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Planning a Flawless Villa Experience

If your days are humdrum and your nights chilly, think of warm Caribbean breezes carrying a faint steel drum melody across the bay; you might be ready for a villa vacation. A villa stay in the Caribbean offers the luxury of your own space, total privacy, and a refrigerator to raid at midnight after a moonlight dip in your pool! And in many cases, you'll probably pay no more per couple than you'd pay for a hotel room. We offer a wide selection of private luxury homes on seven islands, ranging from intimate cottages to a private island - there's something for everyone.

Villa life is flexible and custom-designed for you. With advance notice we can arrange additional maid service, grocery delivery, your own chef, babysitter or nanny, masseuse, manicurist, even spa services at your villa. You may opt for total privacy, enjoying quality time with your lover, family or friends, sequestering yourselves away for peace and quiet. A family getaway can take on new intimacy with quality time spent together at a villa, or your villa can be your headquarters for an action and adventure vacation - diving, snorkeling, fishing, parasailing, jet skiing, sailing, power boating and windsurfing are all here.

Sounds great - but what are some of the things you should absolutely consider when planning your villa vacation so you'll have the best vacation of your life? Here are our top ten tips for making your villa rental as perfect as it can get:

1) Choose your group wisely. If traveling with friends, be sure you know them well, so no disagreements or stress crop up unexpectedly to ruin your vacation.

2) Call a meeting of your group to discuss what each person really would like to do on this vacation. Each of you will then get a good idea of what the others in your group expect. Together your group can determine if you'll need an extra rental car or two so you can split up and go your separate ways on certain days. Do you all want to eat out at restaurants every night, or cook and grill at your villa, or do you wish to hire a chef? Who will occupy each bedroom? Who will drive the rental cars (everyone should know we drive on the left side in the islands)? Make it a fun evening, bring website information or brochures to share, and spend lots of time talking about your vacation together. Time spent together before you go can create better understanding and harmony later.

3) Choose the right island. Each of our Caribbean islands has its own distinct flavor and beat. Besides the wide choice of island watersports available, other things for all of you to do can vary widely. If you have tiny children, make sure the island is easily accessible via a direct flight rather than having to take two or three or four connecting flights and then a ferry - a long journey can frazzle any family with small kids! If you're an active group who wants lots of nightlife and shopping, then the smaller islands may not be mainstream enough to provide a wide enough variety. Would you all be happy just to be on the beach or sitting at the pool every day? Then a smaller or less-developed island may be just the ticket. Check carefully to be sure all the components of your dream vacation are available on the islands which interest you. Utilize the internet and Caribbean island tourist boards for general information, and then spend even more time on the internet getting all the fine details. Above all, ask your villa specialist about everything you need to know, and more! The more you know, the easier and wiser your choice will be.

4) Book your activities and daytrips before your arrival. We can help you plan and reserve activities for your island vacation - we'll help you customize the perfect vacation with island sights and fun things to do. If you are arriving late in the day, or especially if you're traveling with children, please ask to have your villa prestocked with groceries of your choice...this service is well worth the nominal fee so you can settle right into your villa and

relax without having to rush off to the grocery store. Special villa services such as chefs, massage and spa treatments, nannies, power boat rentals, day sails and so on are often sold out weeks in advance; please book well in advance to avoid disappointment.

5) Research all the details and ask a lot of questions about which villa is best for you. Eventually you may feel like a pest, asking new questions which arise, but keep asking! How else will you know if the house is going to meet all your needs? Study the web page information for each villa carefully. What size beds are in the villa (your name will be mud if you arrive and your two sons have to share a bed). Does it list all the amenities you want? Which rental car companies are best? Can you rent a crib? Will you have complete privacy at your pool? Does anyone in your group have a physical condition which makes climbing stairs a problem? Keep asking questions!

6) Never assume. Full disclosure about your villa booking should always be provided to you. But never assume anything – study available villa information online, and ask questions until you know the villa and rental policies well enough to feel totally comfortable. And always get a written confirmation of your reservation, and then check it thoroughly as soon as you receive it to make sure there are no errors.

7) Book months in advance, so the villa you really want is more likely to be available.

8) Adjust your expectations. It's everyone's holiday dream to stay in a perfect, designer-furnished millionaire's mansion on its own private mile-long white sand beach. But all beaches are deemed public in the U.S. and British Virgin Islands, so there are few private homes on their own white sand beaches here. You'll have to drive short distances to get to beaches, but the upside is that, as a tourist, you may walk through any hotel or resort lobby and spend the day on their beach, and can sample a different beach or resort's flavor each day. Our islands do not have any street addresses so a rental car is essential (a taxi cannot locate your villa). It will give you wonderful freedom to explore. Go for a swim at dawn, drive to a different beach or attraction every few hours and see all the sights! You'll certainly get to know your island better than you ever dreamed. Most Caribbean travelers who rent villas are quite independent and love being on their own with their own house and car.

9) Calm down, unpack and relax. Once you've arrived at your villa, sip a cool drink, savor the ocean views, and take a dip in the pool. Move slowly - it's the Caribbean way. Above all, open your eyes to new experiences and your heart to another culture. Remember your Caribbean manners while visiting - a cheery "Good Morning," "Good Afternoon," or "Good Evening" before you launch into your conversation with a local will usually get a smile in return. Let the unhurried rhythm of the tropics take over.

10) Go with the island flow. Don't plan too much; be open to exploration and spontaneity. Don't let silly island glitches, big or small, ruin your fun. Adjust. Keep your sense of humor and try to laugh about the bumps in the road - in the islands, "It's always something." Who knows, you may find it all very funny later, a great travel anecdote to share with friends and family after you get home.

Relax and enjoy. Villas...this is the life!



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