



# ESCAPES

## Dialed In Saint Barthélemy

CARL GUSTAF



### THE LUXURY-HOTEL SCENE

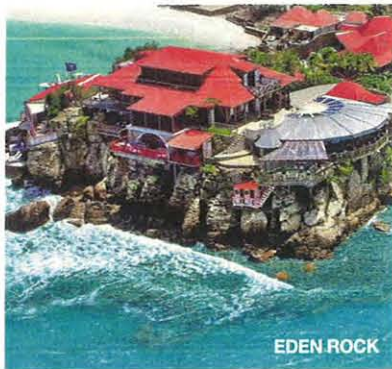
#### CARL GUSTAF

The finest room and sunset-cocktail views on the island, courtesy of the location, a steep hillside above Gustavia. Built for privacy: Most of the 14 units are freestanding one- or two-bedroom cottages. The downside: The hotel is going through a growing phase, with a new manager, and service was far from tack-sharp on a summer visit. Cottages farther down the hill are near a steep, gear-grinding main road out of Gustavia. Bonus: within walking distance of two great restaurants, L'Isola and Le Bonito. \$1,375–\$9,661. 866-297-2153, [hotelcarlgustaf.com](http://hotelcarlgustaf.com)

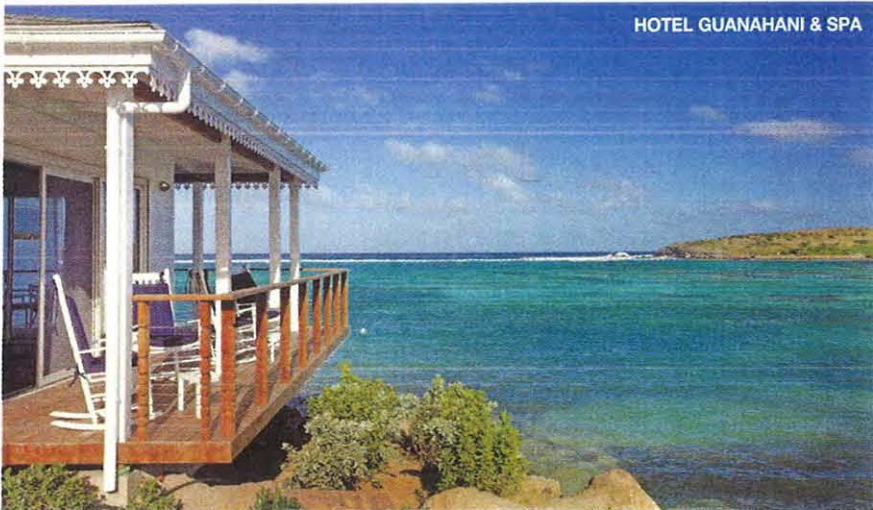
#### EDEN ROCK

The original nine rooms, built on an enormous rock in the water, are best for views and privacy. (My pick is the Reef, directly beneath the lobby.) The Howard Hughes Loft Suite, atop the main building, is the place to imitate its namesake. The beach rooms are conventional (avoid the doubles behind the restaurant), with the exception of the six-bedroom Villa Rock Star. Villa amenities include a Mini Cooper convertible, a Jeep, a

EDEN ROCK



HOTEL GUANAHANI & SPA



HOTEL LE TOINY

gym, a bathroom in white-gold tile, and a recording studio with a mixing console that John Lennon used to record *Imagine*. Since mid-October, the main restaurant has been under the direction of Jean-Georges Vongerichten. Local legend: The original hotelier bought the land for \$200 in 1950; the next day the seller called to say the price was too high and refunded \$100. \$960–\$2,937. 855-333-6762, [edenrockhotel.com](http://edenrockhotel.com)

#### HOTEL GUANAHANI & SPA

The island's only full-service resort with three restaurants, two lit tennis courts, a cool fitness center on the beach, a Clarins spa, a Frédéric Fekkai hair salon, multiple pools, including one that's 98 feet long, and a water-sports center. Despite its 68 rooms (14 with private pools), it feels cozy, with lollipop-colored bungalows spilling down a hill to the ocean. Just opened this year are two water's-edge, butler-serviced suites (Serenity and Admiral) with decor that deftly mates Saint-Tropez and Malibu. Garden-view rooms (291 square feet) are the lowest category, but ocean-view (430 square feet) seems the place to start, with a choice between the property's upper elevations (good view) and lower (expansive deck). \$893–\$8,874. 800-216-3774, [leguanahani.com](http://leguanahani.com)

