

## Pumpkin-chuckin' time

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

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### 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,

See ISLANDS/4L

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.

### MYSA.COM

#### 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 Guelaguetza.

Despite the renewed violence lead-

See OAXACA/3L



MICHAEL OAKES/SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS-NEWS

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

# Islands naturally romantic for honeymooners

CONTINUED FROM 1L

You can also find romantic privacy on St. Croix at the Caribbela Beach Resort & Spa, where every suite faces the beach and all you hear at night is the sound of the waves and the tree frogs. You won't see any lights from other resorts or towns here; you feel like you've left civilization behind (except for the flat screen TVs and full kitchen in your suite, and the great restaurant). Local restaurants, such as Savant, offer intimate dining with excellent food and service. By the docks in Christiansted, the Fort Christian Brew Pub has great food and their own ales and beers; perfect after a morning spent sailing and snorkeling the reefs.

Nicole and Christopher Heniff wanted a more active honeymoon. "We knew we wanted to honeymoon in the Caribbean because it would be exotic and special," says Nicole. "But sitting on a beach and doing nothing all day was not for us. Frenchman's Reef on St. Thomas was perfect because we could leave right from their dock to do all kinds of activities. It was also affordable for us on a teacher's salary. And we liked that we didn't have to worry about passports, changing currency or speaking English, since we were still in the U.S., even though it felt very exotic and tropical."

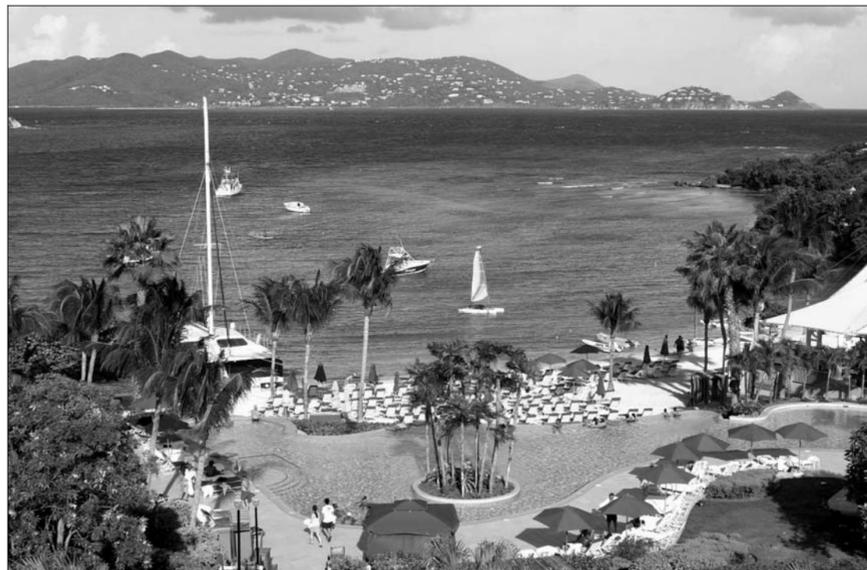
They parasailed, snorkeled, jet skied, shopped, toured Bluebeard's castle, day-tripped to St. John, and ate wonderful food. "We're going back for our third anniversary," Heniff said.

St. Thomas is the best place in the Caribbean for U.S. citizens to shop. Everything is tax and duty free, so jewelry, electronics and other luxury items are much cheaper than state-side.

## Jammin' in Jamaica

The third largest island in the Caribbean offers white sand beaches and tropical mountains. Swim with dolphins, dance to reggae in the land of Bob Marley, watch local artists at work or have a massage in a private cabana on the beach.

Negril boasts a seven-mile beach lined with resorts. Charles and Melissa Brickey got married on the beach with close friends and family in attendance, then honeymooned for nine days at the Grand Lido Negril, and loved every



PHOTOS BY RONA DISTENFELD/SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS-NEWS

The pool at the Ritz Carlton on St. Thomas almost blends into the turquoise waters of the Caribbean.

## IF YOU GO

■ A good central source for information on individual islands, accommodations and activities is [www.Caribbean.com](http://www.Caribbean.com). All the islands also have their own official Web sites loaded with details for visitors.

■ You can get married in the Caribbean, then stay for your honeymoon. It's easiest in the U.S. Virgin Islands, since you're still in the United States and the same rules apply, but it's still a good idea to work with a wedding planner who knows the ropes and will make sure you don't arrive on some odd island holiday when the licensing office is closed.

■ Jamaica lets visitors marry within 24 hours of arrival if you do the paperwork in advance, and

wedding planners will help. It can be a lengthier process on other islands. Beth and David Faller started their planning six months in advance to make sure they had their paperwork in hand to marry in Bonaire.

