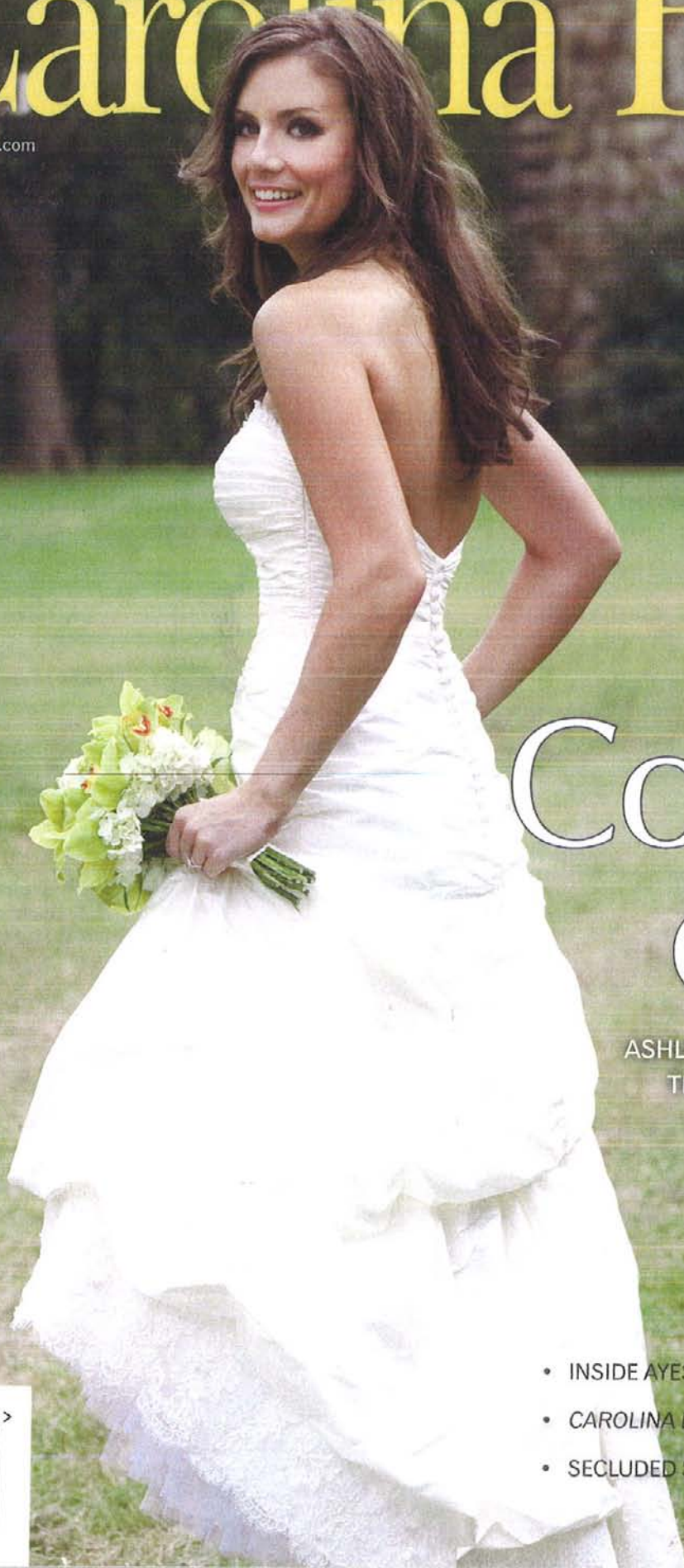


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## Country chic

ASHLEY AND ROBERT SHOW OFF  
THAT SOUTHERN CHARM

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*Plus:*

- INSIDE AYESHA & STEPHEN CURRY'S WEDDING
- CAROLINA BRIDE GOES TO THE HIGH COUNTRY
- SECLUDED ST. BARTH HONEYMOONS



An aerial photograph of the French island of Saint Barthélemy. The image shows a rugged coastline with a mix of dark blue and turquoise water. Several buildings with red and green roofs are scattered across a green, hilly area. The sky is a deep, dark blue with some light clouds. The overall scene is scenic and idyllic.

