

Puerto Vallarta it takes two and a half hours. Alternatively, charter Cuixmala's plane. *Cuixmala* (+1 52 315 351 0044; www.cuixmala.com). *Mason Rose* (020 7235 3245; www.masonrose.com) offers hire of fully staffed estate casas with private pools from about £825 to £6,050 a casa a night, room only. *Casitas*, from about £625 a night B&B, including use of a clubhouse and a shared pool.

Casa Nalum

Tulum, Mexico

This unique and distinctly exotic eco-villa on Mexico's Caribbean coast has mile upon mile of deserted white sandy beach. The property enjoys an exceptionally tranquil setting on an isthmus between a lagoon and the sea. Casa Nalum is situated inside the Sian Kaan biosphere reserve (a Unesco World Heritage Site) and there is not a neighbour to be seen.

X-factor The architecture: the villa was built in a traditional Mayan style with soaring thatched roofs. Solar technology and a state-of-the-art wind turbine power the air-conditioning and water systems.

Party space The roof terrace at jungle-canopy level is a great place to watch the sun set, and the open deck (which has its own sound system) is perfect for dancing under the stars. Charming local staff will keep you extremely well cared for – and provide three wonderful meals a day. Three bedrooms, each boasting a private terrace, can sleep up to six people.

Past revellers 'La Casta Divina': Mexico's grand colonial families; Euro-bankers with impossibly gorgeous 'god-daughters'; and New Englanders fleeing the Hamptons.

Must do Visit the ruins at Tulum at sunset; watch the jaguars, pumas, spider monkeys, crocodiles and manatees in the Sian Kaan reserve; have a driftwood fire on the beach; go turtle-watching; have a massage by the sea; watch films on the cinema screen in the villa's open-sided living room; or float along ancient Mayan canals on a giant rubber ring, with a bottle of Bollinger bobbing beside you in its own buoyancy aid.

If only... it wasn't quite so tricky to get to (there are no direct flights to Cancun).

Getting there Fly to Mexico City (12 hours from London), then get a connecting flight to Cancun – the villa is an hour's drive away.

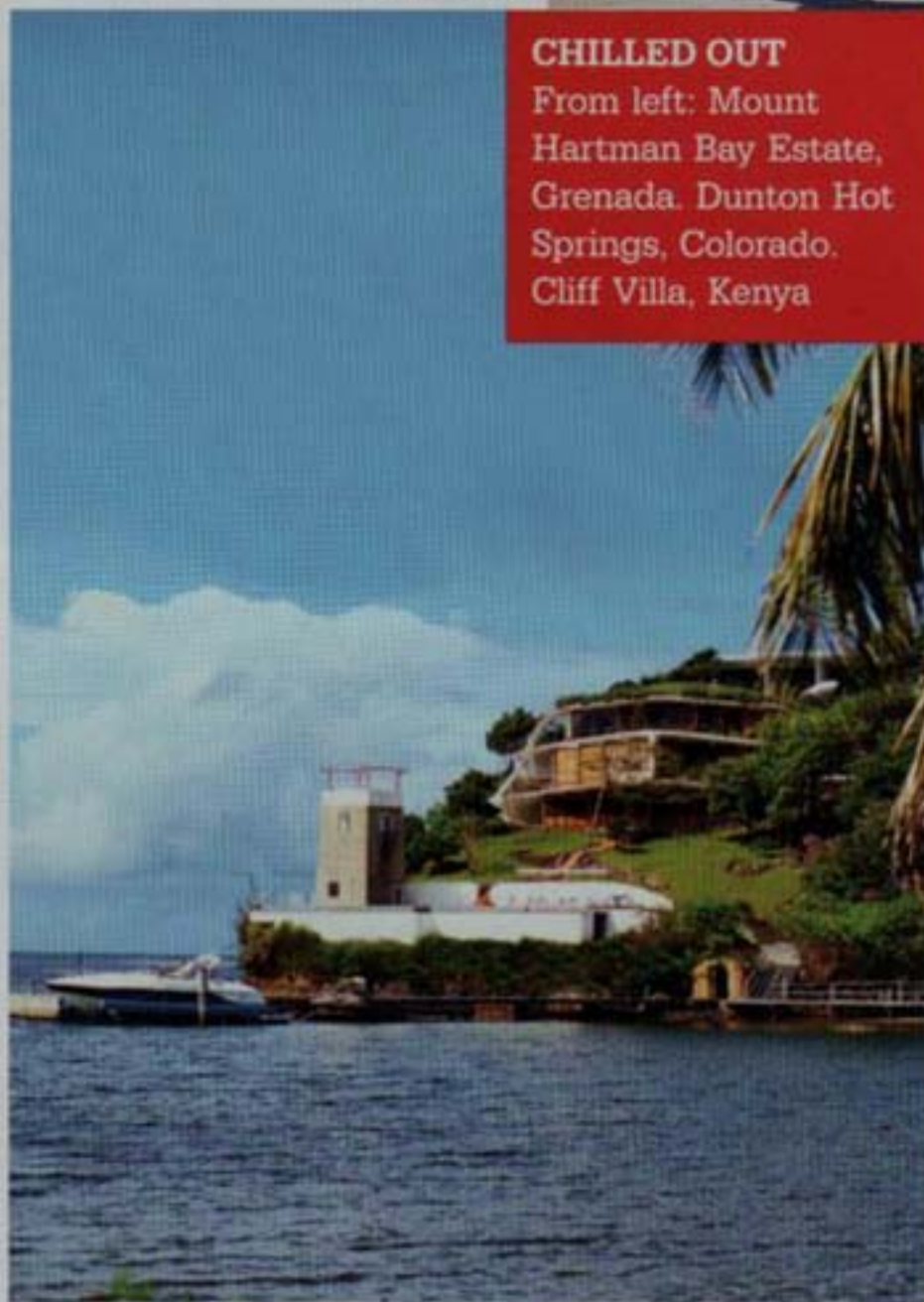
When to go Avoid July to September, when the weather is extremely hot and hurricanes can hit the area.

