

ALL EXCLUSIVE

VIP ESCORT THROUGH CUSTOMS. \$15,000-PER-NIGHT MANSIONS. TOP-SHELF RUMS ON THE DRINK PLAN. IS **JUMBY BAY** IN ANTIGUA THE WORLD'S MOST ELITE ALL-INCLUSIVE?

STORY BY DAVID LAHUTA



 **WHEN TO GO**

DEC
TO APRIL

Winter brings mild temps and little to no rain • Spring break here means no coeds and fewer cruise crowds



The seven-bedroom Bananaquit villa is mere steps from Pasture Beach, but it also has a 50-by-20-foot private saltwater pool just in case you don't want to get sandy.

RESORT TIP

“Order what’s not on the menu: my Jumby Passion, with Antiguan rum and a secret splash.”

SAYS PATEL, BARTENDER AT JUMBY BAY’S BEACH BAR

It happens all de time.” Like her concierge colleagues, Tatiana is sitting behind one of two side-by-side mahogany desks in an open-air reception area. Tropical artwork hangs from the walls behind her, and in my hand is the fruit fusion of the day: a glass of fresh-pressed mango, papaya and passion-fruit juice that I’ve brought from my beachfront breakfast table a few yards away.

My family and I have just spent three days on Jumby Bay — a private 300-acre island off the northern coast of Antigua — and the thought of leaving tomorrow is not sitting well with us. Even still, I’m not sure why her words sound so surprising. “Really?” I reply with a chuckle. Apparently I’m not the first person to ask for one of the few things that isn’t included at this exclusive all-inclusive resort: another night’s stay. “We can help you, Mr. LaHuta,” she adds. “Not a problem ah-tall.”

Accessible by boat only, Jumby Bay doesn’t have cars, retail stores or even above-ground power lines — and that’s just how the island’s cooperative of owners likes it. In addition to its 56 multimillion-dollar mansions, the co-op also owns the island’s only hotel, the 40-room, 17-villa Rosewood resort where I’m staying with my wife, Joy, and my two sons, Jackson and Tyler. And thanks to a recent \$28 million investment that added two-, five- and

six-bedroom estate homes over the past year — properties with personal chefs, butlers and housekeeping staffs that can be rented for upward of \$15,000 a night — the number of estates available for rent is now 18.

“You get what you pay for,” says Scott D. Berman, a principal at PwC and leader of the firm’s U.S. hospitality and leisure practice. “People equate inclusive properties to being affordable, but at the high end, it’s a different experience.”

It’s one that begins even before stepping foot on Jumby Bay — specifically at V.C. Bird International Airport, Antigua’s brand-new \$97 million terminal where we and a handful of other resort guests are fast-tracked through customs while the remainder of our flight waits in a long, serpentine line. “First time to Jumby?” asks Diana, a cheerful granny who assists me with my paperwork. “Excellent choice,” she says. Minutes later, our bags are loaded into a tinted Chevy Suburban for a seven-minute drive to Jumby Bay’s private ferry. Once on board, it’s a 10-minute crossing to the dock, where we’re greeted with cold lemongrass-scented face towels and craft-rum cocktails.

“Get whichever wine you want at dinner or take lessons on a water sport you’ve never tried, because why not?” says 27-year-old Logan McIntosh, who is honeymooning with her 28-year-old investment banker husband, Tom. “You never regret a decision because you second-guess if it was worth it.”

I’ve run into the affable couple yet again, this time on Jumby Bay’s white-sand beach, where tangerine sea stars wash ashore and a server named Franka doles out homemade strawberry



ice-cream sandwiches to guests lounging under thatch-roof palapas. My kids devour the treats, I toss a starfish back into the sea and Logan gushes about last night’s dinner — one that included two massive lobster tails freshly caught that day. “It wasn’t even on the menu.”

This all-inclusive is just so, well, inclusive. For example,



The three-bedroom Sea Pigeon villa (left) is home base. From there, Jumby Bay’s comforts are at your fingertips: weekly rum tastings at the Estate House Bar, sunset kayaking off Jumby Bay Beach and a solo sandbar that begs for a chair.



