

## 7 Top Caribbean Eco-Resorts



Looking for a beautiful place to stay that won't cost the Earth? We've picked a selection of top options in the Caribbean where green credentials are matched by comfort and style... By Ben West

### 1 JUNGLE BAY, DOMINICA

*Barefoot luxury at an original geotourism resort beneath the jungle of the 'Nature Isle'*

**Best for...** Active, adventurous types, nature lovers and hikers

**Why stay?** Nestling in the island's southeast corner, this locally owned boutique hotel consists of 35 rustic-luxury tropical hardwood cottages with semi-outdoor showers, overlooking lush tropical forest as well as the ocean. Daily organised nature-based activities, excursions, hikes and yoga add to the sense of natural wellbeing, and there's an oceanfront spa to keep you relaxed and invigorated. Community participation and contribution to biodiversity conservation are important aspects. You can visit nearby villages to learn about their traditions, join local guides on hikes into the jungle, or even join a fitness boot camp.

**Green factor** The resort has been built on responsible, eco-friendly principles from the bottom up. The cottages are built on wooden stilts, ensuring natural ventilation removes the need for air conditioning. Furniture is handmade on-site using reclaimed wood. The freshest local ingredients are cooked up in the restaurant, reducing packaging, waste and food miles, and organic food production eliminates the use of harmful insecticides and fertilisers. Rubbish is recycled, while food waste is used as fodder or compost. Energy usage is monitored, resulting in around a 35% carbon reduction. Drinking water comes from a natural spring and guests are provided with reusable drinking bottles.

**Where?** Point Mulatre, Delices, Dominica

**Booking details** Doubles start at US\$210 plus tax. [www.junglebaydominica.com](http://www.junglebaydominica.com)

### 2 BALENBOUCHE ESTATE, ST LUCIA

*Beautiful former plantation house set amid lush heritage gardens alongside secluded beaches*

**Best for...** Independent travellers, eco-romantics, nature lovers, artists, writers, couples, active families

**Why stay?** A quartet of lovely cottages, each packed with individual charm and character, feature one or two bedrooms and sleep from two to six people, with attractive furniture and outside showers for hot days. The cottages nestle in an 75-acre estate that features historic ruins, a profusion of tropical plants and beautiful old trees, vegetable gardens and orchards, pastures, lily ponds and rivers. Quiet beaches are within walking distance, and there's easy access to the airport, just a little to the east. Balenbouche is also a popular venue for yoga, meditation and nutritional guidance.

**Green factor** The cottages at Balenbouche benefit from solar-powered showers and energy-saving technology. With an emphasis on farming and community involvement, the estate has special arrangements with local people to plant gardens, graze cattle, produce charcoal, and harvest crops at little or no cost. Produce is mostly bought locally, and the estate hosts workshops and retreats, also focusing on historic preservation and protection of indigenous flora and fauna.

**Where?** Choiseul, southwest St Lucia

**Booking details** Cottages from US\$690 per week plus tax. [www.balenbouche.com](http://www.balenbouche.com)

### 3 HIX ISLAND HOUSE, PUERTO RICO

*'Zen-like architectural elegance' combining the latest style and eco-initiatives with luxury and romance*

**Best for...** Relaxing, replenishing and refreshing the lives of eco-minded, outdoor and romantic couples

**Why stay?** Though distinctly modern in design, the buildings that make up Hix Island House blend in with the landscape, blurring the boundaries between indoors and the tropical paradise outside. Largely open, they encourage guests to absorb their surroundings and immerse themselves in the island. Set on the Spanish Virgin Island of Vieques, just off the southeast corner of Puerto Rico, Hix Island House is only a 22-minute flight from San Juan. Designed mainly for couples (no under-16s are allowed), this is the ideal place to lie by the pool or in a hammock, and perhaps try some yoga or a hill walk.

**Green factor** The entire design aims to conserve the environment, using wind and solar power to reduce carbon emissions and other initiatives to reduce energy and water consumption. Hix Island House was the first to receive Puerto Rico Tourism's Sustainable Tourism Facility seal. Casa Solaris, its most recent building, is completely off-grid, having solar panels for electricity and hot water, and a cistern to collect rainwater. The building uses nothing but LED lights, and all grey water runs out to surrounding gardens and fruit trees. The rest of the complex is solar powered, too. The buildings were designed to provide shade and to catch the cooling trade winds.

**Where?** Vieques Island, Puerto Rico

**Booking details** Doubles from US\$135 plus tax; all rooms have kitchens, and everything one needs to make breakfast is provided daily. <http://hixislandhouse.com>

### 4 SPICE ISLAND BEACH RESORT, GRENADA

*Boutique style, luxury and the perfect beach – with a clean conscience*

**Best for...** Eco-romantics and travellers looking for a luxurious beach retreat

**Why stay?** Just steps from the pristine sands of Grand Anse Beach and the balmy waters of the Caribbean, this spacious eight-acre property oozes elegant luxury – yet behind the scenes works hard to boost its green credentials. Each of its suites, whether beachfront or poolside, is stylishly designed and boasts all the mod cons you'd expect from a top-notch resort. There's also a host of activities available to guests, including golf, tennis and cycling, and water sports such as snorkelling, sailing on Hobie Cats and ocean kayaks, plus a state-of-the-art fitness centre. The indulgent spa incorporates the finest botanical elements from the 'Spice Island': nutmeg, of course, but also orange and coconut. And being just 10 minutes from the airport, it's a breeze to access.

