



*Having a Home  
in Paradise*

Designers Rodney Deepröse & Chris Ferreira  
[www.rodneydeeproese.com](http://www.rodneydeeproese.com)





*written by* Debra Usher

### **The First Home**

The idyllic island of Nevis lies near the top of the Lesser Antilles archipelago, about 200 miles south of Puerto Rico and just west of Antigua. Approximately 7 miles long and 5 miles wide, this diminutive island jewel is blessed with natural vegetation that is unparalleled in its beauty.

The clients have owned a house high on the mountainside of Nevis since the early 1980s, when their children were young. With breathtaking views, spectacular cross winds and monkeys in the garden the family has spent many years vacationing in this spectacular mountain paradise.

There is a certain something about the small, sombrero-shaped island that grabs you. The charm and tranquility take you back to a time when things were simpler, when days were more peaceful and stress was just a word, not a way of life.

Green and serene, Nevis is truly one of the world's remaining unspoiled places and proudly carries the name, "Queen of the Caribbees". From the top of the 3,232-foot Nevis Peak to the depths of the clear waters offshore, there is a world of flora and fauna to be explored. In the hills, the comical green vervet monkeys chatter and scamper; in the sea, the whales cruise by. Stroll around and see the architecture of bygone eras: churches, windmills and refurbished Great Houses.

### **Changing Locations**

Once they had grandchildren, the homeowners realized they needed to be closer to the island's recreational areas to keep the young adults and small children happy. They were fortunate to secure a double lot on the golf course at the Private Residences of the Four Seasons Resort Nevis.

Here they built this 3 bedroom plus den, 2.5 bath "cottage" with an oversized pool and a small waterfall. A large shaded porch overlooking the pool is a definite bonus. With the generous space afforded by a double lot, they were also able to build a 1 bedroom Guest House.

Island living for the family now includes all the recreational facilities of the Four Seasons Resort: Spa, Tennis, Golf, Water Sports, etc. Amenities include room service, laundry, housekeeping and concierge services.

The cottage was based on a "stock" design available for the development, but was customized and enlarged to suit the individual needs of the client. The cottage now has a view of the golf course and the









mountain they once lived on, but is only a few minutes' walk to the great sandy beach that has made the resort famous.

Working in the Caribbean has its share of issues for trades and designers like Rodney Deeprise. Often schedules take longer than expected, shipping everything from the mainland can be difficult and plays havoc with the availability of product. Of course the climate is always a concern when selecting and specifying furniture and accessories. Constant humidity and hurricanes cause plenty of problems for those living on the island.

The client has 2 grown children who are now married, and within a few years of the weddings they added 6 grandchildren to the family group. The client also maintains homes in Florida and Oakville as well as having plans in development for a cottage property on Georgian Bay.





















*The  
Island  
of Nevis*







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### Island Charm

Nevis is special, a place that will seduce you and tug at your heart strings long after you leave. A genuine charm and hospitality radiate throughout the island and its 10,000 neighbourly residents are ready to make new friends and welcome back regular visitors. As they say on Nevis: "You're only a stranger here once."

Nevis is a true paradise for nature lovers. Just listen to the monkeys chattering in the trees, the doves cooing in the distance. There is excellent snorkeling just off shore and scuba diving around wrecks and natural reefs. For those more interested in man-made exploration, try your hand at archaeology, or exploring the ruins of old sugar plantations, a lime kiln or Amerindian sites.

Rainforests, reefs and ruins make Nevis a fascinating destination for people who enjoy the natural side of the tropics. Hiking in the rain forest

is a must for everyone, whether it be the short hike through the nature trail at Golden Rock Plantation Inn or a day-long climb to the top of Nevis Peak (3,232 feet). Walk on the beach and learn about the nesting of sea turtles with a biologist as your guide, or go snorkeling with a marine biologist to learn about life under the sea. There are even night beach walks available to study the stars, seemingly light years away from the glare of the cities.

### An Impressive History

The written history of Nevis begins with the account recorded by Christopher Columbus when he sailed past the island in 1493. The name Nevis is derived from "Nuestra Senora de Las Nieves" which means "Our Lady of the Snows," because the cloud-capped mountain reminded Columbus of snow.

Prior to the Columbus saga, Nevis was named Dulcina "Sweet Island" by the Arawaks and later Oualie "land of beautiful waters" by the Caribs.









Later in the 18th century Nevis became known as "Queen of the Caribbees."

Over the years, Nevis has made a number of significant contributions to the Caribbean and the world. Two key players in international history were Alexander Hamilton and Lord Horatio Nelson. Hamilton, one of the founding fathers of America and its first Secretary of the Treasury was born on Nevis on January 11, 1757. Nelson, Britain's most famous Admiral, used Nevis as a base of operations in the mid-1780's and married a Nevisian, Frances Nisbet in 1787.

Nevis continued as part of the British colonial holdings until 1967 when it achieved Associated Statehood with St. Kitts. On September 19, 1983, Nevis became part of an independent nation – the sovereign democratic state of St. Christopher and Nevis. It has the unique constitutional arrangement of being part of the Federal Parliament while having a separate parliament and its own Nevis Island Administration headed by a Premier.