■ Most resorts have their own planners who will help you with everything from getting the license to getting a band. You can work with a private wedding planner if you want to marry somewhere other than a resort. Either way, spend some time talking with the planner. You want to be sure this is someone you can work with, who understands your dreams and your limits. Most Caribbean tourism Web sites provide lists of planners, so contact several before you decide.

minute of it.

"The wedding planner at the Grand Lido made everything so easy," said Charles. "And since the resort was all-inclusive, once we got there we didn't have to think about another thing." The Brickeys felt that many of the resorts were cramped together along the long beach, but not the Lido. "Our resort seemed to have the longest stretch of beach," says Melissa. "It wasn't crowded like some of the others, even though we were there in December."

They also found it a very affordable way to get married and have a memorable honeymoon. "We only spent about \$8,000 in total," says Charles. "That includes airfare, wedding bands, everything. If we

had to do it over again, we'd do exactly the same thing."

For those who want to get away from the big resorts in Negril and Montego Bay, Ocho Rios offers a quieter option, with lots of local activities. Visit Bob Marley's birthplace, swim with dolphins and explore the local flora in this very different part of the island.

## Bonny Bonaire

On the other side of the Caribbean, Bonaire is a favorite destination for scuba divers such as David and Beth Faller. After visiting Bonaire and other Caribbean islands many times, they knew they wanted to marry and honeymoon here. "It was a honeymoon in paradise, with everything we could

want," says Beth. "We had a private dinner in a gazebo at the end of a dock, looking out on the water. There was just one table, and the food was wonderful. It was very romantic."

They chose the Plaza Resort because "it caters to honeymooners, while most places here cater to divers," says Beth. "We got a lot of privacy even though it was Easter week. We were often the only ones on our strip of beach because the beach is so large, and most people seemed to use the pool. It was very serene."

There isn't a lot of wild nightlife, but there's a lot to see and do if you like history, sports and scenery, such as the thousands of pink flamingos that nest here. "One of our fa-



LEFT: Charles and Melissa Brickey married at the Grand Lido Negril in Jamaica, then stayed for their honeymoon. BELOW: Kayaks await guests at the Buccaneer on St. Croix.



vorite things was kayaking through the mangroves," says David. The Dutch heritage is still strong, and Dutch is commonly spoken along with English and Spanish in the quaint towns.

## More island experiences

Since the days of Admiral Nelson, travelers have been drawn to Antigua's secluded beaches, breezes made for sailing and beautiful winding coastline. The island is the perfect setting for a memorable honeymoon, and Sandals Grande Antigua Resort & Spa offers an all-inclusive package just for newlyweds.

Sandals has been crowned the "World's Most Romantic Resort" 10 years in a row, and is recognized on the Condé Nast Traveler Gold List. It is also Green Globe-certified for environmental stewardship, for honeymooners who care

about saving the planet.

On the western side of the Caribbean, the Cayman Islands offers shopping, nightlife, great restaurants on Grand Cayman and a natural retreat habited by whistling ducks, frigate birds and red-footed boobies on Little Cayman. You can fish for tarpon and bonefish, dive and snorkel, pet a stingray and do some serious hiking here. It isn't just the pirates of bygone days who consider the Caymans paradise!

There are dozens of islands in the Caribbean, each with its own charms, plus coastal resorts such as Cancun and Belize. Whatever your perfect honeymoon vision, if it includes warm turquoise water, white sand beaches, green tropical mountains and great food and drink, the Caribbean has it.

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# Guides can customize battlefield visit

Interest in Civil War grows as 150th anniversary nears.

BY DAVID DISHNEAU  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

SHARPSBURG, Md. — Would you like your Civil War history seasoned with baseball trivia? Spritzed up with a winery tour? Do you long to dissect the Battle of Antietam with a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian?

Hire a guide.

As the 150th anniversary of the war between the states approaches, starting with John Brown's 1859 prewar raid at Harpers Ferry, W.Va., customized tours for people fascinated by the conflict are multiplying.

As little as \$50 buys a two-hour, private guided tour of Antietam, site of the bloodiest day of the war, or Gettysburg National Military Park, the high-water mark of the Confederacy, in neighboring Pennsylvania.

Those thirsting for more knowledge can join multistate bus tours of up to six days led by scholars including James McPherson, whose 1988 book "Battle Cry of Freedom" won a Pulitzer and helped rekindle interest in the conflict. The cost of the marathon trek, offered by Civil War Tours of Winchester, Conn.: \$950, excluding hotel lodging.

"We interpret the events of the battle as they unfolded, which the average guy can't do standing there reading the park brochure by the way-side," tour operator David Ward said.

Between these extremes are an assortment of tours tailored for virtually every taste. All-In-One Tours and Cruises of Lancaster, Pa., blends visits to Virginia battlefields with wine tastings, plantation house tours and Shakespeare plays.



TIMOTHY JACOBSEN/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Thomas Clemens, a private guide for hire at Antietam National Battlefield in Sharpsburg, Md., stands along a row of artillery cannons. Clemens is part of a guide program run by a local nonprofit.

