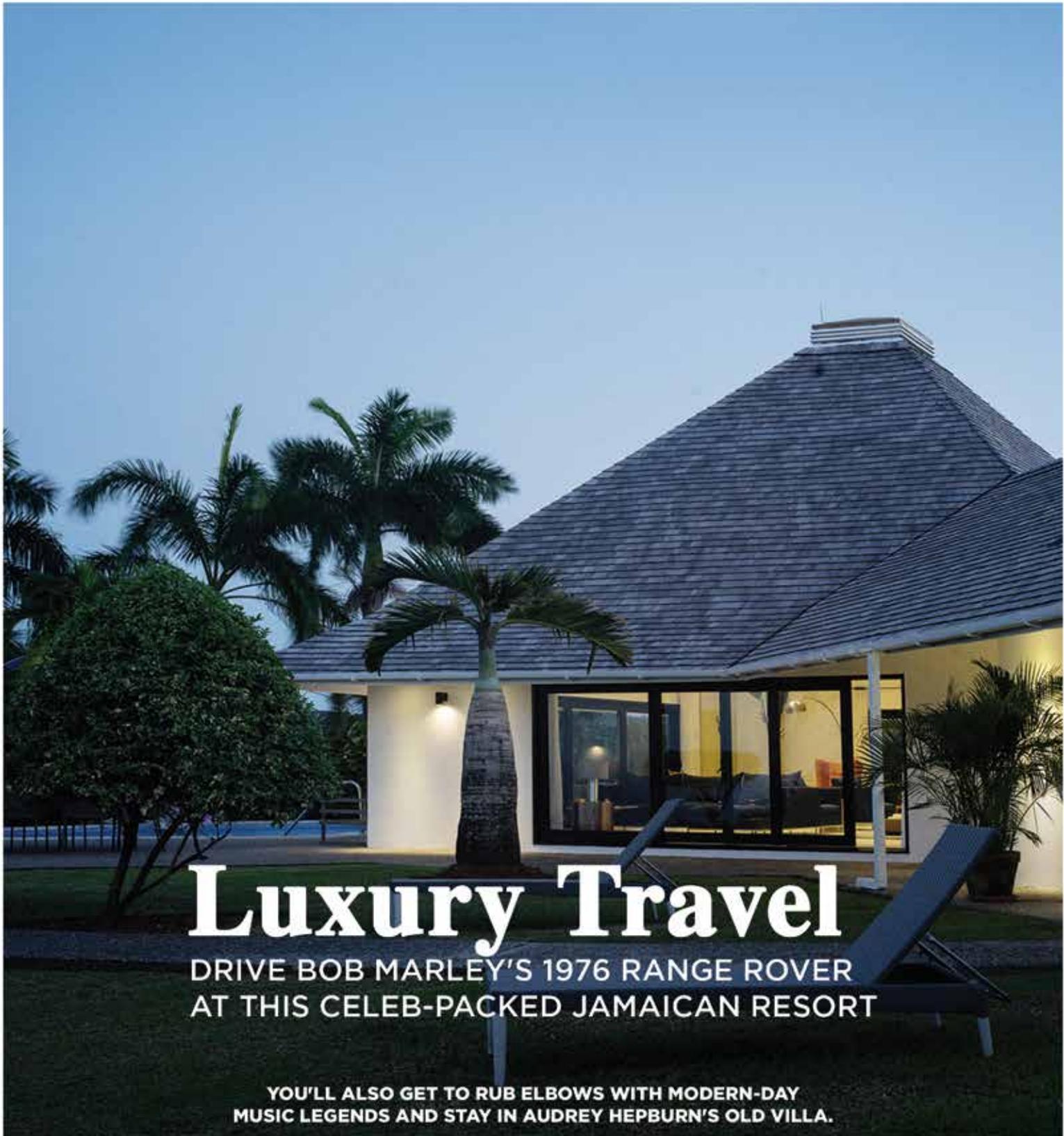


Bloomberg Pursuits

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Luxury Travel

DRIVE BOB MARLEY'S 1976 RANGE ROVER
AT THIS CELEB-PACKED JAMAICAN RESORT

YOU'LL ALSO GET TO RUB ELBOWS WITH MODERN-DAY
MUSIC LEGENDS AND STAY IN AUDREY HEPBURN'S OLD VILLA.

ARTICLE BY



NIKKI EKSTEIN

Jon Baker wears a lot of hats.

