



Left: Calivigny Island, Grenada

7 PRIVATE ISLAND RESORTS

Small But Perfectly Formed

When it comes to luxury and exclusivity, nothing can beat a Caribbean private island resort. From the Bahamas to Belize, there's no better destination for splendid isolation. Here are our top picks

LEO BEAR

Bon voyage

Calivigny Island, just south of Grenada, oozes European style. Belonging to a glamorous French couple, you'd expect nothing less. Choose from a colonial-style suite in the main house, a chic two-bedroom cottage, or if you want to really push the boat out, a palatial mansion filled with custom-made Oscar de la Renta furniture. Getting around the 80-acre island is by quad bike, but fear not, wherever you venture – even the furthest-flung beach – you can still order a cocktail. Make a good impression on the owners, and they might even lend you their 173-foot Perini Navi yacht for your evening sundowner.

Calivigny Island, Grenada



IN BRIEF 7 PRIVATE ISLAND RESORTS

Celebrity favourite

Five large beach houses, each with its own wrap-around mahogany deck and private sugar-sand beach, make up this paradise resort located in the Exuma chain. It belongs to world-famous magician David Copperfield, accommodating no more than one group of 24 guests at any one time. Copperfield has spared no expense in creating his vision of holiday perfection. This includes an outdoor movie theatre called 'Dave's Drive-In', a games room with a billiards table that once belonged to Houdini and 4km of jogging trails. Musha Cay also boasts a two-mile sandbar – surely a contender for the world's most romantic stroll. Well, Oprah thinks so anyway.

Musha Cay, Bahamas

Fun in the sun

This is the ideal retreat for active types. The resort owns two 44-foot sailing yachts with spacious cabins so you can overnight on them should you wish, and as well as sailing, there's windsurfing, kayaks, pedaloes and some great scuba diving in the area. This is one of the bigger private islands in the Caribbean with 29 guestrooms, but don't be put off, you still get to feel like a castaway – there's just plenty to keep you busy while you wait for rescue. The floating Coconut bar, for example, is a great place to mingle with other guests although if you prefer privacy, thatched huts on the beach provide the perfect table for two.

Young Island, St Vincent & the Grenadines

Highview Living Room at Musha Cay, Courtesy of Musha Cay and the Islands of Copperfield Bay



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“...This is the Caribbean of yesteryear...
No gimmicks. Just an island all to yourselves...”

Fit for a king

With the emphasis on impeccable service, there are few places that can compete with the Royal Belize. For each villa, a staff of seven is provided including a private chef and a concierge, both of which are on hand 24/7. Every member of staff is professionally trained to the highest level and knows how to remain unobtrusive while responding to even the most demanding of requests. The island itself is tiny (arrival is by helicopter) and postcard-pretty in a charming old-world way. This is the Caribbean of yesteryear with traditional thatched cottages, wicker garden furniture and trees swaying under the weight of coconuts. No gimmicks. Just an island all to yourselves.

Royal Belize, Belize

Virgin territory

Following last year’s fire, Necker Island is back on track and looking better than ever with a brand-new snazzy beach house. Its owner Richard Branson has also welcomed some new furry friends to the island – a family of ring-tailed lemurs – certain to keep the little ones happy. Bookings are flexible. You can reserve a room or hire the whole island, but whatever you choose, Branson and his energetic team will organise all manner of fun and games for you and your guests to enjoy. For example, a casino night, a beach BBQ or a fancy dress party. Eat your heart out Jack Sparrow.

Necker Island, BVI

Off the grid

Offering mile upon mile of sugar-soft sand and verdant forested hills plus an unplugged policy that forces you to switch off your BlackBerry when you step ashore, this island is one of the most luxurious in the world. Each of its 22 cottages is breathtakingly beautiful, built

*Top: Bali Hi at Necker Island,
Courtesy of Virgin Limited Edition
Bottom: Royal Belize, Belize*

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from native stone and wood, scattered sparsely across the island to ensure maximum privacy. Its hillside spa has four open-air treatment rooms with dazzling 180-degree views and scores of treatments to revitalise even the most stressed-out of city types. Naturally, this is a favourite with honeymooners but it is possible to hire out in its entirety too.

Petit St Vincent, St Vincent & the Grenadines

Ultimate escape

Compared to some of the more popular islands in the Caribbean, Belize remains virtually undiscovered. As a result, the lavish private island of Cayo Espanto just off the coast of Belize, offers total seclusion. The generous villas, many of which are two-storey, are designed in keeping with the natural environment with the use

of local Zirocotte and Jobillo wood for the verandahs and cabbage bark to decorate the ceilings. As well as generous private pools, each villa comes with a pantry stacked high with its occupants' favourite snacks and treats. But best of all, with a limit of 18 on the island, there's no danger of having to share your view (or your nibbles) with anyone else.

Cayo Espanto, Belize

Globe-trotting travel writer Leo Bear has a penchant for paradisiacal private islands. She also writes for Condé Nast Traveller, Sunday Times Travel, House and Garden and Elle UK.

Top: Calivigny Island, Grenada

Right: Kids at Casa Ventenas, Cayo Espanto, Belize

