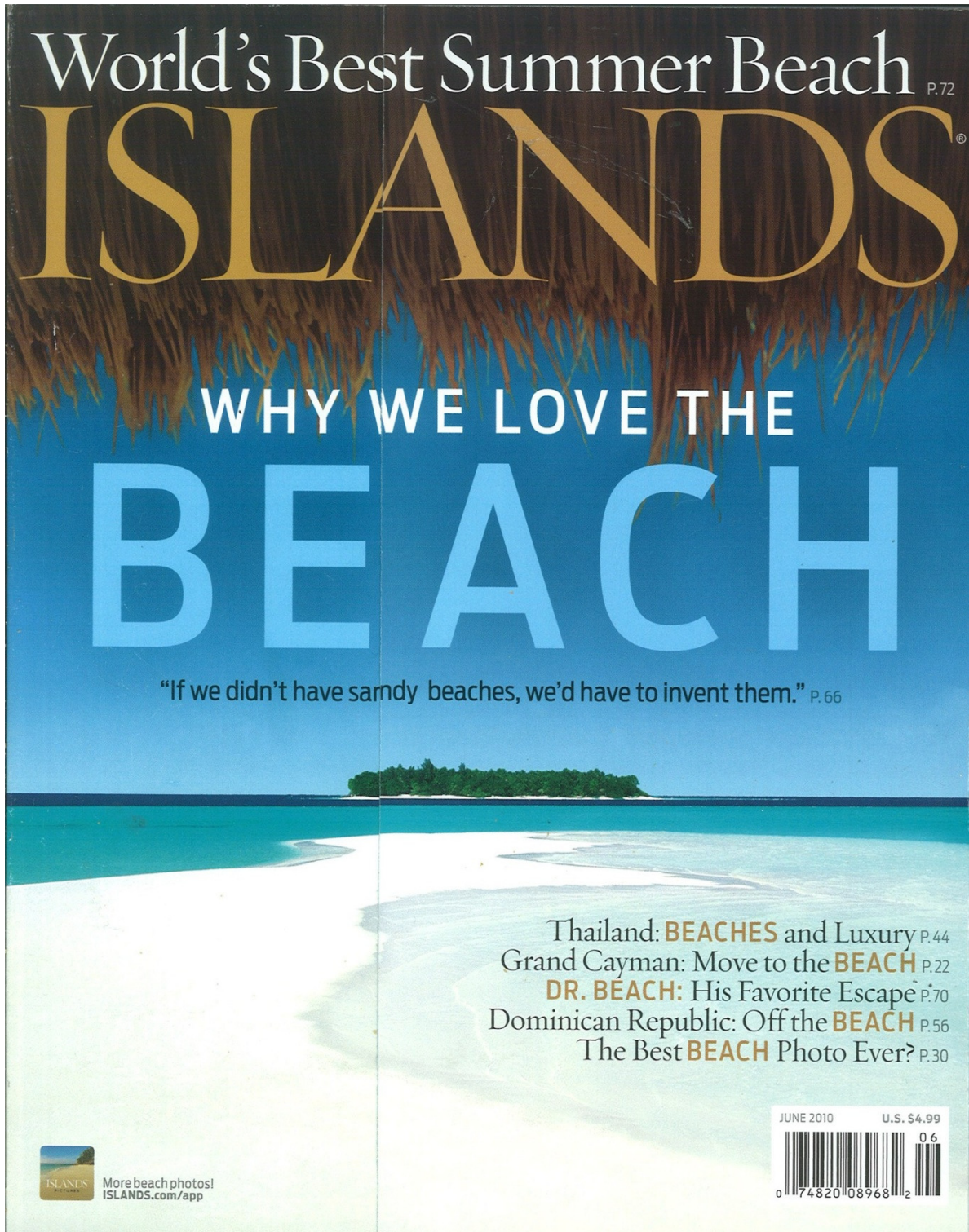


Islands

June 2010

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World's Best Summer Beach P.72 ISLANDS[®]

WHY WE LOVE THE BEACH

"If we didn't have sandy beaches, we'd have to invent them." P.66

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Dominican Republic

"If you have time, tour the Brugal Rum factory. If you have time, ride the *teleférico*. It's the DR vacation mantra. Everything I did pointed to more fun things to do. Wherever I went, people suggested other favorite places. Oh, and if you have time, relax." — MATTHEW MILLER, EDITOR

Summit the DR

DAYS > Fly to Santiago (STI), rent a car, drive to Jarabacoa in the mountains.

1-4 > Relax into the Dominican vibe at Rancho Baiguate, test your gringo Spanish and rest up. Tomorrow's a big day.

