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Return to Eden

TR finds paradise lost on St. Barths and its acclaimed resort Eden Rock.

By Beth Weitzman

Arriving on the island of St. Barths is a near-religious experience. The lush tropical land famous for the sounds of its lulling ocean, soft sand and glittering white coral has become a favorite destination for the world's elite. With plenty of nightlife, including lively parties and an energetic bar scene, and its decadent dining and accommodations, St. Barths is an isle without rival. The island itself provides a worthy respite, but until you set foot on the shores of Eden Rock, you have yet to truly experience the ethereal beauty and magic of the Caribbean. With an esteemed reputation as a premier escape for those in the know, the luxurious yet totally relaxed atmosphere of Eden Rock, a Relais & Châteaux property, offers its guests attention to every detail, a host of impressive features and standards of service unlike any other.

GETTING THERE

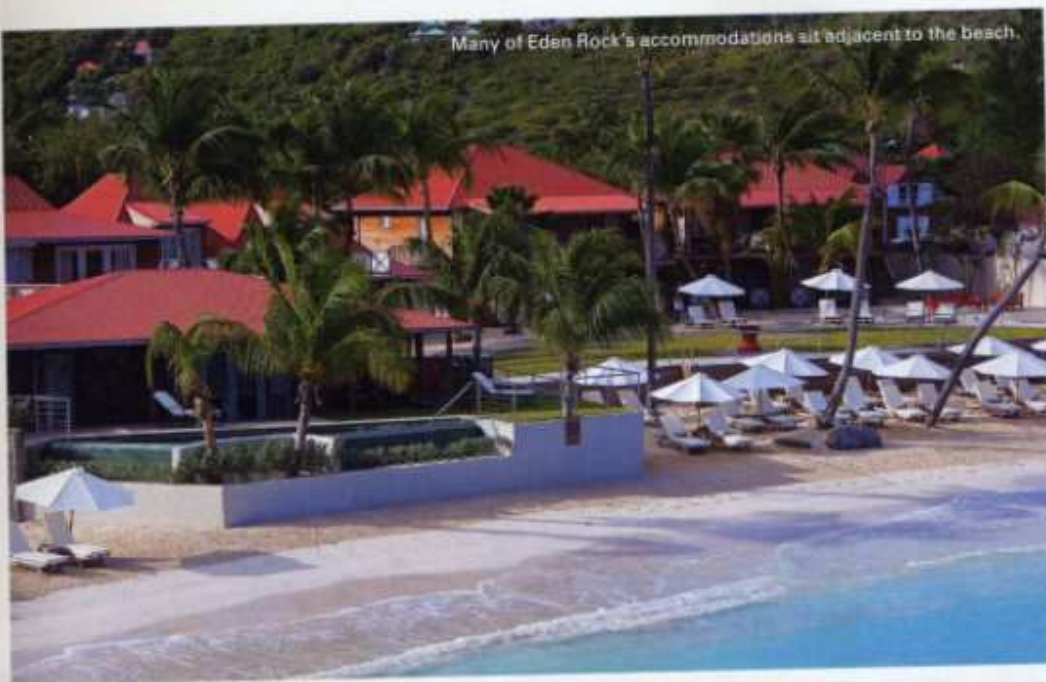
Traveling to St. Barths means taking a short, 10-minute hopper flight from St. Maarten to the island's famous landing strip—one that ends on the beach, offering a unique and exciting arrival. For those fearful of small planes, a 40-minute sea ferry ride is an option. Eden Rock, which can be seen from the edge of the landing strip, sits atop a rocky peninsula in St. Jean Bay above a vibrant coral reef. Originally designed as an elite residence, Eden Rock was built nearly 60 years ago by the island's first mayor, Rémy de Haenen. Since then, it has been made into a modern, tropical dream.

STAY

Guests of Eden Rock have a plethora of accommodation options. All 34 distinguished lodgings boast flat-screen satellite TVs, DVD players and complimentary high-speed Internet access. Eden Rock gives guests nine varieties of accommodations—the Big Beach House, the Diamond Suites, the Heavenly Beach Houses, the Premium Suites, the Classic Rock Suites, the Contemporary Beach Rooms, the Garden Cottages, Eden Rock Estates and the Eden Rock Owners Society—all of which are uniquely designed. Some of the spreads are seriously worth the extra coin. Big Beach House, for example, is a three-bedroom beachfront property with private swimming and spa pools, a home cinema and breathtaking terraces. Among the property's Diamond Suites is the Howard Hughes Loft Suite, which is the signature dwelling at Eden Rock. Located atop the main house, it captures 360-degree views of the bay and its white coral colonies visible under the blue-green water. This singular accommodation spans 1,500 square feet and has three spectacular sun terraces and a home theater.



