

# Bal Harbour

M A G A Z I N E

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MARTHA HUNT

FALL OUT OF LINE

Break the Rules and  
Own the Season





COURTESY OF THE MUSTIQUE COMPANY; GETTY IMAGES

Mention the island of Mustique to any jet-setting traveler and its allure is well-known: an elusive, exclusive enclave of the Caribbean beloved by British royalty and those who know them. If you've ever mulled a Mustique trip yourself, but wondered where to start, here's the ultimate cheat sheet. It's designed to make any first-timer's visit so remarkable, they'll make sure it isn't their last.

BY MARK ELLWOOD



HRH Princess Margaret on Mustique, circa March 1972, holding court with friends, including The Hon. Colin Tennant, Lady Anne Tennant, Basil Charles, and Nicholas Courtney. At left, Toucan Hill villa

Think of this 1,400-acre island as the ultimate country club, perhaps even a private country. Certainly, that was the vision of British aristocrat Colin Tennant, who bought the land in 1958; it's one of the Grenadine islands south of Saint Vincent, and Tennant paid £45,000 (the equivalent of around \$985,000 today) to commandeer it. The eccentric and irascible Tennant envisaged the ultimate playground for wealthy Britons, helped along by the fact that his wife, Anne, was a lady in waiting to Princess Margaret. Cannily, Tennant gifted her land on his Caribbean island as a wedding present, and she built a villa there, *Les Jolies Eaux*; her magnetism and prestige helped attract boldfaced visitors, lured also by Tennant's legendary, louche parties. Still, the cost of developing the island from scratch proved too onerous for even that wealthy aristocrat, and he eventually sold a controlling stake in the Mustique Company in 1976. That



entity now operates the island, much like a sun-soaked co-op where home owners rotate through various positions alongside full-time staffers, under the direction of Roger Pritchard.

Fifty years since that sale, Mustique remains a magnet for the world's most glamorous people. Homeowners include Mick Jagger, Tommy Hilfiger, and Bryan Adams, and everyone from Harry Styles to Kate Moss are reportedly fixtures. One thing they love more than any other: privacy, as the self-contained island keeps pesky paparazzi at bay. The vibe is distinctly low-key, no matter how starry the guest.

## WHAT TO BOOK

The vast majority of accommodations on the island are in privately owned homes that are rented out via the Mustique Company. Here are three prime perches worth a stay.

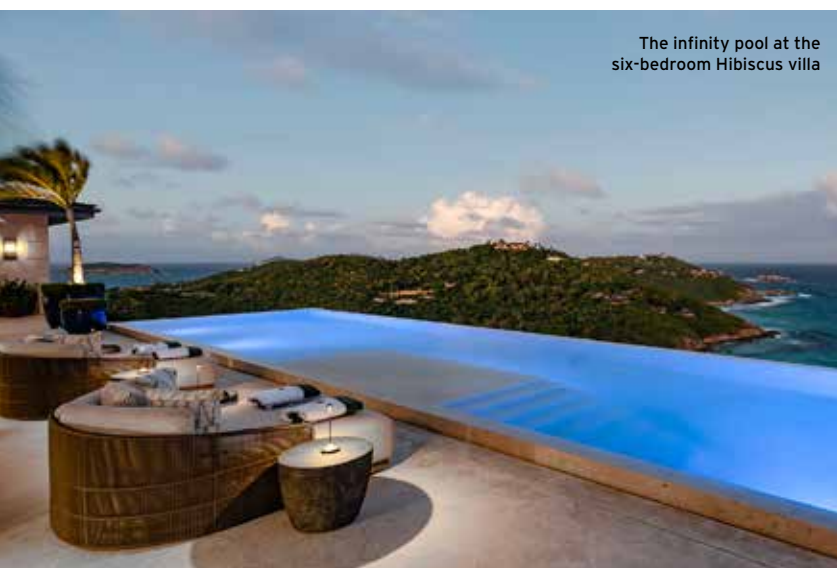
**Coccoloba** The sprawling four-bedroom's design takes its inspiration from Oliver Messel—the island's OG architect. It has a home gym and home office—ideal if you're staying for longer than a week or two—and thoughtful touches like the locally made Nine Isles Gin in the bar. The landmark sculpture out front was installed by the current owner in collaboration with the artist Mark Handforth.

**Hibiscus** Sweeping views over the beloved Macaroni Beach are one amenity of this hillside six-bedroom renovation, which is slickly designed with modern white interiors and pops of color. The home gym has a Mustique Wrestling mat—the owner's son was a champion—and there's an ice bath for post-workout cold plunges, too.

**Indigo** It's only a five-minute walk down to Pasture Bay, arguably the island's most pristine beach, from this three-bedroom property. The modernist structure centers on a Roman villa-style reflecting pool. The bedrooms are artfully arranged for privacy, ideal for friends traveling together—rather than an extended family.

“Mustique is the absence of things:  
high rises, cars, and tourists.”

—TATIANA COPELAND



The infinity pool at the six-bedroom Hibiscus villa



The island's only hotel, Cotton House, sits right on Endeavour Bay; its interiors are relaxed and inviting, and the menu at Veranda doesn't disappoint.



