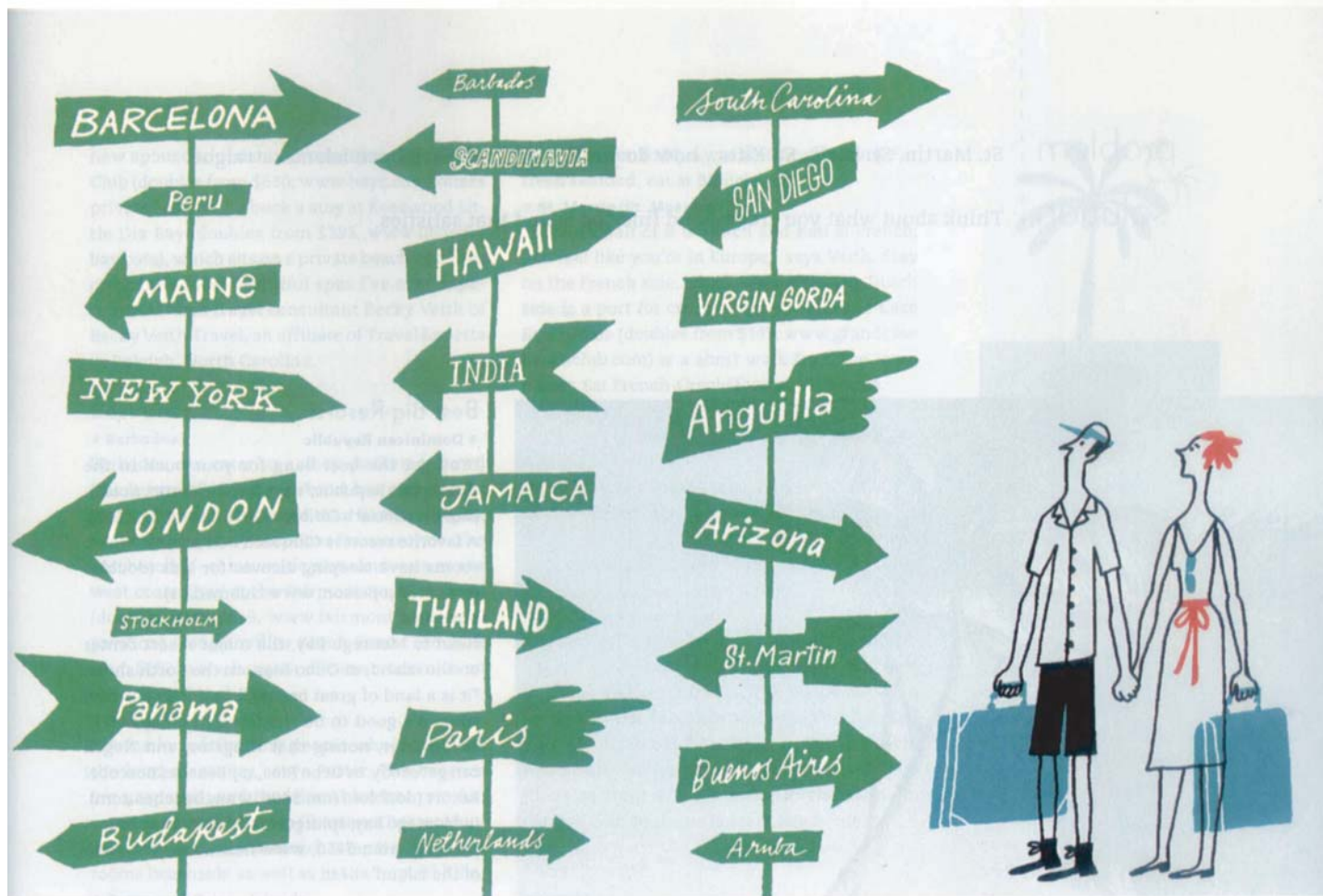


REAL SIMPLE travel

special
issue

destinations



The Ultimate Destination Guide

A vacation should melt away problems, not create more of them. Make the planning easier with this map to finding your perfect trip.

WHOEVER SAID "IT'S THE JOURNEY, not the destination, that counts" wasn't planning a vacation at the time. After all, who doesn't prefer wading through the ocean to wading through piles of brochures? Vacations are all about the destination, of course, but the act of picking one can make anybody seek a self-help mantra.

To ease the stress, *Real Simple*, with the advice of travel experts and local residents worldwide, created a guide to satisfy all types of wanderlust. This way, when you start planning, you'll have some direction. As the Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu said, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Or a single turn of the page.

Written by Elizabeth Schatz Passarella

Best Beaches

✦ Barbados

Barbados can cater to a deep-pocketed crowd (the historic Sandy Lane resort has entertained royalty and can cost more than \$1,000 a night), but there are plenty of options for nonroyals. The best beaches—think exotic pink sand—are on the west coast. Stay at the Fairmont Royal Pavilion (doubles from \$519, www.fairmont.com/royal-pavilion). Bougainvillea Beach Resort (doubles from \$162, www.bougainvillearesort.com) is on the island's south side.

✦ St. Lucia

"St. Lucia is attracting people who don't have the herd mentality," says Porter. The beaches are unspoiled, and the island also has rain forests and volcanoes. Anse Chastanet Resort (doubles from \$280, www.ansechastanet.com) offers rooms beachside as well as in the tropical hills.

✦ Turks and Caicos Islands

This cluster of islands has gone from off-the-map to of-the-moment. The main draws are the coral reefs and the high-end hotels on perfect strips of sand. Grace Bay Beach, in Provo, is the most popular area; stay at the Regent Palms Turks and Caicos (doubles from \$425, www.regenthotels.com), or try the cheaper Sibonné Beach Hotel (doubles from \$110, www.sibonne.com)—same sand, less money.