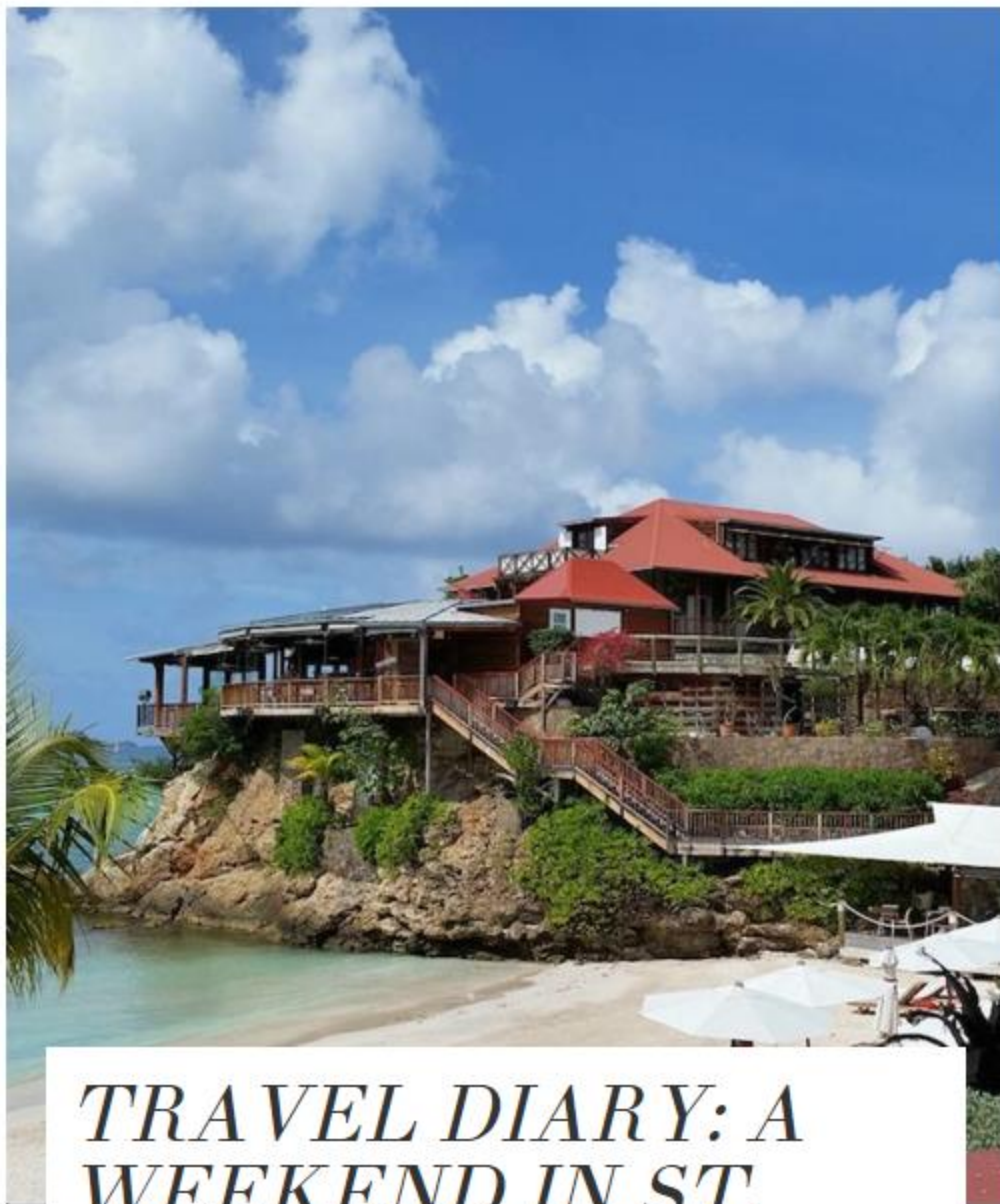


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TRAVEL DIARY: A WEEKEND IN ST. BARTH

Sun, sand and five-star service on the chicest island in the Caribbean

Before I visited St. Barth for the first time several years ago, I had a preconceived notion of what the island would be like. I assumed, like many others who've never been, it was the kind of place with an underlying stuffiness and self-importance—even the pronunciation, “St. Baaahhth,” seemed to emit an air of French pretension.

I realized just how wrong I was moments after boarding the Winair puddle-jumper that most visitors take from St. Maarten to get to the island. With paper fans in lieu of air-conditioning, room for about a dozen passengers and a runway approach that feels like an amusement park roller coaster, the 10-minute flight is anything but luxurious—and that's exactly how St. Barth devotees like it. Sure, you can also fly private, but there's an authenticity to the Winair experience that even the wealthiest travelers adore.

When I returned to the island last month for the second annual Taste of St. Barth Gourmet Festival, I was relieved to discover that the laid-back vibe I loved so much on my first visit hadn't changed a bit. People were still strolling into chic restaurants with sandy feet and swimsuits; the valets at swanky hotels were still happy to park your car, even if you just wanted to pop in and watch the sunset.

On this trip, though, the island was buzzing more than usual. As part of the festival, seven renowned French chefs—including Michelin-starred icons Emmanuel Renaut and Stéphanie Le Quellec—were flown in for a weekend-long series of French cuisine-themed events, including cocktail parties at sprawling villas, picnics on the beach and pastry competitions with local students. The visiting chefs also teamed up with an acclaimed restaurant each evening to prepare an exquisite tasting menu for guests.

While the festival no doubt placed French food at the forefront, it also showcased the island's best assets: restaurants like On the Rocks at Eden Rock; the picturesque beaches at Le Guanahani; no-frills bars like DO Brazil at Shell Beach. For a glimpse into the weekend's greatest moments, click through our digital diary (above).

WRITTEN BY LINDSAY SILBERMAN



Sometimes there's nothing more indulgent than room service...especially when you're staying in one of Le Guanahani's Ocean Cove Suites.



A pathway that leads to the beach at Le Guanahani.



As part of the festival's "Express Beach Picnic" competition, chefs prepared high-concept miniature meals and attendees voted for their favorites.



When you challenge a Michelin-star chef from France to create a picnic-inspired plate, this is the result.



The best place to unwind for the afternoon: on a day bed at Hotel Christopher.



Absolut Elyx hosted a cocktail competition at DO Brazil on Shell Beach, and the copper pineapples ended up stealing the spotlight.



Breakfast is served! Eden Rock has perfected the art of poached eggs.



A view of Eden Rock's aptly-named restaurant, On the Rocks with Jean-Georges.



One of many magical St. Barth sunsets.



At Cheval Blanc St-Barth Isle de France, the bathtubs come with spectacular scenery.



A quiet morning moment at Cheval Blanc's stunning pool.



Watching the kite surfers glide along Marigot Bay.



St. Barth from above: the island's iconic red-roofs surround the harbor.

For more information about next year's Taste of St. Barth Festival, head to saintbarth-tourisme.com.