

Nevis — Gem Of The West Indies

Sunny island escapes are strewn across the Caribbean Sea. They vary in size and flavor — with Nevis being my personal favorite. I like this island best because it feels like a small town in an everyone-knows-everyone sort of way. I also like that cruise ships don't stop here and that most of the resort hotels are privately-owned. This patch of paradise is somewhat of a secret — and it is well loved by those who know it and return frequently.

Christopher Columbus named the island "Nieves" because the cloud-shrouded top of its volcanic peak reminded him of the snow-capped mountains of Spain. The peak remains the dominant feature on Nevis, but the first thing I noticed was the rich blue water around the boat that transported us from the airport on neighboring St. Kitts. I also enjoyed the casual manner of the local people and the way

the tropical vegetation swayed in the breeze.

Alexander Hamilton was born on Nevis, and George Washington came here to soak in the hot springs. Several hundred years later, Princess Diana took refuge on this island when her marriage was on the rocks. Today, the independent federation of Nevis and St. Kitts is a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

I think Nisbet Plantation Beach Club is the best place to stay on the island, and *Travel + Leisure* magazine says it's "the best place to stay in the Caribbean." (www.nisbetplantation.com)

Built on the grounds of a historic sugar plantation once owned by Lord Horatio Nelson and his wife Fanny Nisbet, lodging here is in creamy yellow cottages scattered around a lush lawn. The cottages

hold 36 elegantly-casual rooms and suites, each with a balcony or patio.

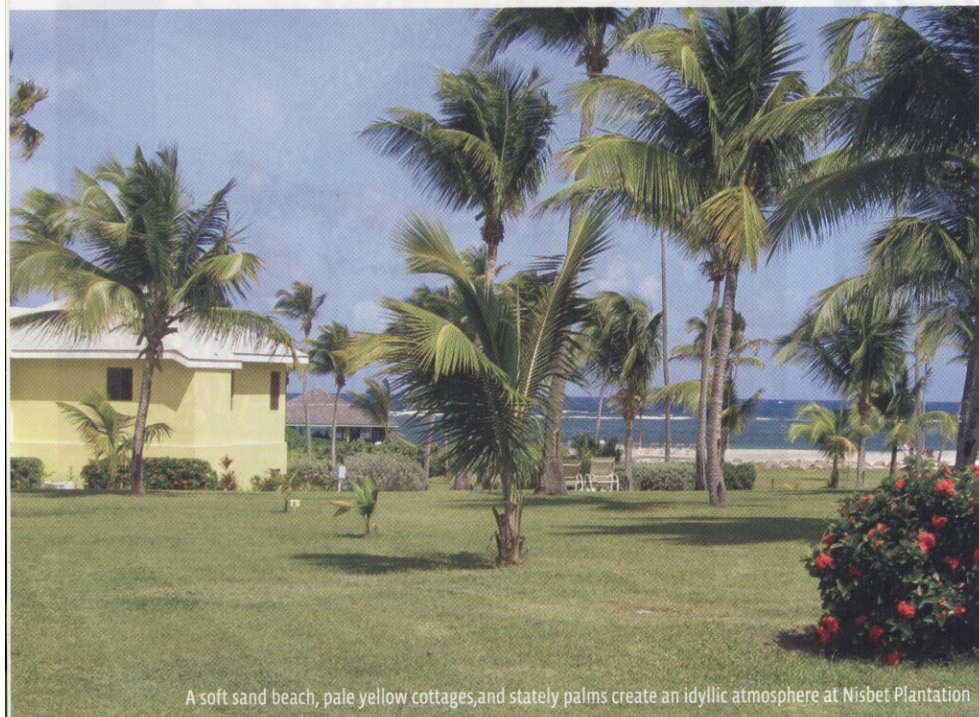
An avenue of towering palms leads to a picture-perfect beach complete with hammocks, chaise lounges, and umbrellas. Nearby, the swimming pool, hot tub,



Golden Rock Inn sits on the slope of Nevis Peak and has a great ocean view

Coconuts Restaurant, and Sea Breeze Beach Bar all share the sea view. Nisbet also offers tennis, croquet, and The Palms Spa. Dinner is served in the Great House Restaurant, which dates from 1778. Afternoon tea is provided daily on the Great House "tea patio." Everywhere on the property, GM Jamie Holmes and his staff go out of their way to meet every need.

