



U.S. TRADE & CONSUMER MEDIA COVERAGE 2019



HOTELS & RESIDENCES



Meet MINT Hotels & Residences: Chic New Hospitality Brand Redefines The Luxury Experience In The Dominican Republic

Authentic New Boutique Brand On A Mission To Deliver True Essence Of Dominican Republic With The MINT Experience

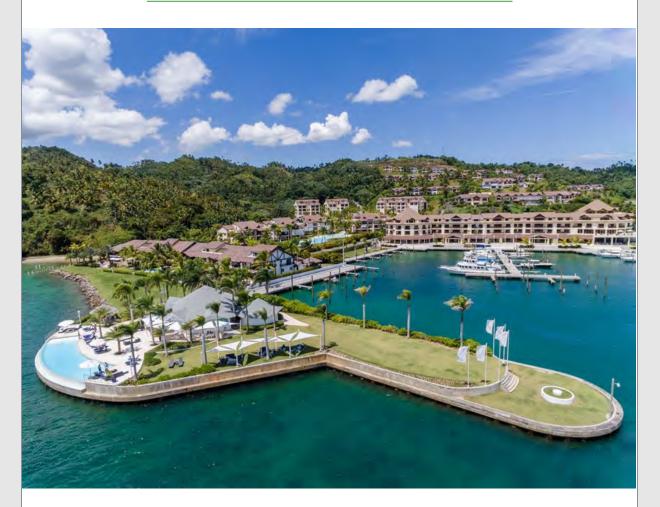
SANTO DOMINGO, DR – March 28, 2019 Forget what you*think* you know about the Dominican Republic - a new boutique hotel brand is redefining the luxury guest experience and dramatically changing perceptions of the island. **MINT Hotels & Residences** currently includes five boutique hotels located in some of the island's most breathtaking and desirable locales – mountains, beaches, rain forests and marinas. From the lush mountains of Barahona to the crystal-clear waters and white sand beaches of Punta Rucia to the chic Samaná peninsula, each property offers an intimate and unspoiled setting, oozing with tropical bliss, lush landscapes and environmental harmony. Guests can combine two or more of these extraordinary locations through the company's **MINT Experience** create a personally-tailored holiday that includes exceptional services such as private helicopter or seaplane transfers, VIP airport escorts and authentic local excursions.

"I always ask people, do you really know the Dominican Republic?" said Abelardo Melgen Acra, *Chief Executive Officer, MINT Hotels & Residences*. "My DR is a hidden gem full of luxury experiences just waiting to be discovered. Where tucked inside every corner of our beautiful island, a tropical paradise awaits."

The hotels were individually chosen for their singular locations and the unique way they capture the true essence of the Dominican Republic through their cuisine,

design, warm service and embrace of the surrounding natural beauty. This concept is the foundation for MINT and its brand attributes, which include offering a unique sense of place, outstanding service, authentic experiences that ignite the senses, and, above all, deeply respecting the environment.

MEET MINT HOTELS & RESIDENCES



The Bannister Hotel & Yacht Club (Samaná)

The hotel's 32 spacious rooms face the breathtaking beauty of Samaná Bay and each has its own private balcony and fully -equipped kitchen. Guests can spend their days at one two pools, waterfront restaurants and bars or venture out to the beach on the complimentary water shuttle to nearby Cayo Levantado, where the hotel has its own private VIP area. For tho those feeling more adventurous, guests can hire a boat and spend the day at the famous Playa Rincon, or Los Haitises National Park and some unspoiled locales such as Playa del Valle, La Playita, Hermitaño, Playa Fronton, Playa Galeras, Playa Bonita or Playa Coson.



Casa Bonita Tropical Lodge (Barahona)

Perched between the rain forest and the Caribbean Sea above the South coast, Casa Bonita boasts just 18 luxurious rooms, including four new River Suites tucked away in the rain forest. Guests can bond with nature at the riverside Tanama Spa, on a heart-racing zip line trail or guided hikes in the forest, and head to local unspoiled beaches to chill or surf.



Punta Rucia Lodge (Punta Rucia)

Nestled along the pristine waters and white sand beach of the North coast, this

simple, yet stylish, resort and its 12 individual A-Frame bungalows are the definition of barefoot luxury. Punta Rucia Lodge offers an infinity pool, restaurant, terrace, bar, beachside Spa, a private dock and even a helipad.



El Portillo Residences (Las Terrenas in Samaná)

These one- to three-bedroom luxurious apartments on the Northeast Coast are ideally located around one of the area's most beautiful beaches. The fully-equipped kitchens can be stocked with provisions prior to guests' arrival or they can tuck into the thatched-roof Club House Restaurant for local cuisine and the "catch of the day." A beautiful pool with spectacular sea views and swim-up bar complete this residential-style paradise.



Los Altos Residences (Casa de Campo)

These chic one- to three-bedroom accommodations offer the perfect combination of luxury hotel service with residential ease and comfort. Set at the summit of Casa de Campo, views are framed by the cliffs over the Chavón River and the Dye Fore Golf Course's 17th fairway. All of the robust Casa de Campo offerings await including golf, beaches, swimming pools, lush gardens and more.

THE MINT EXPERIENCE

With such a varied collection of accommodations set throughout the country's stunning landscape, the brand encourages guest to take in multiple properties and locales with *The MINT Experience*. Providing a seamless connection by private helicopter, seaplane, or private car, allows guests to see more of the diverse destination without compromising valuable vacation time. While there are five different pre-designed MINT Experiences to choose from, the options are endless and can be completely hand-crafted to include cultural and nature excursions in each destination or along the way.

"We wanted the MINT brand to convey the undiscovered authenticity and stunning biodiversity that our country has to offer," said Miguelina Butron, Partner & Vice President, Sales & Marketing, MINT Hotels & Resorts "The goal of MINT is for guests to see another side of the Dominican Republic. One that expresses the pure beauty of our people, landscape, heritage and hospitality. Each property in the collection achieves this mission and we will continue to seek out new and inventive ways for our guests to experience the authentic DR."

HIGH TOUCH, VIP AIRPORT EXPERIENCE

Arriving and departing for all guests of MINT Hotels & Residences is truly effortless and seamless. Upon landing at any one of the three major international airports

including Santo Domingo's Las Americas International Airport, Santiago International Airport and Punta Cana International Airport guests are met at the jetway and whisked away to a VIP lounge to discreetly clear customs and connect with their private transportation. When departing the DR, this luxurious experience happens in reverse. Guests are met upon arrival at the airport, escorted through customs and security, and hand delivered to the VIP lounge.

For more information *MINT Hotels & Residences* please visit <u>www.minthotelsresidences.com</u> or call +1 (809) 540-5304.

***EDITORS NOTE: For a selection of high-resolution images <u>CLICK HERE</u> ***

ABOUT MINT HOTELS & RESIDENCES

MINT Hotels & Residences is a burgeoning boutique hotel brand redefining the luxury guest experience in the Dominican Republic. Comprised of five independently-owned properties, each perfectly exemplify the brand attributes, which include: offering a unique sense of place, outstanding service, and authentic experiences that ignite the senses, while, above all, deeply respecting the environment. From the lush mountains of Barahona, to the crystal-clear waters and white sand beaches of Punta Rucia to the chic Samaná peninsula, each of the properties' compelling locales offer guests an intimate and unspoiled setting oozing with tropical bliss and eco-harmony. Guests can combine two or more of these locations with exceptional services, like private helicopter or seaplane transfers, VIP airport escorts and local excursions, to create a personally-tailored MINT Experience. MINT is operated by Hospitality Management Solutions (HMS), a leading real estate development and management company with holdings in the Dominican Republic, Central America and The Caribbean. For more information, and to see the full collection of MINT properties, please visit www.minthotelsresidences.com

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PRESS CONTACTS:

D&D PR

 $\underline{www.dndpr.com}$

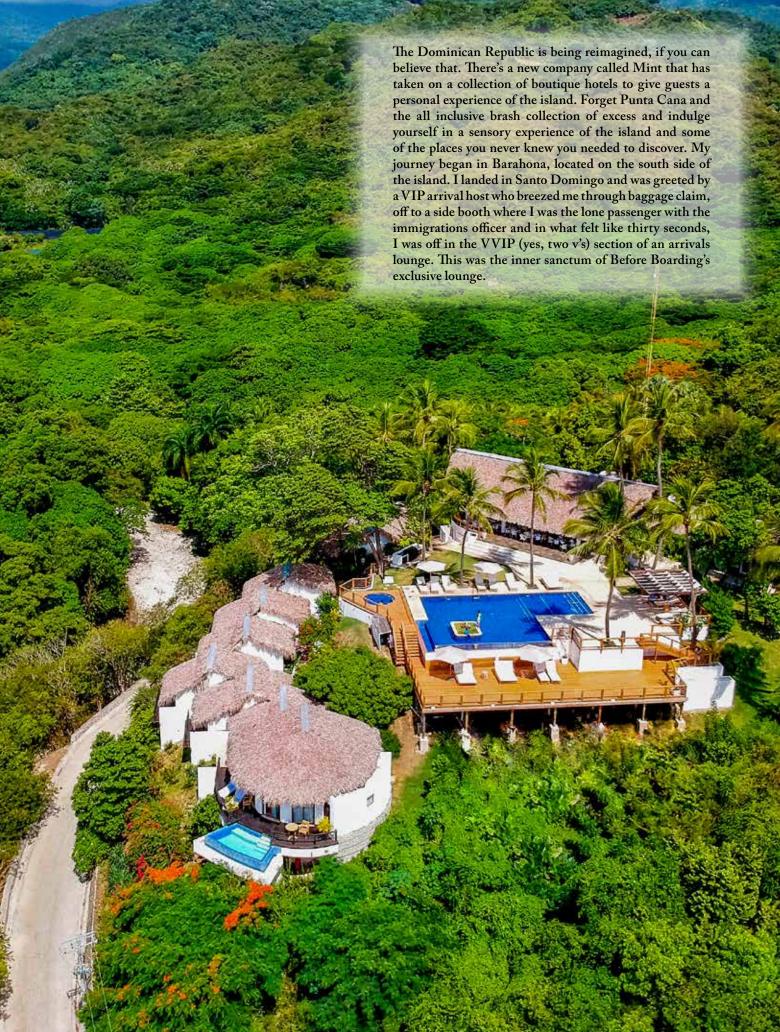
Tel: 1.646.393.4392

Nichole DiBenedetto Nichole@dndpr.com
Teresa Delaney Teresa@dndpr.com





A fresh Perspective
Of The
Dominican Republic





The ladies at Mint have thought of everything, partnering with the cream of the crop to start the experience from the moment of arrival. My awaiting black SUV was another perfect fit and made the three hour drive fly by. I was happy to see the reality of the destination. There were boys selling hats, windshield wipers, and cold water in the streets. Congested traffic with horns blowing throughout the dusty streets. I was an observer. The participants were also content. As the ladies selling fresh fruit on the side of the road made their seniority work in their favor, the younger boys rushed the cars bringing new meaning to the words drive-through. I had to stop and grab some local fruit. It's one of my absolute favorite things to do on any given day. I am a renowned farmer's market hound and a sucker for island fruit, any time—any day. On this day, it was a great precursor to what lay ahead of me.

