



# *Trident Hotel*

*Port Antonio, Jamaica*

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In this former British Colony, driving the North Coast Highway from Montego Bay east to Port Antonio, I pass expanses of green landscapes, sugarcane, and banana plantations spread along the foothills to my right, the dark blue Caribbean Sea on my left. The 'highway' is dotted with tiny villages whose brightly colored walls and zinc roofs homes are often barely larger than the equally colorful makeshift stands, bars, and eateries selling mangos, guavas, otaheite apples, breadfruit, patties, and coconut water, all staples for locals and tourists, I am tempted to stop but the brilliant white full moon arcing through the particularly pink dusk, coaxes me toward Port Antonio.

It's evening as I reach the midpoint of my trip, I bear left in downtown Ocho Rios, spurred by Noel Coward's refrain and lured by Ian Fleming's espionage novels' storylines, I flash past a sidewalk party blasting what else, classic Reggae by none other than an actual Jamaican, Bob Marley.

It was while visiting Ian Fleming's property Goldeneye that Noel Coward so fell in love with the island that he decided to buy his own property, Firefly. Fleming found enough unspoiled beauty, rusticism, exoticism and history to inspire his creativity and authored more than a dozen Bond novels in his home just up the road.

My five hour drive ends at a tall nondescript white wall whose stylized "T" and large wooden gates, mark the exclusive Trident Hotel. Once inside, Shantiqua greets me with a most welcome tall glass of chilled coconut water and refreshing ice cold, lemongrass towelettes. The staff is as gracious and inviting as the pristine sleek décor. Past the two Brancusi statues, onto an open grassy veranda, lighted narrow reflecting pools in the walkway precede the infinity swimming pool. Beyond that lies only sea. Following Travis, my bellman, I make a left and we head down the palm tree lined pathway to my very private dwelling.





One of 13, my seaside villa is elegantly spacious and breezy. Furnished in mid-century Scandinavian and modern (Saarinen, Gino, Eames) great care has been given to all details, from the eclectic art collections, imported wood floors, Apple TV, JBL boom boxes, everything is top of the line. The rooms' primarily white décor, accented by dark wood furnishings. The spacious bathroom appointments and outdoor tub are by Tyrell and Laing, Hans Grohe, and Kohler, the plush Egyptian cotton towels will dry me luxuriously before I put on the robe and slippers. Heading through the glass living room doors I step onto the private deck for a relaxed look at the moon reflected in the dipping pool. In the morning I'll swim to the edge and scan the coast in both directions, where there will doubtless be fishermen in wooden boats spearing and catching dinner.

I could start the day wet and finish up dry, this villa is a perfect place for the sunrises and sunsets that turn the blue Caribbean black and red.

Byron brings my seaside dinner at Trident's Veranda restaurant overlooking grazing sheep sculptures, and the large infinity pool. He's been here 'from the beginning' (over 30 years) when the original Trident existed and has great stories to share, including the evolution of the property.

Back in the '50's the Trident Villas were built by architect Earl Levy, as hotel rentals, nestled between Turtle Crawl Bay and the sea. In the late '70's Levy began construction on his dream project, the iconic sprawling Trident Castle. Fashioned in the 18th century English colonial style, white turrets and all, the 8 bedrooms is a surprisingly small number contrast its breathtaking ballroom, exquisite dining hall, spacious living rooms, myriad stairways and terraces. About a decade of fitful construction was needed to complete this gleaming extravaganza. No expense was spared and the rooms are still decorated with beautiful antiques from around the world, Roman statues, glistening chandeliers, and a pair of stone alligators that guard the oversized entrance.





If you visit, be sure to ask for the story behind the humorous expression of this reptilian couple. Levy lived here a short time before selling the whole 7 acres to the most recent owner, investor Michael Lee Chin. Trident Castle is now rented out for special occasions; film-shoots, celebrity weekend getaways, and weddings (there's even an ordained chapel on the property). This short seaside walk from the villas to the castle should be a must for all guests. Just make sure you let the front desk know, as there is always a guard with his dog protecting the property. Trident now owns about 35 acres of land and until the new public road is rerouted to pass outside the property, the short wall might not be enough to keep out the curious.

Financial investment magnate Michael Lee Chin originally from Port Antonio, started as grounds keeper at a nearby property before moving to study in Canada. Extremely successful, he returned to the island, investing in land, hotels, coffee and even bought the Jamaican bank that had originally made him his student loan. Chin purchased the villas in 2003, acquired Trident Castle and it's 7 acres in 2009 and began extensive renovations. The new Trident opened in 2012.