> Meet your guide to discuss the Pico Duarte trek. Got hiking boots, rain gear, layered non-cotton clothing and a day pack? Mules carry the rest.

> Rancho Baiguate guides bring food and do the cooking. Food tastes better at altitude. Request ahead for special diet needs.

> Take it slow (you're on vacation), walking or riding uphill. Sip the clear creek water (safe to drink) and listen to the birds.

> Overnight at La Compartición. Run by the national park, the shared camp has plain but well-kept cabins, a cookhouse and restrooms. Bathe in the creek.

> Get up before dawn (cour- age!); mount a mule in the dark and ride for the summit. Do the last steep trail on foot, racing the sun. The walk back to town is easier if you succeed.

Rest. You'll Need It.

DAY > Drive three hours across the island's central region through hills, tobacco plantations and villages to Sosúa on the north coast. Along the way, stop for a machete-cut *agua de coco* at a roadside stand.

> Check into Sea Horse Ranch and give yourself a break. The chef cooks to order the food you bring; the maid does your laundry. Don't worry," one staffer says. You're at Sea Horse now."

> All villas have private pools.

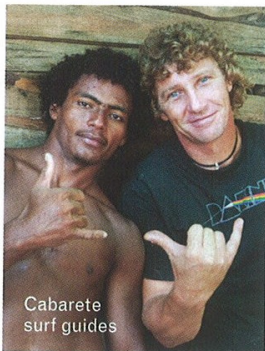
The resort's communal club pool has a view of the Caribbean.

> At the Beach Club, you can dine on Caribbean-influenced cuisine from seared tuna to Dominican country stew.

> For a change, eat and browse at Miró Gallery and Restaurant on Cabarete beach. There's art on the walls, lounge seating on the beach and Moroccan cuisine like chicken tangine on your table.

Ride Easy

DAY > Want to surf? Check out the Encuentro break west of Cabarete (turn at the Coconut Palms Resort). Most days the gentle surf suits beginners. The bigger outer break awaits when you advance. Takeoff surf school teaches ocean sense and surfing etiquette as well as moves.



Cabarete surf guides

Fly a Kite, Señor

DAY > Kiteboarding isn't easy, especially in the maze of lines and kites on Cabarete beach.

7 Start slow at Laurel Eastman



The Facts PASSPORT NEEDED > Yes CURRENCY > Peso OFFICIAL LANGUAGE > Spanish WHEN TO GO > Anytime — it's summery year-round LOCAL DRINK > Mamajuana — rum, herbs, bark, but mostly bite

Kiteboarding School. If you have time, the four-day "Transformation into Kiteboarder" package goes from trainer kites to water starts. You'll get dunked a lot, but the water's warm.

> Got extra hours? In the morning before clouds roll in, take the *teleférico* up Mount Isabel de Torres for sweeping views of Puerto Plata and the area.

> Or tour the Brugal Rum factory to see how they get the deliciousness out of the sugar cane and into the bottle.

> Or snorkel Sosúa. Rent gear on the beach and dive into an all-time favorite reef spot.

Climb Waterfalls

DAY > Iguana Mama picks you up at your hotel and drives you to the 27 Charcos site on Rio Damajagua. Part of the proceeds help support local communities.

> Wear comfortable clothes and closed-toe shoes that can get wet. Strap on a life jacket and helmet, and follow local guides upriver, swimming, climbing ladders and shimmying up ropes to the top. Then leap down.

Ride a Tiny Horse

DAY > At Rancho Montana southeast of Cabarete, witness Dominican life atop a small but spirited *criollo* horse. Ride through the village of Veragua, then along the river where locals work and play.

> Full-day tour includes lunch and *mamajuana*, a concoction of botanicals as effective an aphrodisiac as the rum it's steeped in — good for what ails you, especially if that's sobriety.

None of the Above

DAYS > Are you sweating just reading all that? Opt instead for the life of luxury enjoyed by Oscar de la Renta, Julio Iglesias and other celebrities at Tortuga Bay in Punta Cana on the island's lower-adrenaline east end.

> Fly directly from Miami to the privately owned Punta Cana International Airport (PUJ). Since the owners of Tortuga Bay resort also own this thatched-roof airport, you won't have to wait in a single customs line or carry your own bag. You're the VIP.

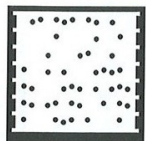
> Look forward to days of such treatment — a private beach, the Six Senses Spa, cold Presidente beer and nine world-class dining options a golf-cart ride away. You don't even have to drive the cart or make your own dinner reservations. Just call your personal concierge on the in-room cell phone; he or she will take care of the rest. All you have to do is relax.

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