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HOUSE & GARDEN WINTER ESCAPES



*The just-renovated Trou aux Biches on Mauritius is set amid lush, tropical gardens which lead onto a pristine sandy beach. Beachcomber (01483-445685; www.beachcombertours.co.uk) offers seven nights, half-board with flights and transfers, from £1,745pp.*



## NATURAL HIGHS

Caribbean resorts are distinguishing themselves by their spas. On St Lucia, the new Rainforest Spa at The Jalousie Plantation (left) is tucked into the rainforest and has six tree-house 'treatment gazebos' and a steam room warmed by volcanic spring water. Carrier (0161-492 1354; www.carrier.co.uk) offers seven nights from £1,785pp including flights. Jumby Bay, located on an island two miles off Antigua's coast, has an open-air Sense spa, ensconced in verdant flora. Seasons in Style (01244-202000; www.seasonsinstyle.com) offers seven nights from £3,365 per person, all inclusive, with flights and transfers.

## LONG-HAUL HAVENS



The beaches of Australia may not be on the doorstep but they are worth the journey. Positioned on the edge of the Great Barrier Reef on the secluded northern tip of Hamilton Island (the second largest of the Whitsundays), the water-front Qualia resort (above) is wonderful for snorkelling and diving. Stay in one of the 60 freestanding pavilions or take the Beach House, a two-bedroom villa with a private pool. Also on the reef, Bedarra is a privately owned island with just 16 waterside villas peeping out from the canopy of the rainforest. Turquoise Holidays offers ten nights at Qualia from £4,175pp, and seven nights at Bedarra Island from £4,690pp, including flights and transfers. Call 01494-678400; www.turquoiseholidays.co.uk



## ISLAND MENTALITY

Sue Lawley discusses her favourite tropical hotels and her longing for castaway life

I love islands. Being beside the sea, breathing cool island breezes, one feels at one with nature. I have found that life on islands is more laid-back and intimate than on the mainland. On holiday I like to walk around barefoot and definitely not dress up too much for dinner. We recently stayed at Montpelier Plantation on Nevis. It's a charming, post-Imperial hideaway on the site of an old sugar estate. Fanny Nesbitt married Horatio Nelson here. The West Indies is not

famous for its food, but this hotel has an excellent kitchen. It also has a superb terrace, 750ft above sea level. This year we went to Baros in the Maldives [right]. You can walk round the island in eight minutes. We dined on a sandbank, just us and the high seas. There was a pavilion behind which the chef and waiter prepared barbecued seafood, which we washed down with pink champagne. During 18 years of presenting Desert Island Discs I never

believed that the perfect 'desert island' existed. Then I went to the Maldives. It was a dream. Sue Lawley is the Chair of BBC Radio 4's Reith Lectures. Montpelier Plantation (www.montpeliernevis.com). Baros Maldives (www.baros.com)

