

American Airlines

## Celebrated Living

GETAWAY

### Natural splendor

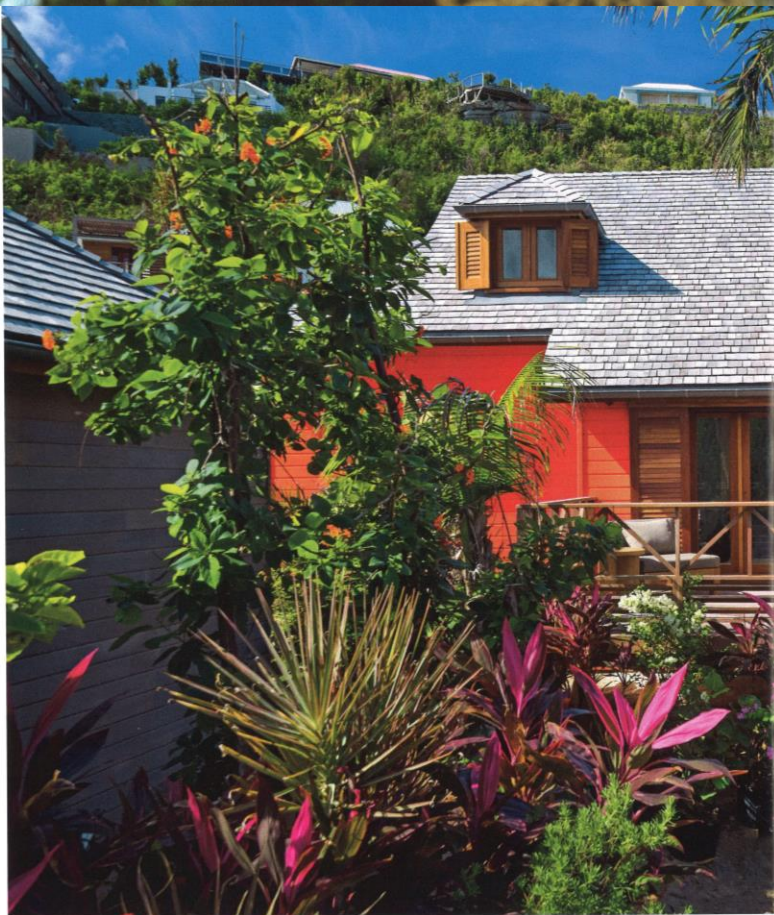
Recovered from Hurricane Irma, St. Barts is again welcoming a VIP clientele to its lavish shores

**S**pending time on St. Barts is like being a member of a special club. With its windswept beaches, European charm, designer boutiques and tropical gourmet cuisine, it has long been a favored destination for celebrities and moguls, who are passionately devoted to the French Caribbean island.

The last tourist season, however, was severely impacted by Hurricane Irma, whose winds of up to 199 mph battered the island for five hours. Many of the waterfront hotels and restaurants were destroyed.

But as one of the richest islands in the Caribbean, St. Barts rebounded quickly. A little over a year later, 90 percent of the hotels, restaurants, stores and nightclubs had reopened—most undergoing renovations along the way. Longtime visitors will notice small changes—for the better.

At the five-star Le Toiny, on the quiet and secluded southeast side of the island, the villa-only property added eight new accommodations and a pool to the oceanfront beach club. Returning guests will still recognize the beautiful lobby perched on a cliff, with its infinity



pool overlooking the beach. Here, patrons sip cocktails and dine on artfully prepared local seafood. Land Rover Defenders shuttle guests down to the shore via a scenic dirt road, ending at one of the best surfing spots on the island.

Launched in 2016, Le Barthélemy Hotel & Spa on Baie de Grand Cul de Sac has reopened with more inventory, adding two expansive six-bedroom villas, ideal for families and larger groups. Suites are equipped with rainfall showers, private balconies, heated plunge pools and Hermès toiletries. Overlooking the sea, the Aux Amis restaurant specializes in dishes such as pig foot carpaccio





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### The Good Life



Clockwise from above: Villa Creole at the Manapany hotel; suite at Le Barthélemy Hotel & Spa; infinity pool at Le Toiny

MAIN PHOTO: MAX VANDERNOOT; RIGHT: LARENT BENOIT

with herbs, poached eggs *meurette*-style with bacon and mushrooms, veal cheek blanquette and rock lobster à l'américaine.

With its hippie-chic style (really the original essence of St. Barts), the Manapany has long been beloved for its colorful suites perched on a rocky hillside in Anse des Cayes. During Hurricane Irma, the hotel suffered big losses (including the pool being broken in half). In its new life, the oceanfront 43-room property has rebranded itself as an "eco-resort" featuring electric cars, all-natural cleaning products, bamboo towels and an on-site vegetable garden and orchard, which produces



### ESSENTIAL EVENTS

#### Carnival (March 5)

A festive Mardi Gras-style parade winds its way through Gustavia with lively music, floats and outrageous costumes. [sbhonline.com](http://sbhonline.com)

#### St. Barths Bucket Regatta (March 21-24)

Sailing enthusiasts gather for this three-day race of superyachts. [bucketregatta.com](http://bucketregatta.com)

#### St. Barth Film Festival (April 28-May 5)

International filmmakers screen their latest movies, discuss Caribbean cinema and network under the stars. [stbarthff.org](http://stbarthff.org)

#### St. Barth Gourmet Festival (November)

This four-day feast features Michelin-starred chefs from France cooking at hotspots throughout the island. [saintbarth-tourisme.com](http://saintbarth-tourisme.com)

ingredients served at the Manapany's restaurant.

St. Barts has long distinguished itself as a gourmet destination, and the dining scene is as vibrant as ever. Fish Corner, a new restaurant in Gustavia, is the power-lunch spot of 2019. Owner Johnny Laplace, whose family has fished these waters for generations, serves fresh seafood in a simple dining room. Another bistro that keeps the flavors bright is Maya's, a haven for hedge funders that debuted in 1984. On the menu are Caribbean-Creole dishes such as crab and avocado salad, cold pea soup, shrimp curry and orange cake.

The rosé-all-day scene at Nikki Beach offers sushi boats, jero-boams of Domaines Ott, and DJ sets by Philippe Paris and Bob Sinclair. Influencers also gather at Bagatelle, Shellona, Bonito and nightlife mainstay Le Ti St-Barth. Although the Eden Rock and Le Guanahani hotels still have not reopened—and won't until November—the St. Barts recovery is so comprehensive that the island looks picture-perfect once again, from the designer storefronts in Gustavia to the pristine beaches.

—JACQUELYNN POWERS MAURICE