I was on my way to Casa Bonita Tropical Lodge. Upon arrival I was met by the owner who, at once, made me feel at home. Certainly, as I stepped off the gravel driveway up to the thatched roof reception, I could see the hip pool area, blue sky, and the deep blue sea. Before I could even imagine the phrase, "Oh, this view again." I was placed in

a vehicle and headed a little deeper down the driveway. Stepping out of the car and on to some more gravel, that delineated a clear white path to my River Suit. A canopy of trees shaded my stroll to the front door and the sound of the river rushing by was hypnotic. Now, I said to myself, "Now, this is a new view." The bedroom was lit by nature, through the massive sliding glass doors and glass panel at the apex of the ceiling. I may as well have been floating on the river. Once I was able to regain my own attention, I turned it to the bathroom which was all outdoors. The toilet had its own room and there was a vintage tiled glass-encased shower that looked out onto a wall made of limestone and river rocks where the outdoor shower sat. The canopy of trees made their way over this entire scene, as small warm pebbles of light shone through the trees, creating a feeling of being nurtured by Mother Nature. This was a unique and inviting suite.

The resort that I had checked into seemed like a different world from where I was now, yet it was only several yards away from where I stood. I was in a fairytale, surrounded by tall trees, feeling like Little Red Riding Hood or Robinhood, I was not yet sure. There was little time to decide between the two as it was time to act like Cinderella and swiftly change into my robe and, get this, walk with my masseuse into the river where my massage table was set up and awaiting my presence. I promise you that I almost pinched myself as I lay naked, facedown, staring through to the rushing water below me. One word...unreal. My body scrub and massage was everything. When the hour had come and gone, far too quickly, I was asked to stand, naked in the river as my masseuse poured a freshy brewed concoction over my body, to rinse off the exfoliants she used to renew my body and now my soul. She explained that it was herbs and roots, some tobacco leaves and a few other gems from nature. The warmth of this elixir being poured over my freshly scrubbed skin as I stood ankle deep in the fast-moving cold water of the river was the very best. These are the authentic experiences that indelible memories are made of.











Somehow I transported myself (still in a dream-state) back to my suite in time to get dressed for dinner with the owner, Polivio. I ate while he regaled me with stories from his childhood when this was merely his family's weekend estate. He and his cousins would hike, swim, and play all around the property. After growing up and taking a look at what a treasure they had, it became obvious that sharing it with more and more friends was inevitable. From this, the hotel was born. Keep in mind that when you arrive, you come as a friend of the family. This is not just lip service, it is a feeling you get when you are here.

A friend of the family who happens to have so much land that there is a ziplining course established through the trees, high above the river. Talk about friends in high places. This takes the cake. Had we not done the zipline, we could have taken mountain bikes for a spin, but I rather like the adrenaline rush I get from zipping through the trees, suspended by a cable. After all, a lot of my friends have bikes, not a lot of them have ziplines in their back yard. We then took a hike and saw some of the plentiful acreage and caught up on potential plans to add a few more things to the accommodation roster. All low-impact on the environment. At the moment, if you were to stumble upon the lodge, you'd be hard-pressed to point out the roofline of much of the accommodations. Rounding out the day full of fun and action, we gathered around the brick oven, in its own wide open space. This was when Polivio invited a few more close friends (actually were old friends of his) over for the afternoon. We all got to try our hand at making pizza from scratch. Mine had corn on it and was quite tasty. We laughed, drank beer and then the chef prepared proper lunch for us all before one-by-one we strolled down to the river for a little more of its magic.

On my final morning, I attended a yoga class. Here again, the main character was the river. We were all on a yoga deck, built about 50 feet above the flow, but the sound and the energy was there. In Vinyasa, movement is fluid and with the river as our companion, everything flowed from one asana to the next. I hated to say goodbye but the next Mint resort awaited. We had a private plane ready to breeze us back over to Santo Domingo, but that plan had to be scrapped due to a faulty battery. We took no chances and drove back.







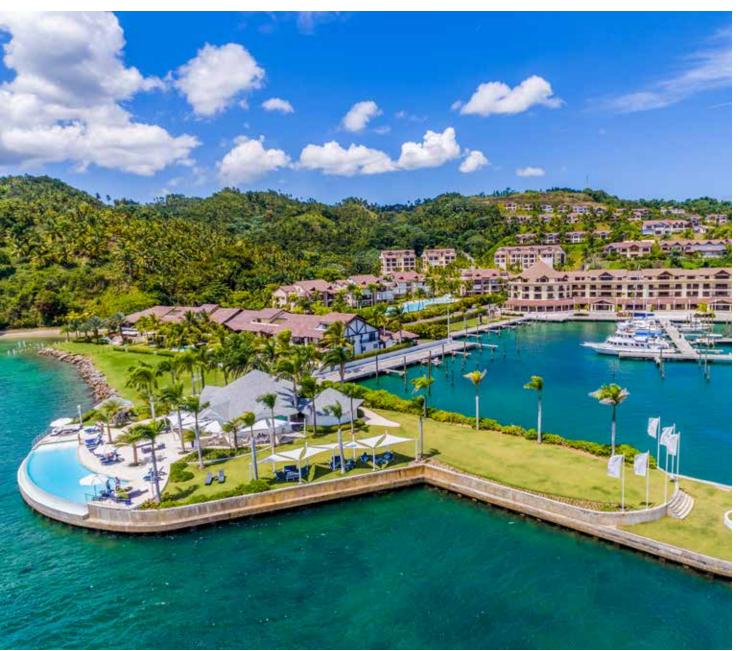




Santo Domingo -- the capital and the largest city in the Dominican Republic is home to the historic colonial city, a UNESCO World heritage site. Here I could wander the streets of the first city of the New World, visit the Cathedral of the Americas and dinning in the Alcazar de Colón, also known as Columbus Alcazar with its wide range of bars and restaurants where I was able to discover true Dominican cuisine. I was excited to explore, even though the journey was longer than anticipated. I met with the team behind Mint and after took a quick spin around the old city on tuk-tuk, owned and operated by the Billini hotel in the Colonial City. The fresh night air brought me right back to where I needed to be. I had now worked up an appetite and was ready to have dinner on the cobblestone streets of this ancient city. My stay here was rather brief as we had missed most of the day driving back versus flying. I took in as much as I could and it left me knowing that I will be back for more. The hotel holds so much history but is brought current with all the modern amenities that today's traveler requires. Early the next morning, the ladies and I were making our way to Samaná for a stav at the Bannister Hotel & Yacht Club. This part of the Island was also very different from the rest. It had its own charm and as soon as we got on the water and headed over to Los Haitises National Park, the difference was made even greater. This was a set of islands that were nothing short of those you see in Thailand. I had again been transported to a place in the Dominican Republic I never imagined. The seas around these islands were calm as I believe they were protected from the wind , and the waters were far more shallow than the crossing from the yacht club. We could've spent the entire day zipping around these stone monoliths which have been carved by wind and sea. Here again, we had other things in mind. We returned to the yacht club and had a very late lunch and cocktails while bobbing in the infinity-edge pool watching the sun go down. Remarkable days in the Dominican Republic had been had by me in the past, but none quite as authentic as my week spent bopping to these three points.













We took a helicopter from Samaná to Punta Rucia.walls, strung like puka beads on a necklace of white sand. This was a place for families and couples to come and relax. We took to ATV's and went hunting for the elusive manatee that used the mangroves as homes and breeding grounds. That trip was fun and guests can partake in the fun during their stay. It's great for laughs and the manatee center is a fantastic resource for learning a little more about the Caribbean Manatee. Super fun fact is that they have Taino artifacts that they discovered around the area and a real, out-in-the-open, skeletal skull of a pirate, mostly intact. Now that is not something you see every day, or even every other day. It's also something you wouldn't expect to see at a manatee conservation center, but here it is and here we are. Remember to look for it on your visit. They don't make a big deal about it, so look for it on the second shelf of the one and only case in the room where you get the overview about these manatees. I dare you to try and focus after that!



After our ride came to an end, we were back in time for dinner by the pool and already dreaming about the following day when we would take a boat to Cayo Arena. This is a sandbar in the middle of the sea with four straw huts on it. The area is protected and since its existence is tenuous (being a sandbar in the middle of the sea) visitors cannot even lay a towel on the sand. I had to think twice about this rule but then it made perfect sense. When the towel is lifted, sand comes with it. That how fragile this slice of heaven is. It's a thrill to be on it. The very deep and rushing sea surrounds you as you stand on these grains of sand. We were lucky enough to be the only ones there that day. I could see it getting crowded with only ten people on it, but thankfully we did not have to concern ourselves with that.

Here again, I felt like I spent far too short a time and made another mental note that I will be back here as well. This is the Dominican Republic I prefer. No crowds, amazing food, personalized attention and unique experiences. Say hola to Mint the next time you think DR as a vacation option.

www.minthotelsresidences.com





A LETTER FROM the Caribbean: Barahona, Dominican Republic

By Peta Phipps



My dear friends,

I drove about three hours, from Santo Domingo, to get to paradise. I know that sounds like an eternity to get to a destination, but along the way I saw the sites, the natural sites, of the Dominican people. Driving out of the city to the east, as congested traffic gave way to smaller towns with vendors selling fresh produce along the edge of the road, framing a picture perfect scene of real life on the island. I was so happy to be able to experience this. The organic nature of a place I was finally seeing for the first time.

