



Free Access View

You've been granted free access to this Houston Chronicle article.

Subscribe today for full access to the Houston Chronicle in print, online and on your iPad.

SUBSCRIBE

DESTINATIONS

Languorous luxury in Anguilla

By **Shayne Benowitz, Miami Herald** | March 20, 2015



0



Photo: Shayne Benowitz, HO



IMAGE 1 OF 9

The Viceroy Anguilla, positioned on a cliff overlooking Barnes Bay. (Shayne Benowitz/TNS)

There's a Spanish proverb that goes, "How wonderful to do nothing, and then rest." It's found printed on T-shirts at Ernie's Bar, a humble beach shack on Anguilla's Shoal Bay, a stretch of powder white sand and endless turquoise-teal water, once named the No. 1 beach in the world by Travel Channel. It's a sentiment that's easy to settle into on this Caribbean island of 35 square miles with a population of 15,000. A British territory and northernmost of the Leeward Islands, Anguilla's a mere three-hour flight from Miami and then 20-minute ferry from St. Martin/St. Maarten.

Anguilla's long been a sanctuary for celebrities in search of under the radar retreats (it's where Brad and Jen had their infamous breakup walk on the beach) and mere mortals desperate for rest and relaxation in style. Unblemished by cruise ships, the island's slight removal from the beaten path makes just the difference.

Days are spent simply gazing into the horizon while lounging by an infinity pool perched precariously atop a craggy cliff

overlooking the sea, a surprisingly tiring exercise. But one happily succumbs to the languorous pace that seems finely attuned to the gravitational pull of the moon's tides and the sunset. The big questions of the day are: Beach or pool? Rose or rum punch? Kindle or hardback? Lunch on my lounge chair or at the poolside cafe?

With luxurious resorts veering towards the sublime, where you stay in Anguilla makes all the



difference. These four hotels are leading the pack with aesthetically unique offerings for discerning travelers of varying tastes.

Malliouhana: Tropical Eclectic

Malliouhana, Anguilla's original luxury resort, which opened in 1984, re-emerged in November 2014 after a three-year closure and 18-month restoration by Auberge Resorts. The result is a dazzlingly transporting 55-room boutique hotel positioned on 25 acres of beachfront bluff. Upon arrival, the hotel's white box facade with high-arched entryways and chic striped awnings feels more Beverly Hills than Caribbean - that is, until you see the ocean shimmering through the tiered, open air lobby.

Inside, your senses are delighted with a wall adorned floor to ceiling with vintage dive helmets. A mirrored mosaic floor reflects celadon walls and Caribbean curio, while the adjacent Sunset Lounge features paintings by Haitian artist Jasmin Joseph depicting the Garden of Eden. Outside, tiered infinity pools are adorned with yellow ruffled umbrellas. And once you've pulled up a cushioned chair at the cliffside restaurant overlooking Bobbing Cove Beach, you're firmly situated inside an F. Scott Fitzgerald novel on the Cote d'Azur.

The hotel is nothing short of spectacular,

MORE INFORMATION

Where to eat and drink

Blanchards: Situated in a cozy cottage on Meads Bay beneath a pink facade and teal shutters, Blanchards is run by an American ex-pat couple and has been a go-to spot for fresh Caribbean fare and warm hospitality for 20 years. Start with the Caribbean sampler and feast on fresh grilled mahi mahi, jerk chicken and crayfish (similar to lobster and equally abundant on the island and its menus).

CuisinArt Resort: For the inquisitive foodie, arrange a tour of CuisinArt's hydroponic farm where they grow 44 varieties of lettuce, tomatoes and herbs in a greenhouse through water recirculation and drip irrigation, allowing for farm fresh crops year round. Afterward, have lunch made of the farm's fresh ingredients poolside at Cafe Med.

Sandy Island: Charter a boat with Shoal Bay Scuba or take the sea shuttle Happiness (\$10 per person round trip) from Sandy Ground Beach two miles offshore to the remote, pink sand beaches of Sandy Island. Spend the day snorkeling, frolicking in the shallow water and refueling with a Caribbean BBQ party. Menu highlights include fresh grilled lobster with coconut and ginger and rum punch.

Bankie Banx's Dune Preserve: Legendary Anguillian reggae artist Bankie Banx has his own delightfully ramshackle beach bar on Rendezvous Bay where he performs live weekly. The governor of Anguilla is a big fan and often can be found at a private table enjoying his music.

Hungry's Food Van: Check out Anguilla's thriving food truck scene at Hungry's. Owned by a former executive chef at Cap Juluca, the van dishes up fresh quesadillas stuffed with rice, peas and carrots and your choice of filling (the lobster is superb), as well as soups and salads.

Ken's BBQ (no website): Ken's BBQ is a roadside

and this extends to the cuisine helmed by Executive Chef Jeremy Bearman, formerly of New York City's five-time Michelin-starred restaurant Rouge Tomate. Think elevated Caribbean fare and a farm-to-table sensibility with entrees such as lobster and conch pizza, tamarind-glazed duck with cornbread and coconut butter and, for dessert, light-as-air, house-made coconut yogurt served with tropical fruit.

