

## Fun in THE SUN

There's so much more to the Caribbean than lying on a beach. *Marie Claire* sends four writers to journey beyond 'fly and flop'

### Partying in JAMAICA

It's my husband's birthday – a special one with a zero on the end – so the pressure's on for a celebration he'll never forget. Andy's not the surprise-party type, but he loves a good night out, and Jamaica's been on our hit list for a long time. I book our first three nights at Jamaica Inn, an immaculate beach resort that oozes timeless glamour and elegance. Opened in 1950, it was a favourite of the jet-set and glitterati, including Marilyn Monroe, who honeymooned here with her husband Arthur Miller. Romance is definitely in the air as we dine under the stars, then dance on the splendid terrace to a live band. Things really get going when three models from New York take the mic for some impromptu karaoke.

It's a good start, but we step up a gear the next evening in the nearby port of Ocho Rios, a tourist hot spot for visiting attractions such as Dunn's River Falls and the Mystic Mountain Rainforest Adventure Park. It's Saturday night and the whole town is out to party. We start with dinner at Miss T's Kitchen, a colourful restaurant that serves excellent home-cooked dishes such as jerk chicken, curry goat and fish stew, then hit the Mongoose Bar and John Crow's Tavern for rum punch and super-cold Red Stripe beer. Afterwards, we join the hordes by the clock tower, who wind and grind,

flirt and laugh to music pumping out of ten-foot speaker towers at ear-splitting levels. It's fun and friendly, and way past our bedtime when we leave.

For the last part of our celebration, we join eight friends who have flown in specially to join us at Sundown Villa in Discovery Bay, a half-hour drive away. A stunning five-bedroom beach house with a staff of eight, including butler Rocky and chef Damean at our service 24/7, it's as luxurious and rock star as it gets – Usain Bolt was here the week before. Being a large group makes such treats more affordable, and we have a private beach for paddle-boarding, canoeing and sailing. When the sun goes down, cocktails are served (Dark & Stormy, made of rum, lime and ginger ale, becomes my favourite), and the party gets started. A fabulous dinner is served on the beach, under the gazebo or in the garden, then the music's turned up and we kick off our shoes and dance the night away, the sand between our toes. It's a very happy birthday – and now I'm looking forward to seeing how Andy's going to top this for mine. ►

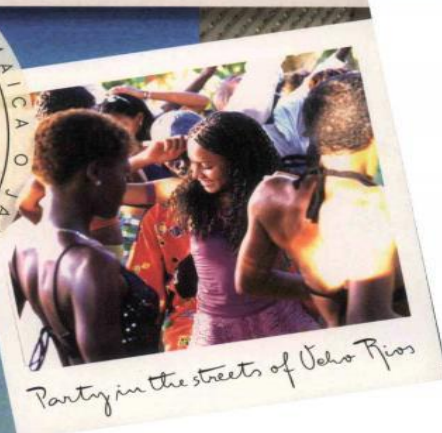
#### Suzy Palmer

*Virgin Atlantic* ([virgin-atlantic.com](http://virgin-atlantic.com)) flies from Gatwick to Montego Bay, from £723 return. Double rooms at Jamaica Inn ([jamaicainn.com](http://jamaicainn.com)) cost from £400. A week at Sundown Villa ([uniquevillasofjamaica.com](http://uniquevillasofjamaica.com)) costs £9,660. For more information, see [visitjamaica.com](http://visitjamaica.com).



**PARTY PLAYLIST**  
Music-biz guru Jon Baker, co-owner of the hip Trident Hotel in Port Antonio ([jeejamcollection.com](http://jeejamcollection.com)), picks five albums to kick-start a Jamaican holiday:

- Studio One Soul • Hed Kandi Nu Disco 2012 • Gaz's Rockin' Blues: Club Classics • Sunshine Reggae: 20 Feel Good Reggae Hits • Ernest Ranglin's Below the Bassline



Party in the streets of Ocho Rios