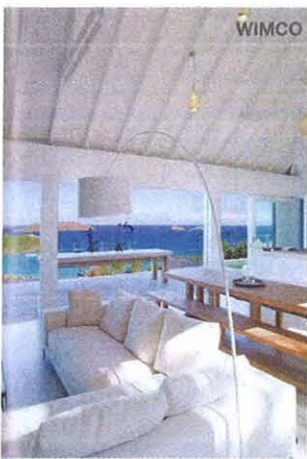
#### HOTEL LE TOINY

Perched high on the secluded southwest side of the island. Ultraprivate and superb ocean vistas and 720-plus-square-foot rooms, all with plunge pools and terraces. Very chic French colonial decor—mahogany leavened by white and blue. Le Gaiac is the island's top gourmet restaurant; on the Riviera, chef Stéphane Mazières would probably have two Michelin stars. Not being beachside is no drawback here. \$1,769–\$4,575. 800-680-0832, [letoiny.com](http://letoiny.com)

PHOTOGRAPHS: THIS PAGE: DANNE VAN DER WAL; EDEN ROCK: LAURENT BENOIT (GUANAHANI) OPPOSITE



ISLE DE FRANCE



WIMCO

**HOTEL SAINT-BARTH ISLE DE FRANCE**

A soigné 39-room hotel with a beach-club atmosphere fronting Flamands, one of the island's best strands. Main house rooms and beach suites and villas (newest, largest, luxest) are on the ocean; garden rooms across the road are perfect for families. Crisp, clean decor (whites, neutrals, blues) throughout. The pick for couples: a top-floor front beach room in the main house or second-story beach suite. The excellent restaurant is quite romantic at night. Curious fact: Hotel owner Charles Vere Nicoll is the island's Anglican minister. \$960-\$10,989. 800-810-4691, [isle-de-france.com](http://isle-de-france.com)

**THE VILLA OPTION**

Courtesy of the French tax code, there is an outsize inventory (hundreds) of camera-ready rental villas on St. Barth's. Wimco handles 230 of the best, and the company has invested heavily in becoming a concierge for its clients, from airport pickup (the rental car is already at the villa) and a housekeeper to providing other personnel such as a chef or yoga instructor. 800-449-1553, [wimco.com](http://wimco.com)

**DINING: THE FOURTOPS**

**L'ISOLA**

Sophisticated Italian flawlessly served in a gorgeous high-ceilinged room illuminated by pools of golden candlelight at dinner. You're not in the Caribbean anymore—more like Capri or Amalfi, and that's just fine. [lisolastbarth.com](http://lisolastbarth.com)



LE BONITO

**LE BONITO**

A cottage exterior conceals a suave lounge of white couches and a curved, open-air dining room looking down on Gustavia. Seviche and *tiradito* are the forte of chef Laurent Cantineaux. Scallops are perfect—meaty and done to a turn—and the wahoo with bok choy and shiitakes is a "wow." [ilovebonito.com](http://ilovebonito.com)

**MAYA'S**

An open-air pavilion near the cargo docks just outside Gustavia but an insider and celebrity favorite for the superb fish. The tuna sashimi was tissue paper thin and the grilled salmon done perfectly rare. [mayas-sbh.com](http://mayas-sbh.com)

**LE LANGOUSTE**

In the Baie des Anges hotel. Superb grilled lobster and fish deftly combined with tropical fruits and citrus. [hotel-baie-des-anges.com](http://hotel-baie-des-anges.com)

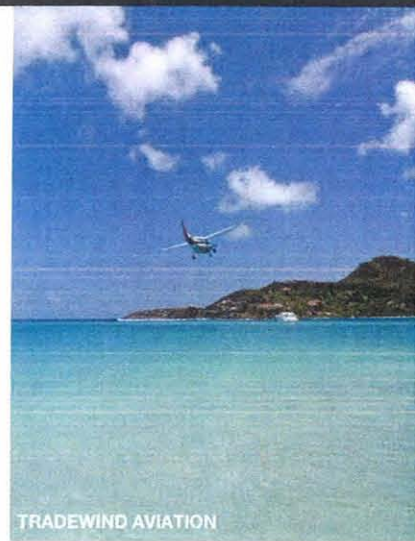
**BEACH LIFE**

Colombier is famously topless. But the best spot would be a toss-up between Gouverneur and Les Salines, both tucked between muscular headlands that yield benevolent swells of aqua. Footnote: That \$88 million estate on Gouverneur Beach belongs to Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich.

**LOGISTICS**

**GETTING THERE** Connect in St. Maarten for WinAir or St. Barth Commuter. Schedules can be, shall we say, casual. The flight takes 10 to 15 minutes. The ferry (75 minutes) requires a strong stomach, even in good weather.

**GETTING THERE MADE EASY** Tradewind Aviation flies eight-seat jet-turboprops from San Juan (90 minutes) and St. Thomas (60 minutes). "We do away with the St. Maarten experience," says vice president David Zara, referring to the customs/luggage retrieval/check-in process there. \$395-\$595 one way, from late October until early May. [tradewindaviation.com](http://tradewindaviation.com) —GARY WALTHER



TRADEWIND AVIATION



MAYA'S