

## Destination Ocho Rios

From elegant villas to breathtaking vistas, add incredible cuisine and the possibility of Sunday brunch catered by Anna Kay Lazarus, the SPF weekend Emancipation 2011 in Ocho Rios is shaping up to become the playground for the fabulocracy.

Ahead of adding the final AWB 2011 summer collection to your luggage SO shares the deets on where to check in, break bread; splurge, style alongside the A-listers and yes frolic. **Where To Stay** Jewel's Resort Dunn's River is the official hotel but there's also: **Cary Island** The Cary Island villa, fashioned in typical 1930s Tudor architecture comes with tennis court, swimming pool, barbecue gazebo and of course well-appointed rooms. **Eight Rivers** We reckon you'll enjoy this posh four-room villa &mdash; from its large terrace to the sunken living room. **Frankfort** This sexy (we're not saying who told us) four-bedroom villa is where A-list celebrities like Drew Barrymore, Bryan Adams, Prince Edwards and Sir Winston Churchill have chilled out on The Rock. Need we say more?! **Golden Eye** Chris Blackwell's affluent flippie chic 'set' love the secluded comfort. Recent guests include Beyonce, hubby Jay Z and B's little sis Solange. **Jamaica Inn** This property, consistently ranked as a preferred Caribbean destination takes you back to when things were, dare we suggest that much gentler and when ladies and gentlemen dressed for dinner and conversed over five course meals &mdash; amazingly they still do. Habitués include: Kate Moss, Lennox Lewis and Shakira. **Sandals Royal Plantation** Sandals Royal Plantation gets our seal of approval for ultimate exclusivity and indulgent pampering. Little surprise really with the super efficient and classy Peter Fraser at the helm. Take your pick of the boutique hotel's 74 ocean-view suites. Our pick is on the West wing, suite # 255. Celebs who've checked in include: Detroit Pistons Rick Hamilton, jazz singer Nicole Henry, Washington Redskins Khary Campbell who wed Teko Morse on the property, Tommy Hilfiger, Mandy Moore and Robin Williams. **Couples Sans Souci** Sans Souci's 'no worries' mantra is spot on SO's book. We've lost ourselves exploring secluded stone pathways or melting away stress in the healing natural mineral springs and relaxing yoga sessions. **Scotch on the Rocks** This five-bedroom villa that rests on Ocho Rios's Sandy Bay is accessible by boat and you leave via the private pier &mdash; interpret this to mean it can be as private as you wish. The jaw-dropping vistas from the wide veranda or deck overlooking the crystal clear Caribbean Sea will impress even the most discerning traveller... naturally you'll have to get in first. **Crystal Cove** For those with a penchant for modern chic, the luxurious Crystal Cove, we're sure, will seduce the most demanding of aesthetic senses. The waterfront three-story property boasts a posh appeal that will sweep you off your feet. **Roaring Pavillion** Premier travel magazine Condé Nast Traveler gave it a much-desired nod as "one of the best villas in the world" so we're not going overboard when we say Roaring Pavillion redefines fabulocracy. The property also boasts an on-site spa &mdash; perfect to whip the body back in shape before, during and after the SPF weekend. **Hermosa Cove** We're putting it out there - SO is loving the Eden-like quality of Hermosa's gorgeous grounds. The property's art-deco villas are nestled in individual garden settings for ultimate privacy and we strongly recommend packing bath salts and bubble bath oil for soaking in the tub of any of the super-sized bathrooms. **Stonaway** You'll be floored by the panoramic view of Ocho Rios from this split-level hillside villa. The plantation-style home has a grandeur that truly recalls old world charm and civility. **Where To Eat...** **Evita's** Northern Italian food features prominently on the menu at Evita's so reserve a table at the popular restaurant, run by Italian-cum-Jamaican Eva Myers, for not only delectable food fare but a bit of celeb-spotting? Diners have included Uma Thurman and Anthony Hopkins. **Toscanini** As if copping the title of Jamaica Observer Food Awards Restaurant of the Year weren't illustrious enough, the divine Italian eatery Toscanini continues to be a restaurant of choice for A-listers. Think US President Bill Clinton and wife Hillary, current US Secretary of State, members of UB40, and Academy-Award winning director Jonathan Demme and international designer Jessica Ogden.. **The Ruins at the Falls** Given our penchant for Asian and Jamaican cuisine, The Ruins at the Falls gets our nod. Its quaint ambience and affordable, tasty menu offerings make it a worthwhile option for lunch or dinner. **Margaritaville** Here's a free tip: the hip and happening head to Margaritaville Ocho Rios for not-too-pricy eats. The bar and grill whips up wings, burgers, brew, and cocktails for those who might want to skip fine dining in favour of a sportsbar-like dining experience. **Miss T's Kitchen** Expect fab home-style Jamaican dishes, agreeable service, and serious considerations of having seconds if you dine at Miss T's Kitchen. Trust us, it's that good. **Mykonos Greek Bar and Grill** Opened just last year, recent Food Awards nominee for Best Kept Secret, Mykonos Greek Bar and Grill is finding much favour with foodies. While SO is partial to the appetiser - spanakopita - the entire, authentic Greek menu is a hands-down winner in our books. **Things to Do: Island Routes** Don't leave Ocho Rios without connecting with your adventurous side -- secure a package from Island Routes Tours. Guaranteed excitement abounds -- we've indulged in jungle river tubing, horseback ride 'n' swim and the lovers' rock catamaran cruise (and loved them all), and there's still more so let's play catch up! **Harmony Hall** Interested in art? Harmony Hall (upstairs Toscanini) features the work of over 100 artists and artisans. From artistic styles that span the naive to the highly sophisticated, consider picking up a piece from Jamaica's leading painters, sculptors and carvers. **Dolphin Cove** Put on your best bikini or swim trunk to commune with the super-smart dolphins in the azure waters at Dolphin Cove &mdash; you'll want to keep these snapshots. Besides going for a swim with the dolphins, visitors can also snorkel and interact with barb-free stingrays, go glass bottom kayaking, and captain a mini boat in the Caribbean Sea. **Mystic Mountain** From its exhilarating bobsled ride to its chairlift that provides awe-inspiring, panoramic views of the resort town below, Mystic Mountain is a must-do destination for the adventure seeker within. After you've had your fill of

