

TRAVEL

# Rediscovering Sunsets and a Sense of Self at Rosewood Le Guanahani St. Barth

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BY MARINA KHOROSH

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The view from a balcony at Rosewood Le Guanahani Photo: Ken Hayden Photography / Courtesy of Rosewood

*I haven't seen a sunset in almost a year.* This is the thought that runs through my mind as I pack for my first solo trip since giving birth to my daughter in February 2021. The second, more daunting one is, *I also haven't missed a bedtime.*

This is not just any trip. This is the trip that a new mother doesn't dare to dream of—a four-day retreat at the newly reopened Rosewood Le Guanahani St. Barth to celebrate the launch of my friend Lola Rykiel's pop-up boutique for her brand, Pompom Paris. (Lola also happens to be a new mother and, therefore, can share the simultaneous excitement and angst of leaving your baby for the very first time.) As I hand my own mother a stack of printed out baby schedules and stuff a massive Spectra breast pump into my carry-on, a wave of doubt washes over me. What if my daughter is not okay without me, or I without her? What if I'm no longer capable of feeling whole without this small being who has become so intrinsically connected to my identity, to the point where I hardly know where one ends and the other begins? What if the pump doesn't work?

By the time my Tradewind flight descends on the island's notoriously short landing strip, offering me a swift overview of its green pastures, scattered red rooftops, and fleets of yachts leisurely lounging in the surrounding waters, most of my worries have dissipated. 30 minutes later, in the lobby of the Rosewood Le Guanahani, over my welcome glass of rosé and a tiny gougère, all traces of mom guilt are officially gone. In their place is my long-lost friend, the euphoria that comes with having your senses awakened by a brand new place for the first time.

And what a place it is. Spread across 18 acres on a private peninsula overlooking the beaches of Maréchal Bay and Grand Cul-de-Sac Lagoon, Rosewood Le Guanahani is comprised of small houses painted in shades of yellow, lavender and turquoise. My little cottage, nestled amid abundant greenery and bougainvillea, is lavender, an homage to Provence and France. Inside is a spacious one-bedroom suite decorated in a chic neutral palette that comes alive with rattan accents, colorful touches and travel-inspired furniture, created for the hotel by designer Luis Pons. Outside on the deck, a private pool glistens against an ocean backdrop. It is indulgent, but does not intimidate me in the way extravagance sometimes does—in fact, I instantly feel at home. That night, after a long welcome dinner of BBQ octopus, fresh watermelon and burrata, and the most exquisite mahi mahi served family-style at the resort's beachfront restaurant, Beach House St. Barth, I fall asleep to the soft whistle of Caribbean winds.

The Garden Pool Suite at Rosewood Le Guanahani Photo: Ken Hayden Photography / Courtesy of Rosewood

“Part of what makes our property special is its unique positioning,” says Thibaut Asso, Rosewood Le Guanahani’s Sales and Marketing Director the following morning, as we hike up the hotel’s Morne Reserve for a sweeping view of the peninsula. An iconic St. Barth resort first established in 1985, Le Guanahani (which means “welcome” in the island’s native Arawak language) underwent four years of renovation before reopening in November 2021. Rosewood came on board to manage it with its signature “A Sense of Place” philosophy that reflects the local culture and sensibilities. The Beach House food and beverage concept sources inspiration from the island’s French and Caribbean influences, resulting in an immersive gastronomic experience that changes as the day goes on. The resort’s Sense spa offers a menu of restorative treatments that combine cutting-edge techniques with local practices and ingredients (one of them, the “Le Morne” Sense Spa Journey, starts with a regenerative stroll through the hotel’s reserve). The children’s club, Rosewood Explorers, offers activities like cooking, painting and gardening, without a tech shortcut in sight. Underlining everything is a strong sustainability component: from newly-installed water pipelines to facilitate water recycling, to a food and beverage program that relies on family style meals, portion moderation and recycled ingredients, the island’s resources are never far from mind. This is subtle luxury, the kind that feels respectful to nature and its surroundings; everything here has a *raison d’être*.