Having visited the extremely popular portions of the island many times before, I drove, mouth agape, staring at the real, raw beauty of this island and her people. I knew that Casa Bonita, my home for this island escape, was "perched between tropical blues and luscious greens." The combination of adventure and relaxation was tugging at every cell in my body. The year has been a whirlwind thus far and we are only at the beginning of March, as I write this letter to you. Pulling up to this Jungle Lodge held the promise

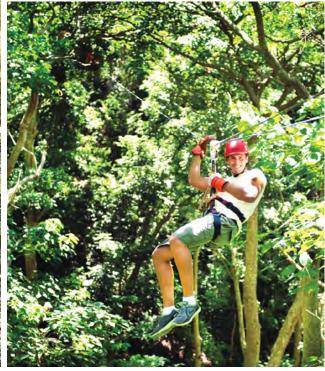




of everything I needed. I chose a river suite, so that I could hear the river rush by in the morning as I ate breakfast and then fall asleep to its hypnotic magic. After approaching the gates and being greeted by the staff, I bumped into the owner, who was on property, as he often is. This was his childhood vacation home, turned resort some years ago. His passion for adventure, adrenaline, and introspection intersect here at Casa Bonita.







He was kind enough to invite me to share my time at the lodge with him and his friends. We hiked a trail that took us from gravel paths to lush foliage where we picked cherries along the way, then got a peek at the Caribbean Sea just before ascending, all while plotting our next adventure around the hotel. Believe it or not, none of our plans included leaving the grounds, although there were even more adrenaline inducing activities within minutes of this hidden gem. Here, we had enough to fulfill the goal of having the best few days in contrast to my typical island escapes. One day we actually had a spa day that was totally over-thetop without it being orchestrated and every second of it took place entirely outdoors. We started with yoga high above the river, which like Vinyasa, flowed to our next event - effortlessly. Have you ever had a massage with the massage bed in the center of a flowing river? I have, and now I can't envision having a better massage anywhere else. The combination of the elements and the skilled massage therapist, was the epitome of a luxury that can't be duplicated in a manmade setting. After feeling every bit pampered, I sat in a temazcal that elevated my spirits and drew any remaining toxins out of my body and mind. This unscripted experience flowed like the river and led to

friends gathered around the brick pizza oven where we made pizzas for each other, as the chef prepared the real meal.

I could go on and detail the suite for you. My outdoor shower and views to the sky as I lay in bed listening to the water and staring at the stars, but I want you to come and feel it for yourself. Yes, there are ocean view suites with infinity edge pools. Yes, the dining area has fabulous views of the hillside, undulating downward towards the sea, but I preferred to look inward and experience Casa Bonita from that vantage point.

Please come,



www.casabonitadr.com/en

The Boston Blobe Here, there, and everywhere

By Necee Regis Globe correspondent Updated April 30, 2019, 7:50 p.m.



A Mint Hotels & Residencies property in the Dominican Republic.

CHIC HOTEL BRAND DEBUTS IN DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Experience the wildly varied landscapes of the Dominican Republic — including mountains, beaches, rain forests, and marinas — at one of five boutique properties debuting on the island. The new luxury brand, Mint Hotels & Residencies, offers guests the opportunity to visit multiple properties and locales with The Mint Experience, a seamless connection to diverse destinations by private helicopter, seaplane, or private car. Or stay in one place and enjoy the best that each has to offer, including golfing, poolside lolling, relaxing spa treatments, fine dining, hiking and mountain biking, eco-touring, ziplines, and more. Upon landing at any one of three major international airports, guests are met at the jetway and whisked to a VIP lounge to clear customs and connect with their private transportation. Click on lower left "Translate" tab for English information. Rates vary between properties. minthotelsresidences.com



Mint Condition

Dominican-Based Management Group Takes Personal Approach With Boutique Hotels

Monday, June 24, 2019

By Kerry Medina

Mint Hotels & Residences is taking a different approach to lodging in the Dominican Republic. In a country long known among global travelers for its many all-inclusive resorts, this Santo Domingo-based hospitality management group is targeting experiential travelers seeking--not mass market dining and live shows nightly—but a personalized trip with more intimate accommodations and immersive, off-property explorations throughout their stay.

Today, the five hotels in Mint's portfolio vary in room count from 18 to 32 keys and are located throughout the country. The hotels--the Bannister Hotel & Yacht Club in Samaná; Casa Bonita Tropical Lodge in Barahona; Punta Rucia Lodge in Punta Rucia;

El Portillo Residences in Las Terrenas in Samaná; and Los



The Punta Rucia Lodge in Punta Rucia.

Altos Residences in Casa de Campo—are each owned by a different, local family. Miguelina Burton, partner and vice president of marketing at Mint, is careful to point out that none of the properties have international investors and most of the families who own them are not hoteliers.

Burton also describes Mint as a consumer-facing brand and explains that owners view Mint as a means to elevate the exposure and the bookings that their properties receive. "It's a challenge for us to manage independent properties in the Dominican Republic because the concept is so different here and the locations aren't necessarily in the same areas as the larger resorts," she said. "But it's also an opportunity to sell the entire country, it's natural wonders, historic sites and all of the cultural experiences it has to offer."

While these hotels are all unique, they do share some similar characteristics. They have fewer than 50 rooms, which is the cap for Mint properties. Their locations and architecture are distinct and they are integrated into their local communities. The hotels don't use plastic straws and limit their use of other plastics.

Some also practice organic agriculture, selling some products and using some on-property. "We look for very niche hotels that are truly unique and have a strong sense of place," said Burton.

Mint considers the structural and design attributes of a property as well as more granular features like its soft goods and website. The hotels' general managers are employed and trained by the management group, which also ensures distribution for the properties across an array of channels that include OTAs and the retail travel community in addition to major tour operators, the GDS and Mint's own website.

Airbnb is also leveraged as a distribution channel for the hotels as Burton doesn't view the alternative accommodations provider as competition, but rather as another selling tool. "We've been using Airbnb as



a distribution channel for about four years now and we believe it's good to have them as another available channel because we want to work with everyone that's selling hotels," she said.

The hotels' owners can also opt to affiliate with a soft brand as is the case with Casa Bonia, which is a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World (SLH). Burton noted that Mint "will always point out to the owners that a flag can generate additional awareness for the property and comes with a sales force that can complement our own."

Another service that Mint offers to hotel guests and owners is Mint Experiences, which effectively serves as an in-house destination management company that allows guests to combine two or more Mint hotels into a single trip. The service included transfers that can take the form of helicopter or seaplane travel, and organizes private airport transportation and customs clearance to and from any of the country's major airports, in addition to local cultural and nature excursions in each hotel's destination.

For example, Punta Rucia Lodge is 20 minutes from the coral island Cayo Arena where guests can go scuba diving and El Portillo Residences is 30-minutes away from Salto del Limon National Park where guests can hike and horseback ride to waterfalls. Other activities such as spa treatments and yoga, kite surfing or dinner at a local high-end restaurant helmed by a European chef are all fair game.

"Travelers today are not just looking for luxury hotel rooms," Burton noted. "They want to invest their money in experiences like a riverside spa treatment or a hammock in the middle of nowhere where they can sip a glass of wine under the night stars."

For the hotels' owners, Burton explained that Mint Experiences is another reason they contract with the management company. She said, "we develop the content for each property and sell the experience and they give owners another revenue stream."

Guests can choose from five pre-designed experiences or customize their own. As the itineraries are both hyper-local and effectively packaged travel, the product has helped increase business from U.S.-based travel agents who earn a standard 20 percent on all bookings.

Hospitality Management Solutions (HMS) is the parent company behind Mint Hotels & Residences. Founded in 2010 with just two employees, the company continues to focus on luxury condominium management nearly a decade in, albeit with 30 employees in the Dominican Republic and another 50 in Panama. Mint was developed as a shared vision between Burton, who has a background in hotel sales and marketing as well as a post-graduate degree in ecotourism, and HMS President Abelardo Melgen Acra, whose expertise is real estate.

Now, their vision has evolved to eventually grow their hotel management business beyond the Dominican Republic where family offices and investors are increasing looking to develop small and medium-sized projects that don't necessarily have close airport proximity.

"We're in a good place to partner with them," said Burton. "There aren't a lot of hotel management companies based in the Dominican Republic and I believe we're the only Dominican brand with this boutique hotel concept."



Last updated: 04/00 AM ET, Thu May 02 2019

Mint Offers Boutique Hotel Options in Dominican Republic

HOTEL & RESORT | HARVEY CHIPKIN | MAY 02, 2019



PHOTO: Rooftop view of Casa Bonita Tropical Lodge (photo courtesy Mint Hotels and Residences)

If you think of the Dominican Republic as a destination for all-inclusive beach vacations, it's time to think again. A newly branded group called Mint Hotels & Residences has emerged with five small boutique hotels scattered around the Caribbean country, as well as a collection of condo residences available for rental. More, the properties pay a full 20 percent commission from the first booking, as well as the same compensation on any added activities that are sold as part of the Mint Experience.

Miguelina Butron, vice president-sales and marketing and a partner in the company, told TravelPulse that Mint was launched earlier this year, bringing together existing independent owned hotels. Mint is part of a hospitality management company called HMS (Hospitality Management Solutions) operating in the Dominican Republic and Panama.

Using the criteria of location, surroundings, cultural opportunities and experiences, the company was formed to promote unique destinations in the country. All of the properties are small – ranging from 12 to 30 rooms. They are located in mountains, beaches, rain forests and marinas from the mountains of Barahona to the beaches of Punta Rucia to the Samaná Peninsula. The hotels were chosen for their cuisine (each has at least one restaurant), design and service.

Mint works through J. MAK Hospitality, a representation firm in the U.S. Butron said about half of the business comes from travel advisors and she is working to establish preferred relationships with agency networks.

Unique about Mint, aside from the quality of its lodgings, said Butron, is that it operates as a sort of destination management company. If a travel agent calls – and there should always be a conversation, said Butron – Mint will put together a trip based on client desires. That might include trekking, climbing (the Dominican Republic boasts the highest peak in the Caribbean), diving, culinary activities, cultural experiences, etc.