fun, scoring a table at the R2 restaurant affords a breathtaking view and great cuisine. Coyaba Gardens History buffs will find interest in the Museum of Island History at Coyaba Gardens that focuses on forgotten Taino/Arawak culture.

Cranbrook The oh-so-scenic Cranbrook attraction is spread across 1,300 acres, including 40 acres of landscaped grounds. Those willing to relax, unwind and enjoy will appreciate the tropical gardens and flower forest the lush lawns and water pools.

Dunn's River Falls No trip to Ocho Rios would be complete without a visit to the world famous Dunn's River Falls. The 600-foot waterfall offers climbing pleasure for hundreds of tourists and locals each day.

Island Hoppers Helicopter Tours For a totally fresh perspective of Ocho Rios, nothing beats a bird's eye view -- consider chartering a helicopter flight and seeing the town from high above. Your pilot is Captain John, a 38-year licensed veteran of flying 'copters.

PLACES TO BE SEEN Casa de Oro If luxury is your thing (and let's be honest, who doesn't want a little of the good life), Casa de Oro is the high-end store of choice. Mikimoto pearls, Cartier handbags, Tag Heuer watches, Bvlgaria fragrances - they're all here. Nuff said!

Toscanini You never know who might be sitting a table away from you at Toscanini. Bill and Hillary Clinton, members of UB40 and the Rolling Stones, Academy Award-winning director Jonathan Demme have all dined at this Italian eatery.

Rio Chico Heiress Jaime Stewart-McConnell tied the knot here while fashion luminary Donatella Versace and Hollywood icon Jack Nicholson are but two of the high-profile guests who have stayed at the ultra-chic, ultra-exclusive 14-acre property. Can you say villa-mazing!

Royal Plantation Lunch at this luxe property is a no-brainer for the style-savvy. If the fabulous cuisine doesn't win over, perhaps the possibility of rubbing shoulders with the likes of Tommy Hilfiger, Robin Williams or Mandy Moore just to well you know name drop just a little might tempt you further.

Jamaica Inn Model Kate Moss, who recently tied the knot, said her favourite cocktail came from this hotel. Movie icon Marilyn Monroe, singer Shakira, Lennox Lewis, movie director Nora Ephron, former British Prime Minister John Major and South African President Thabo Mbeki, are among the celebrities who have enjoyed the charmed existence associated with the Jamaica Inn.

Golden Eye Golden Eye is the perfect vacation spot. Just ask A-listers Jay-Z, Beyoncé, Sting, Bono and Scarlett Johansson who have all enjoyed the slice of paradise that is Golden Eye. Also see: Stylish Boutiques: Kavalo Raffine Shimmer Bars: Moxons John Crow's Tavern Gazebo and Bizot Bars (at Golden Eye)

Source: [jamaicaobserver.com](http://jamaicaobserver.com)