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Destination Weddings & Honeymoons

PREMIER ISSUE

Spring 2005

Jamaica

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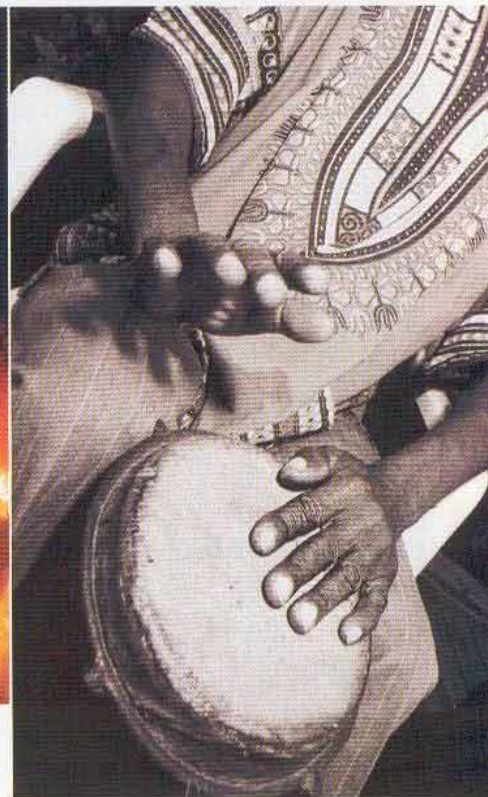
Destination: Hawaii
Kapalua Bay, Maui

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The marriage process has been streamlined to the point where in some cases it's easier—and often cheaper—than tying the knot back home.



RHYTHM NATION: Romantic terraces at The Caves (opposite) reflect the laid-back pace of Negril. Reggae dance tunes fill the air (above) at one of Angie and Michael's prewedding parties; a local drummer (right) keeps it going all night long.

a thriving local culture. Shannon and I love the music, and music is everywhere you go in Jamaica.”

Like many couples, Jeff and Shannon had each visited the island during college and after graduation. It was during a weekend trip about three months before their marriage that they realized Jamaica would provide exactly what they wanted for their wedding in terms of atmosphere, logistics, and price. “By taking advantage of the off-season rates,” Jeff says, “we were able to make the trip reasonable for everyone.”

Two months before the August 2001 event, they got wedding guests into an island mood by mailing their invitations in bottles filled with sand and shells. Some of their friends expressed concerns about the island's safety, but Jeff and Shannon quickly soothed those fears.

“We felt 100 percent safe the entire time,” Jeff says, “and many of our best times were interacting with the staff and locals.”

Sweetheart Deals

Nearly every major Jamaican resort has a dedicated wedding planner. Thanks to the hotels, local tourism authorities, wedding suppliers, and government policies, the marriage process has been streamlined to the point where in some cases it's easier—and often cheaper—than tying the knot back home.

Speed, ease, and economics were three of the main factors that Paula McClendon of Rockwall, Texas, took into consideration in planning a destination wedding for her eldest daughter, Kelly, and Kelly's fiancé, Brian Cannon.

“They had finished school,” Paula says, “they were just getting started in their careers, and they didn't want to sit on a waiting list a whole year to pay \$30,000 or \$40,000 for an ordinary church wedding and reception at home in Dallas.”

They looked at resorts in Mexico and the Bahamas before finally settling on the Mais Oui Tennis & Spa Villa overlooking Discovery Bay—thought to be where Christopher Columbus first stepped ashore in Jamaica. With six bedrooms, the villa was large enough to house the dozen people in the wedding party. Other guests stayed at nearby bed-and-breakfasts and the all-inclusive Breezes Runaway Bay Resort & Golf Club, Grand Lido Braco Resort & Spa, and Portside Resort & Villas.

The ceremony, performed by a local minister, took place in a breezy gazebo at Mais Oui. The villa's ocean-view terrace held the reception.

Paula worked with Sherry Woodhouse, the co-owner and wedding planner from Mais Oui, until everything was perfect. “And it really was perfect,” Paula says, “down to the little things like the flowers and the (Continued on page 100)

HEART & SOUL

(Continued from page 51)

photographs. It was organized in very little time and for very little money compared to what we would have spent back home. We would do it again in a heartbeat—the same way.”