

ISLAND GETAWAYS

LOOKING FOR SOME FUN IN THE SUN? TONI KRASICKI EXPLORES WHERE WE CAN SEIZE THAT ELUSIVE DREAM OF A TROPICAL ISLAND GETAWAY.

QUEENSLAND – AUSTRALIA

They don't call Australia the lucky country for nothing! Forget your passport, there's an array of islands in your very own backyard just waiting to be explored. From the Gold Coast to Cooktown, you'll find an island getaway to satisfy all tastes and budgets.

If you are planning on taking a young family, then Lindeman Island is a perfect choice. The Club Med Resort offers all-inclusive packages, so there's no fretting about racking up a massive food tab. There's a colossal activities program offered through a variety of kids clubs, and the club caters for the needs of infants' right up to teenagers. So eat as little or as much as you like, or do as little or as much as you like. What's more perfect than that!

Couples chasing some romance should head to Brampton or Hayman Island. Find a private beach and claim it as your own for the day! But if you need rock star-style seclusion and intimate luxury, try Lizard, Orpheus and the Bedarra Islands, or Peppers Palm Bay. These



The Great Barrier Reef, one of Queensland's natural gems

Queensland resorts have a 'no child under 12/15' policy and cater to only a small number of guests.

Can't choose? Islands such as Hamilton, Dunk, Daydream, and Long Island Resort are perfect for offering something in between. Hamilton Island is a prime example. It has a bustling marina with a yachty vibe, family fun by a variety of pools, and a great dining choice. Or you can go the whole shebang and hit the solitude of Qualia Resort on the other end of the island. So whether you are a family or a group of mates, you'll find something that rocks your boat.

Heron, Wilson, or one of the Ladies (Lady Elliot or Lady Musgrave) offer superb diving and fishing opportunities. Choose the right season and for nature lovers it's paradise. Check out the whale watching, turtle hatching, and bird rookeries.

But if it all sounds too hard and travelling north is too much to get your head around, then consider Tangalooma Resort on Moreton Island off Brisbane or Couran Cove Island Resort on South Stradbroke Island off the Gold Coast.

And when you're kicking back, remember that old saying: 'Queensland, beautiful one day, perfect the next'!

MAURITIUS

The Republic of Mauritius, located in the warm waters of the Indian Ocean, has its fair share of sun-kissed beaches. This island nation is part of the Mascarene Archipelago and sits off the southeast of Africa. The island is a blend of diverse cultures and religions, boasting a population of Hindus, Creole, African, Chinese, Muslims and European. It's this diversity that affords Mauritius its own unique island culture.

A tropical island dream come true with clear turquoise waters and blindingly white sandy beaches. The tourist hub, where you'll find most of the accommodation, shopping plazas, beaches, nightclubs and restaurants, is found in the northern reaches of the island. Want to kite surf? Scuba dive? Water-ski? Parasail? It's all there. Too strenuous? Then try a round of golf, or just snooze under the casuarinas. If you want to glimpse the wilder and less developed areas of the island and mix with the friendly locals, explore!

Most of the island, apart from the south, is protected by coral reefs which makes beaches safe for swimming. Travel east and stretch out on empty endless powder white beaches. The

south east is wild and craggy as waves crash into high cliffs, affording exhilarating views. The west is the perfect spot for surfers and deep sea fishing. As the sun slips in to the sea, linger for sundowners and toast the end of another perfect day in paradise.

THE CARIBBEAN

The Caribbean or West Indies is a region in the Caribbean Sea comprising more than 7,000 islands, islets, reefs and cays. How do you choose from so many? This immense tropical marvel can be divided into English speaking (American and British), French, Dutch, and Spanish Caribbean. Turn up on Saint-Martin and expect a slice of France fused finely into Creole, or perhaps you'll be eating Gouda on Bonaire.

Want to stay away from the crowds? Definitely avoid any islands popular with cruise ships otherwise expect to share your hideaway with hordes of camera wielding tourists. From holistic spas to lush rain forests, under and on-water activities, towering waterfalls to charming seaside villages, with such an assortment of islands you would be hard pressed not finding your idyllic getaway.

The Caribbean people like their music and there is almost a different rhythm for every island. All are energetic, fast and full of explosive euphoria. Coincide your visit with Carnival, which can start heating up as early as January, or any of the music festivals held throughout the year.

Cuba is a destination not only boasting unforgettable beaches, but stunning colonial architecture, a fascinating history and sizzling music. Look forward to balmy nights, mojitos and some red hot Cuban tunes. If you would rather something more mellow, try Jamaica for some good old reggae and laidback island life.

To celebrate summer we've got the ultimate beach babe pack, valued at \$500 from Nookie Beach. Containing everything you need to take you from the beach to the bar, including one full-piece swimsuit, two bikinis and two dresses. To enter, email 50 words or less to editor@fitnessfirst.com.au before 5 December, and tell us why you want to win this prize. The best entry will win – remember to include your sizes and delivery address.

Prize pack varies to images shown



Hamilton Island, Queensland



Dunk Island, Queensland



Mauritius, South Africa



Roatan Island, Caribbean

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