

## UNIQUE RETREATS

From the Virgin Islands to the Grenadines and many in between, the Caribbean has no shortage of islands perfect for hopping via superyacht, but none are as exclusive as the following private island getaways.

BY MIRIAM CAIN





AERIAL VIEW / PETIT ST. VINCENT

COTTAGE LIVING ROOM / PETIT ST. VINCENT

## PETIT ST. VINCENT, GRENADINES

Strewn along the eastern side of the Caribbean Sea, the Windward Islands are an archipelago of rainforest landscapes and sheltered bays fringed by white-sand beaches. Within this group are the small islands of the Grenadines. Best explored by yacht, the island chain offers a wide variety of activities and high-end resorts, one of which is **Petit St. Vincent**.

Built as an exclusive resort in 1968, Petit St. Vincent is a timeless paradise unspoiled by the modern world; low tech is a way of life here. The only way to reach it is by water, and this explains part of its unique charm. This unplugged corner of the Caribbean is its own self-contained world without towns or shops. It is the perfect place to step out of the rat race for a few days and reconnect with friends and family without 21st-century distractions. Formal check-in, keys, TVs and telephones are nowhere to be found. It is effortlessly luxurious in every respect, but the main emphasis is on escape, barefoot elegance and tranquility. For room service you simply raise the yellow banner outside your cottage; for privacy raise the red banner. The island underwent a major, 12-month renovation last year under the stewardship of new owners Robin Paterson and Phil Stephenson

who transformed it into a haven of rustic luxury (*Contact: General Manager Matthew Semark, (784) 458-8801; matthew.semark@petitstvincent.com; www.petitstvincent.com*).

### WHAT TO DO

There are plenty of activities on Petit St. Vincent, from daily yoga classes and tennis to water activities such as windsurfing, kayaking, snorkeling and sailing. For the more adventurous types the waters surrounding the island are ideal for deep sea sport fishing and scuba diving.

The newly created **Treetop Spa** sits nestled on Marni Hill where treatment rooms may be left open to allow the trade winds to breeze through. The treatment menu mixes traditional Indonesian therapies with local ingredients (*Contact: Spa Manager Anie Ardiani, (784) 458-8801; anie.ardiani@petitstvincent.com; www.petitstvincent.com*).

### WHERE TO STAY

Perched on the hillside above the white-sand beach are 22 cottages in a variety of sizes and shapes. Built from native bluebirch stone quarried from the island, the cottages are spacious and each has a living room area and bedroom.

They also have their own private pavilion area with daybeds and large hammocks.

### WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK

The refurbishment brought with it a new barefoot beach bar where guests can enjoy lunch or sunset cocktails. The bar menu includes Caribbean tapas dishes such as lobster fritters, creole crab and shrimp and scallop ceviche.

Scattered between the bar pavilion and the beach are dining tables covered by individual thatched roofs where guests can sample Caribbean and Mediterranean dishes, including house specialties like lobster pizza. The restaurant also has an *al fresco* barbecue-style grill and a stone-built lobster pot, housing live lobsters caught off the island's coast (*Contact: Chef Sean Kuylen, (784) 458-8801; sean.kuylen@petitstvincent.com; www.petitstvincent.com*).

### RECOMMENDED

Sail on the *Jambalaya* (a locally built schooner) to the nearby **Tobago Cays** for spectacular snorkeling in a protected area where the coral is untouched and the calm waters allow you to float and let the water pull you gently over the reef.



## MUSTIQUE, GRENADINES

A close neighbor of Petit St. Vincent, **Mustique** is another exclusive private island along the Grenadines chain. Since the 1960s, English aristocracy and Hollywood elite have been drawn to this tiny island. Privately owned by a consortium, it is only three miles long and a mile and a half wide, and is home to only one hotel, a small guesthouse and a collection of villas.

The nearest international airport is in Barbados, but there are domestic flights taking you over to Mustique, although the airport closes at sunset because there are no lights on the airstrip. Without a doubt the best way to arrive is by yacht.