GET HERE

When Antigua’s V.C. Bird International Airport opened in July, it ushered in a new era of airlift; the terminal now has the capacity to process 3 million passengers annually, up from 860,000. Now one of the largest hubs in the Caribbean, the airport is busier than ever, with nonstop flights from New York City (American; JetBlue begins Nov. 5), Newark (United), Charlotte (US Airways), Miami (American), Montreal (Air Canada), Toronto (WestJet; Air Canada) and London (British Airways, Virgin Atlantic).



RESORT TIP

“The only way to see all the million-dollar manses is by hopping on the resort’s powerboat.”

SAYS LOGAN MCINTOSH, JUMBY BAY GUEST

bartender Darren Simpson pours me yet another snifter of English Harbour, an Antiguan sipping rum that’s aged for 10 years in French oak casks and retails for \$193. It’s sitting next to bottles of Hendrick’s gin and Grey Goose vodka at the open-air Verandah Bar. And like the bottle of Rémy Martin cognac that was delivered to my suite when I requested a single glass, they too are included.

“We all aim to please,” says Jumby Bay’s executive chef Sylvain Hervochon, who sources nearly 50 percent of the fruits, vegetables and proteins served in the resort’s three restaurants from local farmers and fishermen. And while he’s also quick to note that cooking in the Caribbean can be tricky due to a lack of resources, the French-trained chef welcomes the challenge.

“Having fewer ingredients at your disposal allows you to be more creative,” he says, a fact that Joy and I experience firsthand during a private moonlit dinner sans kids (the hotel arranges for a sweet-as-pie nanny to watch the boys in our one-bedroom suite).

Ringed by a circle of groomed sand and illuminated by flickering tiki torches, our shell-topped table is staffed by a single waiter who brings us five preselected courses. There’s spicy tuna tartar, savory coconut shrimp,

seared scallops over beds of local greens and spiny lobster tails served Caribbean style, with grilled vegetables and a generous portion of peas and rice. “Just like my mama makes,” says our waiter. Later, a trio of bite-size sweets arrives with glasses of 20-year-old tawny port. OK, so this wasn’t inclusive, but the extra \$245 for our toes-in-the-sand meal was well worth it.

“I hear you’re staying with us another night,” says Melinda, a peppy guest-services specialist who greets us at breakfast the next morning. “It’s your last day, so do everything you can — or do nothing at all,” she says, matter-of-factly.

We opt for the former: I try water skiing for the first time, Joy gets massaged with warm nautilus shells at the spa, and we take meandering rides on fat-tire bikes outfitted with seats for the kids. We also hop aboard *Yennecot*, a 45-foot catamaran (included) that takes us snorkeling on Paradise Reef (included) and to uninhabited Prickly Pear Cay where we sip Chablis and nibble gourmet snacks in solitude (you get the idea).

Back at the resort, Jackson begs for one more dip in our room’s private plunge pool — a late-afternoon swim followed by warm baths in the outdoor soaking tub. It’s almost time for our final dinner, this one inside a 1830s colonial cottage called the Estate House, where the menu changes nightly, but the bill never does — because, of course, there is no bill.

“Should we stay another night?” asks Joy.

“Of course we should,” I say. “Next time we come back.” From \$1,075 a night, rosewoodhotels.com **MORE ALL-INCS:** islands.com/allincs

WHEN TO GO

Jumby Bay’s busiest (read: most expensive) stretch is from Dec. 20 through Easter, when homeowners and hotel guests flock to the island for its low-80s days that are cooled by the trade winds. Save some cash by traveling in June, July and August, when temperatures are only slightly hotter and the rates are at their lowest. **Tip:** Avoid traveling the last week of April when hotel rooms and airfare skyrocket during Antigua Sailing Week.



Kids gather at the dock to take part in Jumby Bay’s Rose Buds program, where they can “adopt” a turtle and track its progress. The La Casa villa (below) doesn’t come cheap, at \$11,000 a night in high season.