Many of Eden Rock's accommodations sit adjacent to the beach.



The signature suite of Eden Rock is the Howard Hughes Loft.



The Howard Hughes Loft Suite offers spectacular views.



For ultimate VIP treatment, drop down your Amex Black on one of the two Eden Rock Estates, both of which are touted as six-star, ultra-extravagant facilities (every star is truly earned, trust me!). For the best beachfront experience, Villa Nina is the place to stay. This gem encompasses 6,000 square feet of total developed space to redefine opulence; its accommodations, which include two majestic bedrooms with spacious walk-in closets, a Valcucine kitchen with a sleek L-shaped dining area, a huge living room with vaulted ceilings, a large swimming pool, a Jacuzzi and an outdoor dining room, along with plenty of space to lounge, are unparalleled. In addition, the highly attentive butler service fulfills every need of those lucky enough to enjoy this gorgeous estate—you'll even have use of your own MINI Cooper.

Museum-quality artwork decorates the hallways of Villa Nina with unique points of personality, while a custom surround-sound system spans from the home cinema to the external terraces. The covered outdoor dining room that overlooks the pool is perfect for fresh lunches with friends or an intimate dinner for two. A walkway on the property leads to the luminous beach, securing the privacy of the villa and its inhabitants from the remainder of the hotel. Soft sand and palm trees blowing in the breeze are just a few feet away. In a word, it's paradise.

Adjacent to Villa Nina is the newest in opulent accommodations, Villa Rockstar. This three-level space spans 17,000 square feet, including four master suites and two cabins, a private office and gym, garages, cars, a dining space for 12, a putting green, two pools, and a pool table and sports area. The villa's "rock star" vibe is undeniable, thanks to a fully rigged recording studio featuring the vintage console used by John Lennon to record his trademark song "Imagine." Believe it.

DINE

A big part of an indulgent Caribbean vacation is, without a doubt, the cuisine. Eden Rock provides guests with the culinary vision of Ex-

Travel

The poolside view from Villa Nina is unparalleled.



ecutive Chef Jean-Claude Dufour, who creates mouthwatering dishes each day from the freshest ingredients on hand. Sample a selection of Dufour's dishes by strolling up to The Sand Bar for a beachside breakfast or lunch in a relaxed atmosphere. The modern white chairs and sleek dark woods of this dining enclave create a clean contrast that fits the resort. Here you'll find light and enticing fare, with items such as local yellowfin tuna with sweet-and-sour orange sauce and glazed carrots with honey and ginger, or roast duckling breast with creamy polenta and olives.

For a refined evening experience, On the Rocks features a French fusion menu full of fresh fish, flavorful meats and a perfectly seasoned pairing of vegetables. Try the beef carpaccio with shaved black truffles, spinach salad and risotto friter or the toasted filet of squab served with red wine risotto and glazed carrots with honey. Diners are sure to notice the restaurant's exemplary service, which is, simply put, world class. All three levels of the elegant eatery offer magnificent water views, and the lively bar quenches the thirst of pre- and post-meal diners and revelers. Outside the resort, even more dining options await the most discerning travelers.

RELAX

Abandon all your preconceived notions about what spa service should be and indulge in what it is here: heaven. Eden Rock's well-trained staff brings services and treatments straight to guests in the privacy of their own room or villa. The spa's treatment menu includes a relaxing array of massages, facials, manicures, pedicures and reflexology. Personal sessions of Pilates and yoga accompany strength training sessions and use of the health club, which features a full range of Technogym equipment.

DISCOVER

Adrenaline junkies will relish the limitless opportunities that come from the lush landscape and multitude of marine life in St. Barths. A word to the wise: Take advantage



The rear of Villa Nina features outdoor dining, a second-floor balcony, and a pool and lounge area.



From the art on the walls to the furnishings, every detail of Villa Nina's master bedroom is luxurious.