MORE HOTEL & RESORT

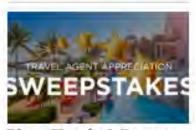


An Inside Look at NU Hotel's Frida Kahlo Mural Room



Save Money Around the Globe With These Top Offers From...

Butron said the company offers "Mint Tips" advice on where to go and what to do with high
specificity. For instance, a climber will be told
what kind of training they need for a certain
mountain. She said it has been a lifelong passion
of hers to explore every corner of the world to
discover special places and activities.



Playa Hotels & Resorts Announces Sweepstakes for Travel...

Many guests will stay at more than one Mint

property so they can experience multiple locations on the island. There is even the option to fly by helicopter, plane or car from one property to another. Some hotels are located within large condo residence developments, in which case the entire complex is managed by HMS. Since Mint manages all the hotels, there is a consistency of standards and quality. Mint places its own general managers in each property.

All Mint guests enjoy VIP airport arrival and departure which means facilitated movement through security and customs, use of a comfortable lounge and airport transfers.

Rates in low season average about \$250 per room per night, including breakfast; in high season it's \$350-\$400 with larger condo residences gong higher. Because of the company's connections, said Butron, it is able to put together well-priced Mint Experience packages.

Mint hotels are Casa Bonita Tropical Lodge (Barahona), El Portillo Residences (Samaná), Los Altos residences (Casa de Campo), Punta Rucia Lodge and The Bannister (Samaná).

Aside from the five hotels (with several in the pipeline) and multiple condo residences in the Dominican Republic, HMS manages 15 condo residences in Panama. Butron said the company is open to expansion of both products elsewhere in the Dominican Republic and South America.



INSIGHT CARIBBEAN INSIGHT

Mint Hotels promises a different look at the Dominican Republic

By Gay Nagle Myers 🄰 🔤 | May 14, 2019





River suites at Casa Bonita Tropical Lodge in Barahona, one of the Mint Hotels and Residences properties.



Gay Nagle Myers

in

Another brand has joined the long list of hoteliers doing business in the Dominican Republic. But this newest collection of properties has no interest in competing with the all-inclusive beachfront resorts scattered along the north and east coasts of the island.

In fact, just the opposite.

Miguelina Butron, partner and vice president of marketing for Santo Domingo-based Mint Hotels & Residences, told me why.

"Our focus is offering a sense of place, outstanding service and authentic experiences that respect the environment and unspoiled locales," Butron said.

"We're asking guests to forget what they think they know about the Dominican Republic and come stay with us for a different guest experience at our smaller properties ... We hope that by staying at our properties it will change their perceptions of the island."

Santo Domingo-based Mint is a boutique brand of five, independently owned properties.

Its goal is to offer guests the opportunity to see another side of the country, one that encompasses its people, landscape, heritage and hospitality, according to Butron.

Mint is operated by Hospitality Management Solutions, a real estate development and management company with holdings in the D.R. and Central America.

The five Mint properties were chosen for their singular locations and for the way they capture the essence of the DR through their cuisine, design, service and natural beauty.

Casa Bonita Tropical Lodge in Barahona is perched between the rainforest and the Caribbean Sea on the south coast. Its 18 rooms include four new suites. Activities available for guests range from treatments at the riverside Tanama Spa to ziplining above the trees, hiking in the rainforest and surfing at a local beach.

Accommodations at the beachfront Punta Rucia Lodge in the fishing village of the same name on the north coast are in 12 individual A-frame bungalows. Several offer two bedrooms. The lodge has an infinity pool, a restaurant and bar, beachside spa, a private dock and a helipad.

El Portillo Residences in Las Terrenas on the northeast coast on the Samana peninsula offers one- to three-bedroom beachfront apartments with kitchens. The complex features a restaurant, pool and swim-up bar.

Los Altos Residences are set within the Casa de Campo complex in La Romana with views of the Chavon River and the resort's golf courses. Accommodations range from one to three bedrooms in size. Mint guests have access to the resort's pools, restaurants and beaches.

Accommodations at the Bannister Hotel & Yacht Club overlooking Samana Bay offer a full kitchen in each of the 32 units. Facilities at the hotel include two pools, waterfront restaurants and bars. There's complimentary water-shuttle service to the nearby island of Cayo Levantado as well as to several nearby beaches.

Rates at all five properties start at \$250 per night, double, with breakfast.

Guests can combine two or more locations on the same trip through the brand's Mint Experience offerings that feature customized itineraries with services that include private helicopter or seaplane transfers, VIP airport escorts and local excursions.

Butron, who grew up in the D.R. and still lives there, said that "my D.R. is a hidden gem of luxury experiences just waiting to be discovered. A tropical paradise is tucked inside every corner of my beautiful island, and we want the Mint brand to convey the authenticity and biodiversity that the Dominican Republic has to offer."

Although it is a new brand, it is gaining attention from agents, who already account for 50% of the bookings, many of which are from the North American market.



Meet Mint Hotels & Residences: A New Hospitality Brand in the DR

by <u>Matt Turner</u> | May 2, 2019 11:44am



Earlier this year, **Mint Hotels & Residences** debuted in the **Dominican Republic** with a selection of independent boutique properties. **Miguelina Butron**, the vice president of marketing and one of the brand's three partners, stopped by **Travel Agent's** office this week to talk about what guests can expect.

While a couple of the properties are located on the beach, kicking back and relaxing isn't what Mint wants from its guests. Rather, they want to inspire travelers to explore the various locations in the Dominican Republic by hiking, mountain biking, scuba diving or snorkeling. Butron also

tells us she thought there was a need to inform travelers that the Dominican Republic offers more than just the big-name all-inclusives.

Mint Hotels & Residences currently comprises the following hotels:

- The Bannister Hotel & Yacht Club (Samaná): The hotel's 32 rooms face Samaná Bay and each has its own private balcony and fully equipped kitchen. Guests can spend their days at the pools, waterfront restaurants and bars or they can take the complimentary water shuttle to nearby Cayo Levantado, where the hotel has its own private VIP area. For those feeling more adventurous, guests can hire a boat and spend the day at Playa Rincon, Los Haitises National Park or other unspoiled locales, such as Playa del Valle, La Playita, Hermitaño, Playa Fronton, Playa Galeras, Playa Bonita or Playa Coson.
- Casa Bonita Tropical Lodge (Barahona): Set between the rain forest and the Caribbean Sea, Casa Bonita has just 18 rooms, including four new River Suites tucked away in the rain forest. Guests can enjoy the riverside Tanama Spa, a zip line trail and guided hikes in the forest, or head to local beaches to chill or surf.
- Punta Rucia Lodge (Punta Rucia): Located on a white sand beach on the north coast, this simple yet stylish resort has 12 individual A-frame bungalows. Punta Rucia Lodge also has an infinity pool, restaurant, terrace, bar, beachside spa, private dock and a helipad.
- El Portillo Residences (Las Terrenas in Samaná): These one- to three-bedroom luxury apartments on the northeast coast are located around one of the area's top beaches. The fully equipped kitchens can be stocked with provisions prior to guests' arrival or they can head to the thatched-roof Club House Restaurant for local cuisine. A pool with sea views and swim-up bar complete this residential-style resort.
- Los Altos Residences (Casa de Campo): These chic one- to three-bedroom accommodations combine luxury hotel services with residential ease and comfort. Set at the summit of Casa de Campo, views are framed by the cliffs over the Chavón River and the Dye Fore Golf Course's 17th fairway. Offerings include golf, beaches, swimming pools, gardens and more.

Prior to joining Mint, each of the hotels had to go through several upgrades to the hardware of the property (think: new furniture and decorations). They also had to go through service training to make sure the staff was up to the standard that Mint expected; it also brought in new general managers for each of the properties.

The Mint Experience

With a varied collection of accommodations set across the country, the brand wants its guests to take in multiple properties and locales with **The Mint Experience**, providing connections via private helicopter, seaplane or private car. All options can be tailored to include cultural and nature excursions in each destination or along the way.

Regarding arrivals and departures: Upon landing at any one of the three major international airports (Santo Domingo's Las Americas International Airport, Santiago International Airport and Punta Cana International Airport), guests are met at the jetway and whisked away to a VIP lounge to clear customs and connect with their private transportation. When departing the

DR, this experience happens in reverse: Guests are met upon arrival at the airport, escorted through customs and security, and delivered to the VIP lounge.

Butron tells us that Mint is looking to add two more properties in the Dominican Republic, but can't confirm where they will be. She also tells Travel Agent that Mint Hotels & Residences is looking to expand into other Caribbean islands, and even destinations further abroad.

Visit <u>www.minthotelsresidences.com</u> or call 1-809-540-5304. Travel advisors can also book through **J.MAK Hospitality**, where they will receive 20 percent commission.



CARIBBEAN INSIGHT

Checking in on hotels and resorts in the Dominican Republic

By Gay Nagle Myers 🎔 🎽 | Jul 16, 2019



Tourism in the Dominican Republic took a plunge recently with media coverage of deaths of several U.S. tourists at the end of May and in early June, but the picture looks brighter now.

Gay Nagle Myers

By late June, air bookings to the D.R. had rallied and were exceeding cancellations, according to ForwardKeys.

Tourism was riding high in the country for the first six months of the year, despite the June downturn. The D.R., which welcomed 6.6 million visitors in 2018, with more than half hailing from the U.S. and Canada, still appears headed for another record year, according to Luis Ernesto Camilo, the director of the Civil Aviation Board.

The agency reported that 7.9 million passengers moved through the country's airports from January through June, a 4.8% year-over-year.

To gauge the impact of the recent events, I checked with several high-end hotels and resorts regarding any falloff or uptick in recent bookings.

The Hodelpa Nicolas de Ovando Hotel, a 92-room boutique property in the heart of Santo Domingo's Colonial Zone, has not seen a drop in bookings, according to Alvar Ojeda, its general manager.

"Our numbers are running according to the city's expected occupancy for the summer season," Ojeda said. (He added that three new package promotions, for romantics, foodies and business travelers, were not correlated to recent news reports but were scheduled as part of the property's overall sales and marketing strategy.)

Room revenue is up 14%, and the average daily rate (ADR) is up 15% year-to-date, he said.

