

WINTER 2022

# DEPARTURES

CHECKING IN

## Postcard from Paradise

St Barths is looking better than ever, says *Nicola Chilton*, who surveys the Caribbean island's many new charms.



TRAVEL

DEPARTURES

Feet-in-the-sand dining at Rosewood Le Guanahani

**THE PAST COUPLE** of years have seen a flurry of nips, tucks, refurbishments and rebrands across St Barths, and the island is truly in bloom. After four years of renovations, **Le Guanahani** ([www.rosewoodhotels.com](https://www.rosewoodhotels.com)) reopened at the end of 2021 as a Rosewood hotel, with a new restaurant – Beach House St Barth – and the Sense Spa, where dreamy treatments incorporate local soursop, tamarind paste, willow bark and coconut oil.

MEX  
Baja Be

JAN  
In Full B

Plus

Rum Re  
Devour  
Vintage

A



From left: Gyp Sea's Parraponne salad; the colourful living area in a Garden Suite at Rosewood Le Guanahani

## *Nikki Beach strikes the perfect balance of those who come to swig rosé and multi-gen families dining in a swirl of cheek kisses*

**Le Tropical Hotel** (*tropical-saint-barth.com*) has also undergone a makeover, reemerging after three years with all the trappings befitting its name – walls papered with prints of palms, loungers made from bamboo, and a palette of Palm Springs-meets-St Tropez pinks, blues and mint greens.

On St Jean Bay, 20 years after opening, **Nikki Beach** (*saint-barth.nikkibeach.com*) still manages to create the perfect balance of those who come to swig rosé all day and multi-gen families dining in a swirl of cheek kisses, tumbling toddlers and elderly relatives, all while remaining impossibly chic. It has recently been joined on this stretch of sand by **Gyp Sea** (*gypsea-beach.com*), a boho spot where barbecued seafood and rum-based tiki cocktails are served beachside, and the onsite boutique stocks a tempting mix of kaftans, sunhats and straw beach bags.

Dining has always been serious business on St Barths, and a few new restaurants have joined the fray. In Grand Cul-de-Sac, **Le Barthélemy Hotel** (*lebarthelemyhotel.com*) has reinvented its Amis St. Barth

restaurant, headed by a culinary husband-and-wife team with a new focus on locally caught seafood and zero waste. Over at **Villa Marie** (*saint-barth.villamarie.fr*), high up in the hills above Colombier, Italian classics – think cacio e pepe flambéed in a Parmesan wheel – are served at the new restaurant, *Dolce Vita*, on the hotel's convivial wooden terrace.

The **Hôtel Barrière Le Carl Gustaf** (*botelsbarriere.com*) is still by far the best spot on the island for sundowners, perched among palm fronds above the petite Gustavia port,

with shiny brass telescopes lined up along the terrace for yacht-spotting. Cocktails here come with a spritz of edible botanical perfume courtesy of mixologist Emanuele Balestra.

For a sublime blend of shoes-off elegance and serenity, head to **Le Sereno** (*serenohotels.com*) in Grand Cul-de-Sac. Here, just 39 suites and three villas hug the quiet bay, and there's a mood of dolce far niente that comes courtesy of its sister property, *Il Sereno* on Lake Como. Unsurprisingly, the Italian food by chef Davide Mosca is excellent, with delicious surprises like the asparagus carbonara with bacon and lime. But the real joy lies just off the beach in the lagoon. Hop in one of the hotel's transparent kayaks, or simply wade in with your own snorkel and mask. The waters here are full of sea turtles, completely unconcerned by their human swimming companions. It's absolutely mesmerising, and – unusually for St Barths – completely free.



Le Sereno's bucolic beach club