

# INDULGE

APRIL 2011

## Natural Beauty

An Eagle Mountain Lake home where every day's a vacation

### OUTDOOR LIVING

FIRE PITS,  
WATERFALLS,  
KITCHENS AND  
MORE

### GREAT ESCAPES

ST. BARTHS  
KEEPS IT  
CASUAL

### GOOD TASTE

5 RESTAURANTS  
WITH ART  
COLLECTIONS

### FASHION

SPRING TRENDS  
IN FULL BLOOM



Inside the Howard Hughes Suite at the Eden Rock.

# Extreme Serene

BY ELAINE GLUSAC

DESPITE A STEADY STREAM OF CELEBRITIES, ST. BARTHS IS STILL MORE ABOUT SAND THAN SCENE.



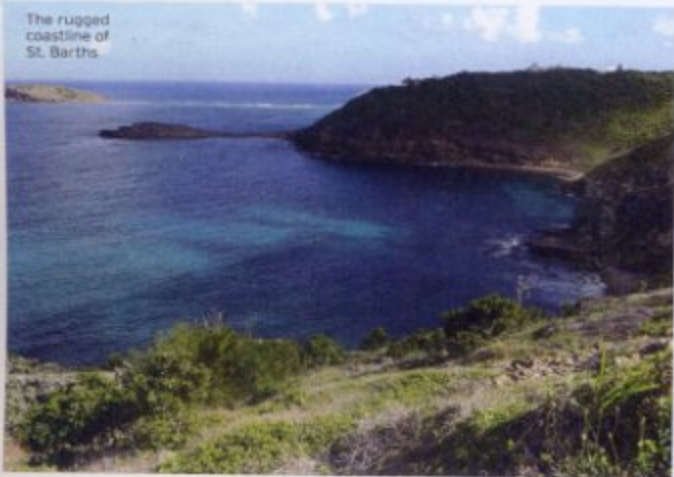
The Eden Rock pool

The butler did it. He spilled the beans. Jimmy Buffett, he said, had been here. And Derek Jeter of the New York Yankees was checking in the next day. But for now, Villa Rockstar — a new beachfront four-bedroom complete with recording studio, personal gym, two pools, putting green and the aforementioned butler — was deliciously mine. Mr. Jeter would have to wait.

A-list names attach themselves to seemingly everything on St. Barthelemy, aka St. Barths. The 8-square-mile island of chic in the Caribbean, a 10-minute plane ride south from St. Maarten, has a reputation for drawing the rich (Roman Abramovich recently bought a \$90 million property), the famous (Steve Martin also owns a place here) and the beautiful (a steady stream of bikini-clad models). During the highest of high seasons, the Christmas-to-New Year's Day holiday week, it's P. Cruz, P. Diddy and Paparazzi Central.

But when things quiet down, the 51 other weeks of the year, St. Barths shows you exactly why tastemakers favor it: pampering hotels, fashionable shopping and sophisticated dining, all on a hilly desert isle with 20 beaches that groom the otherwise rugged coastline. In short, the best of France cast away in the Caribbean.

The rugged coastline of St. Barths.



"Except for sun, sand and some rum drinks, we really are not Caribbean," said Sonia Tejero, general manager of the 34-room Eden Rock hotel, which includes the over-the-top Villa Rockstar, my first stop on a tour of newly expanded boutique hotels on St. Barths. "We are more European."