# Chic, French Saint Barthélemy

Très magnifique for Caribbean honeymoons

By Kathy M. Newbern and J.S. Fletcher

## Honeymoon

Locals call the French West Indies island of Saint Barthélemy 'St. Barth,' also spelled St. Bart. No matter how you spell it, it equals splendid beaches, fantastic cuisine and plenty of pampered luxury.

After David Rockefeller bought a property here in 1957, the little island of eight square miles quickly grew into an upscale destination. Howard Hughes, Humphrey Bogart and many Hollywood elite had retreats here.

The island is still a jet-setter's casual getaway, attracting celebs and the well-heeled with private villas and small hotels, welcoming about 200,000 visitors a year, both French and international. All must arrive by small plane, and the landing — a quick dive past a peak to a short, seafront runway — is exhilarating (some say scary).

You won't find high-rises on St. Barth, which is fitting since there are only about 8,400 year-round residents, so expect boutique properties. Size doesn't diminish service, though: There are seven five-star hotels.

Here's a look at three distinctly different honeymoon hideouts and a few must-sees-and-do's. Don't forget your bikini — it's French, too, you know.

### Carl Gustaf, a regal perch

From its cliff-side perch, Hotel Carl Gustaf has a panoramic view of the yacht-filled harbor of the island's main town and capital, Gustavia, named for King Gustav III of Sweden. The adjacent hillside is home to historic Fort Gustav.

"Wow" is the one-word descriptor for the suites, with private plunge pools and gorgeous views. Equally impressive is the property's hub — one open space divided into reception, bar and dining. Here, man-about-island bartender Jacky Bertrand will pour you a vintage Champagne as well as offer an impromptu course on rums (none made on the island, but plentiful nevertheless).

Time your aperitif for sunset, as Gustaf's bar is a primo spot for viewing. Then try the Victoria's Restaurant "mystery dinner," also called a "blind menu" because the chef surprises you with courses of his choosing, which can be paired with optional course-by-course wines by the glass.

Even before dinner, an unusual treat arrives: thin slivers from a carving station just in front of the hotel's open kitchen. It's "pata negra," an expensive Spanish ham delicacy almost buttery in taste.

After cocooning in the room's luxury linens,

KATHY M. HEWENING/ISTOCK

## Honeymoon

venture to Shell Beach (first walking Gustaf's stairs — remember it's cliff-side) for swimming, sunning, snorkeling and eating or drinking at Dô Brazil's tables in the sand. A honeymoon keepsake, beach glass, can be found at waves' edge.

Back at the hotel, the two-level Boutique Spa featuring Carita, Declor and Valmont products awaits, as does a fitness center and adjacent hydro-zone area with huge whirlpool bath, essential oils shower, jetted foot bath with pebble floor, and an ice fountain.

Gustaf's accommodations include 13 one- and two-bedroom suites, one junior spa suite, the two-level penthouse Royal Suite (where the Black Eyed Peas have stayed) and Villa Golden Reef, a stand-alone, seven-bedroom villa — perhaps for your 30th anniversary with all the kids and grandkids.

**Contact:** 866-297-2153 or [www.hotelcargustaf.com](http://www.hotelcargustaf.com), or email [reservation@hotelcargustaf.com](mailto:reservation@hotelcargustaf.com).

### Le Toiny for romantic seclusion

One hotel manager says of Hôtel Le Toiny, "It's lost. Great, with an amazing view, and really isolated."

We're not the first to equate seclusion to romance. In fact, each Le Toiny villa has its own gated entrance with a red mailbox flag serving as a "privacy please" sign. Perfect for honeymooners.

A Relais & Chateaux member property, Le Toiny is situated on 38 acres on the island's southeastern side overlooking Anse de Toiny. There are only 15 exclusive, pastel-colored villa suites, all with fantastic ocean views and private pools.

Le Toiny is also known as the address for gastronomy because of award-winning Restaurant Le Gaïac, currently under the guidance of a Relais & Chateaux Grand Chef.

The hotel "living room," behind reception, houses Le Gaïac and its open-air terrace that overlooks the infinity pool and sea. To one side, La Case Bar encompasses two bungalows with one wall completely open. The all-white upholstered furnishings invite guests to come, relax, catch the breeze.

