

Starwood Brings Luxury Brand to Caribbean

By Michael Martin 09/28/09 - 01:00 AM EDT

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VIEQUES, Puerto Rico ([TheStreet](#)) -- Plan to skip St. Bart's this year. **Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide** ([HOT Quote](#)) will soon open its first W-branded site in the Caribbean.

The W Retreat & Spa Vieques Island, scheduled to open in November, will bring the hotel giant's boutique line to Puerto Rico. Since the U.S. Navy stopped using the island as a weapons testing site in 2003, Vieques has been upgrading its resort infrastructure.



The tropical-themed lobby of the W Retreat Vieques.

How to get there: Vieques is eight miles off Puerto Rico's southeast coast and offers quiet, palm-strewn beaches and shallow coves of exotic sea life. You can take a short flight from San Juan to get to the island. The W resort [plans](#) to shuttle guests to and from the airport, a 10-minute drive.

What to expect: Vieques eschews high-rise buildings, sticking to two- and three-story bungalows instead. The W will feature airy lounges with floor-to-ceiling windows and comfy furnishings in earth tones. The look is meant to be visually appealing without seeming like it was built for a Hollywood nightclub.

Guest rooms: The W Retreat hotels are designed to be smaller. The Vieques site will have 157 rooms and 21 suites that offer quirky details such as papasan chairs and hanging pod loungers on the balconies. Guests can request pillows from the W's "menu." The bathrooms will feature natural stone sinks and the occasional open-air terrace with sea views. Some high-end suites offer formal dining rooms and beachfront decks.

Playtime on Vieques: W Retreat is about rejuvenation. Days can be spent relaxing near one of the resort's two pools, inside a cabana or at the outdoor bar. The ambiance will be techno-music free during the day, but at night, guests can party in the hotel's indoor-outdoor "living room," where DJs will spin music near a fire pit.

The restaurant: In recent years, Starwood has cultivated relationships with star chefs like Todd English, Michael Chow and Jean-Georges Vongerichten through restaurant partnerships at premiere W [Hotel properties](#) in New York, Istanbul and Miami. The W Retreat in Vieques ups the ante with Michelin-starred French chef Alain Ducasse. Best known for his work at Paris's Plaza Athenee and Jules Verne restaurants, Ducasse will create the menu for the hotel's eatery, Mix on the Beach. Its formal dining room, cafe and poolside tapas bar will follow the fine-dining formula of Ducasse's Mix Las Vegas in the Mandalay Bay Hotel & Casino.

The spa: A centerpiece of the W Retreat will be its Spa Chakra, a new partnership with the same [company](#) that operates Guerlain Spa in Paris and Acqua di Parma's Blu Spa in Sardinia. The Spa Chakra, like its sister site on New York's Fifth Avenue, will offer 60 health and beauty treatments in a 6,000-square-foot space with indoor-outdoor treatment rooms. Expect to find Pilates classes and oceanfront yoga at its gym.