

HOT DEALS TO BEAT THE WINTER BLAHS p.28

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ROMANTIC ESCAPES

Making love, not war,  
in one of the turrets  
at San Juan's grand  
El Morro fortress;  
Opposite: Eclectic  
contemporary decor  
meets colonial style  
in Old San Juan.

# HOT

Isn't it time you two made the scene in a cinematic locale, lingered over sumptuous meals, spooned under starlit skies and retired to a do-not-disturb love nest? Whether you can steal away for a three-day romp, a five-day interlude or a weeklong sojourn, these getaways set the stage for romance.



# 5 NIGHTS IN SEDUCTIVE ST. BARTS

POPULATED BY A CHIC, MOSTLY EUROPEAN crowd and positively overrun by celebrities during the see-and-be-seen holiday season, St. Barts is bountifully blessed with ravishing beaches, epicurean dining and swanky villas. Curvaceous roads wind around rocky and arid hillsides to reveal dramatic coastal vistas and casual-cool beachfront lounges where Balinese beds are suggestively draped with canopies and curtains. Accessible by only small plane or ferry from St. Martin, St. Barts demands five days to appreciate its full flavor. The destination retains its exclusive St. Tropez vibe, and as long as your wallet is ready for a collision with the euro, this enchanting escape is *pas de problème* for lovers.

**OUT & ABOUT** The petite capital of Gustavia is perfect for exploring on foot. Stroll its rustic waterfront, where sleek megayachts fill the harbor and distinctive red-roofed buildings — some centuries old — cover the steep hillside. Shopping is *de rigueur* on small streets lined with pricey international designer boutiques and quaint shops stocked with rare treasures. Commemorate your visit with something homegrown: perhaps a painting from one of the dozen or so galleries that purvey work by local contemporary artists, or something from the famed **Ligne St. Barth** collection of body products. (Their fragrant coconut massage oil is a surefire catalyst for evening fireworks.) Then take to the sea aboard the 42-foot catamaran **Ne Me Quitte Pas** on a day sail that includes snorkeling, lunch and plenty of opportunities for frolicking on white-sand shores.

Opposite, from above: Work out the kinks with a soothing Thai massage in the tropical garden pavilion at Hotel St. Barth Isle de France; the beach at St. Jean is the place to see and be seen.

**FOR BEACH LOVERS** It's only eight square miles, but St. Barts boasts 16 white-sand beaches. **Saline**, reached by a quarter-mile trail through a dune, is a local favorite where no one will raise an eyebrow if you decide to enjoy it *au naturel*. Equally out of the way, postcard-pretty **Gouverneur** is washed by steady rollers that spill onto the loamy sand. Secluded **Colombier**, reached by a 20-minute trail, is often deserted and blissfully private. The lively bay at **Flamands**, St. Barts' largest, is lined with small hotels and has the ambience of a French country village, complete with clucking chickens and *épiceries*. And for people-watching at its finest, head for the sweeping curve at **St. Jean**. Anchored by the airport on one side and **Eden Rock** on the other, it is the island's undisputed social hub.

**WINING & DINING** As you'd expect, dining on St. Barts is superb, and almost 100 restaurants serve everything from cheeseburgers to expertly prepared haute cuisine in seductive settings that include casual beachfront joints and intimate hillside dining rooms. It's hard to imagine a more sublime locale for a sunset cocktail than the **Hotel Carl Gustaf** overlooking Gustavia. Other romantic roosts include the hotel **Eden Rock's** pair of elegant restaurants, one called Sand Bar that sidles up to the St. Jean shore for lunch, the other, On the Rocks, that's perfect for starlit dinners above the waves. In high season, open-air sushi bar **Le Bête à Z'ailes** (known as BAZ) swings to live music. A couple of small clubs satisfy a younger crowd, but night life here is mostly do-it-yourself. — DAVID SWANSON

## GET THERE

Fly to St. Martin via American, Continental, Delta, United or USAirways, and then connect to Air Caraïbes, St. Barth Commuter or Winair to St. Barts. Or hop the ferry from St. Martin, which takes about an hour.

