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JET SET TRAVEL

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Forget Staycations. This Winter, Journey To Some Of The Most Fascinating Destinations On Planet Earth

Caribbean Chic

Mariah. Beyoncé. Jay-Z. Ryan Seacrest. Each winter, these celebs and a host of other boldface names make St. Barths their holiday hideout. (Bonus points for a David Letterman sighting. He has a house on the island but rarely patronizes the typical hot spots. In fact, I've run into him at the Supermarché in the most casual of attire.) It's like vacationing in the pages of *US Weekly*, and the French Caribbean island is petite enough that you will bump into A-listers, moguls, musicians and supermodels on a regular basis.

First off, however, you need two things: Enough F-You money that a \$25 Coca-Cola doesn't faze you, and the cojones to survive the eight-minute prop plane from St. Maarten to St. Barths. Only a special type of plane can navigate St. Barths' teeny tiny runway, and, for first-timers especially, it's a harrowing landing between two mountains and the sea. But hey, the high prices and element of danger are worth it for sandy beaches, crystal waters and glimpses of 200-foot mega yachts.

Next up is scoring a reservation at the "right" hotels and restaurants. Scenesters love to stay at Hotel Saint Barth Isle de France, where most celebrities congregate beachside. (If you're a Donny Deutsch fan, you can catch him working on his tan from dawn to dusk.) If the hotel is booked—as it often is during Christmas and New Year's—you can still soak up the ambience during a late lunch at their adorable poolside restaurant. Or go next door to Taiwana, where the heavy hitters (think Harvey Weinstein and Martha Stewart) nibble on the tastiest—and most expensive—lentil salad and roasted chicken I've ever had. At Nikki Beach, the lunch scene is elbow-to-elbow with a sarong-clad crowd powering through magnums of rosé and tuna sashimi while dancing to the blaring French hip-hop.

Another spot to rest your head is Hotel Guanahani, which has everything from tennis courts to a spa. This is as active as it gets, and the crowd here tends to be mainly Euro, which is either a blessing or a curse, depending on your proclivities. At Le Toiny, privacy is key and, fittingly, the bungalows come with their own pools and kitchenettes. There's no reason to leave your private enclave, which is why so many couples book this remote, deluxe accommodation. I also like Eden Rock, which is in a prime location and has an active bar scene downstairs. Finally, you must eat at Maya's, the charming Caribbean restaurant near the port. Not only can you see Jon Bon Jovi and Penny Marshall, but this surprisingly unpretentious spot serves the best food on the island.



St. Barths