The island is covered with ruins from the sugar

plantation era, which declined in the late 1800s after slavery was abolished and the sugar beet created competition for sugar cane. Over the years, volunteer groups and researchers have come to the island to explore the history of the old buildings and document them for future generations. Several archaeology projects led by university researchers from England and the United States continue each year.

#### **Music on the Island**

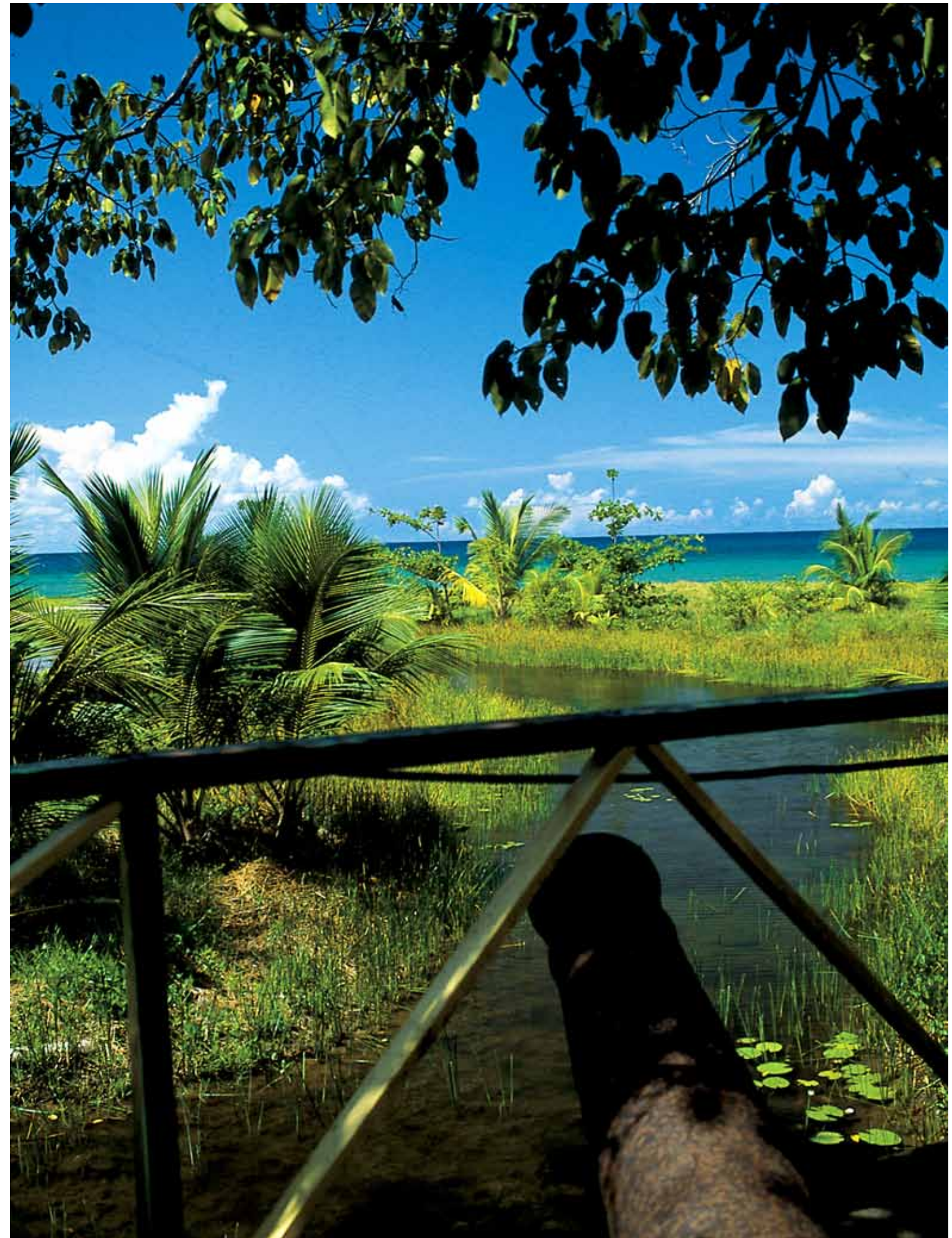
Music and the Caribbean islands go hand-in-hand, and Nevis is no exception. Since the days of slavery, folk dances and folk music have been a part of life. They played a key role, particularly at Christmas when field workers were given free time for leisure activities.

With the advent of Carnival and later Culturama, the annual cultural festival held each summer since 1974, dances and music became even more important to island celebrations. There are many traditional folk dances, such as the Masquerade, the Mocko-Jumbies that walk









on stilts, Cowboys and Indians and Plait the Ribbon, a May pole dance.

The musical accompaniment for these dances is the Big Drum or the String Band. Big Drum, which is African in origin, consists of a bass and kettle drums and fife. The string band, or "scratch band" as it is called, consists of about 10 musicians, with usually three guitars and a four-string instrument-mandolin and quarto as accompaniment. The rest of the band plays a baho, a bass pipe made from bamboo (or in recent times, PVC pipe) that reaches to the floor, and percussion (maracas, triangle, and guiro – a hollow gourd with ridges that are "scratched" with a metal comb-like object). A fife usually carries the melody for the group.