I begin tonight's dinner with fried yam and mackerel paté, followed by grilled red snapper in a sweet soursop sauce, accompanied by callaloo (similar to collard greens) and lightly steamed veggies (everything is organically farmed.) The yummy finish to this delicious meal is the chocolate temptation, a triple chocolate mousse beneath almond crumble.

Back in my villa, I decide to take a moonlit soak in the outside bathtub, accompanied by the sound of gentle waves breaking on the rocks before sinking into my huge bed for a most welcome night's sleep.

The new day begins the way its predecessor ended, with a gorgeous pink sky, I take breakfast on the veranda: A cornucopia of tropical fruits, scrambled eggs, pancakes with maple syrup and a pot of 100% Blue Mountain Coffee and friendly chats with the staff on food prep, job satisfaction and the weather are the perfect start to my day of luxuriating.



Down the manicured path that leads past my villa, behind the Secret Garden-esque portico, a door opens to a private champagne colored beach surrounding a built up natural cove. Arthur the Lifeguard sets up my beach chair and is another great storyteller, answering my many questions about the ecology here. Trident's many partnerships include the Marine Sanctuary and there is a protected fish nursery in the first of two coves as one swims to the open waters. Here you find at least 5 different fish; parrot, grunt, snapper, sergeant major, doctor fish, and lobster. With his calm expert guidance, I have my first paddleboard experience, which is a fun way to see the huge property from the water. He offers all kinds of activities, from table tennis, soccer and football, to snorkeling, windsurfing, and swimming lessons, "it's all about relaxing and trusting". If you prefer to just be pulled around on an air mattress, Trident will do that too.

Arthur informs me that I can have any of my meals served wherever I wish, on the beach, by the pool, in my villa. It seems that my every expectation and wish can be fulfilled here at Trident and the staff prides itself in anticipating and attending to their guests every need.

After a long day in and out of the water, I finish up with a light dinner and the Dustin Hoffman movie "Quartet" in the large upstairs digital audio and high intensity-LCD projector-equipped entertainment theatre, The healthy movie selection that supplements Trident's Netflix subscription, available either in here or the villas, made it hard for me to settle on Hoffman.

After the movie, I grab an exotic fruit drink downstairs at the Time Bar, where some of the finest Cuban rums and delicious blended drinks are created, before heading next door to shoot a game of pool on the Explorer's Lounge antique pool table. The large, comfortable living room area has a huge bookshelf displaying variety art and literature tomes, board games on one wall and the old upright piano on the opposite wall.

The pouring rain awakens me the second morning but I'm relieved it's just a squall, typical of this time of year and passes within a few minutes. Breakfast is a more Jamaican affair today, scrambled eggs, fried bammy (cassava), salt fish and baked beans, more callaloo, yams, boiled green bananas and the requisite blue mountain coffee. Trident's General Manager Dwight Powell, a veteran luxury hotelier, has agreed to meet me this morning for a grand tour of the Castle and the region beyond the hotel.

We walk east down Trident's recommended jogging trail toward Pegg Point, and adjust our pace to ensure sea spray doesn't get us on a section of pathway particularly close to the water. Passing sea grape trees Dwight fills me in on some of the environmental organizations Trident partners with. Since much of the water off this property is now a marine sanctuary and consequently off limits to fishing, CASE (College of Agricultural, Science and Environment) is now retraining local fishermen as certified scuba instructors and guides to promote this area as a perfect diving destination with an emphasis on conscious, environmentally sustainable tourism and hotel management. The Alligator Head Foundation and Marine Labs is another of Trident's partners with whom they plan to open another "Red Rooster" restaurant with chef Marcus Samuelsson of the Food Network. Across the street from us is the Trident Castle Furniture Restorations Project, where many of the castle's antiques are restored and much of the villas' furniture is built.

Built in the 50's by architect and developer, Earl Levy, used the proceeds he earned from building the nearby Jamaican Palace to purchase the Trident Castle land. This dream project took 10 years to complete and Levy remained onsite during the construction, living in each room until its completion.

Getting back to those two big alligators guarding the front of the castle, visitors are challenged to determine each one's sex. Sliding one's hand under the croc's lower belly will answer the riddle. This challenge is a small indication of Levy's oversized, madcap sense of humor, who, before selling the castle, made Trident THE hang out spot in Jamaica in the '80's hosting visitors like Tom Cruise, Whoopi Goldberg, Kevin Klein, Kate Moss, Denzel Washington and many more are all welcome to return and find property-wide WiFi and flat screen HD TVs have been added to the Old World Elegance and traditional commitment to service that goes above and beyond guests' expectations.

