

A Safe Spot for Gay Travelers at Jamaica's Hedonism II

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PHOTO: Nude side or prude side? Take your pick at Hedonism II in Jamaica. (photo by Paul J. Heney)

[Jamaica](#) can be a tough decision for [LGBTQ](#) travelers: To go or not to go?

The island is an easy flight from much of the United States, and it boasts [beautiful beaches](#), fantastic tropical weather, lush mountains, Instagram-ready waterfalls and numerous resorts to suit almost every price point.

But the country is notorious for being one of the most homophobic in the Western Hemisphere. Its laws criminalize sex between men—with maximum sentences of 10 years of prison and hard labor. Even simple physical intimacy such as two men holding hands can result in a two-year sentence. And just Google “Jamaican murder music” if you want to get your blood boiling.

So, it was with mixed emotions that my partner and I attended the recent Bloom Freedom Festival at Jamaica's [Hedonism II resort](#). Bloom, while open to everyone, heavily attracts gay men of color—making this an interesting opportunity to see how this played in a homophobic [Caribbean](#) country.

Hedonism II (or Hedo, as the regulars call it) is an all-inclusive, adults-only, clothing-optional property in Negril. We weren't sure about the whole clothing-optional thing (not really our scene) but were willing to see what it was all about.

Hedo smartly divides the beach areas into the “nude” and “prude” sides. On the nude side, there's a five-minute grace period: Once you're there, you have five minutes to remove your clothing. On the prude side, you can go nude (and some people do), but it's not required. You can wear as much or as little as you'd like.

Each side has its own pool area and outdoor bar/grill, so once you find a place where you're comfortable, you're good to go. (Guests are required to wear clothing in all public spaces (like the lobby and gym), as well as in the dining areas.)

Interestingly, the gay fellows from the Bloom group all hung out on the prude side, and that's where we felt the most comfortable, too. Some of them went nude from time to time when they were sunning themselves or going into the ocean, but it became less and less of a big deal with each passing day.

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We'd been warned by friends that Hedo was going to be some sort of crazy swingers' resort where public sex was rampant. But we didn't find that at all. The resort we experienced was simply a very sex-positive, non-judgmental place. There were straight people, gay people, swingers, partiers, people with particular fetishes, exhibitionists, people in open relationships and monogamous couples.

We saw a few instances of public sex—it was there if you really were looking for it, but it seemed more natural than anything and not salacious to me. Maybe this place's open-minded attitude was really rubbing off on me.

The property is all-inclusive, so all meals, snack and beverages, which are poured with top-shelf alcohol, are included in your stay. In addition to the main buffet—which serves breakfast, lunch and dinner each day—Hedo guests can opt for more intimate restaurants: a steakhouse, an Italian restaurant and a Japanese hibachi restaurant (our favorite).

We found the guestrooms very simple—and giggled at the mirrors over the bed—but their basic nature became less and less important to us with each passing day, as we spent almost no time inside.

The resort offers free boat trips daily, including a [snorkeling](#), scuba and glass-bottomed boat tour of the magnificent coral reefs just offshore. Nightly themes turn up the sexiness factor, with some of the guests going all out with their costumes at dinner and afterward, dancing in the nightclub or on the beach. Themes during our stay included Toga & Foam, Rockstar, Hats & Heels, and Hedonistic School Girl (or boy).

Once on the resort property, we were completely at ease as gay men. We had great interactions with the other queer guests, as well as the straight ones, who were friendly, open and engaging. We even interacted with a gay resort employee, who was open with who he was.

“Inclusivity is at the very core of Hedonism II, so it only makes sense that the property has hosted the annual Bloom Freedom Festival for seven years,” said Kevin Levee, the resort’s General Manager. “To our guests, it isn’t about gay or straight—it isn’t about sexuality or any label at all. Hedonism II is about liberation and love, however, one should choose to express it.”

Jamaica’s most famous song is [Bob Marley’s](#) “One Love.” I feel like I found that spirit at Hedo, and it changed my mind about visiting Marley’s island home again in the future.