



## Rediscovering the Caribbean

LAST SUMMER, when I sat down to plan my next trip, I had some difficulty selecting a destination. All it took was a phone call from a longtime client asking, “What’s new and happening down in the Caribbean?” Now, I know what you’re thinking: Wow, what a tough job! But, seeing as someone had to do it, my husband Jim and I started out on our Caribbean adventure.

We set our itinerary to include St. Barths, St. Lucia, Turks and Caicos, and St. Martin. Jim and I decided that staying at two to three properties on each island would be the best way to learn.

**Travel House Tip #1:** When traveling to the Caribbean, you must have a current U.S. passport, with extended validity of six months past your trip’s return date. A Visa is not required at this time.

### ST. BARTHS

Located in the French West Indies, the island of St. Barths is a French territory, unlike its Caribbean counterparts. The official language is French, with many natives and guests who are fluent in French and English. The island caters to the world’s most

discerning travelers, offering opulent accommodations and world-class dining experiences, which aids St. Barths in topping the list as the #1 playground for the rich and famous.

**Travel House tip #2:** The currency on St. Barths is the Euro, as it is a French territory. Keep in mind that a cab ride that costs 50 Euro is more when the price is in U.S. dollars. At press time, the exchange is 50 Euro = \$53.56 USD.

St. Barths is considered the most luxurious of all the Caribbean islands. We stayed at Cheval Blanc’s Isle de France, and Le Sereno, both of which offer Virtuoso Amenities. The cab from the airport to Le Sereno (5.5km = 12 min. drive) was 50 Euro, and each cab thereafter cost 50 to 100 Euro. A glass of wine anywhere on the island is between 20-40 Euro, confirming St. Barths as quite unkind to a tight budget. Aside from cost, the scenery and the service on the island is world-class, matching the caliber and French quality service at the most distinguished Parisian hotels.

**Travel house Tip #3:** Virtuoso Amenities are exclusive perks offered to clients of Virtuoso

Member Agencies. Amenities range from: A complimentary room category upgrade at time of booking, \$100 resort and/or spa credits, complimentary full breakfasts (daily in-room or restaurant), and more. Travel House is a Virtuoso Member agency.

Of the two properties, Cheval Blanc’s Isle de France was my favorite. It was an exceptionally beautiful property, drenched in white, with Caribbean blue and bright pink accents, kept in pristine condition. We toured at Eden Roc home of infamous Nikki Beach, a world-class restaurant and lounge featuring A-list entertainment. For spa enthusiasts, we toured the lovely Hotel Guanahani, and the brand-new Le Barthelemy—the essence St. Barths’ chic luxury.

### ST. LUCIA

St. Lucia is one of the most beautiful and scenic islands in the world. The climate allows for unmatched environmental luxuries, sprawling lush rainforests with symphonies of wildlife, detoxifying sulphur springs, brilliant coral reefs, and breathtaking views of the Pitons.

We started on the North Coast of St. Lucia, spending a few evenings at Capella Marigot Bay, located alongside the Marina. During our time at Capella, we did some touring early one morning to the Sulphur Springs and took a mud bath. We visited the world’s only active drive-thru volcano, which was exhilarating, but not for the faint-hearted. The tours were the best part of our experience at Capella Marigot Bay, as the property was my least favorite. It is priced similar to its competition, which all have better views, like Jade Mountain, and the second property we stayed at, Ladera, which is an all-suite property where each room includes a private plunge pool and open walls with the most incredible view of the Pitons. Ladera is an amazing property for honeymooners. I preferred this side of St. Lucia.

**Travel House Tip #4:** Some of the finest resorts in St. Lucia don’t have air-conditioned accommodations. This provides for an “at one with nature” open-air experience.

### ST. MARTIN

St. Martin is a small French-Dutch island that makes a good argument for having the best beaches in the Caribbean. St. Martin is a “party island”,




St. Martin

here without any of the “touristy” feel. The Grace Bay Club at Turks is beautiful and offers a private kids section, as Turks and Caicos is one of the most kid-friendly islands in the Caribbean. For those looking to splurge, Parrot Cay on the private island of Provinciales is ‘Best of the Best’ when it comes to beauty, hospitality, and luxury.

You can find heavy savings and deep discounts in the Caribbean from May to June, and November to mid-December. The high season for both discerning travelers and throughout the Caribbean is from mid-December to mid-April. The year-round temperature in the Caribbean averages 80 degrees, with October being the wettest month of the year. If you’re willing to brave hurricane season, you can find empty hotels and big savings!

**Travel House Tip #6:** We always recommend purchasing a Travel Insurance Policy, no matter how big or small the trip!

There are many wonderful islands with new and exciting happenings in the Caribbean. Whether you’re a retired couple, a young single Millennial, a couple with three young children, or a multi-generational family, there are plenty of options available for you. I came back with a surprising and renewed love for the Caribbean, so much so that I plan to continue “Rediscovering the Caribbean” this year ... so stay tuned! 

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known for those who eat well, shop till they drop (duty-free!), and enjoy a vibrant night life. The French side of the island (North side) has trendy duty-free shopping and cutting-edge cuisine, while the Dutch/South side of the island is known for high-rolling casinos and private nightclubs.

Be sure to visit Maho Beach, to experience a nail-biting plane landing at Princess Juliana Airport. Spend a full day or more on Orient Bay Beach, a clothing-optional beach, jam-packed with motorized water sports, beautiful bodies, fabulous rum-punch, and mouth-watering cuisine. It’s not too hard to figure out why this side of the island is referred to as the St. Tropez of the Caribbean.

**Travel House Tip #5:** Did you know St. Martin is one island, containing two countries? There is a French side (collectivity of St. Martin) and a Dutch side (St. Maarten). Once on island, you do not need a passport to travel between the two sides, but a passport to get there is required!

## TURKS AND CAICOS

Turks and Caicos is one of my favorites! Uncrowded beaches, distinctive multi-bedroom properties, world-class spas, and superb restaurants. Turks and Caicos is an angler’s paradise for deep-sea fishing. You can get PADI certified in Scuba Diving, and snorkeling and fishing is a must. Turks has become a mecca for wellness. The world-class

spa at brand-new property The Shore Club offers breathtaking views, rejuvenating treatments, and a tranquil atmosphere to recharge mind and body.

We stayed at The Palms, which is The Shore Club’s sister property. The first of two built by the Hartling Group, The Palms is a condominium-turned five-star resort property, offering full kitchens and mind-blowing views of the gorgeous Grace Bay. The spa is one of the most serene in the world. World-class luxury—I loved it!

If you want a sense of what’s new and exciting in the Caribbean, Turks and Caicos is my strongest recommendation! There is so much going on



Orient Bay Beach at St. Martin