**Green factor** The resort ticks a lot of eco boxes with energy-efficient practices: recycling, replanting trees and educating employees about conservation, for starters. Solar rooftop heaters provide all hot water; a desalination plant purifies sea water for drinking during the dry season; swimming pools are purified by the chemical-free 'Auto Pilot' system, which uses salt instead of chlorine; and a vegetable and herb garden supplies the kitchen with fresh ingredients. Energy-efficient lightbulbs are used, while light timers and air conditioners are automatically turned off when rooms aren't occupied. The resort has been careful to nurture the surroundings, too, planting native trees and organising clean-ups of reefs and the surrounding Morne Rouge area.

**Where?** St George, Grenada

**Booking details** Doubles from US\$1041 plus tax. [www.spiceislandbeachresort.com](http://www.spiceislandbeachresort.com)

## **5 BELLE MONT FARM, KITTITIAN HILL, ST KITTS**

*A new breed of community-centred organic farming and accommodation*

**Best for...** Foodies looking to experience ingredients from field to plate.

**Why stay?** The newly opened guesthouses, farmhouses and villas of Belle Mont are scattered across a hillside on the 400-acre organic farm that comprises Kittitian Hill. A novel concept in responsible luxury, the resort offers boutique styling and fabulous sea and forest views with a sense of involvement in the local community. There's no skimping on comfort and amenities – from wrap-around verandahs and rainwater showers to iPads and projector screens for movies. And where else can you tee off on an edible golf course?

**Green factor** The owners produce organic ingredients and share techniques for environmentally responsible food production with farmers, reducing imports and unnecessary chemicals and pesticides. You can meet local food producers, including a specialist coffee roaster and artisan cheese makers. There's a push to bring creativity and community together in a thriving village of artists and artisans, and the resort operates on fair-trade principles.

**Where?** Northern St Kitts

**Booking details** A Signature Experience stay costs from US\$2250 per night for two people, including all food, drink and a range of activities. [www.kittitianhill.com](http://www.kittitianhill.com)

## **6 FOND DOUX PLANTATION AND RESORT, ST LUCIA**

*Cluster of romantic French colonial cottages on a working plantation with an organic spa*

**Best for...** Active families, nature and wildlife lovers, romantics

**Why stay?** A historic working plantation – now 250 years old – Fond Doux has 15 secluded cottages on 130 acres studded with coconut groves and fruit trees. There's an organic spa, a pool and two organic restaurants. It's perfect for those wanting privacy and an authentic St Lucia experience. Make your own chocolate – from harvesting and drying the beans to rolling the cocoa and enjoying the delicious finished product!

Set on the island's west coast within a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Fond Deux is ten minutes' drive away from the scenic town of Soufrière, five from the Sulphur Springs ('the world's only drive-in volcano!') and 20 from some of the Caribbean's best diving sites.

**Green factor** This Green Globe Certified property, the only certified organic plantation on St Lucia, works to reuse, recycle and minimise waste, maximise energy efficiency and improve waste-water management. It has invested in ecotechnologies and environmentally safe products, and reduces its carbon footprint by sourcing local suppliers and products, and using solar panels to heat water for guest rooms and laundry. The resort helps to preserve St Lucia's architectural heritage by purchasing and restoring abandoned colonial buildings.

**Where?** Soufrière, St Lucia

**Booking details** From US\$250 plus tax per night for a one-bedroom cottage sleeping two people.

[www.fonddouxestate.com](http://www.fonddouxestate.com)

## **7 CASA GRANDE MOUNTAIN RETREAT, PUERTO RICO**

*Rustic wooden cabins scattered across a hillside in a spectacularly wild setting*

**Best for...** Independent travellers, nature lovers, couples, active families, yoga enthusiasts

**Why stay?** The big draw is the location: a stunning, tranquil mountain setting, perfect for escaping the pressures of modern life. Set in the 107 verdant acres of a tropical valley, this former coffee plantation now has 20 rooms in

five cabins scattered up the hillside, each with private bath and hammock. There's a fresh-water swimming pool, and a range of relaxing, health-promoting activities are on offer, including yoga and massage therapy. There are also terrific hikes – with guided options – and rewarding birdwatching.

**Green factor** Here, the absence of power-guzzling air-conditioning and TV is a virtue: environmental awareness is in the DNA of Casa Grande, which uses energy-efficient lightbulbs, recycles paper, plastic and glass, grows and serves local fruit and vegetables, buys from farmers and artisans in the region, and uses biodegradable cleaners – no wonder it's a four-times winner of the Tourism Association's Green Inn of the Year Award.

**Where?** Central mountains of Utuado, Puerto Rico

**Booking details** Doubles from US\$126 plus tax. [www.hotelcasagrande.com](http://www.hotelcasagrande.com)

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