

CHIC ESCAPES

A WEEK IN ST. BARTH



One week in St. Barth is not nearly long enough. This is the island that makes you fantasize about leaving everything behind and starting a new life. Whether you plan to stay for a few days, a week, a month, or longer, you'll dream about making this Caribbean destination your second home. SHOP BAZAAR Editor Minna Shim shares a slice of her island life experience, plus exactly what to pack.

WHERE TO STAY

LE BARTHÉLEMY HOTEL & SPA

The epitome of tranquility—touches of blue that emulate the calming ocean can be found throughout the property, so you feel at-one with the sea, promising instant relaxation. With the only Michelin-starred chef on the island, lively rooftop programs, countless watersport activities offered, a complimentary Kids Club, and an option to have chilled champagne delivered with a press of a button on the in-room phones, this will feel like your own little luxurious paradise.



HIGHLIGHTS

-White sand beaches, glorious views, delicious food—the list of what makes St. Barth a top destination is endless, but the main appeal is that there is a unique accommodation for every type of traveler. No property is alike, making each resort a world of its own with its distinct personality. The best way to experience all that St. Barth has to offer is to go on a “hotel hop”, if you will, where you break up your stay amongst multiple hotels and jump from one restaurant and activity to the next. **EDITOR’S NOTE:** Book a stay during the low season (April to early November) for the best prices, easy reservations, and less crowds.

-For those that want to enjoy the quintessential island life, Les Ilets de la Plage will make you feel at home and allow you to imagine what living on St. Barth could be like. Less than a five-minute drive from the airport, these rustic yet charming villas provide maximum solitude. The open terrace overlooking the ocean has a built-in kitchen so you can start your day with a leisurely home-cooked breakfast. The pool is shared amongst the guests but will never feel crowded. There’s also a private beach with stairs that lead directly into the cool water. When you walk along the lush grounds, you’ll see tortoises roaming freely, as well as a plethora of lizard friends and a few well-behaved cats. Perfect for couples (reminds me of the scene in *The Thomas Crown Affair* where Pierce Brosnan’s character whisked Rene Russo’s character off to the private island residence for a romantic getaway), and families for a lived-in experience, these villas are a truly unique find on the island. **EDITOR’S NOTE:** My 15-minute float at Les Ilets de la Plage’s pool was the most relaxed I felt during my entire St. Barth trip.

-If you’re looking for a more energetic and animated stay, the new beach houses at Gyp Sea will meet and exceed your expectations. Located in the iconic St. Jean district and with playful names like “Wild Banana,” “Bohemian Blue,” and “Coco Mango,” these beachfront cottages will make your mouth drop upon entering. You’ll be enthralled by the thematic decor that’s both sophisticated and quirky.

Every tabletop and corner of the cottages are thoughtfully designed and accented, so you'll be immersed in tropical chicness and be persuaded to stay indoors more often than nought. There is of course a private pool (you may have esteemed iguana guests drop by) with direct access to the beach, and you'll be just steps away from the beach club where you can enjoy lunch barefoot and go straight from dining to jet-skiing if you wish.

-Even the locals agree, for absolute luxury and the most-talked about pool on St. Barth that has unobstructed views of the ocean and neighboring islands, the Christopher deserves a place in your "hotel hop." The hotel's contemporary design is minimal and elegant, but still imbued with earthy elements, like palm-tree lined pathways and organic wood shaped furniture. You can sit under the shaded canopy tables at the Riviera restaurant while sipping on freshly cracked coconut, then enjoy an afternoon at the award-winning Sisley Spa where you can receive facials and massages next to the turquoise waters. **EDITOR'S NOTE:** Do not decline the welcome drink (the homemade iced tea) upon arrival; it's fruity, refreshing, and addicting—you'll be craving it when you're back home.



WHERE TO EAT

BEEFBAR

While your first thought may be to search for seafood in St. Barth, the newly opened Beefbar located in the Hotel Barriere Le Carl Gustaf offers a memorable experience that will tempt you to try all its global locations. From the emoji plates and sunset views to the mouthwatering dishes, everything is a conversation starter. And yes, there are lovely seafood options available on the menu.



