AT THE HOTEL** Instead of Caesar salad and club sandwiches, you'll find enough variety to keep you looking forward to meal after meal: Indigo specializes in Caribbean-inspired dishes, and East offers Asian fare. There's a nightly buffet for kids at Indigo from 5 to 6:30 P.M., and a special dinner hour for parents and kids at East. Most of the poultry, fish, and produce at both restaurants is Antiguan; ice cream is made right on the premises.

**CATHERINE'S CAFÉ** The French expat owner serves up long lunches at this terrace restaurant, from which you can watch the boats stream across English Harbour.

The menu (eggplant *tatin*, fish carpaccio, oysters with lime) changes daily; after sampling from the lengthy wine list, hop on the water taxi to Nelson's Dockyard. *Antigua Slipway, English Harbour*, (268) 460-5050.

**THE CULTURE SHOP** Stop in at this stand along Fig Tree Drive—a rainforest road lined with banana trees (*fig* is Antiguan for "banana")—for homemade mango or sorrel preserves. Also, pick up a bottle of Susie's Hot Sauce to add fire to your eggs when you get back home. *Wallings Dam, Fig Tree Drive*, (268) 460-3949.

## THE ACTIVITIES

**THE KIDS' CLUB** Catering to children 6 months to 12 years old, this is one of the best-thought-out kids' clubs anywhere: There's a toddler pool (with a fountain in the middle and lots of shade), a wooden jungle gym, a high ratio of caregivers to children—and no TV.

**NELSON'S DOCKYARD** Out your kids' (and maybe your husband's) inner Captain Cook here. The 18th-century dockyard is somewhere between a ghost town and a working port of call for yachts, boasting sailors' graffiti from as early as the 1740s and cool maritime relics. There's easy—and fun—water-taxi access from English Harbour. *Apple Water Taxi*, \$5 a person, (268) 462-0480.

**GUIDED RAINFOREST WALK** The hotel's location near the place where the island's rainforest begins gives it unmatched access. Knowledgeable hotel staffers will lead you on a free guided stroll—which can be tailored in length and presentation for the little ones—through butterfly- and iguana-filled lemongrass meadows and palmetto groves. At the path's modest peak, they break out water and cold towels as you admire the view of the bay and the sea.