Pompom Paris at Le Boutique in St. Barth Photo: Hugo Allard / Courtesy of Pompom Paris

Given this ethos, the choice of Pompom Paris for the resort's waterfront boutique, Le Boutique, made perfect sense. "I wanted to create something unique and different, something that you want to keep forever and pass along to future generations," says Lola as she recounts the inspiration behind her sportswear line, launched in 2019. "I was a professional dancer for years and first came to New York to train at the Martha Graham school. I remember being so inspired by the style, the way the dancers would just throw on big sweatshirts over their leotards and look so cool." These visual references stayed with her for life and served as the main catalyst for her label, alongside glam imagery from the '70s and iconic velvet pieces created by her grandmother, the late Sonia Rykiel. The collection, consisting of sportswear-inspired pieces with unique feminine twists, exudes playful glamour while never sacrificing comfort and quality. "We always talk about wellness, but we forget that the biggest organ we have is our skin," says Lola as she runs us through her selection of thoughtfully chosen fabrics, from buttery cotton to thick lycra to the softest of velvets. Each piece selected for the Rosewood Le Guanahani pop-up, which is set to run through April, carries a unique story or evokes a story within. A shocking pink lycra top with a circular strass motif at the breasts alludes to the designer's modern jazz classes. A dusty pink cut-off sweatshirt is adorned with crystal tiger paws that allude to motherhood. "I actually designed it when I was pregnant; it is as though carrying my baby awoke my animal instinct. As a mother, you feel strong and sensual at the same time, and I think the feline embodies this perfectly," Lola says. For the pop-up, she created a specially curated tee that reads "MISS SAINT BARTH" in strass, inspired by pageant ribbons of yesteryear. "I think it's cool to proclaim yourself a Miss Something, to be your own judge," she says. I buy a tee on the spot, so eager I am to give myself a new title.

Lola Rykiel in front of her Pompom Paris pop-up. Photo: Hugo Allard / Courtesy of Pompom Paris

The days fly by, bookmarked by meals at Beach House that we linger at for hours, moving from the dining room to the beach and back indoors as the day progresses, a renewal of energy that allows for novelty of experience. We explore the island by boat, jumping into the water and swimming to shore,

where we run along the sand like children. I skinny dip in my private pool (an experience, much to my shock, recommended by my mother). My Facetime calls to home decrease as I let go and allow myself to get lost in these new friendships and activities, knowing that it is a matter of time until I'm back to measuring my days by nap schedules. I shimmy in my new Pompom tee while drinking bespoke cocktails at Bar Mélangé and recalling horror stories of dating days past. Walking back to the room under the starlit sky, I can feel the old me—the person I was before the stress of mortgages and real life responsibilities, who considered passport stamps an identity pillar, who answered to no one and lived in a constant state of adventure.

“Before I had my baby, I was working all the time and was so driven by my own creativity, but then you become a mother and become so absorbed by your child. You don't even realize that the person you were before is still within you and needs to be nourished,” confirms Lola as we lounge by the heated pool of Sense spa, reflecting on the trip. “Going back to your old self makes you feel so powerful. I'm definitely going back with more to give, both to my husband and to my baby.”

On the last day, our group heads on a long hike with [Body and Soul](#), one of the activities arranged by the resort. To our right are green pastures scattered with low palm trees; to the left is the glistening Caribbean sea. Walking behind the group, just a few missed steps separating me from the steep drop below, I experience a sudden awareness of my body. It is the same body that has expanded and morphed and recovered over the past two years to produce and nurture another human, but, here, gliding through this narrow trail, it is just mine, independent and free. We make our way down to a crystal clear natural pool, separated from the sea by a wall of jagged rocks. As I swim towards the barrier, a huge wave crashes against it, sending shock waves through my body. The first thought that flashes through my mind is, “I’m a mother. Somebody out there needs me.” Our bodies may exist without our children, yet we are connected to them from so far away.

That evening I sit on my deck, watching the sun paint the sky in streaks of red and orange before dipping into the horizon. I know it’s the last sunset I’ll see in a while, and that’s okay. It’s time to go home.

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