Information:

malliouhana.aubergeresorts.com; 877-733-3611; Rates from \$1,042 per night

Viceroy: The Modernist

The Viceroy is a true stunner from the moment you set foot inside the lobby. All right angles in a pastiche of naturalgray-and sand-toned marble, it opens up to the dramatic Sunset Lounge set atop a cliff, framing a panoramic vista of Meads and Barnes bays. An adjacent infinity pool - the first of three pools on the resort - is nearby, lined in black pebble for effect. The architectural concept by Wimberly Allison Tong & Goo is modern minimalism rising from the organic landscape, serving to highlight its natural beauty.

Purveyor of style Kelly Wearstler designed the hotel's interiors with surreal objets d'art such as petrified wood tables, chairs carved of natural wood with larger-than-life Renaissance-style profiles sculpted into the backs and, at Aleta restaurant, gilded fish lining the walls.

The 35-acre resort, built in 2009, houses 166 serene accommodations with private villas, townhomes and suites with up to three bedrooms. The rooms, bathrooms and sun decks are extra large in Italian travertine marble with private outdoor soaking pools. From sushi at Sunset Lounge to fine dining and a lavish buffet breakfast at Coba, there are five bars and

food stand in the Valley loved by locals across the island, serving barbecue pork ribs and chicken made from livestock raised on his own farm. Hours vary, consult your concierge.

The Pumphouse: Serving elevated Caribbean cuisine in a funky setting by the old salt ponds in Sandy Ground, come to the Pumphouse for dinner and stay for live music nightly.

Tasty's: For a true taste of what the locals eat, head to Tasty's for conch creole with coconut dumplings, curried goat stew, grilled crayfish, pumpkin soup and johnny cakes.

Getting There

Nonstop flights from Miami to St. Martin on American Airlines, three hours long, from \$640 round trip. Fly into St. Martin and arrange a 20-minute ferry charter to Anguilla at the adjacent terminal with companies such as Calypso Charters (\$65-\$85 per adult one way). Another option is to take a taxi 10 minutes to St. Martin's Marigot ferry terminal to catch the public ferry for \$15 per adult. Charter flights also are available. Departure taxes and fees apply.

restaurants in all, making never leaving the resort tempting, and true relaxation all the more achievable.

Information: viceroyhotelsandresorts.com/en/anguilla; 800-578-0283; Rates from \$800 per night

Ce Blue: Secluded Serenity

For those in search of the privacy of a condo with the services of a boutique resort, Ce Blue is the answer. Just a year old, situated high in the lush green hills of Crocus Bay, Ce Blue offers eight two-story private villas of up to five oceanfront bedrooms with vaulted ceilings and a softly modern, organic design scheme. Each room is complete with a stunning en suite master bath featuring an open shower and egg-shaped soaking tub, some with impressive views of the bay, especially at sunset.

Ideal for a group of friends or a family reunion, each 8,000-square-foot villa boasts a 5,000-square-foot wooden deck with pool and outdoor shower and dizzyingly sweeping views of the sea. Accommodations come standard with gourmet kitchen and dining room, an outdoor barbecue, washer/dryer and living room with entertainment center.

Ce Blue has an onsite restaurant and bar popular with locals that specializes in gourmet pizza, as well as room service and the option to arrange for an in-villa private chef. While there's no direct beach access, a short walk down a steep road leads to Crocus Bay beach with watersports and two more restaurants where you can charge meals to your room.

Information: ceblueanguilla.com; 800-304-1484; Rates from \$2,400-\$3,600 per night (based on four-night minimum stay)

Cap Juluca: Moorish Marvel

Cap Juluca, the grand dame of Anguilla's resorts, opened in 1988 and is situated on 179 acres of Maundays Bay, an intimate, white-sand crescent with impossibly pale blue water. Its design is inspired by Greco-Moorish architecture, which can feel more novelty than luxury, yet there's something decidedly romantic about the place. Its 15 white stucco villas with domed

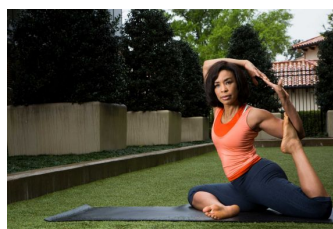
roofs, terracotta tile floors and arched doorways contain 70 guestrooms.

The brand new 3,290-square-foot, two-bedroom Jonquil Suite is a habitation that begs to be luxuriated in. With ample living space, courtyards, a full kitchen and bathrooms with indoor/outdoor showers and soaking tubs, the suite also boasts an ocean-facing front yard with direct beach access, private infinity pool and Jacuzzi. You'll feel like you've stepped into your home away from home in Anguilla, ready to entertain. While the Jonquil Suite is impressive, the resort's standard rooms and suites aren't quite at the same level of modern luxury, even after a recent multimillion dollar update.

With four dining venues, Pimms is the resort's high-end restaurant featuring a fusion of Caribbean and European flavors with pristine views of Maundays Bay. The adjacent Spice Moroccan Lounge is newly opened in a plush, exotic setting. It's the perfect place to muster up some energy for a drink with live music after a day at the beach, and then of course, rest and do nothing.

Information: capjuluca.com; 888-858-5822; Rates from \$1,397 per night

LIFESTYLE



Yoga helps anchorwoman Gina Gaston stay focused with busy

Turn a toothbrush into a scrubbing machine

Birthdays: March 23

Looking back: March 23

Man stays on the sidelines when family talks sports