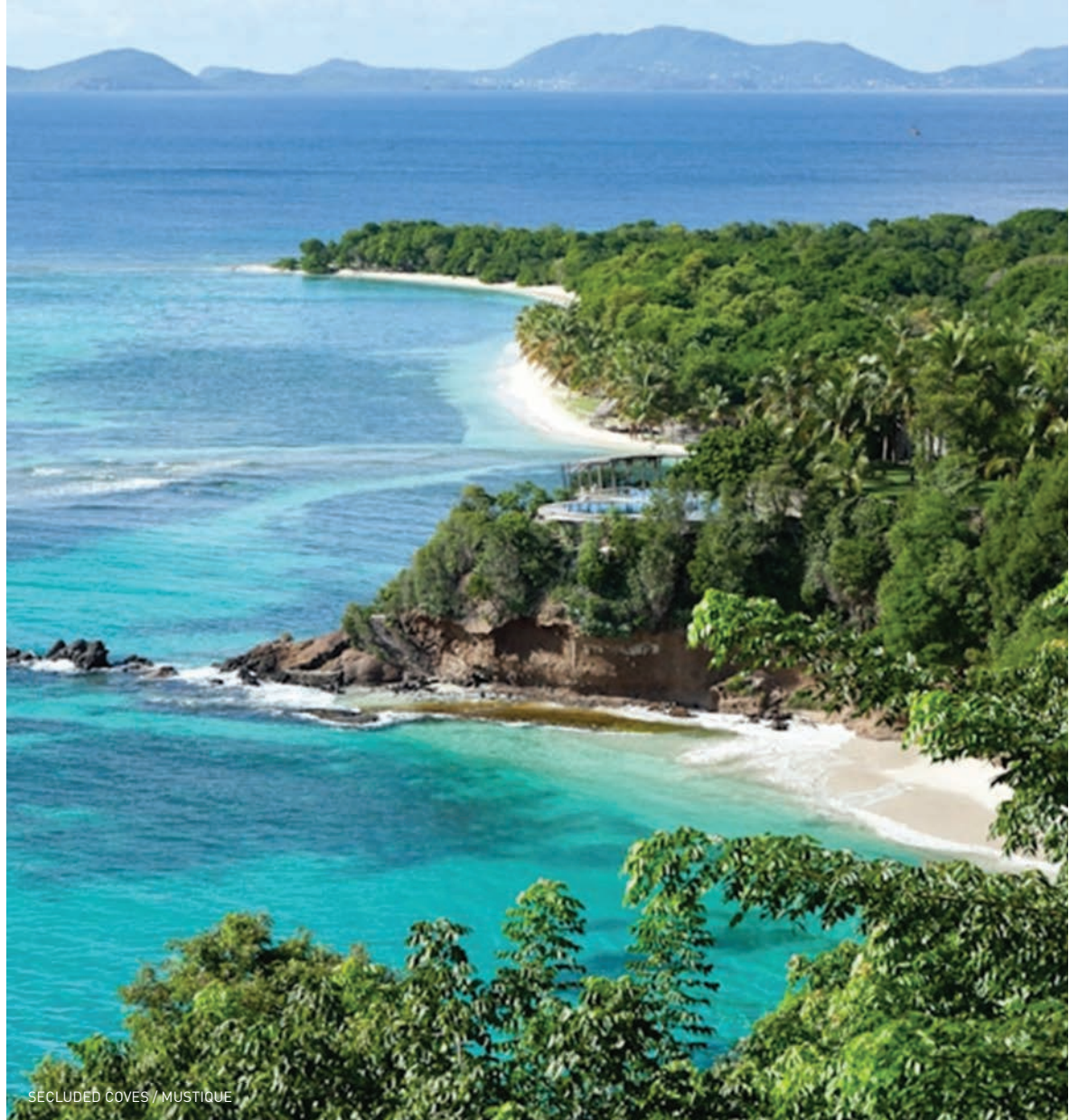
### WHAT TO DO

Mustique is the perfect place for practicing the fine art of *limin'* (doing nothing all day), and is ideal for those seeking an easy, relaxing and chic retreat. **Macaroni Beach**, on the island's Atlantic coast, is one of the most popular stretches of sand and is a great spot for surfing. **Lagoon Beach** on the Caribbean side has calm, shallow waters, and farther along is the sheltered bay at Gellicieux, both of which are perfect for snorkeling. The island has a water sports center with everything on offer from scuba diving to windsurfing and kayaking.