Our roomy cottage features a small, functional kitchen and a large living room with French Colonial décor, hardwood floor, sisal rug and comfy furniture accented with bright Caribbean-colored striped cushions.

The oversized bath sits off the elegant bedroom with romantic, four-poster canopy bed and Frette linens. The piece-de-resistance, however, is the private pool and stone patio terrace surrounded by



HÔTEL LE TOINY



HÔTEL LE TOINY



HOTEL CHRISTOPHER



A room at Hotel Christopher.

HOTEL CHRISTOPHER

lush, tropical foliage with an ocean view.

There's one junior suite, 13 one-bedroom villa suites, and La Villa, a one- to three-bedroom master house that includes two bungalows. La Villa is the largest suite, at 1,200 total square feet, and occupies the most private portion of the property.

Each stand-alone villa is designed to operate as a well-run home, and Le Toiny's site remains preserved with natural vegetation, including cacti and St. Barth's rare Gaïac trees (from which the restaurant takes its name).

Though the Serenity Spa Cottage is small, the treatments and products are rave-worthy. The Ligne St. Barth spa products are all-natural and made on the island, making perfect take-home gifts for your bridesmaids.

**Contact:** 800-680-0832 or [www.letoiny.com](http://www.letoiny.com), or email [reservations@letoiny.com](mailto:reservations@letoiny.com).



A dining room of the Villa Golden Reef at Hotel Carl Gustaf.

HOTEL CARL GUSTAF

## Oh Christopher, oh what a pool

The manager at Hotel Christopher, located at Pointe Milou, calls it a "lifestyle hotel" that approaches its mission with "integrity, honesty, enthusiasm." The staff lives up to the promise.

Built into the hillside as four, two-story buildings on terraces, Hotel Christopher's steps lead down to a rocky shoreline and the Atlantic — yes, hills equal super views.

Its 42 rooms and suites, all renovated in 2009, have different styles but share very hip décor. Each has either a private terrace or balcony, but the focal point is a knockout infinity pool beside the ocean.

Our second-floor, one-bedroom ocean suite boasts 942 square feet with a spacious living room, plus a bedroom that also has a full sofa. The high ceilings accentuate the space that easily accommodates the stark, black tubular framework bed.

This décor, done in wide swaths of black, white and natural wood, is all about openness and leanness — think Scandinavian. The bathroom seems built for newlyweds with a stone, free-standing, two-person tub and separate rain shower. A unique trough-like sink runs along one wall.

Hotel Christopher has two dining options; Taino and Mango bookend the pool. Mango is feet-in-the-sand casual, great for lunch or sunset snacks and drinks. You'll love bartender Jackson. The Taino Restaurant is located just off the "living room" space of the resort, a covered area sporting a small library and sitting room. Dining can be inside or out, with sea or pool views that are quite romantic at night.

