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With Hot Deals, Islands Hope to Rev Up Tourism

The sun keeps shining in the Bahamas, Bermuda and the Caribbean, but since the economic downturn, a dark cloud has been looming over them. Tighter wallets mean fewer tourists. According to the latest statistics from the Caribbean Tourism Organization, visits to many island destinations declined last year. For example, between January and October, the Bahamas experienced a 3 percent drop; Martinique was off by 4.4 percent between January and August. In December, when many Americans were grieving over their stock portfolios, tourism in Puerto Rico fell almost 13 percent, nearly twice as much as in the Cayman Islands. Adding to the malaise: Resorts are laying off workers and even closing hotel wings and limiting restaurant hours.

"Overall to the region, tourism is down," said Richard Kahn, marketing consultant for the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association. "The Caribbean is going to have a softer season than last winter, but it won't be as devastating as expected. People still want to go to the Caribbean."

To lure reluctant vacationers, the islands are offering tempting discounts on a range of items, from fish fries to oceanfront rooms. Here is a sampling of deals for six destinations that could chase away those doomy clouds.

Bahamas

-- The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism is offering *\$200 rebates* on packages to *Nassau/Paradise Island, Grand Bahama Island* and the *Out Islands*. Details vary per destination. For example, spend at least \$400 on a land and air package to the Out Islands and receive an instant rebate of \$200. Vacation must be booked from the list of participating properties, which includes Bimini Bay Resort and Marina, Powell Pointe Resort at Cape Eleuthera and Abaco Beach Resort. One rebate per double room; book by April 6 and travel by Dec. 15. Use promotion code OUTISLANDS200. Info: 800-BAHAMAS, <http://www.bahamas.com>.

-- Skip the scalpers and get guaranteed tickets for the *Jonas Brothers* with a deal from *Atlantis Resort on Paradise Island*. The three-day Jonas Brothers Weekend in Paradise package, which starts at \$509 per adult and \$199 per child, includes two nights in a deluxe room, concert tickets and transfers. Concert dates are March 14, April 18 and May 9. For non-groupies, Atlantis is offering a *free fourth night*; book by April 30 and travel by May 31. Nightly rates from \$499 for the Beach Tower. Info: 1-800-ATLANTIS, <http://www.atlantis.com>.

Barbados

-- The Barbados Tourism Authority has created the perks-filled *Best of Barbados* deal for travel May 1-July 15 or Sept. 1-Dec. 18. Book a seven-night minimum stay at a European Plan hotel or a five-night minimum stay at an all-inclusive resort and receive *air credits of up to \$300*, one free night at your chosen property, daily breakfast, \$25 voucher (per booking) to the Oistins fish fry, Barbados Gourmet Card (25 percent off participating restaurants), half-off second ticket for ground activities, and \$100 Visa debit card. More than 40 hotels are taking part, including the Crane, Butterfly Beach Hotel and Hilton Barbados. For spring travel, book by April 1; for fall, June 8-July 3. Info: 866-566-0956, <http://www.visitbarbados.org>.

-- *Almond Resorts* has *cut rates by 50 percent* at its three all-inclusive resorts in Barbados. A three-night stay at the Almond Beach Village, Almond Casuarina Beach or Almond Beach Club and Spa now starts at \$460 per person double, down from \$920. Book by March 15; travel by Dec. 20. Rate includes meals, drinks, land and water activities, classes, taxes and more; transfers additional. Info: 800-425-6663, <http://www.almondresorts.com/specials>.

Bermuda

-- USA3000 is offering flights between *BWI* and *Bermuda* from \$99 one way. Fly

Thursday or Sunday, June 11-Aug. 16. Total round-trip fare is \$251. Info: 877-872-3000, <http://www.usa3000.com>. Carrier offers nonstop service (see story, Page P7). For travel this spring, JetBlue has one-way fares from New York's JFK to Hamilton from \$99. Round-trip flight with taxes starts at \$288. Book by March 31 and complete travel by May 21. Info: 800-538-2583, <http://www.jetblueairways.com>.

