

PROPERTY NEVIS & ST KITTS

GET WITH THE CARIBBEAN VIBE

With winter looming, thoughts turn to tropical golfing climes. Peter Swain has found one destination that won't break the bank

When it comes to buying a sun-kissed greenside home, we tend to think the Caribbean too pricey for all but the rich and infamous. So, for instance, Wayne Rooney, Gary Lineker and Michael Vaughan have bought in Barbados, while Sean Connery and Ian Poulter prefer the Bahamas.

But another couple of islands with high-quality courses and more reasonably priced property than their glitzier neighbours are coming onto the radar.

The twin island Commonwealth federation of St Kitts (just bigger than Jersey) and Nevis (the size of Guernsey) currently has two fine clubs, with more about to open. Separated by a 30-minute ferry ride, the islands have a wide range of property for sale at or just above

\$400,000 (£255,000).

The price point is directly linked to the local government's Economic Citizenship Program under which anyone buying a property for more than \$400,000 is entitled to apply for St Kitts and Nevis citizenship, with all the consequent tax advantages.

Now, as golfers, we're more interested in the quality of the par fives than the tax perks – although the two are not mutually exclusive. So what's on offer?

The Robert Trent Jones II Four Seasons course on Nevis is a long, hilly, colourful gem. With more elevation changes than you expect in the Caribbean, it's challenging for the pros, and downright tough for high handicappers. It features fast greens, memorable ocean views, a good variety of holes, and exemplary clubhouse service.



(Above): The Trent Jones layout on Nevis is a roller-coaster of colour, and offers some glorious views of its neighbour, St Kitts, across the water; (Right): A quarter-share of Seaside at Cliffdwellers can be yours from around £280,000



(Above): The Robert Trent Jones II course on Nevis; (Below): The world-renowned course designer Tom Fazio – in the pink shirt – is involved in the project at Christophe Harbour (right), where fractionals start at £262,000



Across the Narrows, the Royal St Kitts Golf Club, affiliated to the local Marriott, has a forgiving front nine and scenic beachside back nine. It's also in great shape, a tad cheaper to play, lightly used, and, when the local Brits meet up at the convivial clubhouse on a Thursday, feels something like a tropical St Mellion.

Both clubs are perfect for local members, mostly British or American, who like to play once or twice a week, but two courses do not a golf destination make. Luckily, there's more to come.

Still at the shaping stage, I walked the new Ian Woosnam track at Kittitian Hill in April. Not particularly long but beautifully situated high up on a hillside overlooking the sea, it should be quite a challenge when it opens for play next year.

Then there's the Tom Fazio course under construction at Christophe Harbour. The fairways on a craggy



promontory with 360-degree Atlantic and Caribbean views were blasted several years ago, then the project stalled. Now it's back up and running, and one of the main reasons Ian Botham has just bought a tract of land nearby.

The course won't be ready before 2015, but when it is, the combined clout of Fazio and Buddy Darby, of Kiawah

Island and Doonbeg fame, suggest it'll be quite something.

So within a few years, there'll be four good courses, meaning now is the perfect time to look at property. For those with relatively shallow pockets, the choice comes down to buying a smaller villa outright or taking a fraction of a larger one.

"For \$450,000 (£287,000) I can find



(Top): The Four Seasons on Nevis offers the last word in luxury, with one-tenth fractional ownership from around £300,000 giving you five weeks' usage with no annual fees; (Right): A seaside spectacular at St Kitts, this being the par-three 15th

you a lovely three-bedroom villa on Nevis, with ocean views, on a half-acre hillside lot," says local estate agent Suzanne Gordon, illustrating the 'outright' approach. www.nevishouses.com

That price is less than a new-build on a golf course in the Algarve. Plus, there's guaranteed winter sun, and twice-weekly BA flights direct from Gatwick.

Nevis is the quieter of the two islands, with a rich history dating back to the nuptials of Nelson and local plantation owner's daughter Fanny Nisbet in 1787. An aristocratic charisma still hangs over several old Plantation Inns, now chic boutique hotels.

Back on St Kitts, local agent Brian Kassab has a recently built two-bedroom villa on Calypso Bay, with a pool, overlooking the golf course, for \$595,000 (£378,000). www.bkassab.com. Because the island is rather larger than Nevis, it has also attracted more developers taking advantage of the Economic Citizenship scheme by providing new homes at \$400,000 or so.

Silver Reef is one example. A niche development of 62 units also looking across at Royal St Kitts, it's only a five-minute walk from the beach. One-bedroom apartments are on the market for



\$400,000 (£255,000), with two-bedroom units costing \$475,000 (£303,000).

The alternative to outright ownership is the fractional approach, like Seaside at Cliffdwellers on Nevis. A quarter share of a two-storey, two-bedroom villa entitles you to 12 weeks use a year – six consecutive weeks in the winter, six in the summer – priced from \$400,000 (£255,000), with five years operating costs included. Fourteen traditional Caribbean-style villas, with generous open-plan living rooms, are next to the beach, and share an 80ft free-form pool. www.cliffdwellers.org

The palatial beachside Four Seasons

on Nevis is one of the best resorts in the whole Caribbean. Giving buyers the opportunity to enjoy the stunning facilities – three restaurants, multiple pools, a gorgeous spa, and the championship course – 11 three-bedroom and four four-bedroom fractional villas are being built. One-tenth shares, costing from \$472,000 (£300,000), give five weeks usage a year, with no added annual fees. residences.fourseasons.com

Kittitian Hill is another hotel-based proposition. With good eco-credentials and Asian-themed, it's due for completion by Christmas, with the Woosnam course ready in 2014. Three- and four-

Within a few years the two islands will boast four good courses, meaning now is the perfect time to look for a property. For those with relatively shallow pockets, the choice comes down to buying a smaller villa outright or taking a fraction of a larger one



bedroom villas featuring infinity pools, cathedral ceilings and spacious verandahs are being built, aimed at buyers who want between six and eight weeks a year 'on island'. Prices vary, from \$405,000 (£258,000) for a one-eighth share up to \$495,000 (£315,000) for a one-sixth. www.selectresorts.co.uk

Lastly, Christophe Harbour itself also has an attractive fractional scheme. If you fancy rubbing shoulders with Ian Botham, \$411,000 (£262,000) buys a one-tenth share of a deluxe four-bedroom villa and five weeks annual usage. Amenities include a deep-water marina designed for super-yachts, an outstanding beach club, and the new Fazio golf course. www.christopheharbour.com

The best way of researching this emerging market, and enjoying the golf, is to book a stay at the Four Seasons. The ebullient General Manager, Sven Wiedenhaupt, will lay on a rum tasting for you and maybe even join you for a round. www.fourseasons.com/nevis ☑



(Above): Aimed directly at the fractional market, attractive eco-friendly three- and four-bedroom villas at Kittitian Hills on St Kitts are due for completion this Christmas, with an Ian Woosnam golf course opening in 2014; (Left): The promise of a Fazio layout on St Kitts has caught the attention of many, with Sir Ian Botham among those drawn the development at Christophe Harbour; (right): A two-bedroom villa with pool overlooking the existing course at St Kitts start at £370,000; (Below): Sunrise Cottage, a typical Nevis house with wraparound verandah, for sale at £303,000