Casa Nalum (www.nalum.com). *Cazenove + Loyd* (020 7384 2332; www.cazloyd.com) offers seven nights from £2,221 a person full board, including flights and transfers, based on six people sharing.

Musha Cay

Exuma Cays, Bahamas

This ultra-discreet resort on a 150-acre private island in the sunlit Bahamian Cays was renovated at a cost of \$50



CHILLED OUT
From left: Mount Hartman Bay Estate, Grenada. Dunton Hot Springs, Colorado. Cliff Villa, Kenya

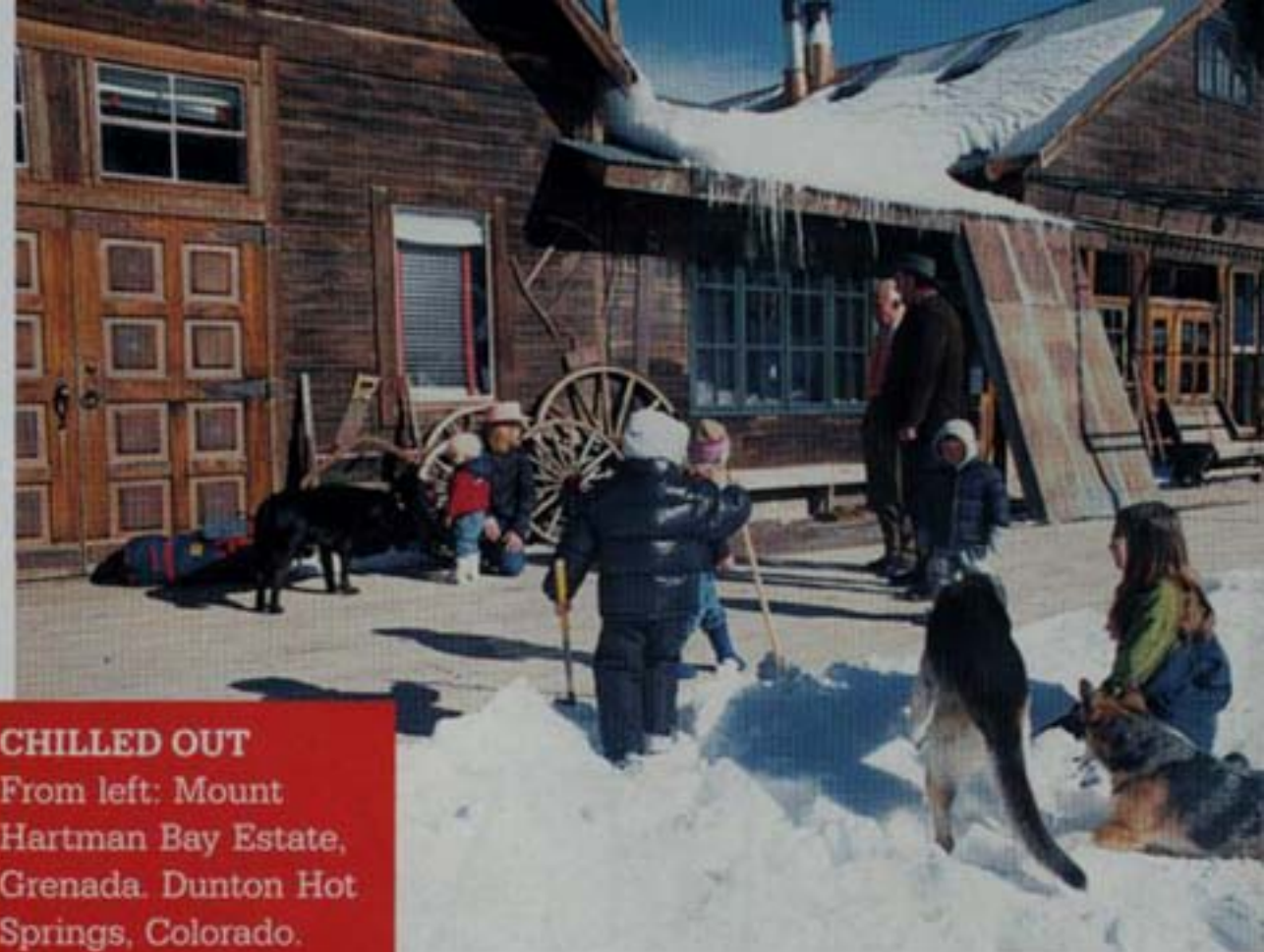
million. The island is surrounded by turquoise seas and seven sugar-white beaches, and guests benefit from the impeccable and unobtrusive services of more than 30 staff. The island is a former pirates' lair, but its new-found, low-profile luxury is the talk of the plutocracy, and no wonder; not many resorts have a private airstrip and a putting green that converts into a helipad.