"The rest of the year's forecast is in line with our budget execution, and our advance reservations on the books are behaving as budgeted," he said. "Our plan of action continues in full force according to our increase in ADR targets, and we look forward to a successful second half of 2019."

Casa de Campo Resort & Villas in La Romana on the country's east coast reported that bookings "are pacing ahead this summer through September versus the same time last year," according to Jason Kycek, its senior vice president of sales and marketing. "Our short-term pacing has thankfully remained strong, and we have already made our 2019 revenue budget for the year."

Booking for the resort's 2020 fiscal year, which begins in October, are ahead of last year at this same time, despite several group cancellations for next February and March.

"We currently have more than 10,000 room nights on the books, but I don't want to paint a perfect picture, because we have been minimally affected, but thankfully will still have a strong year despite the challenges that the D.R. is facing," Kycek said.

Bookings for the January-to-June timeframe for the Santo Domingo-based Mint Hotels & Residences, a boutique brand of five, independently owned properties located throughout the country, are ahead of last year, according to Miguelina Butron, partner and vice president of sales and marketing.

"We are maintaining our current projections for 2019, which were done at the end of 2018," she said.

Butron said that occupancies increased 12% in the April-to-June period versus the same time last year, and ADR is holding steady, with increases between 3% and 5%.

Current reservations tend to be last minute, which Butron said is normal for this time of year for Mint.

"The Dominican Republic has always had great awareness in the tourism industry and a great trajectory of growth," she said. "We don't believe that these recent isolated and extremely unfortunate cases will destroy or damage what we have been building for more than 50 years.

"Tourism is a growing industry worldwide, but particularly in this country because of its natural resources, the ongoing development of new offerings and the inviting environment for foreign and local investments," she added. "Tourism growth won't stop in the Dominican Republic or at Mint. It is part of our DNA.

At Bahia Principe Hotels & Resorts, where investigations are ongoing into the deaths of several guests at three of its 13 properties, "currently all of our properties are operating as normal," said Helen Montijano, vice president of sales and marketing in the U.S./Canada markets. "We are not seeing a serious impact in terms of overall bookings.

"We're truly appreciative of our guests' continued support and collaboration through these times and have assured all our guests with current bookings that our resorts are safe," she said.

"We have tremendous respect for the authorities handling the investigations and are hopeful that they will be able to provide answers to the grieving families soon."

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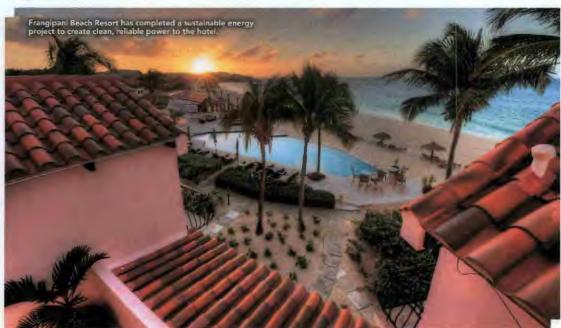
Tuesday, October 01, 2019 NEW YORK, NY 12,158 (N/A) Magazine (12Y) 12,13,16,17,20.... Caribbean Casa Bonita Tropical Lodge





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WHAT'S NEW IN THE ISLANDS: Updates You Need to Know About



Among international areas or regions that U.S. vacationers are interested in visiting during the next two years, the Caribbean is second only to Europe. This is according to MMGY Global's 2019-2020 Portrait of American Travelers, which also notes that interest in the islands is up significantly over 2018. Returning visitors, in particular, should be interested in the many significant tourism developments in the Caribbean over the past several months, especially on the hotel front. Here is an island-by-island sampling of what's new and improved.

ANGUILLA

Frangipani Beach Resort on Meads Bay has completed an extensive sustainable energy project to create clean, reliable power to the hotel and to protect the surrounding area. The endeavor that is projected to power 70 percent of the resort will offset a part of Frangipani Beach Resort's energy demand. The field's enclosure was constructed to resist hurricane-force winds. The resort is already going green by offering reusable drinking cups to guests and a filtered water refilling station designed to help minimize the number of water bottles in circulation and replacing

plastic straws with environmentally friendly paper straws.

Frangipani has 19 rooms and suites, plus a four-bedroom beachfront villa, and offers complimentary motorized and non-motorized water sports, a fitness center, tennis court, basketball court and the Plumeria Balinese Spa. It also operates Beach Hopping Boat Trips, exclusively for quests.

In January, Altamer Resort, a collection of beachfront villas located on Anguilla's Shoal Bay West Beach, reopened the Antilles Pearl Villa and has also unveiled the Petit Topaz Villa, a new villa rental product. The Antilles Pearl, a five-bedroom 12,000-square-foot villa, has one master suite with a private terrace, en suite bathroom with a jacuzzi tub and shower for two, and four additional bedrooms with en suite baths. Additional amenities include a formal dining room with seating for 12; separate entertainment room with a home theater system, wet bar, card table and custom-built pool table; 50-foot skywalk with a triangular viewing area protruding over the sand; rooftop terrace with 360-degree views of the Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea and St. Martin; and two private tennis courts, fitness facility and basketball and volleyball courts.

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rooms and suites, including deluxe and superior rooms with mountain- or ocean-views, as well as two-bedroom duplexes and villas. Each room is designed in palette of coastal colors, detailed wood accents and natural lighting.

The 4,585-square-foot Presidential Villa has ocean views, butler service, a private lobby entrance, two bedrooms, two and a half bathrooms, a dining room, a private spa room with sauna and a terrace for outdoor dining, complete with a grill and private pool. A private chef is also available upon request.

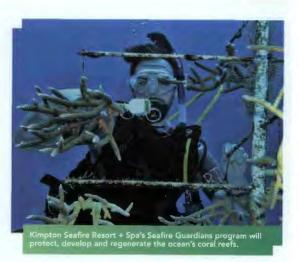
There's also an 18,000-square-foot Kempinski Spa where guests may select from indoor and outdoor wellness experiences or choose a culturally inspired treatment.

The resort's three restaurants serve up both local and international cuisine, as well as "farm-to-table" and "seato-table" dining. The resort's signature restaurant, Cabrits Market, provides an ambiance of vibrant colors and flavors meant to be indicative of a Creole market. The buffet stations include a variety of international fare, Italian, barbecue, as well as Creole-themed dinner and brunch. The Kweyol Beach Café offers a mix of Creole dishes, international favorites and home-made ice cream flavors, such as coconut. Bonsai serves Pan-Asian cuisine including sushi, sashimi, satays, Thai curries, wok-sautéed dishes and more. With both indoor and outdoor seating, the Rumfire Bar serves as the place to end the day with classic cocktails and original creations made with local Caribbean rums and dark spirits.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Club Med's newest Caribbean resort, Club Med Michés Playa Esmeralda, is set to open in December 2019. Marking its first Exclusive Collection Resort in the Americas, the new property occupies a stretch of the Dominican Republic's northeast coast in the town of Miches.

At a cost of \$100 million and occupying 93-plus acres, the new Club Med's accommodations will spread across four diverse boutique "villages": the oceanfront, adults-only



Archipelago; the lush, tropical Caribbean Paradise at the heart of the property; the adults-only "eco-chic retreat" Emerald Jungle; and the family-friendly Explorer Cove.

Club Med Michés Playa Esmeralda has taken several steps to encourage sustainability at the resort. The property plans to enact a tree re-planting program to replace every tree that had to be removed during construction. Guests will be able to attend educational mini-sessions and visit the community garden to learn about gardening, recycling and sustainability. Club Med Michés Playa Esmeralda will also ban the use of plastic straws.

In addition to Club Med's usual selection of amenities and activities, Club Med Michés Playa Esmeralda's unique environment will provide its own possibilities. Guests will be able to visit Laguna Limón, a nature reserve with waterfalls; Samaná Bay, a site known for its whale-watching opportunities; or Montaña Redonda, with its 360-degree views and its photo-famous swing.

With a new investment set in Punta Cana's Macao zone, Palace Resorts will be aiming to expand Moon

Continued on page 24

CUBA REMAINS A VIABLE OPTION

Earlier this year, the Trump Administration ended group People-to-People travel to Cuba, which caused all cruise lines to reroute their Cuba itineraries; it also affected a variety of tour operators who work on the island. If you're considering the island, it's good to know Cultural Cuba, a niche destination management company specializing in private tours to Cuba, and Classic Journeys continue to operate its itineraries despite the restrictions.

Programs by Cultural Cuba and Classic Journeys fall under the authorized OFAC categories of "Support for the Cuban People," "Humanitarian" and "Religious Purposes." These curated trips directly support hundreds of Cubans, including artists, musicians, dancers, school children and small business owners while giving clients insider access to authentic Cuba. The new June restrictions affect companies that organize large group tours, cruises, and independent travelers who check the People-to-People box for travel, but do not actually travel with a licensed tour operator.

Apple Vacations' programs operated by Cuba Travel
Services are also not affected by the ban because they fall
under the "Support for the Cuban People" category. The
company is also developing new ones.

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Palace Punta Cana by adding 1,200 new rooms. Palace Resorts began construction of its new 2,150-room Moon Palace Punta Cana in November 2018. The resort has 20 restaurants, nine bars, seven swimming pools, a water park, Greg Norman Eco Signature Design Golf Course, 75-booth wellness spa, casino, 118,000-square-foot Convention Center and more.

AMResorts is bringing a Dreams resort to Macao Beach in the Dominican Republic. The resort will be the hotel company's 11th property on the island, and Macao Beach will be the fifth destination in the Dominican Republic in the AMResorts collection. Once complete, **Dreams Macao Beach Punta Cana** will comprise 500 rooms and suites, all with ocean views. Guests looking for a more private experience can choose a unit within the exclusive family villa area, which will have private swimming pools, play areas and more.

The property will also offer guests Dreams Resorts &

Spa's Unlimited-Luxury vacation concept, which includes reservation-free dining options at six specialty restaurants, including a buffet, a French restaurant and a Coco Café with an ice cream parlor. Guests will also be able to take advantage of seven bar experiences, including a swim-up bar, and a sports bar concept.

