



A St. Barths Getaway

DISCOVER WHY THIS STORIED ISLAND HAS
BEEN NICKNAMED THE CARRIBEAN'S PEARL

BY LINDSAY MAHER

Eight square miles of paradise resides in St. Barths, a Caribbean island located just off the coast of Saint-Martin. Sunrays break and dance on the surface of too-blue-to-be-true water, and around you the island sings. Praises of rugged coasts, exultation for flora and fauna, harmony on the ocean breeze. It is an escapist's haven: a place to make grand fantasies a reality.

Suffice it to say that St. Barths is a multifaceted getaway of high-end shops and restaurants, sandy beaches and centuries-old stories. If you aren't sure, ask actor Jake Gyllenhaal, musician Paul McCartney or fashion designer Marc Jacobs: they are among an endless list of celebrities who jet here for a break. From yachting, swimming and hiking to international cuisine and exciting nightlife, there isn't much not to fall in love with on arrival.

Christopher Columbus first discovered the island in 1493, naming it Saint Barthélemy after his brother, but left in search of land that offered treasures and wealth. It was finally colonized in 1648 by Sir Jacques Gente and a group of 40 settlers, and here began a tumultuous relationship between the island and its inhabitants.

Massacres on the settlers left St. Barths abandoned for about three years; and in coming years, pirates and thieves would call it home. Invasions and a struggle for power grew increasingly prevalent at the turn of the eighteenth century, where France, Malta, (briefly) Ireland and Sweden all attempted to lay claim on the land. A combination of waged war and natural disasters drove many away, allowing for the nationality to officially become French in 1878.

As of January 2013, roughly ninety-three hundred people call St. Barths home. A quiet existence steeped in tradition, the friendly local flare is exactly as it seems. If only we were all so lucky, to wake up each morning with the lull of the island steadying us for the day.

St. Barths begins and ends with you. The days and nights spent here will meld together into a blur of strolls, waterfront rendezvous and historic exploration. For the adventurer, block off your mornings to wade into the water: try scuba diving around Pain de Sucre or l'Ane Rouge, two of the more beautiful underwater escapes. The sweeping glory of the island almost pales in comparison to the colors bursting from the coral. Or, hop on a water ski or surfboard and let the waves take you.



Sailing, jet skiing and yachting are favorite past times. Guided submarine tours are also available, traveling six feet below the water's surface and moving alongside schools of fish that reside in a shipwrecked vessel.

On returning to land, lounge on one of St. Barths' pristine beaches with a book and umbrella. Even at the height of tourist season, the beaches remain uncrowded. Sometimes, this world may feel like it's yours completely.

Spend time perusing the many elegant shopping centers, taking advantage of the duty free port. A spree can be taken in the ultimate style, delivering you Parisian charm.

St. Barths' cuisine is yet another slice of heaven, both in restaurants and in grocery stores. The passion for food runs deeply with chefs across the board, ensuring that each bite is cooked perfectly to order. Many restaurants overlook the ocean, allowing you to sit back with the freshest ingredients and stunning views. When the sun dips below the horizon, you can find further respite at a cocktail bar with live entertainment. There are a number of bars that stay open until the early hours of the morning, but the jewel of it all lays in relaxed dining.

If you'd like a night in, you'll be able to find anything you need at one of the island's supermarkets, ranging from fresh produce to wine and spirits. Here, each aspect of life is meant to be made easy.

There are a number of places to stay on St. Barths, among them villa and bungalow rentals and resorts. Return to the lap of luxury at the Hotel Le Toiny, a collection of bungalows along the water that allow each guest privacy. Bright, minimalist furniture decorates each room, and bay doors open out to a patio, complete with private pool and lush vegetation. Make time for the Serenity Cottage, bringing you a new level of pampering. Experience their deep treatments either at the cottage or in your villa; wherever you decide, the ocean backdrop will enhance the relaxation.



Eden Rock



Eden Rock is one of the most sought after resorts, which isn't surprising, given its location on a headland, its proximity to the beach and individually decorated villas. Everything is manicured and ready to be experienced, including its three upscale eateries, boutique, wellness area and recording studio. It is, like the rest of the island, a dreamscape that seems too beautiful to be real.

Traveling to St. Barths often requires a direct flight into St. Maarten, where you will then hop on a connecting flight to the Gustaf III Airport. Delta Airlines is one of the premier flights to begin your journey with, offering nothing short of the best for passengers: comfortable seating, complimentary entertainment and wi-fi and a wide selection of food and beverages to choose from starts your vacation on the right foot. Both Winair and St. Barth Commuter sell tickets for the short 15-minute flight from St. Maarten. Or, if you prefer, fly Tradewinds Aviation from San Juan, Puerto Rico. Whichever you book, you'll enjoy the adventure as you fly between two mountains before descending upon St. Barth's one and a half mile stretch of runway.

Then comes the boundless tranquility that pulses through the island: a nirvana of the wildest dreams.