

A Curated Premium Vacation Experience

An Interview with Houston Moncure,
Managing Director, Bluefields Bay Villas



An aerial view of the San Michele Villa

EDITORS' NOTE *Houston Moncure spent his earliest years in Jamaica where he learned the foundation of the hospitality industry from a young age. He worked with several media and production houses including Feature Story News, Storyhouse Productions, Swiss Television and Media Matters for America. After several years in the field, Moncure decided to return to his roots and work full-time with the family business.*



Houston Moncure

Additionally, Moncure oversees the execution of all Bluefields Environmental Protection Association's (BEPA) activities in Jamaica, where 2 percent of villa rental fees paid support the local basic school for early childhood education, an anti-littering campaign, the building and maintenance of Belmont's new architect-designed refuse collection center, repairing water supply, sea water testing and more. Moncure studied broadcasting, telecommunications and mass media at Temple University in Philadelphia, earning his bachelor's degree in 2008.

PROPERTY BRIEF *Bluefields Bay Villas (bluefieldsvillas.com) is a collection of six all-inclusive luxury villas on Jamaica's south coast. Situated on the hilly coastline overlooking the sea, each open-air private villa is equipped with expansive views and a private pool as well as a dedicated butler, maid service and chef and is designed with antique island charm, allowing the beauty of the island to take center stage. Each villa, ranging from two to six bedrooms, has its own personality, from the palatial-like San Michele house with its private island to the intimate Cottonwood Cottage tucked in the trees.*

Will you discuss the history of Bluefields Bay Villas and provide an overview of the property today?

The business has grown fairly organically. My parents arrived in Jamaica in the early '80s and they loved it here. Around 1983, they started talking to the woman who became my godmother about where they could acquire property that would have the most community impact.

She sent them to the house I'm currently sitting in, which is the original house they

acquired. Within a few years, they ended up with three houses and then they looked at each other and asked what they were going to do with these houses. They decided to build another three houses and continued to build as they worked to decide what they were going to do.

Eventually, we turned these houses into a five-star luxury property. We are all-inclusive but it's so much more than that – it's a fully curated premium vacation experience.

Our guests wake up in the morning knowing that we know exactly what they like. The butler, who is with them for their entire stay, knows if once they get into the pool in the morning, within five minutes, they will want their first Pina Colada.

Whether our guests are movie stars or regular people, they all get the exact same treatment. When we have celebrities here, half the staff has no idea who they are because Bluefields is so sheltered.

Will you discuss the location and accessibility to Bluefields?

Bluefields is on the south coast, directly south of Montego Bay for the most part. To get here, we give people two options: they can take a 70-minute car ride or a 12-minute helicopter ride. We have two helicopter pads, one that services four of our houses and one that is directly on the lawn next to San Michele which is our flagship house next to the water with a little bridge going to a private island with the pool pavilion next door to it.

Is there a consistent feel among the six villas?

When it comes to appointing the villas, my parents have an incredibly eclectic taste for antiques and we are the largest holder of Jamaican antiques in the world. When anyone walks into any of the houses, it is like walking back into old world Jamaica.

With just six villas on the property, how do you handle the food and beverage component?

Jamaica has so many flavorings to work with. We look at this as a real opportunity.

We have about a dozen chefs on property and we're running six different kitchens. We have spent a lot of time on developing our own food style, which is Jamaican fusion. We try to give people dishes that look very

similar to what they would get at a high-end restaurant in the U.K., Canada, or the U.S., but that utilizes as many Jamaican ingredients as possible.

We use extremely local ingredients. We work with the farmers in our immediate area. The produce is picked ripe off the vine and delivered directly to us. This also creates the highest economic impact for the area. The woman we get our eggs from is 200 yards from the resort, so we know we're going to get the freshest eggs. This helps us prepare very high-quality food.

Do you look at the destination as a place to disconnect and recharge?

This is certainly a place where one can disconnect and recharge. We don't have TVs in any of the houses. Time slows down here. In today's fast-moving world, many people need to slow down every now and again.

However, there is plenty to do at Bluefields. We have kayaks, paddle boards, and tennis courts. Continuing in our community focused ethos, we'll send a gardener who lives up the hill on hikes with guests. The community does best when everyone here feels like they're having a good time and participating. This means safety and security isn't an issue the way it can be in other places. We encourage our guests to walk out into the community and say hello. This certainly creates an authentic Jamaican experience.

In terms of other types of activities, Negril is 40 minutes away. Also 40 minutes away via a beautiful boat ride is Black River. It was the first town in Jamaica. There are huge mangroves and, of course, crocodiles there.

YS Falls is another 20 minutes from there. This is a beautiful privately-owned waterfall that has been turned into a park where we send our guests with a picnic. While they are touring the falls, the butler is setting out a picnic for when they finish.

From a service point of view, will you discuss your focus on attracting and retaining talent?

Continuing our theme of doing as much with the local community as we can, we don't look for talent island wide – we stay as local as possible. We're probably one of the few places that prefers to take in local people who are completely green and have never had any type of experience in hospitality, and then train them to Bluefields' standards. ●