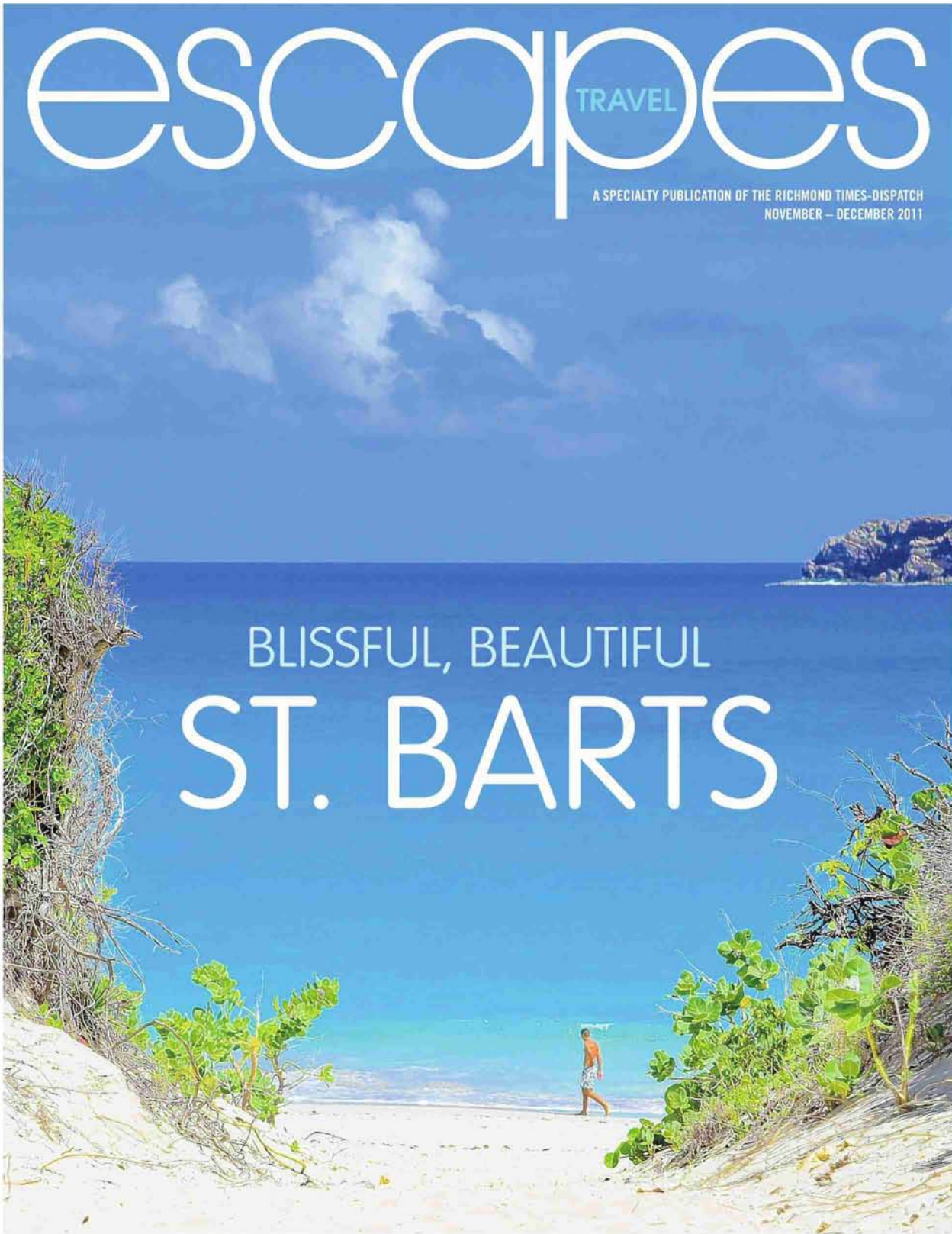


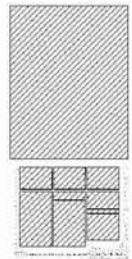
# escapes

TRAVEL

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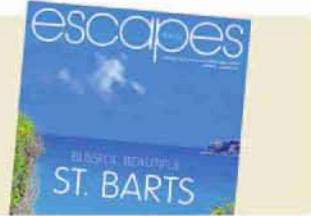


## BLISSFUL, BEAUTIFUL ST. BARTS



**INSIDE TODAY**

## A taste of France in the Caribbean



**BY SUSAN CARVELL**  
 Escapes Writer

Whether your vacation dreams include a glamorous, star-studded getaway or you're in search of an idyllic, secluded hideaway, St. Barts can make your dreams come true. One of the most beautiful spots in the Caribbean, this French-accented isle welcomes celebrity travelers attempting to evade the paparazzi as well as everyday vacationers looking to escape their 9-to-5 routine. So whether you're longing for the glamorous life or searching for a touch of serenity, St. Barts offers the best of both worlds.

Discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1493 and named for his brother, Bartolomeo, the island of Saint Barthelemy was settled by the French during the 17th century. After being sold to Sweden in 1784, St. Barts' largest town was renamed Gustavia after King Gustav III, and the island flourished as a trading center during the 18th century. France repurchased St. Barts in 1878, although the island retained its many Swedish street and place names.

Arriving in St. Barts by air is not for the fainthearted—with one of the world's most challenging airports, pilots must have special training to land on the tiny airstrip, which

ends abruptly at St. Jean beach. Planes don't land at night (so don't miss the final flight from St. Maarten or you'll have to book passage on the ferry or charter a boat).

With serene white sand beaches and crystalline azure waters, St. Barts is a sun-worshippers' paradise. (Be sure to pack plenty of sunscreen, as topless sunbathing is permitted on all the beaches.) And, while all of the island's 20 beaches are free and accessible to the public, they are remarkably uncrowded, even during peak vacation times.

Accommodation prices on St. Barts range from reasonable to ultra-expensive. If you book your stay during the high season—mid-December through mid-April—costs will be correspondingly high. And prices during the holiday season, mid-December through early January, can reach dizzying heights. However, off-season spring and summer prices can be surprisingly affordable.

If you don't want to break your budget, the Normandie Hotel offers top-drawer amenities at affordable prices. Just steps away from lush Lorient beach, the charming inn offers complimentary pool-side breakfasts and afternoon wine tastings. The art deco inspired décor is a tribute to the legendary luxury liner the S. S. Normandie. Double



room rates at the eight-bedroom hideaway begin around \$250 during the winter high

season. [normandiehotelstbarts.com](http://normandiehotelstbarts.com)

If money is no object, make your reservations at the luxe five-star Hotel Le Toiny, where 15 villa suites are nestled on a secluded cliffside beach overlooking the tranquil Bay of Toiny and the Caribbean. Guests enjoy spectacular views from private balconies as well as elegant décor, private swimming pools, pampering treatments at the Serenity Spa and French cuisine at the open-air terrace Restaurant Le Gaiac. Suite rates begin at around \$1,800 during the high season. [letoiny.com](http://letoiny.com)