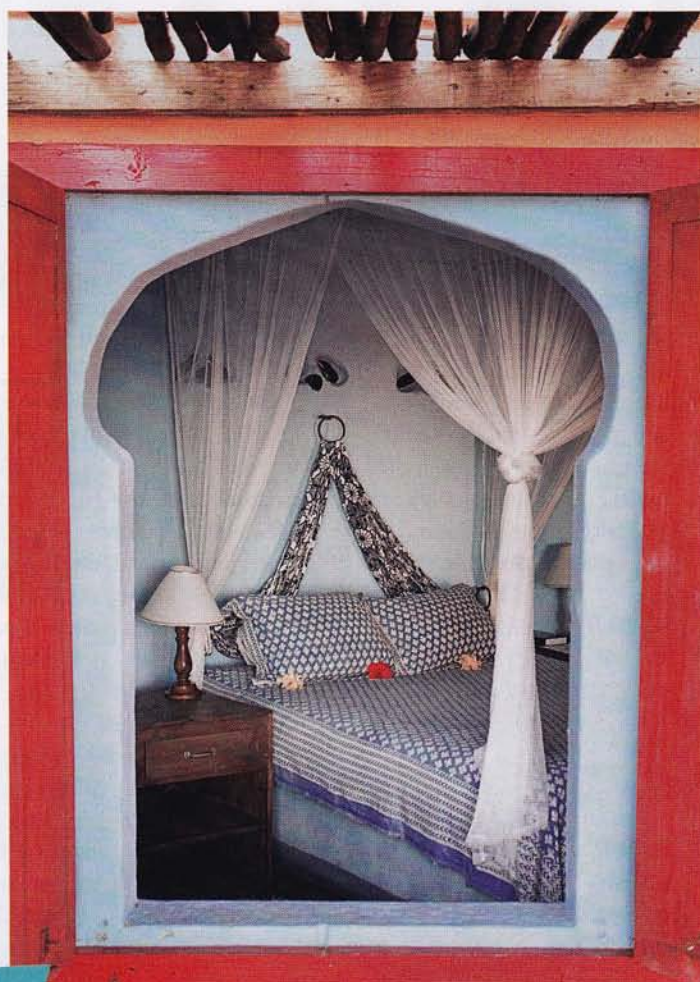
## STAY THERE

**\$** The **Normandie Hotel** is ideal for couples who plan to spend their time exploring. From \$187 in low season (\$262 high), including breakfast; 011-590-590-27-61-66; [normandiehotelstbarts.com](http://normandiehotelstbarts.com)

**\$\$** Beachfront **Hotel les Ondines** features full kitchens in every unit, so you can save on some meals and splurge on others. From \$322 in low season (\$525 high), including breakfast; 011-590-590-27-69-64; [stbarthlesondineshotel.com](http://stbarthlesondineshotel.com)

**\$\$\$** At **Hotel St. Barth Isle de France**, you can halve the top rate by choosing a garden room rather than beachfront. From \$675 in low season (\$1,042 high), including breakfast; 011-590-590-27-61-81; [isle-de-france.com](http://isle-de-france.com)