Three swimming pools include two that are infinity pools overlooking Macao Beach and the hills of Punta Cana, as well as an on-site waterpark, Core Zone Teen's Club, Explorer's Club for Kids, gaming lounge, a batting cage and more.

Earlier this year, Mint Hotels & Residences debuted in the Dominican Republic with a selection of independent boutique properties. The idea behind the collection is to offer hotels in a variety of settings and destinations, encouraging guests to travel between the properties, exploring more of the island. The Mint roster currently includes The Bannister Hotel & Yacht Club (Samaná); Casa Bonita Tropical Lodge (Barahona); Punta Rucia Lodge (Punta Rucia); El Portillo Residences (Las Terrenas in Samaná); and Los Altos Residences (Casa de Campo).

Prior to joining Mint, each of these hotels had to undergo several upgrades to the hardware of the property (think: new furniture and decorations) as well as new service training for the staff. Mint also brought in new general managers for each of the properties.

Upon landing at any one of the Dominican Republic's three major international airports (Santo Domingo's Las



Above: Casa Bonita Tropical Lodge in Barahona, Dominicat Republic, Left: The spa at Meliá Punta Cana Beach Resort.

Americas International Airport, Santiago International Airport and Punta Cana International Airport), guests are met at the jetway and taken to a VIP lounge to clear customs and connect with their private transportation. When departing the DR, guests are escorted through customs and security, and delivered to the VIP lounge.

Meliá Hotels International celebrated the grand opening of two distinct new properties in June:

Meliá Punta Cana Beach Resort and Meliá Caribe Beach Resort, which were formerly one property.

An adults-only property, Meliá Punta Cana Beach Resort consists of 544 rooms, including standard junior suites and 136 The Level suites. Amenities of The Level, an increased-service offering, include VIP lounge for check-in/out, an exclusive pool, additional restaurant inclusivity at the Quimera Restaurant & Rooftop, free Internet access, premium beverages, and hors d'oeuvres alongside coffee/tea service throughout the day. The Level Concierge can also arrange for priority reservations for à la carte restaurants, treatments at the spa, golf reservations and more.

Dining options at Meliá Punta Cana Beach Resort include seven restaurant concepts with cuisine ranging from Mediterranean and Italian to Asian and Caribbean. Activities include Latin dance classes in the water, cultural workshops, team sports and fitness classes. Also included among the property's luxury offerings is access to the 18-hole Cocotal golf course designed by José Gancedo.

Specializing in family-friendly activities, services and amenities, Meliá Caribe Beach Resort offers an array

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of room options, specifically designed to meet multigenerational needs. Featuring 611 rooms, including 154 The Level Suites, 125 Beachside Family Rooms, and a mix of 332 Premium Beachside and Deluxe Rooms, the resort works to combine the essence of the Caribbean with modern all-inclusive spaces.

Meliá Caribe Beach Resort debuts with eight dining options on property. Some of these include, Riviera, an all-day international eatery that is exclusively accessible to The Level guests. Additional venues include: Alma, blending traditional Spanish recipes with modern techniques; Barefoot, a casual beachfront grill and bar; and Merkado, overlooking the beach with family-style seating that can host large groups, a kid's corner and ice cream shop. Opening later this year will be Tartufo, serving Italian and Mediterranean fare; Bazaar, an à la carte restaurant featuring food trucks and American grill style food stations; and O Grille.

Other amenities include a lineup of family entertainment activities, access to Bávaro Beach as well as several pools, and an arcade featuring popular gaming and virtual reality consoles. The property also has an interactive waterpark named 'Splash Island.' The Splash Water Park at Meliá Caribe Beach features slides, SplashPad, cascades and an interactive swimming pool.

GRENADA

Silversands Grenada opened this past winter with Beach Residences that can accommodate children, but their unique layout (of five semi-connected buildings) means that parents and children will be entirely separated at night; we would recommend these rooms for families with adult children or traveling couples.

Walking into the lobby, guests are greeted by the 300-plus-foot infinity pool — the longest in the Caribbean. Flanking the pool is an Asian-inspired restaurant, a pool bar and café; just off the lobby is a rum and cigar lounge.

Scheduled to open in 2022, Six Senses La Sagesse, Grenada will be set along a beach on the southern part of the island and will be part of a mixed-use development. Being on the beach, water will be a focal point of the property, beginning with the lobby, which will have its own water features. There will be 100 rooms — all of which will be made with sustainable and repurposed materials. There will also be a number of villas, each with its own private plunge pool and ocean views. The resort will additionally offer a menu of specialty wellness treatments, as well as Caribbean healing traditions and rejuvenation journeys. Tip: Guests will be able to customize their wellness journey, including the products, which they can create from local herbs, fruits and spices (Grenada is the "Isle of Spice," after all).

Dining at Six Senses La Sagesse, Grenada will focus on fresh seafood and local produce harvested on site or from nearby producers. For drinks, guests can opt for the pirate-inspired Rum Shack, or they can use the swim-up bar or sip served refreshments poolside.

Royalton Grenada Resort and Spa is set to launch on March 1, 2020. It will have 269 suites in an area known for its mountains, waterfalls and historical sites. It will offer direct access to two of the island's white-sand beaches. Amenities include 24-hour room service, complimentary non-motorized water sports, free high-speed Wi-Fi resortwide, a spa and more. Each suite is equipped with rain showers and two-person soaker tubs.

It will also be the first property within the Royalton portfolio with the new Ma Maison restaurant, a new dining concept for the chain. The bistro-style eatery will offer French cuisine in a waterfront setting. Guests also receive unlimited reservation-free dining at the resort's à la carte restaurants included as part of their stay.



JAMAICA

Couples Resorts Jamaica plans to renovate the 150-suite, all-inclusive Couples Sans Souci in Ocho Rios. The \$7 million project will begin May 1 and is scheduled for completion in late October 2020. The renovations will include 78 suites and the Hibiscus Cottage, Balloon Bar Terrace, reconfiguration of the Band Gazebo, Balloon Bar, Casanova Restaurant and Kitchen, Bella Vista Restaurant and relocation of tennis courts near Sunset Beach.

Couples Sans Souci is perched on 35 acres of cliffside bluffs overlooking the Caribbean. It has winding stone walkways, hidden grottos, tropical foliage and natural mineral springs. Included in a stay at the resort stay are unlimited spirits, scuba diving and watersports, as well as 24-hour dining and nightly entertainment.

The Tryall Club in Montego Bay is undergoing a multiphase renovation project set to debut in the winter

Continued on page 28

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MEET NATURA CABANA BOUTIQUE HOTEL & SPA MINT HOTEL & RESIDENCE'S NEWEST FAMILY MEMBER!

Intimate Eco-Sensitive Wellness Lodge Receives Refresh & Updated Amenities

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, October 24, 2019 – <u>MINT Hotels & Residences</u>, a boutique hotel brand in the Dominican Republic that is redefining the guest experience, is pleased to announce the newest member of its family, <u>Natura Cabana Boutique Hotel & Spa</u>.

An intimate 12-bungalow eco-friendly hotel, Natura Cabana is the perfect location for those who wish to unwind, unplug, and travel with a low carbon footprint. Located on the picturesque coast of Cabarete, Puerto Plata, Natura Cabana is nestled amongst acres of swaying palms and fruit trees, on one of the most spectacular coastlines in the Dominican Republic.



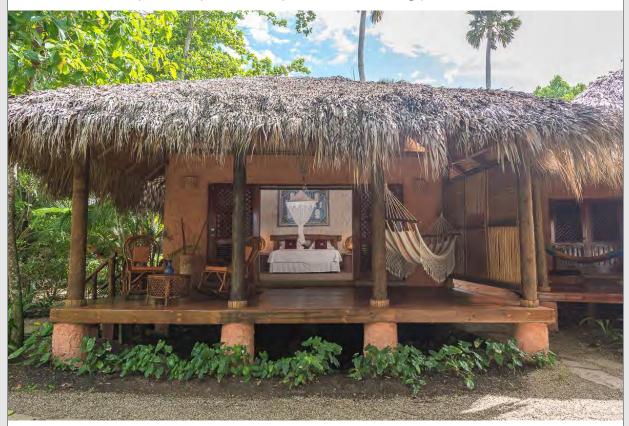
With its own yoga temple and a new Pilates fitness program, wellness is a way of life at Natura Cabana. Yoga and "Pilafit" classes are held daily led by local instructors and wellness events are hosted weekly along with an array of retreats scattered throughout the year. Guests of the established boutique eco-resort enjoy clean eating as the hotels' two restaurants — Karaya and Natura — harvest their own ingredients straight from the newly-planted organic garden.

Combining natural harmony and elegance, Natura Cabana has added new beachside amenities this season. Now guests can enjoy a relaxing massage to the soothing sounds of the Atlantic ocean at the new open-air spa casita, a variety of seaside hammocks for lazing the day away and a castaway chic beach bar serving everyone's favorite island libations from its new cocktail menu.



Each of the sustainably built one, two- and three-bedroom bungalows with private terraces have been given a soft vibrant refresh yet still maintain the tranquility and peace for which Natura Cabana is known. Feng Shui designed to maximize the circulation of positive energy, the uniquely decorated open-air bungalows, are crafted of traditional palm thatched roofs, while a variety of locally sourced mahogany, bamboo, coral and artistic stonework accent the interiors. Mosquito netting canapes don each bed, while ceiling fans and screened windows allow guests to be lulled to sleep by fresh ocean breezes and sounds of the sea.

Recognized as one of the best surfing and kite surfing locations in the world, Cabarete is the perfect destination for adventure seekers and watersports fanatics. Lessons for both kite surfing and surfing can be organized through the resort along with all of the area's other activities, including: snorkeling, scuba diving, jungle ziplining, exploring hidden waterfalls, diving in underwater caves, swimming with dolphins, horseback riding, and much more. For those feeling less than active, there's the lushly landscaped centrally located swimming pool.



Only 10 minutes away is the lively town of Cabarete, known for its numerous restaurants and bars and shops with locally handcrafted products, downtown is an excellent spot for relaxed sunset dining and nightlife. Natura Cabana is easily accessible from either the Puerto Plata Airport (20 minutes) or from the Santiago International Airport (1.5 hours). Rates start at just \$250.00 per night plus taxes, includes breakfast, WiFi and free parking.

