

ATTRACTIONS AND LANDMARKS, HOTELS

5 Reasons To Visit St. Barts Right Now

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Le Barthélemy Hotel & Spa is a sleek seaside escape. *Credit: Le Barthélemy Hotel & Spa*

At only 11 miles long, the tiny island of [St. Barts](#), in the French West Indies, makes big headlines for attracting celebrities and ultra-luxury jet setters (and their mega yachts). Beyond its outward persona, the island holds a bit back for privacy's sake. It is filled with many wonderful surprises discoverable to the 200,000-plus visitors who come during the busiest time (November to July) and escapade around its hilly terrain in the signature island vehicle, the mini Moke.

Getting to St. Barts — also known as Saint Barthélemy (the official French name) and St. Barth (the French nickname) — by boat, private yacht, helicopter or plane is half the fun. With one of the shortest runways in the world that cascades down a hill and into the ocean, landing on the island is an adventure. International flights arrive in [St. Martin](#), [Antigua](#), [Anguilla](#), [St. Kitts](#), [St. Thomas](#), [Puerto Rico](#) and Guadeloupe and connect via inter-island flights to St. Barts, skillfully making the landing more than 30 times a day. For the comfort of a fully pressurized cabin, opt for the Tradewinds Aviation flight from San Juan, which lasts around an hour.

Once on the ground, you're reminded that the Caribbean island is a French territory. The euro is the standard currency, locals are citizens of France and there are many French fashion brands, boulangeries, patisseries, cafés and brasseries around town. Expect artful service and attention to detail. And if you know where to look around the luxurious escape, you're bound to find a few sublime surprises, too.



St. Barts is a small island that makes a big impression. *Credit: iStock-Sean Pavone*

EMBRACE THE WATER

Most of the luxury hotel rooms in St. Barts hide in the hillside, but [Le Barthélemy Hotel & Spa](#) puts you on the crescent-shaped beach of Grand Cul-de-Sac. Some of the sea-inspired accommodations offer direct sand access, and others have pools and Jacuzzis overlooking the ocean. The sprawling resort pool also affords water vistas.

Jump right into the calm waters with paddleboarding, kayaking, kitesurfing or snorkeling; explore with a private yacht; or cut through the waves in a jet ski – all of which are available through Le Barthélemy.

Then dine alfresco while gazing at the water at Abyss, the hotel's French fine dining restaurant spotlighting local ingredients. Be sure to order the house cuvée, Leclerc Briant Champagne, which spends a year aging submerged in the Atlantic Ocean. For a more laid-back option, enjoy lunch on the beach at Amis St. Barth or come for its decadent brunch, which debuts this season featuring dishes like bacon-bechamel-stuffed croissants and made-to-order crepes.

And don't miss a visit to La Spa, the only one in the Caribbean to use La Mer's lavish products that use the power of the sea for transformative facials.



An oasis of calm is tucked in Cheval Blanc St-Barth's tropical garden. *Credit: Cheval Blanc St-Barth*

SPA IN A SECRET GARDEN

The closest thing in St. Barts to being in France without actually being there is Forbes Travel Guide Five-Star [Cheval Blanc St-Barth](#) in Baie des Flamands. The area became favored by the elite when the Rockefellers purchased land there in the 1960s. Cheval Blanc St-Barth ensures standards remain exceptionally high with its newly renovated [Cheval Blanc Spa by Guerlain](#).

Tucked into the resort's secluded tropical garden, the oasis was designed by Parisian modernist architect Isabelle Stanislas and features services specially created for this wellness treasure that engages all the senses. There are five treatment rooms, including Salon Orchidée, an indoor double suite that feels like a heavenly cocoon, with white walls and soothing woods that mimic the sands of St. Barts. The interior reflects the exterior, with nature inspiring all the choices, from the ergonomic lines of the furniture to lighting that mimics the sun.

New aesthetic enhancements, including micropeels and Hydrafacial technology, amplify the benefits of these treatments. To appeal to your olfactory sense, Thierry Wasser, the nose of Guerlain, produced the fragrance Tropical Chic for the resort, which joins the collection of the beauty brand's destination-inspired scents.

RELAX ON A PRIVATE BEACH

St. Barts has roughly 15 beaches across the island, each with its own character. The Four-Star [Rosewood Le Guanahani St. Barth](#) offers the full toes-in-sand experience with two private, fully serviced beaches within its compound. The resort first opened in 1986 as Hotel Guanahani ("welcome" in the island's native Arawak language), but was reimagined and reopened as a Rosewood property in 2021. Unfolding over 18 acres on a private peninsula between Marechal Beach and Grand Cul-de-Sac lagoon. While the 66 rooms are scattered around the hillside, Rosewood Le Guanahani St. Barth beckons those who crave proximity to the water with complimentary kayaking, paddle-boarding and snorkeling on its beaches.



Have a meal on Rosewood Le Guanahani St. Barth's own stretch of sand. *Credit: Rosewood Le Guanahani St. Barth*

[Beach House St. Barth](#), the resort's all-day culinary complex, serves a beachfront lunch of refreshing dishes like cucumber and mint gazpacho and sashimi for when the day's top priority is unwinding by the sand. Feel the waterfront elegance over multi-course candlelit dinners as well.



The stars gravitate to St. Barts' laid-back landscape. *Credit: iStock-Nancy Pauwels*

IMMERSE IN THE CELEBRITY SCENE

Every season in St. Barts is marked by new openings, which quickly become the hot tickets in town. One of the latest examples has been all the chatter surrounding [Mamo](#), a transplant from the French Riviera that has attracted legions of A-list celebrities (including Beyoncé, Jay-Z, Mick Jagger, Kendall Jenner and Leonardo DiCaprio) to its Soho outpost for decades. It now moves into the heart of St Barts' central district, Gustavia, with food that's authentically Italian and the vibe best described as Côte d'Azur chic.

Chef Mamo Pepino, known as the "Pope of Pasta and Smiles," flawlessly re-creates Mediterranean magic in the heart of the Caribbean. In this tiny temple of Italian delicacies, white tablecloths, the golden glow of candlelight and the palpable energy of the crowd complement lemon-Parmesan artichoke salad, spaghetti with caviar and a vibrant menu of other favorites.

TAKE IN A MILLION-DOLLAR VIEW

St. Barts loves to show off its beauty. With its pearly beaches and sapphire-hued water jutting up against dramatic volcano-carved landscapes, it makes sense. But the star of the show is the sunset, and one of the best places to watch it is from the upper level of [Hotel Barrière Le Carl Gustaf](#). Only five minutes from the port in Gustavia, the west-facing location perched above the buildings' red rooftops is perfect for any photos.

With 21 rooms and suites and a villa, the terraced property with a tropical garden is the only hotel on the island with views like this of Gustavia. Every suite features a private pool to watch those epic sunsets while the 3,230-square-foot Villa Diane also comes with a butler. The French-Caribbean design by Gilles & Boissier makes every environment appear as if it's swathed in the golden glow of a Clarendon filter, with natural shutters and fabrics, light wood and stone.

The wellness programs at [Spa Diane Barrière](#) also include a memorable vista. Enjoy a yoga session on the beach or a massage on the terrace of your suite.

Also, with a fantastic view right on Shell Beach, the hotel's [Shellona](#) attracts day partiers to its glamorous beach shack chic scene. The kitchen serves the island fare du jour (a hybrid between Caribbean and Mediterranean), mezze, shellfish, crudo and carpaccio, grilled whole fish and skewers of meat, all accompanied by lots of rosé.