## WHAT MATTERS

- Staying at the only hotel on the island, the 17-room Cotton House, used to feel rather like a second-class choice compared to the expansive villas. But General Manager Emilie Polastron has transformed the property, and helped it feel far more like everyone's clubhouse.
- Mustique's topography is quite varied so choose your villa location carefully. The upside of being close to the beaches is convenience but you'll likely have to fend off far more mosquitoes (the island, after all, derives its name from the French word for them).
- Most houses will have guest books, and make sure to flick back through them for a sense of the A-listers who have shared the same perch.
- The runway at MQS is short, in part by design, to restrict noisy, larger planes. If you're chartering long-haul, you'll need to land—and park—at nearby Canouan (CIW) then take a puddle jumper over to Mustique.
- While many folks come in large groups, you don't have to arrive *en masse*; indeed, Mustique is unusual in that it offers smaller villas, like the two-bedroom Blue Waters and Greystone, both of which come fully rostered with staff in the same way a larger estate does.
- The warren of roads and paths that quilt the island can be confusing, even in such a relatively small space, so don't be afraid to ask staff from your house to drive ahead and show you the way in the buggy known as a Mustique Mule. ➤

## WHAT (NOT) TO SAY

The weekly cocktail party thrown by the Mustique Company at Cotton House each Tuesday night is the apex of the social scene here and a chance to make new friends; villa guests can mingle here and strike up conversation.

**DO SAY:** *Nice to meet you. We'd love to invite you over for supper this week.*

The premise of the cocktail party is to get to know your week's neighbors—expect them to issue invitations, to drinks, dinner, or a game of tennis. Feel free to reciprocate.

**DON'T SAY:** *Isn't that Prince George playing over there?*

Yes, the Royal Family remain regular visitors here, often accompanied by the Princess of Wales' parents, Carole and Michael Middleton. One major appeal for them is how the trio of Wales children go unremarked upon, and are able to have as normal an experience as possible, so avoid pointing them out.

## WHAT TO KNOW

Tatiana Copeland is a longtime part-time resident, and owns the four-bedroom Toucan Hill villa; no one is better placed to offer an insider's perspective than the Washington, D.C.-based philanthropist. "One of the first things you'll probably notice is how safe it is, and truly relaxing—there are no tours, no mobs, no boat noise," she says, "It's the absence of things: high rises, cars, and tourists. You can leave your home unlocked." Even the wealthiest visitors, she says, will be startled. "You can create a week of a life you don't normally live at home, as all the planning is done by someone else."

## WHAT TO READ

There are a few essential books to browse when you're in Mustique—don't worry about bringing them, though, as most homes will have spare copies lying around somewhere. Anne Glenconner's memoir, "Lady in Waiting: My Extraordinary Life in the Shadow of the Crown," is a dishy look at Mustique's early days of development from the woman who witnessed it up close, while Sarah McCoy's "Mustique Island" looks at the same period through a fictional lens with much more leeway. The Assouline-published "Mustique Icon" is a chance to dip back into the same heady, royal-tinged first heyday through more than 200 photos and a foreword written by, who else, Mick Jagger.



**FROM TOP**  
Hiking the rugged landscapes that are typical in the Grenadines; with a foreword by longtime homeowner Mick Jagger, "Mustique Icon" (Assouline) is a must-read; modish Tortuga villa; wading through the island's famously clear waters on horseback



## WHAT TO DO

Though the island is synonymous with sybaritic excess, those who are keen to break a healthy sweat have options, too.

- The Mustique Company's director of sales, Pippa Ona, suggests horse riding. Head down to L'Ansecoy beach to go wading through the waters on horseback.
- Ona loves hiking the rugged landscape, especially at sunrise or sunset. She calls the 90-minute North Point hike along the edge of the coastline (start at Cotton House) "not for the faint of heart," while the walk around Gun Hill in the south is more suitable for all fitness levels.
- Keep an eye out for which tennis pros are on island—you'll find that international-caliber players will make unexpected appearances and are ready to challenge the cockiest amateur. "Tends to be a bit of a surprise," says Ona. "Someone comes and Omigod, they're playing tennis with Tim Henman." There is of course an on-staff tennis coaching team (including their resident pro Richard Schaffer), too, who will happily do everything from arrange lessons to pair guests with other visitors of similar skill levels for matches. ▶

The vibe on Mustique is distinctly low-key, however starry the guest.







#### CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

The 17-acre Terraces villa estate (currently for sale); arriving on Mustique; a pool at The Terraces; and one of the villa's 22 bedrooms, with hand-painted ceiling frescoes



- Mustique's proper British affect (pick-up cricket matches are a regular occurrence) is only dislodged occasionally, as with its Turkey Trot on Thanksgiving—you can cap that brisk but manageable walk with a rum punch or two.
- There are no motorized water sports on offer, in order to keep noise disruption to a minimum, but everyone can grab kayaks or snorkels by the beach bar.

## WHAT TO BUY

Want to make your stay more permanent? Properties on Mustique quietly cycle through owners, periodically coming up for sale. These standouts are currently available via real estate agent Knight Frank.

#### The Terraces

The 22-bedroom estate on one of the island's prime peaks sits on 17 acres, with 65,000

square feet of livable space; it has not one but three pools as well as its own chapel. It was originally built for *Mad Men*-era ad guru Mary Wells Lawrence in the 1980s, and is primed for entertaining, with its own billiards hall and a bar.

#### Aria

This four-bedroom property is a refreshing reminder of the eclectic design language of the island now, a Japanese-style vision by Paolo Piva that offers unbeatable sunset views. There's an oversized great room and an entertaining-ready indoor-outdoor dining room with a golden waterfall, plus a sunken Japanese-style dining room for casual suppers.

#### Tortuga

Fancy a short stumble back from Basil's every night? This modish, Milan-nodding villa overlooks Britannia Bay, with five bedrooms and a pool bar-slash-pavilion that is the center of the house's soul. The primary bedroom suite is standalone, so you won't feel crowded even when the property is full of guests.

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