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WORD OF MOUTH: ST BARTHS

OUR FAVORITE RITZY AND RELAXED
PLACES ON THE CARIBBEAN ISLAND

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The Collectivity of Saint-Barthélemy—better known as St Barths—is truly bouncing back two years after the devastation that Hurricane Irma inflicted on the Caribbean island. Many hotels that call this small island home didn't just rebuild; they regrouped and reimagined their properties, creating entirely new and luxurious experiences that are difficult to match. Yearly events like the [West Indies Regatta](#), [St Barth Film Festival](#) and culinary goldmine [St Barth Gourmet Festival](#) (which we attended) are already back up and running. But beyond all the luxury offerings, the island's most appealing quality is its natural restorative magic. Best known for opulence, St Barths offers enough relaxation and nonchalance to make a vacation there as rejuvenating as it is pampering. Here we have selected some of our favorite spots, from the luxe to the laidback.

[Cool Hunting](#)



Le Sereno Hotel

St Barths is home to no less than 10 five-star hotels, and each boasts its singular charms. [Le Sereno](#), situated on a corner of Grand Cul de Sac Beach, leaves guests wanting for nothing. Their suites are enormous and airy, with large sliding glass doors that open onto a private terrace that looks out over the glittering bay. Guests can walk a quarter-mile out into the turquoise water of Anse de Grand Cul de Sac (a protected marine park), barely hip-deep, spotting a half-dozen sea turtles along the way. The restaurant is helmed by chef Raffaele Lenzi, from Le Sereno's sister location on Lake Cuomo, where it earned a Michelin star within a year of opening.. Additionally, the pool is the only one on the island that does not offer day passes and in turn is an idyllic, quiet atmosphere.



Le Toiny / Beach Club and Jarad's

Like Le Sereno, [Le Toiny](#) excels in privacy. But where Le Sereno's seclusion is contained within the hotel's property, Le Toiny's is villa-based, meaning each of its 22 suites feature pools nestled in private palm-lined decks. Le Toiny offers two superlative amenities that will certainly lure guests from that private oasis, however. The first is its Beach Club, which is accessible down a long dirt road via rugged Land Rover Defender shuttles. (This car ride is essential, given Le Toiny is the largest hotel on the island, sitting on 42 acres of a reclusive peninsula.) This is the social heart of Le Toiny, with a second beachside pool, DJ, restaurant, bar, and plenty of daybeds and lounges. The second offering is chef Jarad McCarroll's eponymous restaurant. The South African was just named best chef in the Caribbean by [Gault et Millau](#), and any meal here will prove why. If his Snake River wagyu is on the menu—slow-cooked for five hours over wood flame—you'd be a fool to skip it.



Casa

At some point in every St Barths vacation, there comes a time to dance until the early hours. Late-night spot [Casa](#) is the closest the island gets to velvet ropes and bottle service, but the staff is polite and friendly and the vibe lacks big city snootiness. While the location is buzzing most nights, it's the weekends that are most action-packed. On a recent Saturday night, French house legend Bob Sinclair took his talents behind the turntables and transformed the place into an early 2000s nightclub. While many well-known DJs perform here, even on nondescript weekends, resident Siryll's sets inevitably lead to spilled gin drinks and dirty footprints on couches.



Rhum Room / Quarter

Not only our favorite rum bar on the island, [Rhum Room](#) might also be one of the finest curated rum specialists on the planet. Owner Chris Davis (who can be found manning the bar nightly) will guide guests through some golden delicacies: 35 Caroni rums from Velier, Saint James Rhum distilled in 1885, Santiago 500 from Cuba, and others. While most bars will only sell these collector bottles as a unit, Rhum Room has them available by the glass. The quiet wood-lined speakeasy is purposely hidden, making it all the more special. Knock on a side door of the [Quarter Kitchen and Cocktail Lab](#) (itself a fantastic Gustavia bar boasting a world-class whiskey collection) to gain entry. Once inside, guests can expect to discover gems from around the world, but Davis truly excels in his rum agricoles so prepare to settle in for a lesson—and perhaps a Cuban exquisito from the humidor.

After trying several superb rums, we suggest strolling two minutes to the oldest bar in St Barths: [Le Select](#). The perfect contrast to Rhum Room, it's a shaggy bar-and-grill that's beloved by visitors and locals alike. Soak up some of the spirits and order a cheeseburger. Cross your fingers to meet Le Select founder, nonagenarian and local legend Marius who might be leaning on his cane, undoubtedly smiling by the front door.



Cantina / Le Piment

For true island vibes, we suggest heading where the locals go: [Cantina](#) in Gustavia or [Le Piment](#) in St Jean. Many service industry professionals frequent these two spots after their hotel bars and restaurants close, so they really start simmering around midnight. Open-air, rambunctious and filled with multilingual chatter and cigarette smoke, both Cantina and Le Piment are as unpretentious as can be found on St Barths: it's French insouciance amplified by a Caribbean breeze.



Tamarin

Numerous restaurants on the island combine superb cuisine with spectacular ambience, but [Tamarin](#)'s locale is truly spectacular. The former bohemian hideaway has transformed into a gastronomic destination, and its plush garden setting—beautifully landscaped with illuminated palms, verdant ferns, lily-pod ponds and a centuries-old tamarin tree—welcome guests. Request one of the tables hidden in an outdoor nook, and it feels like you're dining in a jungle. The menu—overflowing with fresh, fragrant dishes like kale and wakamé seaweed salad; and yellow fin tuna and coconut milk ceviche dressed with cucumber, mint and pistachio—is well complemented by an incredibly extensive wine selection.



Le Ti

While nightlife abounds in St Barths, cabaret bar [Le Ti](#)—with its red velvet curtains, mirrors, gold leaf and wood-panels—feels like a fin de siècle den of iniquity. We suggest skipping dinner here and reserve a table afterward instead for optimal sightline to the stage, where talented dancers will entertain with numbers ranging from bawdy to flamboyant. If the ambience overtakes and you want to join in, a back room overflowing like a Hollywood costume studio offers everything from Batman costumes to DayGlo wigs, feather boas and latex masks. Le Ti (which was established in 1995) is open Tuesdays to Saturdays, but it's from 10PM on Saturdays that the fabulousness hits its rabid peak.

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