

THE 10 Point Caribbean Escapes Plan



FOR GOLFERS

Jamaica

For years, golf was scarce in the Caribbean, where strict development rules and lack of fresh water posed major challenges. But thanks in part to a new breed of salt-tolerant turf grass, known as paspalum, golf courses have been springing up on many islands in recent years. Anguilla got its first golf course in November. Barbados, which has a total of seven courses, played host to the World Golf Championships for the first time last month. And the Dominican Republic, with a new Jack Nicklaus-designed course, Punta Espada, and half a dozen other courses planned, is quickly gaining notice among golfers as a hotspot to tee-off.

But for many avid golfers, the island of choice remains Jamaica. While it may be better known for reggae, Jamaica also has 12 golf courses, with a range in difficulty to suit every level of player. Most courses are in and around resort centers, making it easy to play a round at one course in the morning and hit a different set of links in the afternoon. Montego Bay, a resort city on the north coast of the island, has three notable courses — Half Moon Golf Club, a Robert Trent Jones Sr.-designed course; White Witch, owned by Ritz-Carlton; and Cinnamon Hill, at the Rose Hall Resort & Country Club — all within a 10-minute drive of one another.

Green fees in Jamaica range from \$23 for the nine-hole Manchester Golf Club in Mandeville, the oldest golf course in the Caribbean, to \$200 at the White Witch. Caddies are mandatory at most courses and will cost \$14 to \$45 more.

WHERE TO STAY Later this year, the Half Moon Resort, in the Rose Hall area of Montego Bay, is scheduled to open a \$4 million spa. Rooms start at \$355 a night; (866-648-6951, www.halfmoon.com). At the Ritz-Carlton Golf & Spa Resort, Montego Bay, ocean-view rooms begin at \$459 a night through March; (800-241-3333, www.ritzcarlton.com). Rose Hall Resort & Country Club has rooms from \$149 a night; (866-831-1313, www.rosehallresort.com).