He's one of Jamaica's most respected hoteliers, as the co-founder of **Geejam Collection**. His flagship, **Geejam Hotel**, doubles as a recording studio and celebrity hotspot frequented by Katy Perry, Rihanna, Drake, and John Legend (among many others).



Photographer: Wil Kaner

He's also an interior design buff who has taken on the restoration and reopening of Audrey Hepburn's favorite villa in Port Antonio—an addition to Geejam that's just opened up for official bookings.

He's a music industry legend as the founder of Gee Street Records, helping develop the careers of Doug E. Fresh and P.M. Dawn.

And if that weren't enough, now he's wearing a dramatically different hat: vintage car repairman.



Photographer: Wil Kaner

Baker insists that his latest calling was long lying dormant in his DNA. “I had a very interesting upbringing in London,” he told Bloomberg from his resort in Port Antonio. “My mum was a relatively well-known fashion designer in London in the ‘60s, and my dad would restore cars and take them to auction.”

So after years of using his mother’s design influence in his hotel projects, Baker had an epiphany. Why not restore some of Jamaica’s prized classic cars—many of which have fallen into terrible disrepair—and preserve a piece of the island’s history while adding an amenity for his hard-to-impress guests?



Bob Marley's 1976 Range Rover.

Now Baker is restoring a fleet of 13 vintage cars—including Bob Marley's two-door Range Rover, a 1991 Alfa Romeo once owned by a Miss World beauty queen, a 1968 Austin Healey 3000, and a 1963 E Type Jaguar 3.8 Series 1 Roadster—which he'll offer up to guests who want to take day trips to nearby picnic spots or to Blue Mountains National Park.

As a first-time player in the car space, Baker is quick to hedge on his efforts. "We're not restoring them to concourse quality," he said. "We're believers in a nice-condition old car. We can't take off every nut and bolt and re-chrome it. But we can make these cars drivable again."



Clockwise from left:
1978 Fiat 124, 1972 E Type Jaguar V12 Roadster, 1991 Jaguar XJ, 1991 Alfa Romeo Spider

To compensate for his inexperience in overhauling vehicles, Baker teamed up with Steve James, a British mechanic who specializes in vintage cars, so you can drive these beauties without worrying that they'll break down again. Geejam CFO Cliff Ryan, a former race driver, is also lending a hand. So far, the team has fully restored five vehicles: two Alfa Romeo Spiders from 1989 and 1991, a 1967 Mercedes SL Sports Pagoda, a 1971 Mercedes 300 SEL 3.5, and a 1988 Escort Cabriolet XR3i. You'll have to wait at least a year to drive Bob Marley's Range Rover, though.



Photographer: Wil Kaner

Of course, the wheels can be yours to enjoy only if you book into one of Geejam's suites or villas. And if you're planning a trip, you'd do best to focus on the newly redone, four-bedroom Panorama villa, which was a beloved vacation spot for Audrey Hepburn and her sons in the 1980s. It's the first addition to Geejam since Baker opened the sprawling six-bedroom Cocosan villa a year and a half ago.

Baker renovated Panorama himself with the help of **Vidal Dowding**, a 30-year-old architect whom he describes as Jamaica's most important up-and-comer. (The pair also teamed up to create the critically acclaimed Trident Hotel in 2012.) Together, they added a full spa and gym; locally-made furniture by Atelier Vidal; vintage pieces by Eames, Saarinen, and Tucci; and a kitchen that's large enough for in-house cooking classes.



Photographer: Wil Kaner

The four bedrooms are decked out in a minimalist, white-on-white style that's accented by pop art—including an Andy Warhol portrait of Liz Taylor and one of Jamie Reid's God Save the Queen prints. And there's a gorgeous pool overlooking the Caribbean Sea. Thankfully, none of it was affected by Hurricane Matthew, which seemed to be barreling straight toward the island when it made its course through the Caribbean.



Cocosan

The whole Panorama villa rents out for a minimum of \$3,500 a night (rates can increase, depending on seasonality), and guests are required to stay for at least five nights. The six-bedroom Cocosan villa, which shares a similar aesthetic (if not the same glamorous connection to Hepburn) starts at \$4,500 per night.

There are only two reasons to leave these villas: to go to the hotel's private beach, which is a short walk away, and to enjoy the company of Geejam's famously stylish crowd. The resort is minutes from the villas on foot, but guests can also be whizzed over by a driver.

Actually, make it three reasons. The villas do come with access to those gorgeous vintage cars, after all. And as Baker put it: "Driving around Jamaica in an old convertible ... what more could you want?"

THE END