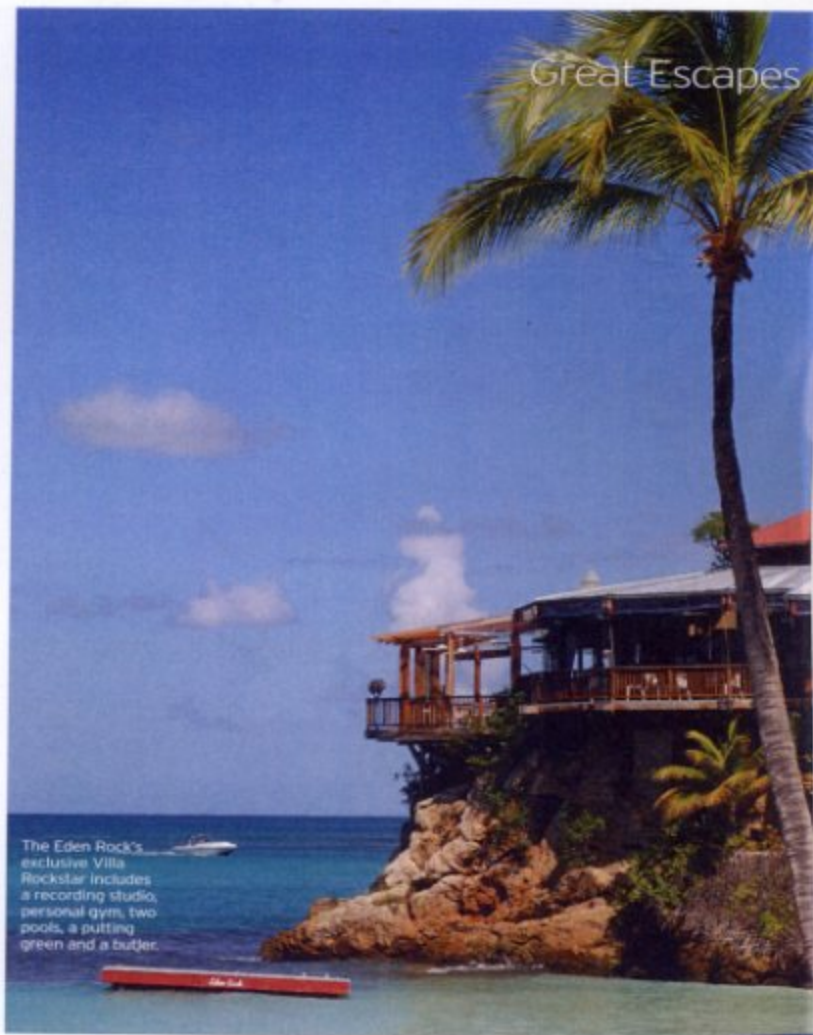
History backs her up. Named by Christopher Columbus for his brother, Bartolomeo, in 1493, the island was claimed by France some two centuries later. France enticed settlers from Brittany and Normandy to secure it in exchange for tax exemption, but meager natural resources on the dry island prevented it from entering into the colonial plantation economy. Sweden took it over in 1784 for a near-100-year hiccup before France took it back.

In the 20th century, when tourism became the economic driver of the region, St. Barths, still French through and through, was waiting for development.

#### Getting There

From D/FW, American Airlines, United and US Airways offer flights to St. Maarten. There are regularly scheduled commercial flights to St. Barths from St. Maarten on WinAir (<http://fly-winair.com>) and Saint Barth Commuter ([www.stbarthcommuter.com](http://www.stbarthcommuter.com)), as well as ferry service.

## Great Escapes



The Eden Rock's exclusive Villa Rockstar includes a recording studio, personal gym, two pools, a putting green and a butler.

## Great Escapes



Oil heir David Rockefeller was one of the first of the bold-face names to drop onto the island, building a midcentury modern house in 1957 above the island's most pristine beach, Colombier. To get there you have to hike — it's the only island beach inaccessible by car. My guide, Gils Ivarra, who moonlights as a radio DJ, led me on a bloom-bordered single track, past aloe and spiny cactus, to the bend before the cove. "Prepare to see the most beautiful beach in the Caribbean," he announced, sweeping an arm across the view of the expansive bay where a half-dozen yachts bobbed at anchor.

Colombier is the wild side of St. Barths, but the refined isn't far off. After snorkeling through schools of vibrantly colored reef fish and taking the scenic hike back, we drove through the lavish villa developments in the island's highlands, where Ivarra pointed out a bare-chested man wrapped in a beach towel giving off a definite boho vibe. Ivarra noted that the man was hardly a hippie: "He's an Hermès."

Among more French elite, Parisian designer Christian



Liaigre recently remodeled the 39-room Le Sereno resort on the island's east end in haute-bungalow style — think soaring wood-beamed ceilings and four-poster beds dressed in billowy white linens. Two new villas feature bedrooms separated by an outdoor walkway overlooking tranquil Grand Cul de Sac Beach. On this November afternoon, the staff is recovering from a society wedding the night before and preparing for the Victoria's Secret catalog production team, expected the following week.

Above left and right, scenes from the ultra-haute Le Sereno resort, recently remodeled by Parisian designer Christian Liaigre.