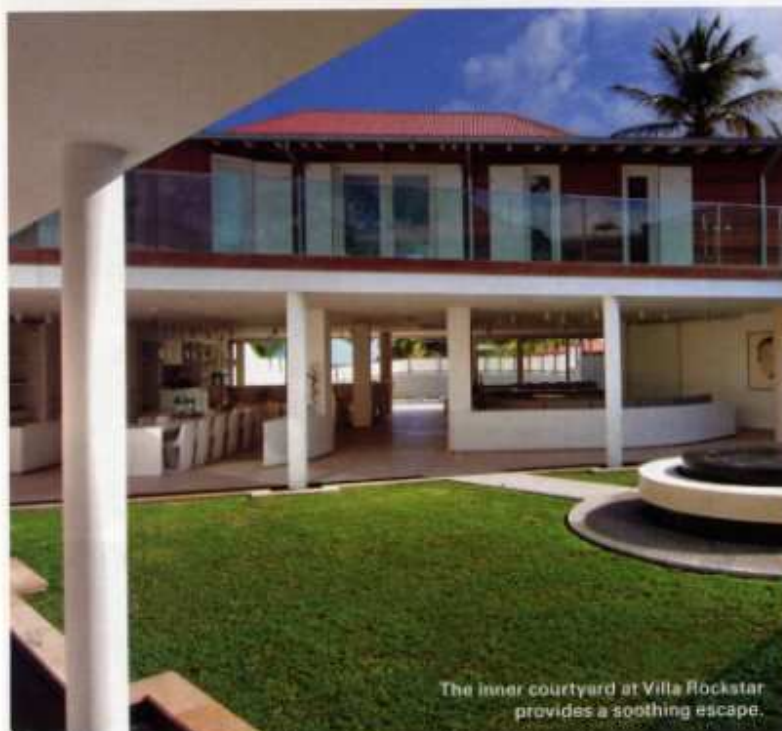
Modern bar chairs line the kitchen's U-shaped dining area in Villa Nina.



St. Barths' shops sit adjacent to the water.



Villa Rockstar features ample space for socializing and playing pool.



The inner courtyard at Villa Rockstar provides a soothing escape.

Eden Rock, St. Barths

Contact: 877.563.7105, edenrockhotel.com, info@edenrockhotel.com

Currency: The Euro

Average temperature: 72-90 degrees Fahrenheit year-round

St. Barths language: French, but English is spoken most places.

Accommodations: 34 different types, from well-appointed rooms to expansive luxe villas

Restaurants: The Sand Bar and On the Rocks

Boats: The 35-foot *Eden Rock* and a 65-foot yacht, *Eden Rock-St Barths*

Well-being services: Door-to-door services include a full spa menu and personal fitness training sessions.

Room service: 24 hours a day

RATES

VILLA NINA: 7,000 Euros per night/49,000 Euros per week

VILLA ROCKSTAR: 15,000 Euros per night/105,000 Euros per week

OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS:

Rates range from 490 to 2,500-Euros per night.

Minimum stay of three nights is required.



The Waterlily suite features an infinity pool overlooking St. Jean Bay.

of the coral reef that encircles the property. The hotel provides snorkeling gear, rafts and glass-bottom kayaks free of charge. Or hop on a Hobie Cat sailboat or grab windsurfing equipment at St. Jean beach. If you want to take a boat trip, simply ask the concierge to use one of the property's two vessels—the picnic boat *Eden Rock* and the 65-foot princess yacht *Eden Rock-St. Barths*.

If you'd rather spend your days soaking up the sun, St. Barths is the spot to do just that. Beach loungers, umbrellas and towels are always ready. Within minutes of your feet touching the sand, the hotel's personnel are there to offer bar service and enticing fresh fruit. It's a no-brainer.

When shopping is on the agenda, visit the designer boutiques along the harbor just a short distance from the hotel. The area is home to such designer favorites as Louis Vuitton, Hermès and Roberto Cavalli. The Eden Rock Gallery also is a must-see for art lovers, who will get lost in the colorful pieces on display during exclusive exhibitions on rotation throughout the year.

The beauty and rapture of St. Barths is ideal and prized for its exclusivity, luxury and tranquility. After being captivated by the sun at the most completely extravagant Caribbean hot spot, you, too, might find yourself thinking, "If this is Eden, there's no doubt it is also heaven." ❧



The Waterlily suite, a one-bedroom bungalow, provides the utmost in comfort.



Eden Rock Gallery features exhibitions of work from artists studying at the New York Academy of Art.