**For More Info** [saintbarth-tourisme.com](http://saintbarth-tourisme.com)



# ALL YOU NEED IS

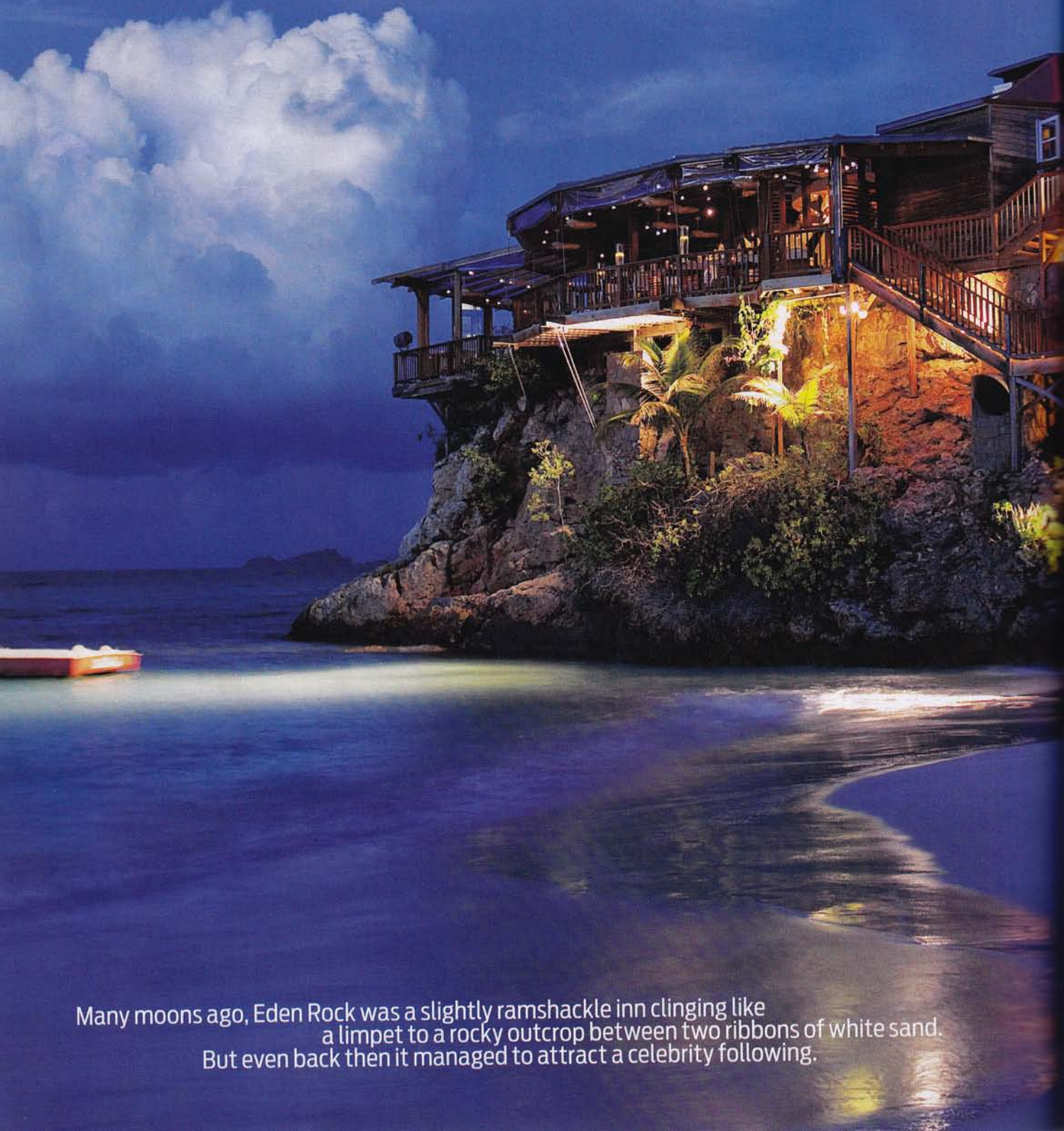
# love

When it's time for some undisturbed togetherness, few places can transport you to a world of bliss as swiftly as a Caribbean inn. You know what I mean: stout four-poster beds in clouds of white muslin; outdoor showers; secluded patios with private plunge pools; the sheer sensuousness of the islands.

One thing I've noted in 30 years of reporting on Caribbean inns — whether they're halfway up a volcano or bang on the beach — is how the best of them keep reinventing themselves, adapting to new trends while preserving their unhurried air of days gone by. In its own way, each one is the perfect love nest; here are 24 of the most romantic.

BY IAN KEOWN

Eden Rock, the star of the glittery St. Barts scene, gets high marks in several categories — cuisine, clientele, setting, style — and it all adds up to sheer hubba-hubba.



Many moons ago, Eden Rock was a slightly ramshackle inn clinging like a limpet to a rocky outcrop between two ribbons of white sand. But even back then it managed to attract a celebrity following.



JAMES SCHNEPP

low season (\$615 high); 866-290-0978; ladera.com ♥ **PENINSULA HOUSE, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC** Dinners at this standout nine-suite hilltop manor in Las Terrenas on the Samaná Peninsula are presented on antique china and savored on a breezy veranda. \$520 year-round; 809-962-7447; thepeninsulahouse.com ♥ **SUGAR MILL HOTEL, TORTOLA, BVI** The softly lit dining room at this 24-room inn is tucked within a centuries-old mill and serves the island's most innovative menus. From \$240 in low season (\$325 high); 800-462-8834; sugarmillhotel.com

**4 FOR GARDEN LOVERS ♥ STRAWBERRY HILL, JAMAICA** What I enjoy most at Strawberry Hill is shuffling along winding pathways hugged by *Ravenala madagascariensis*, hanging a left at the *Tecomanthe speciosa* and then ascending to the Aveda spa. I know those botanical names because the hotel provides a horticultural guide to this peaceful Blue Mountain oasis. Strawberry Hill's 18 cottages have traditional fretwork, rafter ceilings and locally crafted furniture, but a hip aesthetic lurks in details such as the portraits of Bob Marley and Mick Jagger in the dining room. The Edenic setting features arbors of blossoming jade arcing over the lawns here, the mountains towering above and Kingston's sprawling cityscape below. Guests can join mountain hikes and visit working coffee estates, but with this much beauty in the gardens, you'll be forgiven if you never leave the grounds. From \$195 in low season (\$295 high); 800-688-7678; islandoutpost.com ♥ **BLUE HORIZONS, GRENADA** More than 20 species of birds make their home in this peaceful enclave, where 32 studios and suites offer welcome respite from the real world. From \$155 in low season (\$210 high); 473-444-4316; grenadabluehorizons.com ♥ **LE JARDIN MALANGA, GUADELOUPE** Nine stylishly furnished cottages are surrounded by acres of banana trees and wild orchids on a lush property overlooking Iles des Saintes. \$382 year-round; 011-590-590-92-67-57; jardinmalanga.com

**5 FOR THE STYLISH ♥ EDEN ROCK, ST. BARTS** Many moons ago, Eden Rock was a slightly ramshackle inn clinging like a limpet to a rocky outcrop between two ribbons of white sand. But even back then it managed to attract a celebrity following, including Howard Hughes and Greta Garbo. Nowadays, it has been transformed into a fashionable beachfront playground for the jet set. Highlights of Eden Rock's 35-room lineup include the Garbo Suite, where a bed with a dramatic, 8-foot-high white padded-leather headboard takes center stage, and the triple-terrace Howard Hughes Loft Suite, which has 360-degree views of St. Jean Bay. One of three lavish one- and two-bedroom Heavenly Beach houses has its own screening room/recording studio — perfectly suited to the highflying media types who frequent the modish roost. From \$716 in low season (\$1,000 high); 877-563-7105; edenrockhotel.com ♥ **LALUNA, GRENADA** Sixteen chic cottages comprise this beachside inn known for its Asian-flavored Italian flair and a laid-back vibe. From \$415 in low