

FAMILY

10 OF THE BEST WINTER-SUN FAMILY VILLAS

ALL BACK TO OURS

These exotic dens are big and secluded enough to make a hullabaloo in – yet helping hands and a kit-bag full of diversions are never far away

VILLAS AT PIET BOON, BONAIRE

This wild, windswept corner of the Caribbean is only 50 miles from Venezuela, but you're more likely to hear Dutch voices chattering at the beach bars than Spanish (or indeed English). Bonaire, still part of the Netherlands, is a tiny island with no traffic lights but lots of flamingos and cacti. Amsterdam-based architect and designer Piet Boon has created a gathering of nine rather extraordinary and well-priced villas, four of which sit right on the water's edge with steps down into the sea. His stark, modern design, with sharp lines and polished concrete, is warmed by shafts of sunlight and vases of bougainvillea and softened by sculptural benches of hewn wood and seashell mobiles. It's refreshingly different to the usual Caribbean floral fussiness – this is smart yet still barefoot and breezy. There are hammocks and swinging rattan chairs strung under a thatched palapa, and charcoal day beds are placed around the emerald-tiled pools. Slatted shutters direct the strong gusts like natural air con (this is a popular wind- and kite-surfing spot). Chefs and housekeepers are on call to whip up BBQs of freshly caught fish, and organise sailing days or kids' camps at windsurfing hub Jibe City. But you can just as happily fend for yourself, and the Van Den Tweel supermarket has all the essentials for a picnic lunch: marinated tomatoes, amazing cheeses and rotisserie chickens. In the evenings head to Kite City, a food truck right by the sea, for zingy fish tacos. Bring fins and masks to drift around under the clear water first, then hang out on beachside beanbags to watch the sun sink. **BOOK IT** Sleeps eight. Seven nights' villa rental from about £2,250 (+599 7176424; www.pietboonbonaire.com)