Now boasting six boutique hotels under its umbrella, Mint Hotels & Residences are located in some of the destination's most breathtaking and desirable locales – mountains, beaches, rain-forests and marinas, inviting guests to see the authentic side of Dominican Republic. From the lush mountains of Barahona to the crystal-clear waters and white sand beaches of Punta Rucia to the chic Samaná peninsula, each property offers an intimate and unspoiled setting, oozing with tropical bliss, lush landscapes and environmental harmony.

Guests are encouraged to combine two or more of these extraordinary locations through the company's *MINT Experience* and create a personally tailored holiday that includes exceptional services such as private helicopter or seaplane transfers, VIP airport escorts and authentic local excursions.



For more information on *Natura Cabana Boutique Hotel & Spa* please visit www.naturacabana.com or for *MINT Hotels & Residences* please visit www.minthotelsresidences.com or call toll free: USA 1-888-970-0832 or Canada 1-833-703-9810

***EDITORS NOTE: For a selection of high-resolution images CLICK HERE ***

ABOUT MINT HOTELS & RESIDENCES

MINT Hotels & Residences is a burgeoning boutique hotel brand redefining the luxury guest experience in the Dominican Republic. Comprised of five independently owned properties, each perfectly exemplify the brand attributes, which include: offering a unique sense of place, outstanding service, and authentic experiences that ignite the senses, while, above all, deeply respecting the environment. From the lush mountains of Barahona, to the crystal-clear waters and white sand beaches of Punta Rucia to the chic Samaná peninsula, each of the properties' compelling locales offer guests an intimate and unspoiled setting oozing with tropical bliss and eco-harmony. Guests can combine two or more of these locations with exceptional services, like private helicopter or seaplane transfers, VIP airport escorts and local excursions, to create a personally tailored MINT Experience. MINT is operated by Hospitality Management Solutions (HMS), a leading real estate development and management company with holdings in the Dominican Republic, Central America and The Caribbean. For more information, and to see the full collection of MINT properties, please visit www.minthotelsresidences.com

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PRESS CONTACTS:

D&DPR

www.dndpr.com

Tel: 1.646.393.4392

Teresa Delaney <u>Teresa@dndpr.com</u> Nichole DiBenedetto <u>Nichole@dndpr.com</u>



Ecofriendly resort in Puerto Plata joins Mint

By Gay Nagle Myers Monday, December 16, 2019



A pool at the Natura Cabana boutique property.

The newest member of Mint Hotels & Resorts, a boutique hotel brand in the Dominican Republic, is Natura Cabana Boutique Hotel & Spa in Puerto Plata.

The 12-bungalow, ecofriendly hotel is set amidst palm and fruit trees and offers its guests fitness programs, two restaurants that use ingredients from an onsite organic garden, a beach bar, a pool and a variety of activities from kitesurfing lessons to jungle ziplining.

The open-air bungalows range from one to three bedrooms; each has ceiling fans and mosquito-netting canopies over the beds.

Ten minutes away is the town of Cabarete, which known for its restaurants, bars and shops.

Mint has six boutique hotels in the DR and offers the option of combination stays at two or more of its locations.







NEW WHALE WATCHING GETAWAY PROVIDES GUESTS INTIMATE ACCESS TO HUMPBACKS OFF THE D.R.'S STUNNING SAMANÁ PENINSULA

The Bannister Hotel & Yacht Club's, A Mint Hotel & Residence Property, New Package Offers Local Eco Excursions to Explore Surrounding Natural Beauty

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic - November 20, 2019 – The Dominican Republic's boutique hotel brand <u>MINT Hotels & Residence</u>s is living up to its tagline "a journey to the authentic" with a new whale watching package from <u>The Bannister Hotel & Yacht Club</u>, a resort set on the country's stunning Samaná peninsula.



From January through March, about 2,000 humpback whales come to reproduce in the warm waters of the Atlantic Ocean off the Dominican Republic. The show is impressive as the 40-ton males breach and jump through the water while the mothers and offspring play nearby. Samaná is considered one of the best places in the world for humpback whale watching, and with The Bannister's n e w Whale Watching Getaway, guests can experience these giant sea creatures up close and personal.

A three-hour whale watching excursion is the highlight of the package, which also includes a boat trip to nearby Cayo Levantado beach, a three-night stay in a

mountain view room (upgrade based on availability), daily breakfast, and free WiFi. Should guests want to explore more or indulge at the resort's Mee Spa, discounts on treatments and additional excursions are available. The package price is US\$625.00, plus taxes of 28%, based on double occupancy. Single and extra person supplements available on request.

To book this package and other offers from The Bannister Hotel & Yacht Club visit www.thebannisterhotel.com Agents receive a 10% commission on all bookings.

About Bannister Hotel & Yacht Club

The hotel's 32 spacious rooms face the breathtaking beauty of Samaná Bay and each has its own private balcony and fully equipped kitchen. Guests can spend their days at one of two pools, waterfront restaurants and bars or venture out to the beach on the complimentary water shuttle to nearby Cayo Levantado, where the hotel has its own private VIP area. For those feeling more adventurous, guests can hire a boat and spend the day at the famous Playa Rincon, or Los Haitises National Park and some unspoiled locales such as Playa del Valle, La Playita, Hermitaño, Playa Fronton, Playa Galeras, Playa Bonita or Playa Coson. For more information, or reservations visit www.thebannisterhotel.com email reservations@thebannisterhotel.com or call (U.S.) 1-888-970-0832 or (Canada) 1-833-703-9810.

For more about *MINT Hotels & Residences* please visit www.minthotelsresidences.com or call +1 (809) 540-5304.

***EDITORS NOTE: For a selection of high-resolution images CLICK HERE ***

ABOUT MINT HOTELS & RESIDENCES

MINT Hotels & Residences is a burgeoning boutique hotel brand redefining the luxury guest experience in the Dominican Republic. Comprised of five independently owned properties, each perfectly exemplify the brand attributes, which include: offering a unique sense of place, outstanding service, and authentic experiences that ignite the senses, while, above all, deeply respecting the environment. From the lush mountains of Barahona, to the crystal-clear waters and white sand beaches of Punta Rucia to the chic Samaná peninsula, each of the properties' compelling locales offer guests an intimate and unspoiled setting oozing with tropical bliss and eco-harmony. Guests can combine two or more of these locations with exceptional services, like private helicopter or seaplane transfers, VIP airport escorts and local excursions, to create a personally tailored MINT Experience. MINT is operated by Hospitality Management Solutions (HMS), a leading real estate development and management company with holdings in the Dominican Republic, Central America and The Caribbean. For more information, and to see the full collection of MINT properties, please visit www.minthotelsresidences.com

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PRESS CONTACTS:

D&D PR

www.dndpr.com

Tel: 1.646.393.4392

Teresa Delaney <u>Teresa@dndpr.com</u>
Nichole DiBenedetto Nichole@dndpr.com







CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS WITH THESE LAST-MINUTE TRAVEL DEALS TO BEAUTIFUL SAMANÁ BAY IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC The Bannister Hotel & Yacht Club's Holiday Offers Are the Perfect Gift For The Travel Procrastinator

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic - December 17, 2019- For those who waited till the last minute to book their holiday getaways, the Dominican Republic's boutique hotel brand <u>MINT Hotels & Residences</u>has you covered. Experience a journey to the authentic at <u>The Bannister Hotel & Yacht Club</u> a 32-room resort set on the country's chic Samaná peninsula and take advantage of great rates with their "New Years in Paradise" or "Christmas in Paradise" offers.



Hoping to forgo going home for the holidays? Come home to The Bannister with their "Christmas in Paradise" package. From now until December 27, guests who want to celebrate the joy of the season in the tropics can do so with rates starting at USD\$140 + 28% for a mountain view suite or USD\$165 for an ocean front suite based on double occupancy. This oh-soincludes rate breakfast daily, stand-up paddle boards and three

course dinner for two at the hotel's waterfront restaurant, La Regatta.

From December 28 to January 2, The Bannister is offering thei***New Years in Paradise*** package with rates starting at USD\$180 + 28% based on double occupancy for an ocean or mountain view suite (*based on availability*). This celebratory rate includes a welcome drink, breakfast daily, as well as early check-in and late check out.

Not sure where to usher in the new decade? Come ring in the new year at the hotel's **New Year's Eve Party** complete with a gala dinner that includes afive-course tasting menu at La Deauville overlooking the marina, a DJ, live music and open bar until 1:00am for USD\$110 per person.

Throughout the holidays, The Bannister is offering a variety of experiences both on and off property - some of which require an additional fee - including an excursion to a nearby zipline park, ceviche and mojitos making classes, a popcorn & movie night, a mountain biking tour to Playa del Valle, and on January 2, there's a beach BBQ on nearby La Playita complete with DJ.

Guests of The Bannister can spend their days at one of two pools, waterfront restaurants and bars or venture out to the beach at nearby Cayo Levantado via complimentary water shuttle and relax in the hotels very own private VIP area. Those feeling more adventurous can hire a boat and spend the day at Hermitaño, Playa Fronton and Los Haitises National park or head off and explore by land some unspoiled near by locales such as Playa del Valle, La Playita, Playa Galeras, Playa Bonita or Playa Coson. Of course, there's always the hotel's Mee Spa for the ultimate in pampering and relaxation.

To book these packages from The Bannister Hotel & Yacht Club, please visit www.thebannisterhotel.com or mail reservations@thebannisterhotel.com

About Bannister Hotel & Yacht Club

The hotel's 32 spacious rooms face the breathtaking beauty of Samaná Bay and each has its own private balcony and fully equipped kitchen. Guests can spend their days at one of two pools, waterfront restaurants and bars or venture out to the beach on the complimentary water shuttle to nearby Cayo Levantado, where the hotel has its own private VIP area. For those feeling more adventurous, guests can hire a boat and spend the day at the famous Playa Rincon, or Los Haitises National Park and some unspoiled locales such as Playa del Valle, La Playita, Hermitaño, Playa Fronton, Playa Galeras, Playa Bonita or Playa Coson. More information, or reservations can be made at www.thebannisterhotel.com by emailing reservations@thebannisterhotel.com or by calling (U.S.) 1-888-970-0832 or (Canada) 1-833-703-9810.