On land, Mustique has plenty of walking and hiking trails. Visitors can explore the island by golf cart. There is an equestrian center and a



SIENNA VILLA / MUSTIQUE



SECLUDED COVES / MUSTIQUE

number of horse-riding tracks, and a tennis center where you can learn from the island's tennis pro Richard Shaeffer.

The waters surrounding Mustique are teeming with sea life and are ideal for offshore fishing excursions.

The focal point of the island is **Britannia Bay**. Here you will find quaint boutiques selling everything from beachwear to designer clothing, jewelry and accessories. There is also a spa, located in Endeavour Bay, with an ESPA treatment menu (Contact: Spa Manager Rockell Matthews, (784) 456-4777; info@cottonhouserestort.com; www.cottonhouserestort.com).

### WHERE TO STAY

The hillside colonial-style **Cotton House Hotel** was originally a simple, eight-bedroom hotel that was expanded and refurbished in 2004. Now it boasts 19 rooms and suites that overlook Endeavour and L'Ansecoy Bays. The décor is clean and pure with suites opening up to the sun and sea. There are also 110 privately owned villas, 75 of which are available to rent. Choose from Roman palazzo-style villas to Chinese pavilions (Contact: General Manager Eleonore Petin, (784) 456-4777;

gm@cottonhouse.net; www.cottonhouse.net).

### WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK

For a spot of Caribbean revelry visit **Basil's Bar**, which is set on a terrace built on stilts over the sea. It is the perfect place to sip lime daiquiris and feast on fresh lobster (Contact: Restaurant Manager Enoch Bacchus, (784) 488-8350; basils@caribsurf.com; www.basilsbar.com). Alternatively, dine at the quaint restaurant **Firefly**, which doubles as the island's only guesthouse and serves French and Caribbean delicacies. Try The Firefly Special, the house cocktail, at the bar (Contact: Hotel & Restaurant Proprietor Stan Clayton, (784) 488-8414; stan@fireflymustique.com; www.fireflymustique.com).

Overlooking Endeavour Bay, the **Beach Café** at the Cotton House is a great spot for lunch, while **The Veranda**, also at the hotel, is perfect for candlelit dinners (Contact: General Manager Eleonore Petin, (784) 456-4777; gm@cottonhouse.net; www.cottonhouse.net).

### RECOMMENDED

Basil's Bar is the place to be on Wednesday nights for a taste of their jump-up and barbecue.



## PETER ISLAND, BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

Ideal for the waterborne, the British Virgin Islands are a cruising haven. Lying amid the 50 or so islands and islets is **Peter Island**, which boasts an 1,800-acre resort. The best way to arrive on Peter Island, at the center of the most popular cruising area around the Sir Francis Drake Passage, is by yacht (*Contact: General Manager Wilbert Mason, (284) 495-2000; wmason@peterisland.net; www.peterisland.com*).

### WHAT TO DO

Life on the island is pure barefoot luxury: Dine under the stars, lounge on cushions on the beach, relax in a hammock overlooking the ocean or explore the island on foot. The most popular activity is to “book your beach.” There are five beaches to choose from, including **Honeymoon Beach**, which is ideal for couples, while **White Bay Beach** has sun loungers and a spectacular view of Norman Island. The latter is said to be the setting for Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*. Swim in **Deadman’s Bay**, directly across the resort, or take a dinghy across to **Dead Chest Island**. The location is said to have earned its name after the infamous pirate Blackbeard deserted his crew there with nothing except a bottle of rum, giving birth to the sea shanty, “fifteen men on the dead man’s chest—yo ho ho and a bottle of rum.” Some sailors tried to

swim across to Peter Island but didn’t make it, hence the moniker Deadman’s Bay.

The spa at Peter Island has developed its own signature treatments that draw on the island’s indigenous plants and the ancient therapeutic practices of the Carib Indians. Indulge in a 75-minute abhyang four-hand massage or the frangipani and coconut moisturizer treatment (*Contact: Spa Director Safye Reid, (284) 495-2000; sreid@peterisland.net; www.peterisland.com*).

### WHERE TO STAY

The resort has 52 rooms, 32 of which are ocean-view accommodations and 20 of which are beach-front suites. There are also a handful of private villas available to rent, including **Hawk’s Nest**, **Crow’s Nest** and **Falcon’s Nest**. The latter is a cliff-top aerie that sleeps 12 and has its own private infinity pool, Jacuzzi, wet bar, cinema, gym and chef.

### WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK

The British Virgin Islands are not known for fine dining opportunities, but there are exceptions, one of which is Peter Island. Fresh seafood dishes and an influence of French cuisine can be found at the **Tradewinds Restaurant**, which also has a weekly buffet that is not to be missed. **Deadman’s Beach Bar and Grill** is a more relaxed affair, serving a fusion of Caribbean and

continental cuisine. A steel-drum band sets the mood on Sunday afternoons, and on Wednesdays they play at the Caribbean buffet (*Contact: Restaurant & Events Manager Kevin Phillips, (284) 495-2000; kphillips@peterisland.net; www.peterisland.com*).

### RECOMMENDED

The Virgin Islands are synonymous with some of the world’s best snorkeling and diving spots. Lying just off Peter Island, **The Indians**, a dramatic reef and rocky outcrop resembling a Native American headdress, provide superb snorkeling. There are also plenty of gentle dives that rarely exceed 98 feet, including the wreck of *RMS Rhone*. *The Royal Mail* steamer, which sank in 1867, is one of the most celebrated dive sites in the Caribbean.

AERIAL VIEW / PETER ISLAND



BEDROOM / HAWK'S NEST





## PARROT CAY, TURKS & CAICOS

The eight inhabited islands and 40-plus cays of Turks & Caicos, boasting the third-largest coral reef in the world, are marooned between the Caribbean and the Bahamas. Originally overlooked by developers, the area was previously known mainly to divers. Chic **Parrot Cay** has put the region on the luxury travel map. Lying on an isolated 1,000-acre island within the archipelago, Parrot Cay is the island chain's most exclusive retreat. A laid-back luxury resort complete with beach houses, villas and the award-winning **Como Shambhala** spa, it is ideal for those seeking a chic, relaxing getaway. Opened in 1998, the island is glitzy without being intimidating (*Contact: Resident Manager Nolie Omar, (649) 946-7788; nolie.omar@parrotcay.com.bz; www.parrotcay.com.bz*).

## WHAT TO DO

Parrot Cay is not the place to come to party. Spend the morning lounging by the infinity-edge swimming pool or while away the day dozing on the beach surrounded by picturesque dunes and pristine white sand. Stick a little flag into the sand, and someone will come to take your drinks order.

There are all manner of non-motorized water sports on offer, from kayaking to Hobie Cat sailing, and the waters surrounding the island are perfect for scuba diving and snorkeling excursions.

For further relaxation, the Zen-like Como Shambhala spa has an extensive menu of therapies ranging from the signature Como Shambhala massage to Dr. Hauschka facials. The spa also has a yoga studio, Pilates studio and Jacuzzi in the garden. There are also daily sunrise and sunset yoga classes on

the beach (*Contact: Spa Manager Patricia Spahn, (646) 946-7788; patricia.spahn@comoshambhala.bz; www.comoshambhala.com.bz*).

## WHERE TO STAY

Parrot Cay's accommodations are in the colonial-style main building or the beachfront cottages, decorated in a subtle palette. White tongue-and-groove walls complement huge four-poster beds draped in billowing muslin nets and spacious bathrooms. The cottages open out onto a deck, plunge pool, dunes and a seemingly endless stretch of pristine beach.

There are also a few private homes on the island that can be rented or bought, and in October the resort will be launching three new beach houses.

## WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK

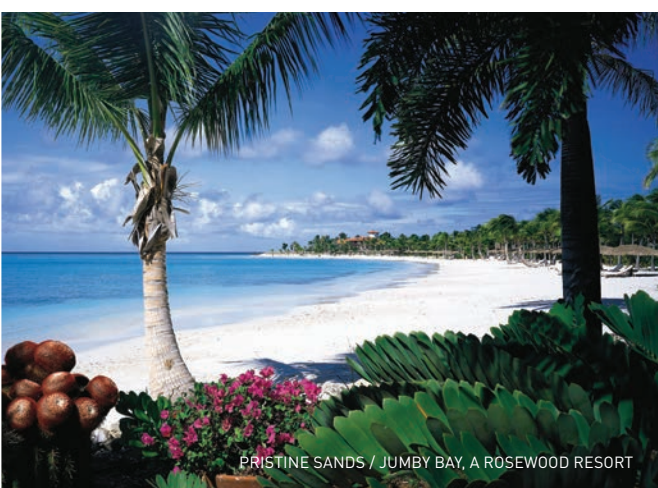
As far as dining is concerned, you can alternate between **Lotus**, which reflects the cuisine of the Orient, the **Terrace**, which leans towards Italian fare, or the healthier options of the spa menu (*Contact: Restaurant Manager Thamu Krishnan, (646) 946-7788; thamu.krishnan@parrotcay.com.bz; www.parrotcay.com.bz*).