HIGHLIGHTS

-During peak season, reservations for most hotel restaurants must be booked several months in advance, especially at the iconic Eden Rock. Recognized as the first hotel to be established in St. Barth, this is where you stay and dine at when you want to see and be seen. At the Remy Bar & Salon, the caviar-egg yolk amuse-bouche melts in your mouth, oysters are flown in daily from Brittany, France, and the crepe Suzette is flambéed tableside. Order the espresso martini, you'll get a kick out of the glass it's served in. Every inch of the hotel is so pristinely maintained, you'll question that it's celebrating its 70th anniversary. In the daytime, Eden Rock is a dream and at night, with the glowing lights and pink sunsets, it's magical. Their signature red color punctuates the rooms, custom gym equipment, Dyson hair tools, and the hotel even has a personalized red nail polish available for purchase so you can take a little piece of Eden Rock home if so desired.

-Manapany, the 5-star eco-resort pays homage to St. Barth with a tropical modernity and is the only hotel that has obtained the Green Key label, a certification that requires specific conservation and sustainability practices to be followed. The rooms feature handcrafted pieces from local artisans, while the restaurant utilizes vegetables, fruits, and aromatics from the hotel's garden. The seafood plates were a popular choice, but I opted for the cheeseburger and fries, and it was exactly what I needed. Munching on a cheeseburger and fries as you take in the ocean views and enjoy the sea breeze is indescribably satisfactory.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Day passes are available for those that wish to partake in a spa service and lunch on the premises. The perfect way to "hotel hop."

-If you want an extra memorable final dinner, Bonito comes highly recommended by everyone. Overlooking the ocean where you can see yachts coming and going, the famous, red-roofed homes, and hypnotic skies, this is the restaurant that will remain forever stamped in your memories. As one of the most well-known fine dining institutions on St. Barth, expect an explosion of flavors. The ceviche was simply delicious, the tuna tacos were scrumptious, and the desserts—an experience in their own right.

-While the hotels have incredible restaurants and various eateries that will never disappoint, you can also head to Gustavia for what locals and residents consistently deem as their go-to favorites:

Le Cafe, for live jazz and a good time

Le Select, for Jimmy Buffett's famous "Cheeseburger in Paradise"

Fish Corner, for unexpected seafood dishes

Le Tamarin, for great vegetarian options

Ti'Corail, for causal comfort food that hits the spot

-EDITOR'S NOTE: Excellent food is a must when on vacation and St. Barth is a culinary treasure with the freshest seafood and innovative dishes and drinks available all day and night. Held in November, the annual Gourmet Festival is a gastronomical celebration with renowned chefs from all over the world sharing their passion. Guests are able to taste exclusive prix fixe menus for a limited time at various hotels on island. The inaugural Creole Festival that will debut later in the fall is also very much anticipated for its lineup of amazing cuisine and cultural programs.



WHAT TO DO

CORAL RESTORATION

Enjoying nature should also come with responsibility. With the Coral Restoration program at Le Barthelemy Hotel & Spa, guests are able to partake in rebuilding the coral that is vital to the marine ecosystem. Kayak out to the coral forest located in the Grand Cul-de-Sac bay with an expert guide, spotting sea turtles on the way, and help take steps to reconstruct the reef.



HIGHLIGHTS

-You can't fully embrace island life until you embrace its splendid nature. Popular hikes like the Grand Fond and Colombier are almost like a rite of passage and cannot be missed. While it's considered beginner-friendly, hiring a guide for first timers will be incredibly helpful and provide peace of mind. You'll see locals in flip flops or even walking the trails barefoot, but visitors should definitely wear sturdy shoes. The hike is a reward itself, but reaching the natural pool and the Colombier Beach at the end feels like a cherished prize. A dip in the cool water after both walks will be one of your most divine experiences during the whole trip.

-From jet-skiing and wind surfing to seabobbing and boating, there's no water activity that you can't do in St. Barth. Inquire with the hotels for a full array of options you can enjoy.

-When it comes to spa services, every hotel in St. Barth is exemplary. There is no wrong choice, however, the skincare products can make the biggest difference. If you are a fan of Biologique Recherche, Hotel Barriere Le Carl Gustaf has the exclusivity in all the Caribbean, plus you can stock up on your favorites at lower prices than found in the US. For La Mer devotees, Le Barthelemy's La Mer Spa is a holistic haven. And at the Christopher hotel, the award-winning Sisley Spa merits a visit.