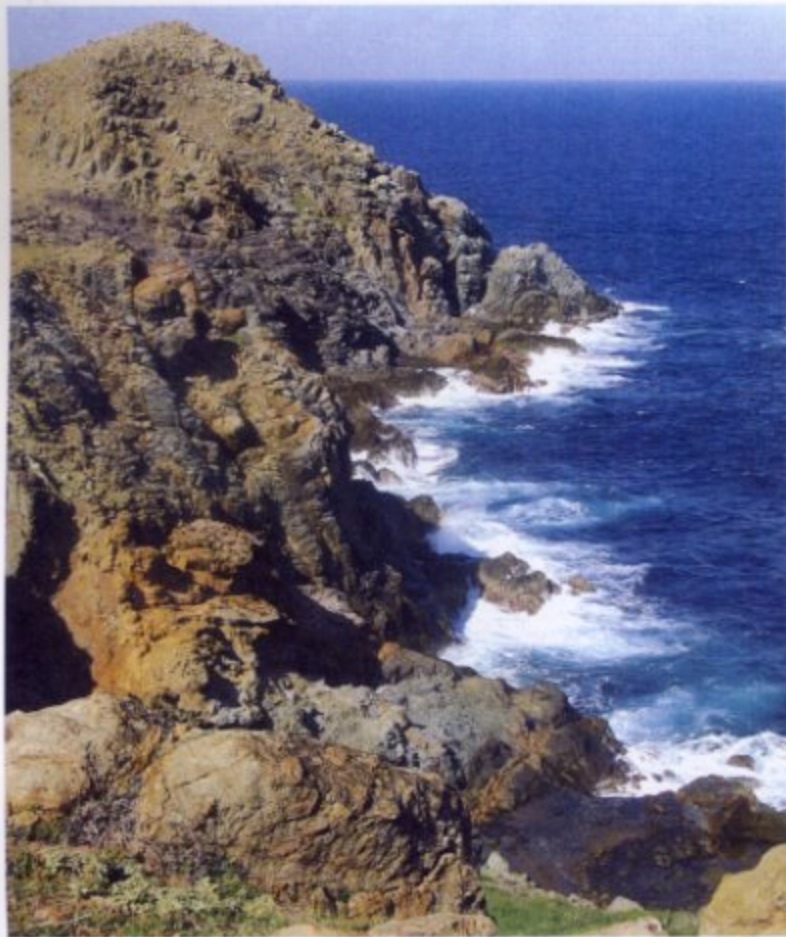
By comparison, Le Toiny resort is isolated and sleepy. On the rocky eastern "Cote Sauvage," or wild coast, the property's hiking trails skirt wave-bashed headlands where wild goats roam the hills and shells litter the shore. Each of the 15 recently renovated cottages features a private pool where breakfast is delivered each morning. Sound like the kind of place where celebrities might hide away? Brad and Gwyneth did. American cyclist Lance Armstrong even owns one.

But the beauty of St. Barths is that no one seems to care. By day, even the swells at trendy Nikki Beach, a restaurant and bar spun off from the South Beach original, seem more focused on sand than scene. I spied several BMW Mini Coopers and Suzuki Samurais, both popular rental cars, parked at various beaches — windows down and keys in the ignition. A policeman passing me near the



Located on the rocky "Cote Sauvage," the recently renovated 15-cottage Le Toiny resort boasts hiking trails, a private pool and, of course, celebrity guests.

## Great Escapes



A street corner in Gustavia, the island's capital.

former home of ballet dancer Rudolf Nureyev on the Cote Sauvage made a gesture indicating that I should buckle up, rather than pulling me over.

This laid-back quality perhaps explains the Jimmy Buffett connection. He purportedly wrote his hit *Cheeseburger in Paradise* about Le Select, a burger dive with plastic tables and constant crowds in the capital of Gustavia, in front of which Ivarra and I patiently waited for the driver in front of us, who was stopped in conversation with a cyclist, to move. No one would think to use the horn, Ivarra said. It's a Caribbean thing.

"People are cool here," he said, shrugging. Inside, as well as out.

### Staying There

When visiting St. Barth's, be sure to have some euros in your pocket; as of press time, the exchange rate was 1.33 euros to the dollar.

**Eden Rock**, rooms from 490 euros. 877-563-7105; <http://edenrockhotel.com>

**Le Sereno**, rooms from 530 euros. 888-537-3736; <http://lesereno.com>

**Le Toiny**, rooms from 790 euros; goes to 520 June 1. 590-590-27-88-88; [www.letoiny.com](http://www.letoiny.com)