X-factor Haul up a yellow flag for skinny-dipping privacy (the Bahamian coastguard enforces a paparazzi-free zone).

Party space The poolside deck is perfect for dancing under the stars – book a steel band from Great Exuma. Grown-up toys include waterskiing boats, wave runners, fishing boats, and guests can go wind-surfing, sail dinghies or play tennis. Staff are used to grandiose requests: previous guests have demanded a badminton court and a submarine – both were provided. The resort sleeps up to 24 guests.

Past revellers Bill and Melinda Gates, Billy Crystal, Robin Williams (for his 50th birthday), Kevin Spacey, Steve Martin, Oprah Winfrey and John Travolta.

Must do Take a sunset walk along the island's one-mile-long spit of sand; share a shower with your loved one in the outdoor bathrooms; build a bonfire on a neighbouring



desert island and cook yourself a lobster supper; and take a picnic to a different private cay every day.

If only... flying to the island on Musha Cay's private plane from Miami or Nassau didn't involve a brief customs stop at Mosstown.

When to go All year round, although the weather is best from September to May, and there is a risk of hurricanes in August.

Getting there Fly to Nassau, then it's a 45-minute connecting flight to the island. *Musha Cay* (+1 203 602 0300; www.mushacay.com), from about £13,747 a night full board, including drinks, based on eight people sharing; additional guests, about £639 a person a night. *Alexander & Stuart Travel* (020 7351 6644; www.alexanderandstuart.com) offers seven nights on Musha Cay from £14,050 a person full board, including flights and transfers, based on eight people sharing.

Mount Hartman Bay Estate

Grenada

Built into a hillside on its own private peninsula, this remarkable Gaudiesque villa is a stone's throw from the water on a beautiful bay protected by coral reefs.

X-factor You get to enjoy a ride in *Bladerunner 51*, the same model of boat that broke the world record for the fastest powerboat sprint around Britain.

Party space Guests can eat in the funky dining room that opens up onto a terrace. The army of staff and the award-winning chef (he creates the best meals on the island) will ensure that nobody has to lift a finger. Sleeps up to 22 people.

Past revellers The owners are far too discreet to drop names.

Must do Explore the island's rainforest using the estate's 4x4s; spend a day making the most of the hi-tech gadgetry and toys, including *Yellow Peril* (a waterskiing boat) and a 43-foot motor cruiser. Get staff to help you hunt down a remote spot for a picnic.

If only... there was a better beach; and the black upholstered Biedermeier sofas might be considered a little austere for this lush Caribbean paradise.