Company co-owner Cathy Strite said the leisurely Civil War packages appeal to history-loving "new seniors" — baby boomers who wouldn't dream of taking a tour bus to Branson, Mo.

"They say, 'I want education, I want to keep living, I want to keep learning, I want to keep my mind active,'" Strite said. "All that will absolutely explode as we approach the 150th."

The Battle of Antietam was fought near the western Maryland hamlet of Sharpsburg on Sept. 17, 1862, leaving more than 23,000 dead, wounded or missing on the bloodiest day of the war. Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's retreat from Antietam gave President Abraham Lincoln the political strength to issue the Emancipation Proclamation five days later.

Those are the basics. But if you hire guide Randy Buchman of the Antietam Battlefield Guides, you'll likely hear about Gen. Abner Doubleday, who commanded a Union division at Antietam and is popularly known as having invented the game of baseball. Buchman, who is writing a

book about Doubleday, said the baseball story is false, since Doubleday was a cadet at West Point when he supposedly invented the game in Cooperstown, N.Y., in 1839.

But Buchman said Doubleday did throw out the first metaphorical pitch of the Civil War by firing the first Union shot in defense of Fort Sumter, in Charleston, S.C., in 1861.

Buchman, an evangelical church pastor, is in his first year of Civil War guiding. Jeff Driscoll has been doing it since the 1970s. His clients have ranged from Boy Scout troops and British tourists to individuals such as Wayne Rowe, a Naval War College librarian from Tiverton, R.I., whose hobby is studying the Richmond Howitzers, a Confederate artillery company.

On Rowe's last visit to the Antietam National Battlefield in May, he hired Driscoll to retrace the unit's movements, from their Potomac River crossing near Sharpsburg to their battle positions throughout the day, documented on time-sequenced maps that most casual visitors to the battlefield headquarters never see.

Rowe said he was thrilled to be able to walk where the Richmond Howitzers marched.

"I didn't have much time, and he kind of did the work for me. It was the best money and time I could have spent," he said.

Driscoll said boning up on arcane requests is part of the fun of guiding.

"You just continue to learn more and more and more about not just the battle, but the whole campaign. It's expected and it's necessary," he said.

The Antietam guide service is run by the Western Maryland Interpretive Association, a private, nonprofit group that also owns the battlefield bookstore. But the rigorous training regimen — including a 25-book reading list and written and oral exams — is based on the requirements of the Gettysburg-based Association of Battlefield Guides.

The 155 Gettysburg guides are licensed by the National Park Service and are the only people allowed to give paid tours of the Gettysburg battlefield.

Park rangers at Gettysburg and Antietam also give programs on the battles, but their offerings are restricted by their numbers — just 18 year-round rangers at Gettysburg and six at Antietam.

"We're limited by the fact that we have to respond to everybody and kind of give a general overview of the battle," Antietam Superintendent John W. Howard said. "Now we have an option; we can say, 'Get hold of the guide service.'"

Antietam guide Thomas G. Clemens, a history professor at nearby Hagerstown Community College, said the service follows the National Park Service mission of public education.

"We're really fulfilling the purpose of what the park is all about," he said. "It's meant to teach people lessons."

## IF YOU GO

**Antietam National Battlefield:** Sharpsburg, Md.; [www.nps.gov/anti](http://www.nps.gov/anti) or (301) 432-5124.

**Gettysburg National Military Park:** Gettysburg, Pa.; [www.nps.gov/gett](http://www.nps.gov/gett) or (717) 334-1124.

**Harpers Ferry National Historical Park:** Harpers Ferry, W.Va.; [www.nps.gov/hafep](http://www.nps.gov/hafep) or (304) 535-6029 or (304) 535-6298.

**Antietam Battlefield Guides:** [www.antietambattlefieldguides.com](http://www.antietambattlefieldguides.com) or (301) 432-4329 or (866) 461-5180. Rates vary depending on group size and length; a two-hour tour for six people or fewer is \$50.

**Association of Licensed Battlefield Guides:** [www.gettysburgtourguides.org](http://www.gettysburgtourguides.org) or

(717) 337-1709. Two-hour tours for up to six people, \$45.

**Civil War Tours:** [www.civilwartours.org](http://www.civilwartours.org) or (860) 485-3603. Destinations for Civil War Tours have included Antietam, Gettysburg, Bull Run and Chancellorsville. Two-day weekend tours including bus or van, lunch, and lectures, \$295, but not lodging.

**All-in-One Tours:** [www.civilwartours.net](http://www.civilwartours.net) or (888) 681-5333. Custom group tours available to Civil War sites. Tours offered in the past include trips as long as seven days to explore Civil War history in Kansas, Virginia and elsewhere. Prices vary but most bus tours range from \$70-\$110 for day trips and overnights from \$120-\$150 per day.

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