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PRESS CONTACTS:

D&D PR

www.dndpr.com

Tel: 1.646.393.4392
Teresa Delaney Teresa@dndpr.com
Nichole DiBenedetto Nichole@dndpr.com



HOTELS & RESIDENCES



STAY ANOTHER DAY IN PARADISE THIS WINTER WITH MINT HOTELS & RESIDENCES

Book Three Nights & the Fourth Is Free at Three Boutique Beach Resorts in The Dominican Republic

SANTO DOMINIGO, D.R. – FEBRUARY 20, 2020 his winter, three MINT Hotels & Residences resorts in the Dominican Republic are making a journey to the authentic even more enticing by offering **MINT WINTER**, a "book three nights and the fourth is free" package.

This special package is offered at <u>Punta Rucia Lodge</u> on the unspoiled North Coast, <u>Natura Cabana</u> in Cabarate or at <u>The Bannister Hotel & Yacht Club</u>on the Samaná Peninsula. To book, visit the individual hotel's website, select four nights and enter the promotional code MINTWINTER. The package must be booked by March 31st, 2020.

MINT Winter also includes a welcome drink, breakfast daily, round-trip airport transfers, Free WiFi, 20% off spa treatments and is based on double occupancy.



PUNTA RUCIA LODGE

Nestled along the pristine waters and white sand beach of the North coast, this simple, yet stylish, resort and its 12 individual A-Frame bungalows are the definition of barefoot luxury. Punta Rucia Lodge offers an infinity pool, restaurant, terrace, bar, beach side spa, a private dock and even a helipad. Guests can kayak or paddle board right off the white sand beach or take an excursion to Cayo Arena island, one of the most spectacular spots for snorkeling.

The package price is US\$1,165.00 plus taxes of 28% for a one-bedroom Ocean view suite and includes round-trip airport transfers between Puerto Plata International Airport.

For more information or to book MINT WINTER at this hotel please visit www.puntarucialodge.com



NATURA CABANA BOUTIQUE HOTEL & SPA

An intimate 12-bungalow eco-friendly hotel, <u>Natura Cabana</u> is the perfect location for those who wish to unwind, unplug, and travel with a low carbon footprint. Located on the picturesque coast of Cabarete, Puerto Plata, Natura Cabana is nestled amongst acres of swaying palms and fruit trees, on one of the country's most spectacular coastlines. Relaxation and wellness are a way of life at the resort with its own yoga temple and a Pilates fitness program.

The package price US\$1,165.00 plus taxes of 28% for a one-bedroom bungalow and includes round-trip airport transfers between Puerto Plata International Airport.

For more information or to book MINT WINTER at this hotel please visit www.naturacabana.com



THE BANNISTER HOTEL & YACHT CLUB

Located on the chic Samaná peninsula, each of The Bannister Hotel & Yacht Club's 30 spacious rooms face the breathtaking beauty of Samaná Bay and offer a private balcony and fully equipped kitchen. Guests can enjoy two pools and waterfront restaurants and bars or venture out to the beach on the complimentary water shuttle to nearby Cayo Levantado, where the hotel has its own private VIP area. For those feeling more adventurous, boat hires are available to spend the day at the famous Playa Rincon or take a whale watching excursion to see the magnificent humpback whales who visit the region through the end of March.

The package price is US\$998.00 plus taxes of 28% for a mountain view suite and round-trip airport transfers between Las Americas International Airport in Santo Domingo.

For more information or to book MINT WINTER this hotel please visit www.thebannisterhotel.com

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D&D PR

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Tel: 1.646.393.4392

Nichole DiBenedetto Nichole@dndpr.com

Teresa Delaney <u>Teresa@dndpr.com</u>

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TERRY WARD

Lonely Planet Writer

19 DECEMBER 2019

Escape the all-inclusive crowds at these 5 Caribbean hotels

Did you travel all the way to an idyllic Caribbean island only to find yourself watching an NFL game on the big screen at a pool bar surrounded by a bunch of people

you could have easily mingled with at a strip mall sports bar back home? When you're looking for the convenient comforts of an all-inclusive resort without the crowds, here are five resorts to help you step well outside the all-inclusive box on your next Caribbean vacation.



Jamaica

Jamaica is where the concept of the all-inclusive vacation was born, and there is a slew of properties here that beckon tourists onto their compounds with the lure of flat rates that include alcohol, food and water sports. We're not saying that's not a fun way to vacation for

some people, but it's not exactly conducive to getting out and mingling with Jamaicans who are doing things other than just slinging your cocktails.

For something different, make the brand new S
Hotel Jamaica in Montego Bay your base for a
different kind of Jamaica stay. The 120-room
hotel sits directly on beautiful Doctor's Cave
Beach, just five minutes from the airport, and
the style mixes Jamaican contemporary art
elements with the sophistication of South Beach
to perfect effect.

Your fellow guests are a worldly bunch of intrepid travelers, Jamaican expats returning to the island for a visit, style-setters from Kingston and the like. The glass-enclosed sky pool on the rooftop looks like it was made for Instagram and is a killer place to wade while watching the sun set over the beach below.

Nearby attractions you can reach by rental car or taxi include the spectacular bioluminescent lagoon at Glistening Waters and Rockland Bird Sanctuary in the hills outside town, where you

can hand-feed hummingbirds.

Related article: Jamaica for adrenalin

junkies



Enjoy the natural beauty of the Cabrits National Park in Dominica $\ \ \ \$ Courtesy of Cabrits Resort

Dominica

The entire island of Dominica – an English speaking island between the two French Antilles

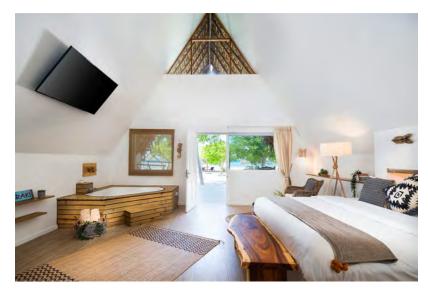
countries of Guadeloupe and Martinique in the eastern Caribbean — plays out like an escape from the all-inclusive crowd.

Dominica is the Caribbean at its most pristine and natural. And even after Hurricane Maria wreaked havoc on the island in 2017, Dominica's verdant foliage has already grown back nearly as lush as before.

Newly opened in late-2019 at the edge of a national park on the island's northeast coast, the Cabrits Resort & Spa Kempinski Dominica fronts a sliver of black sand beach and puts you close to waterfalls and great hiking within the forested headland of Cabrits National Park.

A swim at the bubbly effervescence of Champagne Reef, near the island's capital in Roseau, is a must — hot volcanic vents beneath the seafloor create the unusual effect. And if you're certified to dive, absolutely do not miss the chance to submerge on Dominica's pristine coral-covered walls during a boat dive trip with Creole Divers.

You might also like: Take a hike Dominica: the Caribbean's most adventurous island



On an island filled with all-inclusive resorts, Punta Rucia provides a little respite from the crowds in the Dominican Republic © Courtesy of the Punta Rucia Lodge

Dominican Republic

Go against the flow on your next visit to the

Dominican Republic and avoid the

pervasiveness of all-inclusives in spots like

Punta Cana by opting to stay at an independent

property with plenty of other perks instead.

Scattered around the island, from Cabarete on the north coast to the Samaná Peninsula further east, is a collection of six independent properties that make up Mint Hotels & Residences. Mint puts the island's spectacular natural landscapes at your doorstep, instead of just another pool bar and beach covered with Hobie Cats.

All of the properties are stunning, but our favorite of the bunch is Punta Rucia Lodge, where 12 free-standing, A-frame bungalows blend with the natural surrounds of Punta Rucia and epitomize the barefoot luxury Caribbean beach life you've come for.

The property has an infinity pool, beachside spa and a private dock from which you can launch a stand-up paddleboard to cruise around or head out by boat launch to tiny Cayo Arena, an offshore island with excellent snorkeling and diving.

You might also like: Dominican Republic, beyond the beaches



It's just a quick ferry ride to Isla Mujeres from Grand Fiesta Americana Coral Beach Cancun © Darren Tierney / Shutterstock

Cancun

Cancun is chock a block with massive resorts touting the all-inclusive vacation life. Once your plastic wristband is snapped on tightly, however, you may start wondering if the compound vacation life is really for you.

Up the decadence factor and add to your independence, too, by opting to stay at Grand Fiesta Americana Coral Beach Cancun, a spectacular luxury property situated right near the ferry dock to Isla Mujeres.

Fiesta Americana is a Mexican-owned hotel chain with many all-inclusive resorts around the country. But the Grand Fiesta Americana Coral Beach Cancun isn't all-inclusive and feels more like a luxury hotel you'd find some place like the French Riviera — only with excellent Mexican food.

Suites have spacious decks overlooking the pool and Caribbean Sea on a quiet cove at the north end of the Zona Hotelera. The property's spa, Gem Spa, with its amazing hydrotherapy circuit, is quite possibly the best in all of the Yucatan.

When you're up for an adventure, walk a few steps over to Playa Caracol, right next to the hotel, to catch the 30-minute ferry to Isla Mujeres — an offshore island where you can rent golf carts to tool around the back streets, sip a coconut from a street vendor and explore quiet coves for snorkeling at Garrafon Natural Reef Park.

You might also like: Day trip to Isla

Mujeres

Get away from the tourist-heavy areas in Nassau and head to the part of the Bahamas with an old-school vibe © Alexandra Lestarska / Getty Images

Bahamas

Between BahaMar and Atlantis — neither of which are all-inclusive resorts but nonetheless typify mass Caribbean tourism — Nassau can feel overrun with visitors.

For an old school Bahamas vibe in a quiet setting, set your sights west to Love Beach at Compass Point Beach Resort, where a collection of colorful standalone bungalows sit right at the ocean's edge fronting an idyllic little stretch of sand.

The hotel has an atmospheric little restaurant and sundowner bar with tables overlooking the water (fresh snapper and Caribbean spiny lobster are usually on the menu).

And it's just a short stroll out the hotel's front door to Dino's Gourmet Conch Salad, a wildly popular roadside stand in the Gambier neighborhood that draws locals for one of the island's tastiest local treats: conch salad spiked with tropical fruits like mango and pineapple.

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