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Eventually the two roads converge, and from here all paths lead to Speyside, the sleepy diving mecca on the northeast tip of the island, whose reefs were reportedly rated by Jacques Cousteau as the third best in the Caribbean, and whose offshore island, Little Tobago, was featured in David Attenborough's *The Living Planet*.

And last but not least, comes Charlottetown, remarkable mainly for being the furthest-most town on the island, and for its jetty, a favored island "liming" spot. *Liming*, for the uninitiated, is the dedicated art of passing time with friends—be it hanging out on the jetty, in the streets, on the quayside, or on the beach. About the only thing that Tobago islanders do better is party.

Life in Tobago, in fact, seems to be one big party, with a major event every month. The year kicks off with Carnival, the biggest party of them all (see sidebar, previous page). Easter sees the serious event of the goat races, with the highly-groomed contenders competing for the titles of Champion Jockey and Champion Trainer by day, and the race spectators dancing until dawn by night. Easter also see the International Fishing tournament, when anglers from around the world come to sample the island's outstanding big-game fishing: dorado, tuna, wahoo, sailfish, and of course, king of them all, marlin (the island has a catch-and-release policy for these ocean giants, so there are ample to go around). May is the month to hoist sale, with the Angostura Tobago Sail Week; July celebrates the island's diverse heritage; adrenaline rushes in during August, with powerboats speeding between Trinidad and Tobago in the Carib Great Race; and

details

The Palms Villa Resort

Signal Hill Old Road

P.O. Box 1070

Signal Hill, Tobago

West Indies

868-635-1010

info@thepalmstobago.com

www.thepalmstobago.com

Villa Rates

(up to six persons per night)

January 2-April 2	\$495
April 3-April 17	\$525
April 18-June 30	\$450
July 1-September 2	\$495
September 3-December 15	\$450

where to stay

There are some "luxury" hotels in Tobago, but in keeping with the island's laidback, low-key style, there are no mega-resorts. As such, a far better option in terms of accommodation is to go for a luxury villa, such as those at the Palms Villa Resort. A new addition to the island, this ten-acre private estate provides some of the island's best villa living. Set just above Scarborough, with fabulous views across the interior, it is home to just five villas—ideal for group and corporate bookings, as well as private rentals. Each villa reflects the style of the old plantation houses, complete with three generously proportioned bedrooms, all en-suite and all with direct access onto the two verandas that surround the house at both levels. Downstairs there is also a living room with a full entertainment center and a fully equipped kitchen, with terrace doors opening out onto the outdoor dining area. Unlike a hotel, you feel right at home, right away.

Mod cons come standard, from fabulous linens in the bedrooms to wireless Internet connections to the huge pool (complete with separate soaker tub), ensuring you work, rest, and play in supreme comfort. If you don't feel like cooking (or you just fancy another helping of the treats awaiting you upon arrival), you can request that dinner be prepared, or that a barbecue be set up poolside, for you to enjoy at leisure. If you feel like a massage, you simply have to ask (having it under the stars is highly recommended, and best of all, you won't have to move more than a few steps afterward to sink into bed).

You could be forgiven for holing up for your entire stay, but the villas are also convenient to the popular Stone Haven Bay and Mt. Irvine areas, Tobago's two main golf courses, and the excellent restaurants that can be found around the Shirvan Road. The Palms Villa team will gladly arrange activities such as golf, diving at Pigeon Point or Speyside (with the two best dive schools, Wild Turtle Dive and Aqua Marine Dive respectively), and any number of personally tailored excursions. David, the resort's manager, has his own boat available for a day's deep-sea fishing, snorkeling, and exploring the coastal coves that are impossible to reach by road (and are therefore wonderfully deserted). For island tours there is no better guide than David Williams, a local resident with unending knowledge (and enthusiasm), for both on- and off-the-beaten-track excursions (www.kingdavidtobago.com). Whether it's discovering the best place for such local specialties as crab dumplings, calaloo, or chicken roti; taking a night walk through the rainforest; getting the inside track on the annual turtle visits; star gazing with a celestron telescope; or getting the best pick straight from the fishermen's nets for the evening barbecue, he's your man.