There are currently several string bands on Nevis, which entertain regularly at island hotels and events like weddings. Young people learn to play the instruments in primary school and some of the bands have younger members to keep the tradition alive.

Steel pan and Kaiso Calypso music play an important role in the island culture. Kaiso is a popular art form throughout the Caribbean and has its roots in West Africa as the African tradition

of orature or storytelling. As in most Caribbean countries, Kaiso started in Nevis during the days of slavery and continued after emancipation into the 20th century.

#### **The Peaceable Island Kingdom**

Monkey sightings are common on Nevis, and most visitors delight in seeing the energetic creatures run across the road (followed by a family of babies) or swing from tree to tree. These green vervet monkeys live only on St. Kitts, Barbados and Nevis, brought to this island by British settlers. Local lore says that the French brought











them, though the description "French" was actually a derogatory term for annoying British.

These cute animals, with expressive faces of white contrasting with their darker hair, chatter from the treetops, as if holding conversations between themselves or berating visitors on the ground. They are very safe, carry no human diseases and are often seen stealing mangoes and flowers.

Sheep and goats are other inhabitants. How do you tell the difference between them? Tails down – sheep. Tails up – goat. Other than that, it's often hard to differentiate between the two.

Donkeys were brought to the island as beasts of burden, but now are only used occasionally for transportation by farmers. Mothers are often seen with their babies – small donkeys with shaggy hair

size of ping-pong balls. In the water, however, they are agile and streamlined and can swim along at up to 35 miles per hour despite massive bodies which can weigh up to 1500 pounds.

During their life span of about 100 years, they travel the oceans, sometimes hundreds of miles, and eat foods ranging from jellyfish to sponges, grass and fish. Despite the large number of eggs per nest, all species of sea turtles are endangered. Only 1 in 10,000 survives to adulthood.

Whales are often considered by fisherman to be harbingers of good fishing. When they appear, the mackerel, tuna and other fish gather in abundance. But anyone familiar with the entertaining aquatic antics of spinner dolphins and the grace of breaching humpback whales also welcome their arrival. The year begins in January



that look like dogs with long ears.

Mongoose were originally introduced to Nevis in 1870 to get rid of the rodent population; this small, brown ferret-like animal is often spotted skittering across roads.

Four different species of sea turtles venture to the beaches to lay eggs: the green sea turtle, the leatherback, the hawksbill and the loggerhead turtle. On land they lumber past the high tide mark to painstakingly dig nests with flippers designed for swimming, and lay 40-150 eggs the

along the coast of Nevis with the haunting songs of the humpbacks. These gentle giants begin their annual journey thousands of miles away near the Arctic and Canada, heading for the warm waters of the Caribbean to mate and give birth. Occasionally one can view a remarkable show of jumps and tail lobbs, fin waving and barrel rolls. By April they move on.

While the humpbacks are migratory, several other types stay here year round. They include pilot, sperm, fin, sei and minke whales. The largest









whale in the world, the blue whale, sometimes passes by and is truly an awesome sight.

At least five species of bats have been identified on Nevis, an important part of the island's natural ecosystem. These lively creatures pollinate plants, disperse seeds, and eat insects like mosquitoes. They are the only native mammals known to live on the island. In recent years, many scientists have come to study the fascinating bat population. They believe there is also a sixth species here, the Caribbean fishing bat.

Nevis is named on international bird lists as a premier world birding spot. There are 126 species of birds on the island, including the perky bananaquits, who may visit your breakfast tables looking for sugar, eight species of impressive hawks and four species of white birds in the egret and heron families that create breathtaking sights.

#### **A Dream Vacation**

If you plan to visit Nevis, a great choice for accommodations is the Four Seasons Resort Nevis. This award-winning, five-diamond resort

is surrounded by coconut palms, golden-sand beaches, and a full spectrum of vacation facilities. The 196 deluxe rooms and suites feature either views of the ocean or the championship golf course designed by Robert Trent Jones II. Enjoy sail boating, snorkeling, scuba diving, waterskiing and windsurfing. Three retail shops sell tropical-style fashions for men, women and children, unusual gift items, books and sundries. There is also a pro shop specializing in sports apparel and golf and tennis equipment.

Facilities include an 18-hole championship golf course, 10 tennis courts, beach, three swimming pools, outdoor Jacuzzi, full-service spa with outdoor gardens and pools, water sports, four restaurants, three lounges, 24-hour room service, complete activities program, cable TV, Flat-screen TVs, DVD, air conditioning and direct-dial telephones. All the conveniences of home in a setting that's pure paradise.

For reservations or information please call 1.800.332.3442 in the US or 1.800.268.6282 in Canada. Or visit [www.fourseasons.com/nevis/](http://www.fourseasons.com/nevis/) or email [reservations.nev@fourseasons.com](mailto:reservations.nev@fourseasons.com).





