

Oceans apart

“Getting away from it all” takes on a glorious new meaning for Anthea Gerrie

INA world that seems oversaturated with five-star travel, the last remaining true luxury has to be getting the run of your own private island. It's easier than you think, given the number of idyllic little plots of land floating in the world's oceans.

Dreams of warm water, white sand and waving palm trees drive the deep-pocketed towards the private island option. Not to mention the joy of celebrating a life landmark with one's nearest and dearest.

What could be lovelier than holding a residential wedding, barmitzvah or special anniversary celebration on a Caribbean island where no gatecrashers can land?

Parrot Cay, in the Turks & Caicos can be yours exclusively for just \$125,000 per day (around £80,000). That gets 140 of your best friends and family a fabulous five-star bedroom, plus a full American breakfast each morning.

In addition, everyone will find champagne in their room on arrival, fruit delivered daily and all the yoga, Pilates, windsurfing and free wi-fi they can use. No need to tip, either, as service charges as well as tax are included.

Parrot Cay is not the only private island in the Caribbean available for hire — also on offer are Petit St Vincent in the Grenadines and Peter Island Resort & Spa in the British Virgin Islands. The latter, which can accommodate up to 135 guests, has a spa specialising in Ayurvedic treatments.

Not exotic enough? Then head for the Pacific, perhaps to Wadigi,

just 10 minutes by helicopter from Fiji's international airport. It has just one cliff-top villa, staffed by two gourmet chefs, housekeeping staff and a boat captain.

Guests can laze around the infinity pool, go snorkelling and swimming off their two private beaches or immerse themselves in a crystal clear lagoon.

Or you could play Robinson Crusoe with 11 of your closest friends on Wilson Island, a five-acre coral cay which can accommodate a dozen in designer tents perched among native trees. No slumming here — these tents have proper floors and king-size beds, as well as that all-important hammock.

Some £41,600 gets all 12 of you international and domestic flights to this Australian idyll, helicopter and boat transfers, all meals and some drinks. Not to mention snorkelling, bird-watching, a stargazing talk and a trip to watch rare green and loggerhead turtles laying their eggs.

It's worth remembering that Britain itself is surrounded by some exquisite little islands — not least the truly magical Isle of Inishturk in Ireland's west coast. Take over the whole island with a house, pavilion and two guesthouses and you can expect to pay 10,500 euros (about £9,000) per night for 17 people, including five meals and 10 different activities. You can add a couple of dozen more guests for a mere 300 euros (£250 per head).

Or you could play Lost Boys on the Scottish island where J.M. Barrie wrote *Peter Pan*. The hunting lodge on Eilean Shona, now owned by Vanessa Branson and her part-

ner, sleeps up to 12 adults and six children.

Hearty local grub is on hand, and blazing logs in every living space wait to greet guests who have tramped the 2½-mile length of the island in typically brisk Highlands weather.

There's also a tennis court with a loch view, and if it pours there's billiards and a piano for sing-songs. There's no television — this is meant to be a true getaway — but you can have newspapers if you really want them.

Finally, for the seasick who fancy a grand private rental without the boat ride, consider Peckforton Castle in Cheshire. This authentic mediaeval edifice has been lovingly restored to provide luxury accommodation for about 75 people. You can sleep and feed all of them for around £12,000 a day and work off your full English breakfast with some off-road driving, archery, falconry and abseiling.

The restaurant has won awards and a spa, due to open in July, will provide pampering options for ladies who loll, while the more adventurous and energetic are living out their Robin Hood or Jeremy Clarkson fantasies.

Parrot Cay:
www.parrotcay.com.bz
Petit St. Vincent:
www.psvresort.com
Peter Island: www.peterisland.com
Wadigi Island:
www.tailor-made.co.uk
Wilson Island:
www.bridgeandwickers.co.uk
Inishturk:
www.inishturk.com
Eilean Shona:
www.eileanshona.com
Peckforton Castle:
www.peckfortoncastle.co.uk