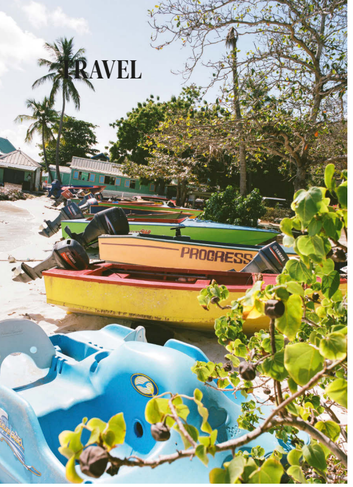
FINANCIAL TIMES
HTSI
7 NOVEMBER 2026



THE LAUDER LEGACY

Inside New York's greatest art gift

PLUS SARAH JESSICA PARKER SPARKLES, GEORGE ORWELL'S JURA, ALEXANDER SC ROWER TALKS TASTE, RAMDANE TOUHAMI'S SNEAKERBOX HOUSE



I came to Mustique from nearby St Vincent in 1971, at the age of 22, to work as a bartender at The Cotton House hotel. At the time, there were only three homes on the island – today there are 120.

Back then Mustique was largely uninhabited. There were no paved roads, drinking water was delivered by boat and the electricity came and went. I became friends with Colin Tennant [who bought Mustique in 1958 for £45,000] who, recognising how special it is, ensured that it would be carefully developed – without big hotels or golf courses. He envisioned this beautiful island as a place for his friends, and cared so much about his guests and their privacy that no journalists were allowed on the island – not even as visitors – for fear that their secrets might be spilled.

Today The Cotton House has grown to 17 suites and cottages. The Great Room is like the island's clubhouse, welcoming everyone from locals to guests, who visit from October through April and July to early August. The festive period is the busiest time here – all the houses are rented – followed by Easter. The island is as beautiful as ever, with white sandy beaches and crystal-clear water.

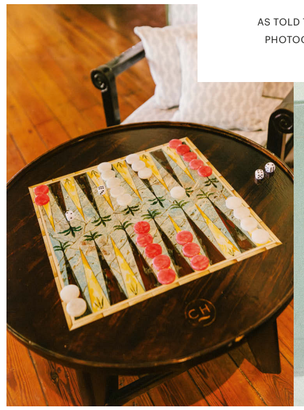
HOW TO SPEND IT IN...

MUSTIQUE

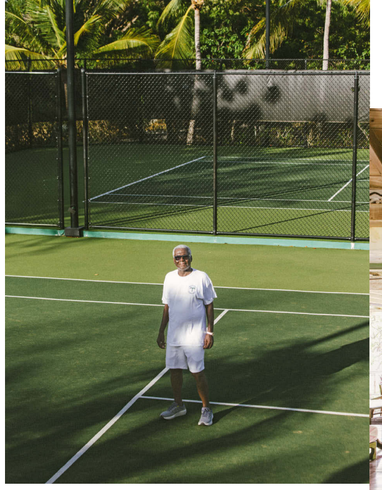
Basil Charles talks beaches, barracuda and the secrets of his legendary bar

AS TOLD TO **CHRISTINA OHLY EVANS**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **JOSH ARONSON**





Basil Charles at The Cotton House (also pictured top far right) and (left) a backgammon set in its Great Room. Top left: the beach on Britannia Bay





I opened Basil's Bar in 1976 – 50 years ago – and we are still going strong. It all came about because Colin thought we needed a restaurant on the island. We started with a little shack on Britannia Bay – just a bar with toasted sandwiches – and now there's dining, music and dancing. We have calypso, reggae and hip-hop from local bands, a house band on Wednesday nights and jazz during the Blues Festival in January. People say we throw the best New Year's Eve party on the island. We had a refresh in 2018 courtesy of my friend Philippe Starck, but the original Balinese feel and over-water bar has stayed.

BASIL'S BAR HAS HAD a lot of visitors through the years – Paul McCartney, Steely Dan, Mick Jagger and Bryan Adams. We're known for our grilled lobster, pig roasts and the Hurricane David cocktail, named after the devastating hurricane that struck the Dominican Republic and Dominica in 1979. It's a mix of dark rum, red rum, vodka, soda water, ice and lime – very refreshing. It's either that or a cold Hairoun, the local beer from St Vincent.

There isn't a lot of shopping on the island but we have Basil's Bazaar next door to the bar for sarongs, straw hats and such. The Pink House is a nice shop owned by Lotty Bunbury, who designs all kinds of kaftans and clothing in floral and tropical prints. She came to Mustique in 1993 with her husband, the former island doctor; they planned to stay for one year and never left. Right next door is the Purple House, a good place for gifts.

One of the earliest and most famous holiday villas here was Princess Margaret's Les Jolies Eaux. Colin gave her a 10-acre plot of land in 1960 as a wedding gift and interior designer Oliver Messel created the neo-Georgian home in 1971. It's beautiful, with big views of Gelliceaux beach and the Caribbean Sea, and can be rented throughout the year. The Sea Star is another Oliver Messel-designed home overlooking Honour Bay, while the Hummingbird, a seven-bedroom hillside villa, was designed by Italian architect Paolo Piva. Regardless of where you stay, The Cotton House is a central hub; for the all-island cocktail party on Tuesday nights, for weekly backgammon games and for lunches.

One of the best places to eat on Mustique is The View, owned by a local lady who also has four rooms to let. The menu is traditional Caribbean and West Indian, with grilled tuna and mahi-mahi as well callaloo, a classic soup made with coconut milk, spices and leafy greens such as amaranth or water spinach. Another island delicacy is barracuda, a fish liked by many guests. They get a bad rap for being mean, but really they're just curious; if you swim towards them, they will flee.

THERE IS NO LAND FOR SALE AND NO RESORTS WILL BE BUILT HERE

There are plenty of activities here – tennis at the Mustique Tennis Club, an equestrian centre and many beautiful hikes, particularly on the south side of the island. But it's the beaches that are the real attraction. White sand Macaroni Beach on the Atlantic side is very popular, with strong surf, while Lagoon Beach is known for calm water and shell collecting. Endeavour beach on the Caribbean side is good for snorkelling and swimming. Surfing isn't encouraged anywhere as the currents can be very strong.

If the island ever starts to feel small, take a day trip to nearby Bequia and have lunch at Jack's Beach Bar. Or visit Tobago Cays for snorkelling on some of the world's most beautiful coral reefs. We are lucky the island is guaranteed to stay small; there is no more land for sale and no resorts will be built. The homeowners voted on an airport expansion in 2019 and it was turned down. We are happy with our low-key way of life. ■**HTSI**



BARS, CAFÉS & RESTAURANTS

Basil's Bar basilsbar.com
Jack's Beach Bar jacksbeachbar.com
The View @theview.mustique

SHOPPING

Basil's Bazaar basilsbar.com
Pink House pinkhousemustique.com
Purple House Britannia Bay

THINGS TO DO

The Equestrian Centre mustique-island.com
Mustique Tennis Club @mustiquetennisclub

WHERE TO STAY

The Cotton House mustique-island.com
Hummingbird elegantresorts.co.uk
Les Jolies Eaux mustique-island.com/villa/les-jolies-eaux
Sea Star elegantresorts.co.uk

SILK FESTIVAL PARROT SHIRT, £25, PINKHOUSE MUSTIQUE.COM



Top left: Charles at Mustique Tennis Club and (below) outside Basil's Bar with Britannia Bay behind. Bottom left: the stage at the bar



BASIL'S VINCY RUM, $60, BASILS BAR.COM

