

IT MUST BE MUSTIQUE

WHEN WILLIAM AND KATE WANT TO GET AWAY FROM IT ALL, THERE'S ONE PLACE THEY LOVE TO GO...

With the birth of their second bundle of joy, the Duke and Duchess Of Cambridge will certainly have their hands full – and any thoughts of jetting off on a sun-kissed holiday will have to be put on the back burner. Saying that, their son Prince George is already a seasoned traveller, having ticked of a royal tour of Australia and New Zealand when he was just eight months old. Prior to that, he made his first trip abroad, flying long-haul to the exclusive island of Mustique when he was just six months old in January 2014. And he returned a year later, aged 18 months, to celebrate his grandmother Carole Middleton's 60th birthday in January of this year. So perhaps it won't be too long before the newest addition to the family jets off to the idyllic island hideaway...

Why do the royals love Mustique?

The two-square-mile island of Mustique has proved to be William and Kate's favourite holiday getaway, and they've visited as both a couple and on Middleton family holidays since 2006. The private island is part of group of islands that comprise St Vincent and the Grenadines in the



The Duchess of Cambridge adores the paradise island

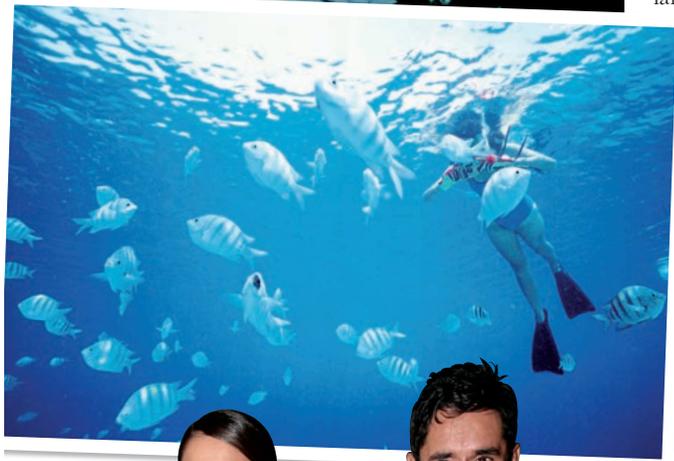
West Indies, and has long been a magnet for rock stars and royalty, drawn by the privacy this tropical gem – only accessible by small plane from Barbados or St Lucia – affords.

Run by the Mustique Company, the island – which has just 500 residents – is home to a boho-chic hilltop guest house called Firefly and the 17-room Cotton House boutique hotel. Cotton House – a former 18th-century sugar plantation house – set in 13 acres of gardens on the beach at Endeavour Bay, is the resort's epicentre, famous for its weekly cocktail party for island guests and its English afternoon teas, both held in the colonial-style Great Room, with ceiling fans whirring overhead. In addition, there are 75 private villas scattered around the island that are available to rent. Most come with a chef, butler and maid to attend to your every whim.

A rich royal history

William and Kate aren't the first royals to be lured by the island's natural beauty. Its sandy, palm-fringed beaches, pristine waters encircled by coral reefs and the year-round balmy temperatures have long attracted members of the royal family.

The late Princess Margaret put the island on the



Cheryl and her husband Jean Bernard Fernandez-Versini tied the knot on Mustique



The classic luxury of Cotton House attracts the holidaying elite



map in the '60s when she was given 10 acres of land as a wedding present by Lord Glenconner, who bought the island in 1958 for £45,000 (Dhs270,000) and then developed it as a luxury resort. On the land, Lord Glenconner built her Les Jolies Eaux, a charming five-bedroom hilltop villa, where she holidayed for many years.

The Queen and Prince Philip have also made three trips to the island over the years. Kate's parents, Carole and Michael Middleton, have long been Mustique fans and have reportedly holidayed on the island once or twice a year for the past decade. They've forged such good friendships with people who work on the island that they invited six of them – including Basil Charles, the owner of the legendary Basil's Bar – to the royal wedding in 2011. No doubt due to this Middleton connection, Prince William decided to spend one of his first holidays with Kate there back in 2006 when they were still university students.

Who else goes?

Since the hedonistic early days when multimillionaires, rock stars, royals and aristocracy mingled over drinks at Basil's Bar, Mustique continues to attract a new generation of rich and famous faces. Current villa owners include Sir Mick Jagger, Tommy Hilfinger, Shania Twain, Robbie Williams and Bryan Adams, while Sir Paul McCartney honeymooned here with his third

wife Nancy in 2011.

No doubt attracted by the island's seclusion and the utter discretion of the staff, last July, Cheryl and Jean-Bernard Fernandez-Versini decided Mustique was the perfect place to hold their secret nuptials in an intimate beach-side ceremony, with just a handful of friends and family in attendance. Now, to celebrate their first anniversary, it's been reported that the couple is planning on buying a villa on the island. A source revealed, "Mustique holds a special place in their hearts and they love the privacy it can offer. It's their favourite place in the world." Adding, "As one of the most photographed women in Britain, she loves the privacy the island affords and the fact that photographers can't take pictures from boats in the waters surrounding it."

What can kids do?

William and Kate will no doubt be back on Mustique with their young family soon – and it's the perfect place to holiday with kids. With no cars, the only transport is golf buggies, referred to as 'mules'. And, with the villas scattered over the island, it never feels crowded. With gingerbread houses, ingenious bunk rooms, a drive-in cinema for golf mules, a pony camp, treasure hunts and kite-flying competitions, Mustique really knows how to keep kids entertained.

Older ones might want to head out on a boat trip to visit the beaches where the *Pirates of The Caribbean* movies were filmed, or take part in paddleboarding contests. There's also a watersports centre for those wishing to take out a catamaran or kayak or go snorkelling and an equestrian centre for those who want to go riding along the shoreline. With all that in mind, it's safe to say that the new royal baby will probably never want to go anywhere else for a holiday.

How do I get there?

The Mustique Company (+44 20 7201 6831; mustique-island.com) offers a seven-night room-only stay at the pretty ti Soleil villa from Dhs32,125 per week. It sleeps six and the price includes three staff and the use of a mule. Prices at Cotton House start from Dhs980 per night, based on two people sharing a garden cottage. Flights from London to St Lucia start from Dhs2,905 return and return transfers from St Lucia to Mustique cost Dhs2,000 per adult. **OKI**

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