



THE RADAR TRAVEL

EDITED BY SARAH GLEIM



From left: The Cap Est Lagoon Resort & Spa; a suite at the resort

SUMMER LOVIN' *Have a hot fling at one of the Caribbean's sexiest island destinations.*

VIVE LA FRANCE

The people of Martinique are obsessed with their island's rum. And with good reason. It has the prestigious French designation Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée—a title previously reserved for only the finest wines in France. It's no surprise then, when on a boat ride in Martinique's famous Joséphine's Bath (a stretch of exotic blue shallow water between two small outlying islands where the Martinique-born Empress Joséphine, wife of Napoléon, is said to have bathed) the boat's owner/captain/bartender drops his anchor and insists everyone jump into the sea, and tilt their heads back so he can pour smooth, sweet local shrubb rum into their mouths. "Now you've been baptized to Martinique," he says.

After dining on lunch of fresh grilled lobsters on a nearby island, the boat, La Belle Creole, returns to Cap Est Lagoon Resort and Spa, an opulent four-star Relais & Châteaux hotel, whose manager won't reveal his famous guests but does hint that it is a favored retreat for royalty. Suites on the resort's sloping peninsula feature lagoon and coral reef views, private freshwater pools and secluded al fresco showers where guests can lather up with Molton Brown bath products under the warm

Caribbean sun. Like the rest of Cap Est, the suites' brightly colored interiors reflect a serene, nature-inspired Asian design mixed with top technology. Beds are elegantly draped in a canopy of white mosquito netting, 32-inch plasma screen TVs are the norm, and high-speed Internet connections are next to bamboo trellis wardrobes.

Le Belém, Cap Est's fine dining restaurant, mixes classical dishes with the island's tropical produce: Traditional foie gras is topped with caramelized bananas from Martinique farms and folded into a delicate pastry. For dessert, flan made with local coconut is drizzled with a sweet passion fruit syrup.

The best way to explore the rugged French island is aboard one of Cap Est's helicopters; the winding mountainous roads can wreak havoc on a weak stomach. (Rumor has it the roads were paid for by the square foot, so builders created needless twists and turns to boost their fee.) But, for those brave enough—and armed with motion sickness medicine—Martinique's French-inspired villages, tropical rainforest waterfalls and more than 200 miles of powder white beaches are worth exploring. *Delta Airlines offers once weekly, nonstop service from Atlanta to Fort de France, Martinique. www.delta.com. Rates for Cap Est Lagoon Resort and Spa range from \$600 to \$2,000 per night. 011.05.96.596.54.80.80 or www.capest.com.—Sarah Crosland* CONTINUED...

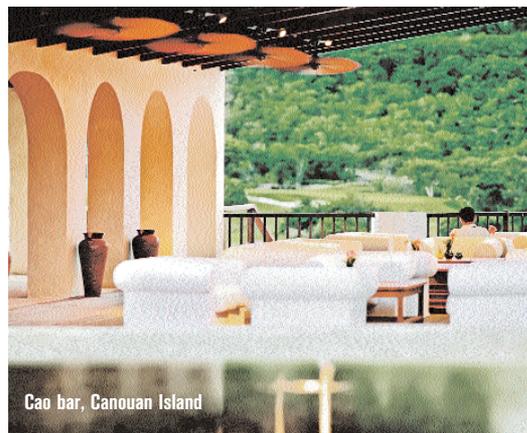


On the Rocks restaurant, Eden Rock

THIS PLACE ROCKS!

The French have done a fine job casting a spell of exotic luxury on the remote, very private environs of St. Barths. And tucked away on a rugged outcropping is a place that's over-the-top: Eden Rock, a Relais & Chateaux hotel with a compelling chemistry of stargazing (think Usher and Paul McCartney), pristine beaches and fine cuisine. The most deluxe rooms are carved into the rock itself, which is in the center of the Bay of Saint-Jean, and rock walls artfully blend with the room's custom furnishings and modern interiors. The Howard Hughes loft suite (\$2,200) on top of the "rock" boasts 1,500 square feet, three private terraces, two bathrooms and 360-degree views of the bay. Beachfront bungalow Waterlily offers a private infinity pool right on the beach, along with Jacuzzi and terrace. And every room in the resort is filled daily with fresh flowers, Bulgari bath amenities, Porthault linens and flat screen televisions.

