

## POSTCARD OF THE DAY



A secluded 300-acre island off the north coast of Antigua, where majestic palms shift in a lazy breeze and creamy sand tips into calm Caribbean waters



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**First impression:** An upscale island paradise with Taittinger Champagne and watersports on tap.

**Staff:** Appear to have swallowed a large volume of Debrett's – immensely polite and full of beans.

**Food and drink:** Fresh seafood, vegetables from Jumby Bay's own farm and juices made from exotic fruit plucked from the surrounding islands.

**Rooms:** Spacious and decadent, drawing on the design, colours and simplicity of the island through a contemporary prism.

**The crowd:** Mainly British and American movers and shakers – whiffs of the Palm Beach set.

**Eco effort:** The island grows thousands of exotic flowers, plants and trees in its own nursery, uses waste water to irrigate common land and all beaches on the island are protected nesting areas for the endangered hawksbill turtle.

**In a nutshell:** A secluded and extraordinarily beautiful Caribbean escape.



Aerial view of Jumby Bay Antigua



### **Set the scene**

Tucked along [Antigua](#)'s north coast, where the Caribbean Sea meets the Atlantic Ocean, Jumby Bay is a 300-acre island with dreamy palms that slow-dance in the breeze. These frame contemporary villas and grand old-world architecture, pepper a wild, undulating centre roamed by Persian sheep and flank a manicured main beach of the same name. Here creamy sand tips into calm Caribbean waters, where mottled turquoise and aquamarine hues transform into molten silver come dusk. Afternoons are made for fresh Piña Coladas, languid sun-worshipping and offshore adventures on motorboats fully stocked with snorkels, fins and local beer. Frigate birds soar in the hot sky and sunsets paint cloud edges in dramatic crimson strokes. The island's more dishevelled beach, Pasture Bay (a hawksbill turtle nesting haven from June until November) is fringed by wayward bushes and wild flowers – a scene, one imagines, not far removed from the one Christopher Columbus sailed into in 1463.



The veranda at Jumby Bay Antigua

### **What's the story?**

Passed between various landowning families throughout the centuries (notably the Jarvises and the Henzells), Jumby Bay was sliced up into private beachfront homes and estates, then later into a series of villas run by Rosewood Hotels and Resorts. The island fast became a magnet for high-profile guests looking for Caribbean bliss and privacy in equal measure. The Jumby Bay Island Company was formed by the homeowners in 1998 and in 2017 it appointed Oetker Collection to take over the hotel management, upping the ante with first-rung service while honouring the island's history, low-key rhythms and the expectations of its beau-monde clientele.

Spread out and easily accessible on bikes parked outside villas or on-demand golf buggies, the hotel includes a [spa and wellness](#) area where pre-breakfast yoga classes take place under a white pavillion surrounded by tropical plants; The Estate House, a splendid nod to a bygone era of gin cocktails and grand pianos; the Jumby Bay Veranda which spills onto the main beach in a rush of bougainvillea, palms and aloe vera; the farm where a kitchen garden supplies the restaurants with fresh herbs and vegetables; tennis courts galore and an elevated pool area with glorious sunset views over the bay and fresh mango and papaya to nibble on. What may read like a resort is in fact a car-free island utopia, light on the clichés that beset many Caribbean hotspots.



Pool suite at Jumby Bay Antigua

### **What can we expect from our room?**

Flooded with natural light, the rooms have sky-high beamed ceilings that create a sense of endless space, so they feel immensely private without being fenced in. All three room categories have sea views and outdoor baths and showers, while the beachfront suites have beach access and the larger pool and estate suites have private pools. A bamboo glass cabinet doubles as a mini-bar and clever little touches abound: hand-painted shells on pillows at turndown, lens cloths for reading glasses by the bed, a ceramic stool for Champagne coupes by the outdoor bath.



The Estate House at Jumby Bay Antigua

### **How about the food and drink?**

Local ingredients are spun into global favourites such as Middle Eastern garbanzo for breakfast or foie-gras terrine for supper, while also celebrating traditional Creole dishes. [Breakfast](#) includes a mix of American classics (pancakes, berry and mascarpone waffles), Antiguan specials (salt fish with fritters and plantain) and Gen-Z hits such as energy-boosting breakfast bowls of farro, poached eggs and smoked salmon, buckwheat crepes and smashed avocado. But the highlight is the bespoke smoothie bar, with a lip-smacking selection of fruit, seeds, milks, yogurt and nuts, all blended together each morning.

For lunch head to the Veranda restaurant for fresh squid and calamari, palm-heart ceviche, fish tartare, gourmet pizzas and burgers, or the Poole Grille for prawn salads, fish tacos and perhaps a magnum of Whispering Angel. For afternoon tea and old-world fine dining with a jazz soundtrack, The Estate House veranda pulls in a warm breeze, and dishes such as lobster and ravioli, and mushroom and truffle velouté with brioche strips wrapped in Italian lardo are served on antique crockery. Wednesday sees a more casual (but no less beguiling) set-up when a Caribbean-themed night plays out along the beach with flames, barbecues and tropical cocktails.

### **Anything to say about the service?**

No request is too much effort and staff wear infectious smiles (possibly because they work in bona fide paradise). Take advantage of the beneficial time difference (four hours ahead of the UK) and rock up for breakfast at 7am; come too late and it starts to get a little busy. Activities such as kayaking past mangroves to nearby [islands](#), waterskiing, sailing and snorkelling trips to Bird Island are led by a convivial team of characters, who share their enthusiasm for Antigua's wildlife and their knowledge of nearby secret spots as well as their impressive water-sports skills.

### **What sort of person comes here?**

The mix of European and American jet setters visiting the island are all very well-mannered, unbuttoned and too successful for keeping-up-with-the-Jones shenanigans.



Jumby Bay Antigua



### What's the neighbourhood scene like?

As far as the private island goes: quiet, idyllic, groomed (even Miami-preened) in places, beautifully bedraggled in others. Flowers and greenery sprouting from every corner and crevice attract hummingbirds, a cacophony of morning birdsong and a cricket soundtrack by late afternoon. With car-free roads to jog down, tall grasses to roam through and shallow waters to wallow in, there's little reason to leave, but should visitors get itchy feet, the catamaran (complimentary to and from the jetty at Winthrop's Bay for arrivals and departures) can whisk them to mainland Antigua in 15 minutes for epic hikes along jungle-clad mountains or the buzz of historical, yacht-fringed towns such as English Harbour.

### Anything you didn't love?

If your agenda goes beyond fly-and-flop (onto a pair of water skis at best), it's worth spending a day or two exploring mainland Antigua for a dose of culture. If, however, your agenda is exactly that, you're in the right place.



Beachside suite at Jumby Bay Antigua

### A final note: is it worth it?

OK, it's steep... but what do you expect from a world-class, private-island paradise graced by stars such as Oprah Winfrey and Justin Bieber? This is the gold standard for a relaxed honeymoon or a blowout winter-sun break, with a fuss-free transfer and direct flights from London.

**Address:** Jumby Bay Island, Antigua and Barbuda

**Telephone:** +1 2684 846000

**Price:** Rooms from £1,661 per night, all inclusive

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