

THINGS TO DO > TRAVEL

## Go ahead, indulge – St. Barts beckons with luxe island leisure



There are beautiful views from every corner of St. Barts (photo by Moira McCarthy)

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By **MOIRA MCCARTHY** |  
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Getting away to a Caribbean island is a commonplace vacation these days. Why not make a jaunt to balmy climes worth the plane ride by choosing a splurge-worthy destination?

I speak of St. Barts. St. Barthelemy if we're being formal.

It's rugged yet posh, with rocky coastlines tucked up against sandy beaches. The scene can get a little wild — visit St. Jean's Beach every Sunday afternoon for proof — yet there's a quieter side too: take in a seaside breakfast at a resort for the perfect peaceful way to start your day.

It's no wonder famed banker David Rockefeller built a masterpiece home there after spotting it from a sailboat way back in 1957.

Today, while St. Bart's is still one of the more expensive islands, it's also one of the most worthwhile.

Just eight square miles, (it's about a 15-minute car ride from one end of the island to the other), but in those miles you'll find breathtaking views, unique and well-appointed resorts, countless rentable villas, a vibrant foodie culture, cool shopping and 22 beaches, all open to the public.

The moment you land at St. Barts' single strip airport — said to be one of the most beautiful and dramatic plane landings out there — you know you're onto something.

Getting there: There are no direct flights to St. Bart's from any American airport. Best bet? Get to St. Martin and then, from there, splurge and — rather than take the 45 minute ferry ride to St. Bart's — hop aboard a private flight with St. Barth Executive ([www.stbarthexecutive.com](http://www.stbarthexecutive.com)).

It might feel extra, but with the short cuts through customs (particularly with COVID rules; this airline makes it easier), and saving as much as a half a day's precious vacation time, it's a smart add.

You'll want to rent a car. St. Bart driving is the same side as American, and while the roads are steep, windy and sometimes a bit challenging, going slow works, and no one minds.

Choosing your base camp: I opted for two spots over my stay. First, I settled into Le Sereno ([www.serenohotels.com](http://www.serenohotels.com)), an all-waterfront-suite property tucked into





Breakfast by the sea at Le Sereno, looking out on the Grand Cal de Sac in St. Barts  
(Photo by Moira McCarthy)

I found it peaceful, beautiful and friendly; I knew more than a few guests by name before departing.

The second half, I chose the newly renovated Carl Gustav ([www.hotelsbarriere.com/en/saint-barth/le-carl-gustaf.html](http://www.hotelsbarriere.com/en/saint-barth/le-carl-gustaf.html)), built out of the side of a high hill looking over the harbor of Gustavia, St. Barth's biggest town.





Looking out over Gustavia from the Carl Gustav Hotel in St. Barts. (Photo by Moira McCarthy)

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I can drive — easily — to many beaches from there, and the shopping and dining of Gustavia is a short walk down the hill. It's a perfect bookend with Le Sereno; two distinctly unique and lovely ways to experience the island.

There are many other great choices too. Villas, small and large, nary one without a sweeping view, can be booked via WIMCO ([www.wimco.com](http://www.wimco.com)). Eden Rock offers luxury accommodations right next to the fun of St. Jean's beach and Nikki Beach. Hotel Manapany ([hotelmanapany-stbarth.com](http://hotelmanapany-stbarth.com)) brings you in touch with nature and offers surfing lessons right at their private shore.

Each beach has its own sense of arrival; some via thickly vegetated paths that open to that amazing sea view; others that pop out to you from behind a building.

Gustavia has great high-end shopping, and since cruise ships cannot come into port, you'll find space. I tend more toward the little local shops, with handmade scarfs, bags and locally inspired fashion. It's fun to explore.

Dining is a big thing here. You can opt for simple perfection with seafood at Fish Corner (Ludacris was spotted there during my visit), and there are incredible



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The Beach at Manapany Hotel, where you can learn to surf from a pro. (Photo by Moira McCarthy)

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I leave wanting to come back — to actually spend a wild Sunday at legendary Nikki Beach and spray champagne with abandon; to get out on that water again and just soak in the craggy shore and sea; to nosh on more insanely delicious meals.

St. Bart's is small in size but boundless in experience. You can learn more at [www.saintbarth-tourisme.com/en](http://www.saintbarth-tourisme.com/en).

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**Moira McCarthy**





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