## RECOMMENDED

The waters of Turks & Caicos are said to be among the top ten dive sites in the world. Divers can choose wall dives, opt for sun-drenched coral valleys or shark and reef diving.







## JUMBY BAY, A ROSEWOOD RESORT, LEEWARD ISLANDS

The Leeward Islands are an intriguing mix of West Indian, French, Dutch and British influences, and the nationality varies depending on which island you visit. One of the most famous is Antigua—rich in maritime history, renowned for its yachting heritage and a wonderful place for fun, socializing and complete relaxation, the island is perfectly located at the southern part of the Leeward chain for the start or end of any cruise around the enticing islands of the archipelago.

Located just two miles off the coast of Antigua, the private island resort of **Jumby Bay** is accessible only by boat. Reopened following a refurbishment, the resort has been totally revamped and today it is the ultimate desert island idyll. Twenty minutes from Antigua's international airport, the island is the perfect place to acclimatize to the relaxed pace of life in the Caribbean before stepping aboard your yacht for a cruise of the Leeward Islands. The resort is also located on one of the best beaches in the Caribbean, backed by acres of tropical gardens with lush foliage, lofty

palms and tumbling bougainvillea (*Contact: Managing Director Andrew Hedley, (268) 462-6000; andrew.hedley@rosewoodhotels.com; www.rosewoodhotels.com*).

### WHAT TO DO

Bicycles are a convenient way to explore the island, which has four miles of trails running throughout its 300 acres. To the western side is **Pasture Bay Beach**, which is where you will find the resort's conservation program that looks after endangered hawksbill turtles and their eggs.

Alternatively, the resort has dinghies, catamarans, windsurfers and kayaks to play with, as well as croquet, tennis courts, a fitness center and guided snorkeling.

The island is surrounded by warm, clear waters with an abundance of colorful marine life. Several coral reefs, walls and shipwrecks provide a home to many varieties of fish, and with little current, these waters are ideal for children and novice snorkelers. For diving enthusiasts the nearby dive site of the **Pillars of Hercules** is a group of coral columns resembling an ancient Greek temple.

**Sense, A Rosewood Spa** has a number of signature treatments including the Jumby Signature Island Experience, which should be booked in advance for your arrival as it is designed to balance the body with a cranial massage to relieve jet lag, followed by a coconut shea butter full-body massage and a warm facial. Other treatments incorporate sugar cane, botanical oils and hot shells (*Contact: Spa Manager Karen McFarlane, (268) 462-6000; jumbybay.spa@rosewoodhotels.com; www.rosewoodhotels.com*).

### WHERE TO STAY

The resort, which is owned by the 56 private villa owners, and managed by Rosewood, has been through a multimillion dollar refit and today boasts a colonial-style hotel and a few dozen private villas that are available for rent. All of the villas and estate houses have their own pools and most have their own private beaches, along with personal staff. The main hotel building has a beachside bar and restaurant, and the 40 rooms and suites sit alongside the bay.

### WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK

Jumby Bay has a number of dining options, from fine dining to private dinners on the beach. Head to **The Estate House** for gourmet Mediterranean cuisine. Located in a Spanish colonial plantation house overlooking the Caribbean Sea, the restaurant has a wine room for private dinners. Specialties include locally caught snapper baked in salt and crisped whole island fish with sweet and sour sauce.

The resort has a number of dining options, including the open-air **Verandah Restaurant**, the property's premier eatery. Verandah's European menu combines dishes with a touch of local ingredients and traditional cooking methods. Highlights include grilled lobster, rotisserie chicken and light desserts featuring local fruits. Guests can also dine at the bar or on the beach.

### RECOMMENDED

The island's resident astrologer, David Stubbs, has a poetic way of explaining the constellations in the Caribbean. Follow a spot of stargazing with a movie on the big screen under the night sky.