Snorkeling along the island's reef is some of the best in the Caribbean, and touring the island's beaches on a chartered luxe yacht is the best way to experience the rugged terrain (\$3,400). And don't skip the classic French culinary talents of chef Jean-Claude Dufour at the hotel's On The Rocks restaurant where he serves up a homemade terrine of foie gras with quince and lime chutney, and sea bass glazed with soya (think soy sauce). *Rates range from \$650 to \$3,300 per night. Bay of Saint-Jean, St. Barths, French West Indies, 877.563.7105 or www.edenrockhotel.com.—Katie Kelly Bell*



Cao bar, Canouan Island

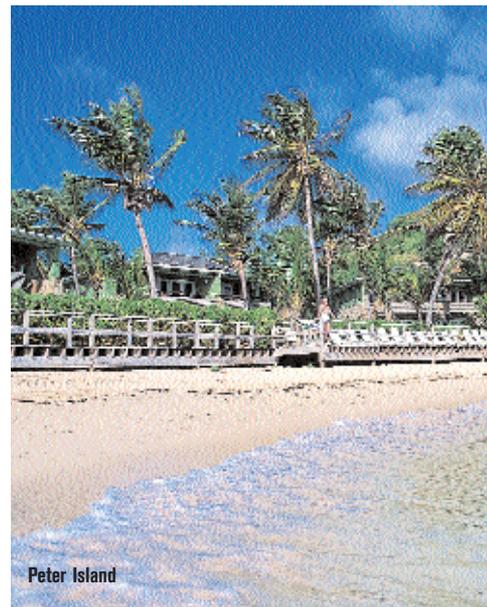
PHYSICAL THERAPY

You won't find any recorded versions of waves crashing or birds singing at the Raffles Amrita Spa on Canouan Island in the Grenadines. Only the natural soundtrack wafts through these cliff-side treatment rooms, where custom massages, including those in glass-bottom huts hovering over the crystal clear water, attract privacy-seeking celebrities like Johnny Depp.

This spa is part of the Five-Star, Five-Diamond 300-acre Raffles Resort Canouan Island. The resort's villas—even the smallest here is more than 600 square feet—all feature private covered patios or terraces overlooking The Carnage Bay shoreline, and newly emerging two- and three-bedroom estate villas in the exclusive Trump Island Villas enclave will feature private verandahs, walk-in closets, state-of-the-art kitchens and media rooms.

Guided hikes to the top of the island's Mt. Royal afford amazing panoramic views of the ocean, and a day-long cruise aboard the Splendid Adventurer with Captain Phil to Tobago Cays is the ultimate way to snorkel with Hawksbill Turtles and feed schools of tropical fish. Phil's sailed these waters for 12 years and knows all the hidden hotspots, as well as those preferred by hotties like Depp, whose "Captain Jack Sparrow" was stranded on a nearby island.

The resort's hot shot chef Eoghain (pronounced Owen) O'Neill has also earned an international reputation for his cuisine at Villa Monte Carlo's posh La Varenne restaurant. Top bets include the chilled tomato gazpacho with basil sorbet. *Villa rates per night start at \$475. Trump Island Villa estate residences start at \$2 million. 877.226.6826 or www.affles-canouanisland.com.—Amanda Lester Trelvelino*



Peter Island

FOR PETE'S SAKE

Just like on neighboring Dead Chest Island, fantastical stories of pirates and pirate ships still exist on Peter Island, the largest private island in the British Virgin Islands. But rogue vessels no longer plunder these waters—today they are swanky mega yachts that anchor at Peter Island's Great Harbor or Little Deadman's Bay. Captains Judy and Paul Rydburg have lived on their 41-foot teak sailing yacht, the Silmaril, for 15 years. The couple takes visitors to favorite spots in the Virgin Islands, like Donovan's Reef or Scrubb Island, as part of the Peter Island Resort Ashore Afloat package (\$7,000 to \$10,000), which combines five nights at the resort's Beach Front Jr. Suite with a two-night adventure on the sailboat. The seaworthy accommodations are snug, but the Beach Front Jr. Suites (\$860) are spacious and cozy, although the service staff could use a bit more training. (Our wake-up calls didn't come, transportation was lacking and we spent days hoping for a bottle opener for our mini-bar.) The opposite's true at the new Falcon's Nest six-bedroom villa (\$12,100 per night), which includes a 24-hour personal porter and chef to cater to your every whim, not to mention nighttime views of the lights of Norman Island from the private swimming pool and bar. The resort also includes the luxe Spa at Peter Island, where outdoor treatments in the two "bohios," open-air suites overlooking the sea, feature Georgia-based Anakiri products. And easy access to one of the world's most famous shipwreck dives, The Wreck of The Rhone (it sits in two parts, one at 80 feet and the other at 40 feet, perfect for a two-tank dive) comes via local dive master Randy Keil. *Rates at Peter Island Resort begin at \$395. 800.346.4451 or www.peterisland.com.—A.L.T. A*