Some guests opt to enjoy all their meals at the resort, and others use rental cars or taxis to sample the island's other dining choices. My husband and I enjoyed meeting Richard Lupinacci, a hospitable Italian-American ex-pat who owns the 15-room Hermitage Plantation Inn, and had a great night eating pizzas baked in his authentic brick oven. The Great House at The Hermitage is



A soft sand beach, pale yellow cottages, and stately palms create an idyllic atmosphere at Nisbet Plantation

340 years old and contains 18th-century furnishings. (www.hermitagenevis.com)

Princess Diana retreated to the more modern and formal Montpelier Plantation. The 19-room hotel is set up in the hills of Nevis, but the management provides transportation to its private beach.

Another not-to-be-missed spot: Golden Rock Inn, which sits on 100 acres on the slopes of Nevis Peak. This 11-room hotel and restaurant has recently been restored by artists Helen and Brice Marden. They preserved the historic elements of the 19th-century mill, while adding colorful art and magnificent gardens. (www.goldenrocknevis.com)

We had a wonderful lunch at Golden Rock after our rainforest hike with guide Reggie Douglas, who showed us the huge ferns and vine-covered trees that thrive on Nevis Peak. Reggie is a multi-sport athlete and West Indies champion who has competed in Europe, Australia, and North America. On Nevis he offers escorted

The Atlantic Ocean washes sculptured driftwood onto the Nisbet Plantation beach



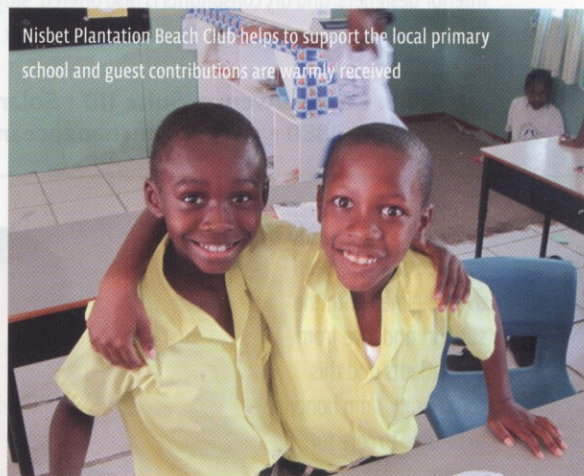
hikes, bike tours, camping trips, and bike rentals. Email greenedge2011@hotmail.com or find Reggie on Facebook at Nevis Adventure Tours/GreenEdge Bike Shop.

You can also see a phenomenal selection of tropical plants at The Botanical Gardens. Christi Douglas has artfully combined innovative landscaping, Asian sculpture, a gift shop, and a Thai restaurant into a must-visit destination. (www.botanicalgardennevis.com)

The best snorkeling we experienced was on a catamaran excursion to St. Kitts with Lennox and Fitzroy of Leeward Island Charters. The divers we talked to at Nisbet raved about the marine life they had seen with Scuba Safaris. (www.stkittisleewardislandscharters.com)

One day, we delivered supplies to the local primary school that Nisbet Plantation supports. Jamie Holmes provided introductions

Nisbet Plantation Beach Club helps to support the local primary school and guest contributions are warmly received



and we had a great time talking with the kids. All I'd brought was a San Diego pictorial calendar and boxes of crayons, pencils, and pens — but they were graciously received.

The next day at breakfast, dining room hostess Violet and several other staff told us how much their kids appreciated our contributions. Nevis is like that — a small island that feels like a small town — in the best possible ways. ELIZABETH HANSEN

The waters around Nevis and St. Kitts are perfect for a relaxing sail

