



The just-for-you secret Caribbean corner

A private island, an empty beach, even a vacant hammock — you can have a little bit of the Caribbean to yourself...

Make the dream come true

Let's nail this 'private beach' misnomer once and for all. 'Private' doesn't mean that you and your lover get it all to yourselves. It means it belongs to the resort — and your fellow guests. You may actually find the free 'public' beach has a solitary fisherman, while the 'private' one you paid for is packed. So ask the hotel how busy the beach gets during your trip (the quietest months in the Caribbean are June and September), and never choose a hotel with more than 50 rooms. Look for lone hotels on an enclosed bay, where walkers can't trail past on foot: we love **Cobblers Cove** in Barbados, which is almost impossible to walk past unless you're a guest or a strong swimmer (00 1246 422 2291, cobblercove.com; doubles from £349, B&B).

If you want true privacy, prepare for a long journey: the Bahamas does the job, but you're looking at a twin-prop flight, boat ride and your transatlantic trip. You won't see another soul at

Musha Cay (00 1208 309 1106, mushacay.com; pictured top right), which sleeps 24 from £27,000 a day in five private-island houses, but you can get something similar, cheaper, at **Kamalame Cay** (020 3318 1191, kamalame.com; doubles from £165, B&B; top left and bottom right), also in the Bahamas; there's just one resort on the island, hosting up to 60.

Want to get there as quickly and cheaply as possible? Think Puerto Rico. It's little-visited by Brits, but there are cheap, direct flights from Gatwick on Norwegian (norwegian.com; from £369 return). Try the boho-chic **Horned Dorset** (00 1 800 633 1857, horneddorset.net; doubles from £414, room only) and avoid US national holidays for a surprisingly small price tag.

Got little ones? Then it's Anguilla (bottom left). **Anacaona Boutique Hotel** (00 1877 647 4736, anacaonahotel.com) has a week for two adults and one child in summer from £1,855, including most meals (but not flights). For one of the most exclusively private islands in the Caribbean, this is a steal. *Rob Crossan*

The Gucci-glamorous Italian Lakes classic

A hyper-glossy, peacock-blue lake is the backdrop. The castles, tanned on glinting sundecks. You're living the Hollywood-abroad lifestyle, in one of the glitziest destinations on Earth. But don't be intimidated — there's a piece of paradise for everybody...

Make the dream come true

Timing matters. Don't plot a Valentine's escape or Christmas jaunt just yet — most Lakes hotels aren't even open (they close from the end of October until April). And at Como, where you'll be sharing your lake view with George and Amal, you're looking at £350 or more for a night in spring and autumn, but up to £600 a night in August. **Grand Hotel Tremezzo** (00 34 827 0133, grandhoteltremezzo.com; from £318, B&B), with its sexy pool floating on the lake, fits the picture-postcard image but is cheaper (it's

also beside a ferry stop with boats to Bellagio village, so you're in well-connected seclusion).

There are exceptions to the rule. August isn't considered high season at Stresa, Maggiore's beautiful villa-strewn resort — May and June are — so last-minute rates at some hotels drop in summer. Old-school beauty queen **Regina Palace** has doubles from £140, B&B, right in the middle of the school hols (00 39 323 936936, reginapalace.it). But beware bargain rates made possible because of dodgy views — the car park, even the road: do you really want to come to the Lakes and forfeit a lake view?

Maggiore and Garda are cheaper and lower-key than Como, if you're there for the rustic lakes scenery rather than the scene. Their most authentic stays are **Villa e Palazzo Aminta**

(00 39 323 933818, villa-aminta.it; doubles from £239, B&B; pictured) and **Gardesana** (00 39 457 225411, gardesana.eu; doubles from £130, B&B), right on a medieval port.

You can save a packet on flights. Low-cost fares to Milan Malpensa and Bergamo (for Como and Maggiore) go for about £50 return, and no-one will judge you for flying EasyJet and flopping five-star. For Lake Garda, Verona is closer than Bergamo but more expensive (from £98 return; various low-cost airlines). The airport to avoid is Milan Linate, bang in the centre of town, so susceptible to traffic jams. And once you're at the Lakes, many of the charms are freebies anyway: infinity pools, secret walled gardens, Jacuzzis. Not to mention that hypnotising balcony view.

Lucy Thackray >