Walking back to the Hotel down the long driveway lined with 50-year old casuarina trees, Dwight points out Trident's brand new full-service spa and beauty salon whose treatment rooms, which open to the sea, allow guests to hear waves breaking on the rocks below. Again only the finest materials have been used to ensure that this offers top of the line services. The spa sits on the far side of the reception and restaurant area as well as from the large recently renovated state-of-the-art gym, which is open 24 hours a day.



the 1950s. In its prime in the '70,s The Cove was one of the island's most luxurious and beautiful properties. The scenery is a compelling enough back-drop for scenes in Tom Cruise's and Cameron Diaz's movie Knight and Day, whose locations are a stone's throw from the phenomenally turquoise colored Blue Lagoon, where some of the scenes in the Brooke Shields movie of the same name were shot.

Winding along the coastline, we are heading to the birthplace of authentic Jerk Cuisine, Boston's Portland Jerk. This style of cooking was born of the Maroons, slaves who had escaped to the mountains where they combined their African techniques for cooking meat with the spices native to Jamaica. This unique distinctly sweet, tangy, spicy flavor relies on smoking meat with pimento (allspice) wood under zinc. Traditionally, since this cooking is made for the whole family, freshly caught or hunted meat is slowly smoked and the spiciness is then added into the sauce. We grab our food to go, headed to nearby Boston Beach, surely one of the island's most beautiful. Sitting in rented beach chairs overlooking the brilliant turquoise bay we watch the locals surf while the children play and others relax in the shade. Enjoying our meal of perfectly jerked, tender chicken, festival (sweet baked bread sticks) smashed sweet potato, fried green plantain and feel grateful.

Because Trident encourages its guests to go out and explore the island's spectacular beauty, Dwight and I head off property by car. Heading past the Castle, what is an exploration for me is a routine exercise of Dwight's total familiarity with the area. He tells me Port Antonio, with its population of around 8000, is in its developmental stage, offering great opportunities for growth and development. Luckily most of this is being done intelligently and sustainably. This part of the island is a lot like what Negril was like in 60's & 70's before the massive development and over construction. Apparently, the Jamaican government is developing this strategically and mindfully, keeping the focus on quality rather than quantity.

Dwight also informs me that tourism started on the island via the banana and other exported crops trade, with enterprising ship owners and intrepid tourists realizing they could each take advantage of empty cargo ships returning to Jamaica.

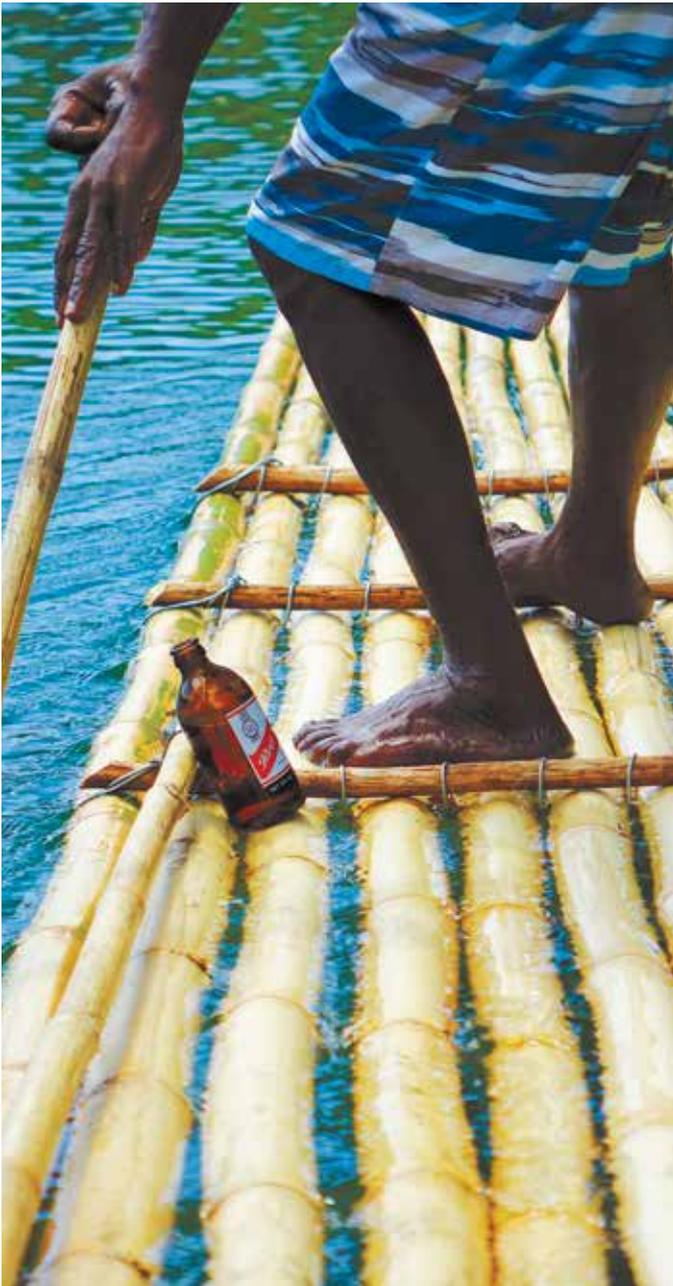
In the time it takes me to hear the story we are passing through the town of Drapers, where Woody's Burgers are supposedly well worth the wait, the service is slow but the burgers come highly recommended. Continuing through the area called San San, Dwight shows me Frenchman's Cove, owned by the Weston family since





