



## The Honeymoon Travel Blog

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**JAMAICA** THE CAVES: "Our friendly waiter disappears to get our drinks and we feel like we've been left to nature's devices. Darkness is all around and the waves are pounding the rock below..."

After a long drive, in the pouring rain we are very glad to arrive at our next hideout.

Looking out of the window over the hour-long trip is an education. There are the mega resorts, the perfectly manicured lawns outside mega mansions and then there are the not so lucky. The poverty in some areas is striking and that's a part of travelling you never get used to. With high unemployment, it's obvious there's a struggle, and the divide between what you see on the streets and the luxurious resorts can't help but make you wonder. But since Jamaica's main income is now tourism, I suppose I should be pleased I'm doing my (oh-

so-small) bit, unlike those who cancelled their bookings after the recent [shootouts in Kingston](#) that claimed 70 odd lives. Then again, I can't say I blame them. It's not terribly reassuring but there's no denying crime is an issue on this island, unlike in other spots - like [Little Cayman](#) where the rooms didn't even come with keys. I'm not suggesting you can compare the two but when it comes to booking a sun, sea, sand Caribbean holiday; it's surely going to play a part.

#### **Back to our trip.**

[The Caves](#), a hippie-chic retreat, beloved by celebs and those in need of seclusion, is a change of scenery from [Half Moon](#). Thirteen cottages with dramatic sea views are nestled on the side of a cliff, surrounded by lush rainforest-like flora. There's no beach here, no long strip of palm fringed sand dotted with loungers, only nooks and crannies carved into the cliff with the odd pair of loungers. Privacy rules.

Here, taking a dip means jumping off the cliff (33ft - no thanks!) or heading down the steep stairs carved into the rock and down the ladders. At water level you soon discover the caves. These amazing grottos run along the sea (some literally right below the resort) - like the Blue Hole (a drop into the sea beneath the breakfast thatched gazebo) which looks like nature drilled through the resort down to the sea. You can even jump in, though the water there is only eight feet deep.

With the sunshine, the waters are a surreal colour, and very inviting. We get a few tips from Paul, the snorkelling/kayaking guy, and head down the perilous steps. Just inches away from the ladder the fish fest starts. I have, unfortunately, no idea of their names, but they come in beautiful blues, yellow stripes, oranges and purple shades. A little like the bedrooms.

The thatched cottages each have romantic names like Butterfly, Moonshine or Two Birds. Each come with a little kitchenette (so you can make a pot of the lovely Jamaican coffee), plenty of decorative knick-knacks, shelves stacked with books (perfect, as I had finished a tear-jerker from Nicholas Sparks) and a mish-mash of prints and colours that should give you a headache but just bring out the authentic Jamaican-Caribbean vibe. Our bright and sunny orange and yellow room is dominated by a mosquito netted-bed, romantic-looking and useful (since there is no glass on the windows here - just louvered shutters that let the breeze and possibly the bugs in). The bed comes with crazy patterned covers, painted headboard and matching wicker lamps and bedside tables that have seen better days.

The resort is 15 years old and it shows in places. But, considering it takes a battering from hurricanes regularly, it's in incredibly good shape. I suspect that the 'lived in' look is actually on purpose - it's supposed to feel homey. And nothing like a sleek five-star resort. No phones and no TVs, but the owners recently bowed to popular demand and installed air-conditioning. Just as well, as it's really, really hot.

In our room, I pick up the guest book and read notes from previous occupiers. It seems this is the place for honeymooners, and they all love it, vowing to come back for anniversaries, and sharing their tips. It's heart-warming to know how many happy people have been here, and how this beautiful, cosy hideout has made happy memories. And, it's hardly surprising - the laid-back vibe, super friendly staff, great food and unique set up are the perfect mix to leave you feeling all warm, fuzzy, and happy all over.

The only downside for me was the proximity of the road right behind the room, which meant the beautiful vistas and relaxing mood were occasionally interrupted by the insane Jamaican drivers, and their over-enthusiastic use of the horn.

The resort has a pool, hot tub, and even a private hot tub in a tiny 'room' carved into the hill where honeymooners and romantics can have a sunset soak with a stunning view. Another must-do is the cave dining; as we make our way down in the dark, we're surprised by the romantic cave set up for dinner with hundreds of tea-lights flickering in the darkness. It's beautiful. Dinner in the rock recess is surreal. We are alone (the newly-wed isolation treatment strikes again!) and when Glen, our friendly waiter, disappears to get our drinks we feel like we've been left to nature's devices - darkness is all around and the waves are pounding the rock below. It's rather special.

We're treated to a lovely split pea soup, Ackee fruit curry, grilled chicken with hot sauce and exotically tasty conch curry. We skip the chocolate cake and head back to the bar where we crash out on the daybed and share a local brew, Red Stripe Light (much nicer than Red Stripe), while chatting to other guests and the guys behind the bar who are busy fixing their finest Dirty Bananas and Chocolate Monkeys.

We both go mad for the pancakes the next morning. They are fantastic. I avoid the maple syrup and just go with butter and Golden Brown sugar - they are probably the nicest I've ever had, except for my mum's Poffertjes of course - but that's another story!

Next: our last Caribbean stop in Jamaica...

**What we loved:** The well-stocked mini-bar, the super friendly staff and the Cave dining

**Don't miss:** A sugar and peppermint scrub at the tiny Aveda spa

**If only** the road weren't there

**What to wear:** Something Bob Marley would like.

**[PREVIOUS: ARRIVING IN JAMAICA](#) "I'm not entirely surprised to find out that the Queen stayed in this very cottage..."**

*For more from Rowena, follow her [@just\\_glorious](#) - take a look at [www.justglorious.com](http://www.justglorious.com) or her portfolio at [www.carrallinson.com](http://www.carrallinson.com). For photography check [www.freerimages.com](http://www.freerimages.com)*