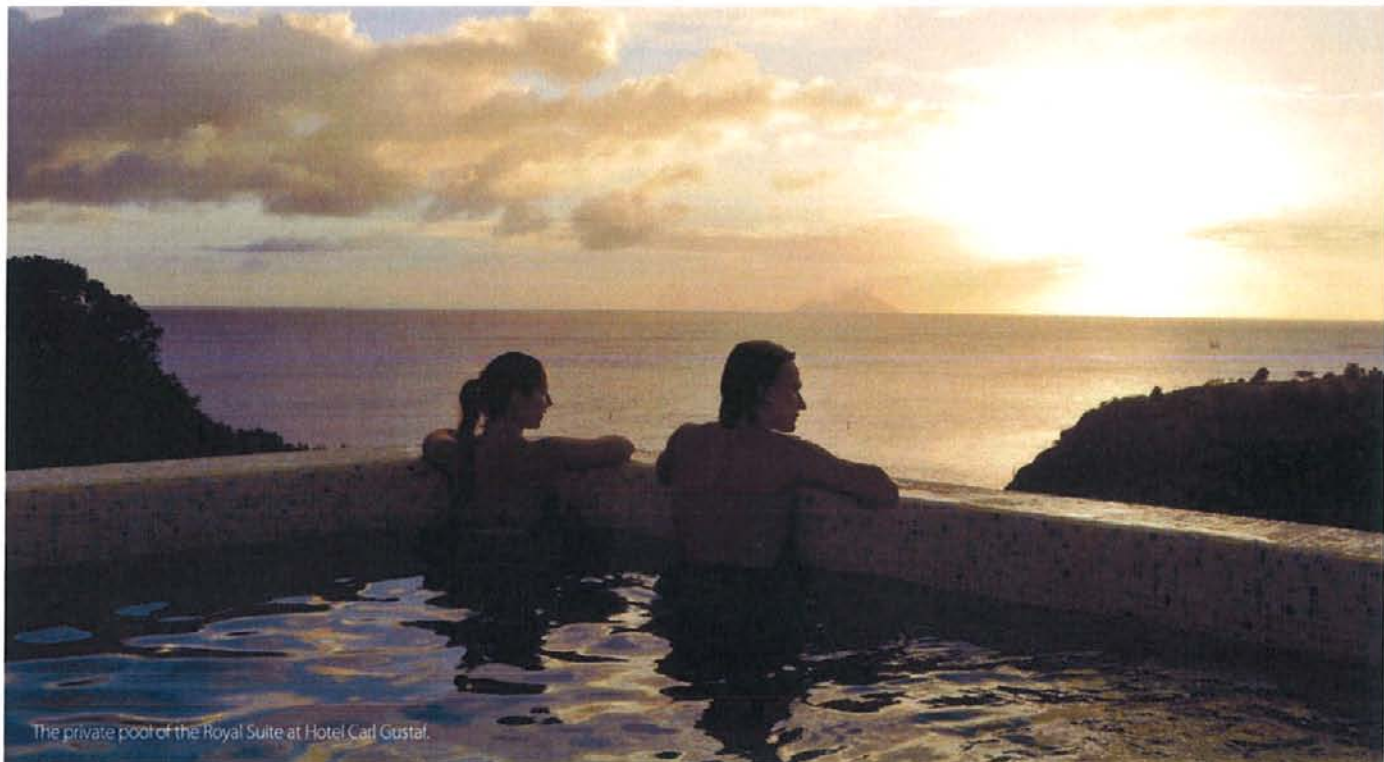
To dine off-property requires a taxi, and if staying more than a few days, consider a rental car.



A bedroom suite at Hotel Carl Gustaf.

HOTEL CARL GUSTAF

## Honeymoon



The private pool of the Royal Suite at Hotel Carl Gustaf.

HOTEL CARL GUSTAF

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Guests at Christopher spend lots of time lazing in that luxurious, fashionable pool. Wood decking surrounds it and holds comfortable, cushioned loungers, large, fun, bean-bag-like chairs and well-placed beach umbrellas. There are two levels of the pool, one main area and an upper, shallow level more for children or those who simply want to sit and talk. Note: this property does offer day passes to sample the pool, spa and dining, so you can expect some "Marco Polo" moments.

The concierge staff will be happy to arrange spa, tennis, volleyball, horseback riding, hiking on several hiking paths, SCUBA diving or snorkeling, windsurfing, fishing, surfing, water skiing and more.

**Contact:** 800-550-1769 or [www.hotelchristopher.com](http://www.hotelchristopher.com), or email [roomsdivision@hotelchristopher.com](mailto:roomsdivision@hotelchristopher.com). The hotel requires a minimum three-night stay.

### If you're going:

St. Barthélemy lies about 150 miles east of San Juan, Puerto Rico. Flights by small plane, like St. Barth Commuter and Winair, arrive from St. Martin, Anguilla or San Juan. The island is also accessible by 45- to 90-minute ferry from St. Martin.

Picture-perfect beaches include Grand Fond, Flamands, Gouverneur, Lorient, Saline (named for the nearby salt flats) and St. Jean. Warm Caribbean temperatures vary just slightly from 86 degrees in the summer, (July/August highs of 90 degrees) to just 80 degrees in the winter. Summer ocean temperatures can reach as high as 84 degrees.

For more information, visit [www.saintbarth-tourisme.com](http://www.saintbarth-tourisme.com). If you need a tour guide, consider Claude Questel; email him at [Claude.taxi10@hotmail.fr](mailto:Claude.taxi10@hotmail.fr). A rental car is recommended. **CB**