Portland's year-round sunshine, with the exception of the rainy months of May and June, plus the warm climate gives its largest town, Port Antonio, incredibly lush rain forest vegetation. Located just north of the Blue Mountains, this is the wettest and greenest part of the island. Another fascinating and unique excursion to experience authentic and timeless Portland Parish is a relaxing three-hour raft ride down the beautiful Rio Grande River with Captain Horace guiding passengers on a long bamboo raft he made himself. We drift down a waterway whose original rafts brought bananas from plantations on either side of the river to ships waiting at the mouth of the Rio Grande. Apparently, Errol Flynn was the one who popularized this timeless transportation mode by inviting his guests to moonlit river rafting excursions. Stepping from the raft into the cab Trident arranged to bring me to and from the river, I am struck by the variety this stay offers, a short time ago I enjoyed an outdoor meal served on a paper plate by Belinda, who had walked an hour from her home, carrying food and pots she uses at Belinda's Canteen, the open air kitchen and dining area whose wood fire and heated rocks are the stoves she uses to prepare tourists' meals.

Having eaten lunch in the jungle by the banks of the Rio Grande, my dinner reservation is indoors back at the hotel where Mike's Supper Club regularly jumps on Saturday nights. Trident's GM, Dwight informs me that the excellent cuisine at this cabaret lounge, with its private speakeasy vibe, is not to be missed. Accompanied by Paul's beautiful refrain to Misty on the 1917 Ferrari Red Steinway Baby Grand, I enjoy my last scrumptious meal at this amazing hotel. Again, I am amazed at variety of vegetables and tropical fruit that grow here in abundance. One of the many wonderful things in Jamaica is the food where "Ital is Vital" makes up an intrinsic part of the culture, and whose Rastafarian term describes the sustainable, organic, close to the earth living, a philosophy that embraces a pure, plant-based, reaping the fruits of one's labor lifestyle, in order to maintain the best physical and spiritual health. I have been so spoiled and looked after by the spectacular beauty of this place and the attentive and expert care of Trident's staff. Staffing the property with approximately 30 ensures that there are typically two staff members for each guest.



Though Portland seems remote there are many ways to get here:

By land, a 5-hour drive from Montego Bay or 3 hours from Kingston. By air, the nearby airports accommodate business jets and chartered propeller aircraft from Kingston, Montego Bay or Negril. Helicopter service for \$1,200 US gets from Kingston to Trident's private helipad in about 15 minutes. The resort offers promotions to guests who stay 5 or more nights in the largest villa, which includes Mercedes car pickup service at any of these locations. There is talk about improving the road to Kingston, which would significantly reduce drive time around the island's east end. By sea, arrivals can either anchor out and tender in to Trident's private beach or dock in the nearby Errol Flynn Marina where the Ken Wright cruise ship terminal also services smaller exclusive luxury ships.

Making a tiny effort to go a little bit out of my way has proven to be amazingly rewarding. I haven't the superlatives to express the beauty and professionalism the Trident Hotel and Villas has to offer. This secluded, romantic, exclusive property's spectacular destination has been honored with, among other awards: TripAdvisor's 2016 # 1 ranking luxury hotel, # 1 Top small hotel in the Caribbean, Traveler's Choice 2017 winner and the GQ rating of the "coolest spot in Jamaica." I'll fondly remember my time at Trident forever.

**[www.thetridenthotel.com](http://www.thetridenthotel.com)**

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