

TRAVEL

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Hot & cool

Upscale hotels, family resorts and culinary creativity make the Caribbean a great place to get away from it all



The Marley Resort and Spa was opened in July on Nassau Island, the Bahamas, by members of reggae legend Bob Marley's family. It has 16 luxury villas and an extensive spa.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MARLEY RESORT

AUSTIN CONSIDINE SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Natural disasters and financial turmoil have hit the Caribbean tourism industry hard this year, but with new hotels opening, high-end resorts raising the bar on amenities, family-oriented getaways expanding their offerings and talented chefs starting restaurants that are transforming the region's culinary scene, there are plenty of reasons for vacationers to seek some

of the coast. Dive packages start at \$75, with equipment rental.

5. The Bob Marley legend may have been born in Jamaica, but it lives on in the Bahamas at the Marley Resort and Spa (242-702-2800; www.marleyresort.com), which was opened on Nassau Island in July by members of the Marley family. It has 16 luxury villas, an organic produce restaurant and an extensive spa. Rooms start at \$450.

new complex start at \$350.

8. St. Lucia continues to attract developers looking to expand on the high end of the market. The latest arrival, Cap Maison (94-208-812-4734; www.capmaison.com), offering 50 luxury rooms and 22 private residences atop a seaside cliff in Cap Estate, overlooking a secluded beach. Rooms start at around \$405 a night.

9. Visitors to Aruba also have a

Lane (1-866-444-4080; www.sandylane.com), a resort known for its celebrity clientele and for rates that start at \$1,000 a night, has upgraded (if that's possible) in the off-season, with the renovation of the Bajan Blue restaurant — with a different theme every evening — and of its spa.

11. But what if you aren't Mick Jagger? Or even K-Fed? Try the Settlers' Beach Hotel (246-422-2020; www.settlersbeach.com).

hopes to generate 17,000 watts of its own power daily. Condos and rentals are scheduled to open in March, starting at \$2,800 a week.

14. Bay Streeters who still have a job in 2009 might want to celebrate in Virgin Gorda, at the new Aquamare Villas (787-61-2638; www.villasmare.com), a tiny, three-villa cluster on Mahoe Bay. Each beachfront villa is 8,000 square feet, with three master bedrooms. As one might expect, each residence