-- The Bermuda Tourism Office is celebrating the island's 400th anniversary by offering up to \$400 credits at participating hotels. Book at least a two-night package at one of the select hotels -- options include the Fairmont Hamilton Princess, Grotto Bay Beach Resort and the Reefs -- and receive a \$200 credit for two nights, \$300 for three nights and \$400 for four nights or longer. Deal also includes the 400th Anniversary Passport, with savings of up to \$1,000, while supplies last. Book by April 16; travel by April 19. Info: 800-BERMUDA, http://www.bermudatourism.com/400th_anniversary.aspx.

Jamaica

-- Air Jamaica Vacations is offering a *three-night package* to the Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort in *Montego Bay*. The deal starts at \$465 per person double and includes round-trip air from BWI, with two checked bags up to 50 pounds; superior room at the all-inclusive; all meals, snacks, cocktails and activities; and transfers. Taxes of \$90 additional. Also, kids younger than 12 stay free. Travel midweek through June 24; book by March 9. Info: 800-568-3247, <http://www.airjamaicavacations.com>.

-- Through the end of the month, the *Couples Resorts Secret Rendezvous* promotion takes nearly 30 percent off the rate for guests who don't mind a bit of pre-trip mystery. Two travelers pay only \$363 per night including taxes but won't know which resort -- Couples Negril, Couples Swept Away or Couples Sans Souci -- they are booked at until seven days before their arrival. Info: 800-268-7537, <http://couples.com/04special.htm>.

Puerto Rico

-- With *Luxury Resorts and Hotels'* winter special, guests *earn resort credits* for stays of varying lengths. For example, book two nights and receive \$50; four nights, \$100; six nights, \$150; and eight nights, \$200. Rebates are valid at four properties, including the Condado Plaza Hotel & Casino in San Juan and El Conquistador Resort & Golden Door Spa in Fajardo. Credits can be used on dining, golf, spa, water sports and other activities and amenities. Valid through April 30. Also, book by April 28 and receive bonuses worth \$400, such as discounts on spa treatments, reduced golf greens fees and a certificate for a free night's stay. Restrictions apply. Info: 877-597-9696, <http://www.luxuryresorts.com/escape/index.cfm>.

-- Delta Vacations is offering a special package to the *Rio Mar Beach Resort & Spa*, a Wyndham Grand Resort. With the Pay 2 Nights, Stay for 4 Nights promotion, book a Delta Vacations package by March 31 and receive the *third and fourth nights free*, plus a *\$100 food and beverage credit*. From Reagan National, the four-night package costs \$695 per person double, plus \$61 taxes. For longer stays, pay for four nights and receive the same number of nights free. Valid on oceanview and oceanfront rooms; request the Vacation Stimulus Package when booking. Travel April 12-Dec. 20. Info: 800-654-6559, <http://www.deltavacations.com>.

Turks and Caicos

-- *Beaches Turks & Caicos Resort Villages & Spa* is celebrating its 162-suite expansion, the Italian Village, with *two free nights* and up to *60 percent off* room rates. Deal is valid on seven-night packages booked by March 31, for travel April 20-June 5 or Sept. 1-Oct. 31. With the free nights and discount, the starting rate for seven nights in a two-bedroom suite is \$2,515 per adult and \$735 per child (children younger than 2 are free). Price includes meals, liquor, golf, water activities, transfers and taxes. Info: 888-BEACHES, <http://www.beaches.com>.

-- *Ocean Club Resorts* has a *Spring Break Sale* with up to *45 percent off* rooms and a *fifth or seventh night free*. For a five-night vacation, pay \$659 per person double for a one-bedroom with a garden view or a suite with a pool view. Taxes of 22 percent are additional. Valid through April 13. Info: 800-457-8787, <http://www.oceanclubresorts.com>.