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With Hot Deals, Islands Hope to Rev Up Tourism

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The sun keeps shining in the Bahamas, Bermuda and the Caribbean, but since the economic downturn, a dark cloud has been looming over them. Tighter wallets mean fewer tourists. According to the latest statistics from the Caribbean Tourism Organization, visits to many island destinations declined last year. For example, between January and October, the Bahamas experienced a 3 percent drop; Martinique was off by 4.4 percent between January and August. In December, when many Americans were grieving over their stock portfolios, tourism in Puerto Rico fell almost 13 percent, nearly twice as much as in the Cayman Islands. Adding to the malaise: Resorts are laying off workers and even closing hotel wings and limiting restaurant hours.

"Overall to the region, tourism is down," said Richard Kahn, marketing consultant for the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association. "The Caribbean is going to have a softer season than last winter, but it won't be as devastating as expected. People still want to go to the Caribbean."

To lure reluctant vacationers, the islands are offering tempting discounts on a range of items, from fish fries to oceanfront rooms. Here is a sampling of deals for six destinations that could chase away those doomy clouds.

-- *Andrea Sachs*

Turks and Caicos

-- *Ocean Club Resorts* has a *Spring Break Sale* with up to 45 percent off rooms and a *fifth or seventh night free*. For a five-night vacation, pay \$659 per person double for a one-bedroom with a garden view or a suite with a pool view. Taxes of 22 percent are additional. Valid through April 13. Info: 800-457-8787, <http://www.oceanclubresorts.com>.