

Why bother with a pie or a jack-o'-lantern when powerful cannons can send these gourds skyward in an orange blur?



### MEXICO AND THE CARIBBEAN

# A villa in Anguilla

Three-generation Caribbean vacation is a hit, despite the rain.

BY ROBERTA SOTONOFF  
SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS-NEWS

Raindrops roll down the windows of our villa. Not quite what one envisions for a Caribbean vacation. My son-in-law, David, decides to perk up everyone's sad faces and grabs his guitar for a spontaneous dance-along and singalong. Even JJ, my 19-month-old grandson, is jiving. I sing but I cannot carry a tune. I dance, but have two left feet. Everyone laughs. It doesn't matter. I am with family.

Being away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and relaxing with the people who are most important to you is the stuff that makes lasting memories. While many families like cruises, glitzy hotels or all-inclusive resorts with "kids clubs," we prefer something more low key: basically, just a house and a beach. We just want to spend quality time together.

Our family, eight people total, including our two adult kids, their husbands and two grandchildren, goes to the Caribbean for two days in French St. Martin and five in the neighboring island of Anguilla.

Traveling day is grueling — an early morning flight, laboring through a small airport where three large flights land almost simultaneously, and stacking 15 pieces of luggage, homemade cookies, homemade snack mix, diapers, toys and eight exhausted people into two small cars. Whew!

"Oh, you can't get lost on the island," says the Avis rep as we pull away.

Of course, we do get lost, and when we finally arrive, all everyone wants to do is sleep (or, in the case of the grandchildren,

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The mountains of St. Maarten/St. Martin (below) loom in the background in the view from Sheriva, the family's villa on Anguilla.



JJ and Annie play on Maundays Bay Beach at Cap Juluca on Anguilla.



While Joe and JJ look on, Annie and Caryn dance to a local band.



PHOTOS BY ROBERTA SOTONOFF/SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS-NEWS  
The clouds don't stop Annie, David and Caryn from jumping into the pool.



## Honeymooning, Caribbean style

From St. John to Jamaica, romantic retreats abound in island paradises.

BY RONA DISTENFELD  
SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS-NEWS

ST. JOHN, U.S. Virgin Islands — Chad and Aubrey Smith stroll Caneel Beach, hand in hand, undisturbed by other visitors. The turquoise waters of the Caribbean gently lap the white sand, and palm trees lining the beach provide shade a few feet away. They married a week earlier on Baldhead Island, N.C., and spent a week celebrating with family and friends. Now they're alone at last on St. John to have their real honeymoon. "We wanted to go someplace

quiet and relaxed, that would feel really private and romantic," says the new Mrs. Smith.

"This place is perfect," adds Chad.

Caneel Bay Resort was designed so guests could enjoy privacy even when it's fully booked. Some beaches are closed to kids under 16, and the staff is ready to cater to every wish, so you can truly have the honeymoon of your dreams.

St. John is considered by many to be the most romantic island in the Caribbean. Most of the island is a national park, and deer, wild donkeys, mon-

goose and birds of all types are a common sight. You can snorkel off Caneel Bay's seven beaches and see sea turtles, stingrays and fish in all colors of the rainbow.

You can only get here by boat, but unlike some other less-developed islands, you don't have to forgo the luxury of a top-flight resort or romantic restaurants (although you can camp on the island, too). In fact, locals from St. Thomas and St. Croix say the best restaurants are here, and St. John is where they come to get away from it all.

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RONA DISTENFELD/SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS-NEWS

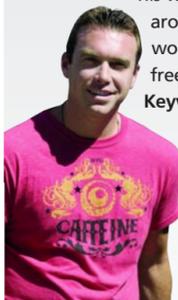
A honeymooning couple walks one of the beaches on St. John in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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#### Caribe sin costo

Extreme traveler Alex Boylan relies on the kindness of Caribbean strangers from Puerto Rico to the Virgin Isles, from Dominica to Trinidad to . . . Venezuela? Find out in the next installment as he finds his way around the world . . . for free.

Keyword:  
Travel



## It's time to go (back) to Oaxaca

BY MICHAEL OAKES  
SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS-NEWS

TAMPICO, Mexico — The pictures on the Mexican morning show made my heart sink. Crowds of men hurling stones at police in riot gear. Police gathering their own piles of rock, throwing them back, then moving in against the rioters in tight formations. A young man being overtaken by police, beaten and kicked as he cowered against a wall and then fell to the ground.

As I sat eating eggs and a blueberry muffin in the breakfast bar of the Hampton Inn in Tampico, Mexico (which by look and feel could

have easily been in Toledo, Ohio), the news only got worse. As I feared, the scenes from the day before, July 16, were from the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca. This was a repeat of an outbreak of violence that erupted in the summer of 2006, as a teachers' union strike turned into a popular revolt against the state governor.

Those riots, which stretched deep into the fall, resulted in a long siege and a dozen deaths, as well as the cancellation of the state's largest annual cultural celebration — and its biggest tourist draw — the Guelagueta.

Despite the renewed violence lead-

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MICHAEL OAKES/SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS-NEWS

A woman practices traditional waist-weaving at the cooperative textile market in Santo Tomás Jalieza.