Paradise found

Oceanfront villa in Jamaica, now that's a vacation

Your own — well, OK — rented villa overlooking the ocean with your own pool and staff. Now, that is a vacation!

vacation!

Picture this — you arrive at
the villa after about a four-hour
light and a long drive from the
Montego Bay Airport. The staff
greets you at the curb, takes
your luggage and says dinner is
ready whenever you are.

Does this sound like a dream?
Well, I have done this and it's
wonderful and it isn't that
expensive!

expensive!

The Villa Life

The Vilin Lite

The typical villa or vacation home comes with a staff appropriate for the luxury, location and size of the property. For example, our four-bedroom villa came with a live-in cook/house-keeper and a caretaker along with another maid who came in daily.

with another mid who came in daily, another mid who came in daily our dealings were mostly with the housekeeper. She made sure the bir was stocked to our liking, meals prepared for our pleasure and she made suggestions for places to go or things to She also made reservations or called for availability.

We had a two-story villa with a circular staircase, our own pool off of a private walled courtyard, a huge semicircular deck off the back with stairs leading down a cliff to the occan below.

Good Luck

We even had a few coconut trees on the property. One day, the caretaker shimmied up a tree with his machete. He cut off tree with his machete. He cut off a couple for our son and his friend. He chopped off the top and told them to drink the cool coconut juice. He then said to toss them in the ocean with a wish for good luck. This made quite an impression on the guys.

Fresh Catch

If you are going

Villas and vacation homes

There are many companies that specialize in this type of vaca-tion. Many travel agents can locate information about villas. They are very popular for people who want extra privacy or a chance to have a group of friends or family in one location. Sizes of villas start from one-bedroom cottages to huge mansions with 10 or more bed-rooms. Rates are either on a daily or weekly basis and are compara-ble to a hotel or package vacation.

Rental cars

Rental cars

There are many rental car companies, but they are always short on vehicles, especially larger ones. The cars are typically foreign, so controls might be backwards. For example our car had the turn signal and wiper blades reversed. We always laughed when we accidentally turned on the wipers when we were turning.

Try to reserve before you leave for your vacation and bring your confirmation number with you. Driving its slow and on the left. Be on the lookout for huge potholes, men digging trenches (with the warning sign at the edge of the ditch) and people and animals daring across the road.

Dunns River Falls

If you are in Jamaica, you must climb the Dunns River falls, Get there early, before the tour buses, or it gets very crowded. The cost is \$6 with an additional \$1 for a locker and \$5 if you want to rant special shoes. If you have sturdy, waterproof shoes, with tread soles, you will be fine. Plan on some time for doing this activity, it may be too difficult for small children and older adults.

Jamaica requires a passport or a birth certificate with a raised seal and picture identification for entry into the country. Leaving the country requires a \$27 Departure Tax.

Currency

One U.S. dollar is currently equal to 47.27 Jamaican dollars. The rate is constantly fluctuating so check it immediately before you

Things to purchase in Jamaica Include Blue Mountain Coffee, Appleton Rum, Liqueurs like Tia Maria, Jerk seasonings, Scotch Bonnet (the hottest pepper in the world) pepper sauce, Macanudo cigars, woodcarvings and strew goods.

Check the woodcarvings for types of borer insects. Things to avoid include gange (it's illegal there, too), tortoise shells, food from street vendors and hair braiding (unless done at a reputable parior with clean tools).

parlor with clean tools).

sters each day from our deck chairs perched high above the water. One day a diver came to our dock and asked if we wanted fresh lobster for dinner.

The cook picked out the best ones, held them up and asked if they were okay. She immediately



Market Day

Market Day

The rest of our food for the week required a trip to the market with the cook for choosing what we wanted to eat. That was a fun experience and great for photographs. She knew which stalls had the best produce and price. The little booths sold an assortment of fresh fruit like ackee, melon, bananas, star apple, breadfruit, yams, callaloo (like spinach) and potatocs. The smell of spices was very strong, including allapice, ginger, nutmeg and garlie.

The food was quite inexpensive, but you must include it in your budget for the trip. Villa vacation agents can give you an idea of how much money to boring. Of course, that will depend on your preferences.

Ice cream seemed to be difficult of the country of the course, the country of the c

anything or were ready for the next course!

anything or were rendy for the next course!

Everyone driving a vehicle that term is used very loosely! in Jamaica is a petential taxt. We learned this when we asked how we could get to the town of Cebe Ries, about four miles away. The housekeeper told us to let her know when we were rendy. She then walked us out to the transparent was to be the rend and put out her thumb!

A late model dark green Mercedes pulled up. There were already people inside. We said, "No, you are already too crowded." But the driver insisted he could take us. So we all piled into the car. The occupants sat on each others laps to give us room—after all we were paying! We said we wanted to go to a nice beach. He took us to Turtle Beach. You have to picture this: A beat up old Mercedes loaded with passengers pulling up to an all-inclusive resort. The driver says, "Security," and they wave us through. It was a beautiful beach.

Beep, beep
This is the high pitched double beep sound made by the small cars driven by natives of Jamaica. This is a language all on its own. It means: Hello—I know you; Get out of my way; I'm going to, turn right now; Do

stunning from a villa balcony overlooking the Caribbean

Private paradise: The

view is

you want a ride?; I'm stopping to pick someone up and You are kind of cute.

Doing the falls

Doing the falls

My son and his friend wanted to climb Dunns River Falls. They went to the bottom of the 600-foot falls where they empty into the ocean and waited for a guide to escort them up. We were afraid, I freely admit it. The guide told them to hold hands and form a human chain on the rocks. He demonstrated where to climb so everyone stayed safe. He oceasionally stopped so the less daring people who used the stairs could take pictures or point out special elements to the climbers like a natural rock slide.

Jamaica is a study of contrasts. It is Reggae music, wonderful benches, great spicy food, dreadlocks, poverty and persistent vendors. Have an open mind when you visit. Also, keep in mind that some areas of Jamaica, because of nude beaches and persistent ganga vendors, may not be suitable for children. A villa vacation is a great way to experience the real Jamaica. Instead of staying in a hotel with everyone else, try living in a home or condo with all the conforts you can imagine.



