

Condé Nast Traveler

Top 40 Resorts in The Caribbean Islands: Readers' Choice Awards 2021

By CNT Editors | October 5, 2021



Le Barthélemy Hotel & Spa

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Quite possibly the top place to stay on the island.

What's the deal here?

An incredibly sophisticated new build on the eastern end of Grand Cul-de-Sac, one of St. Bart's most scenic beaches with shallow water perfect for kayaking, snorkeling, and windsurfing (or just watching), the resort opened in the Fall of 2016. Damage from Hurricane Irma in 2017 shut the property for just over a year, but it has made a spectacular return and is now quite possibly the top place to stay on the island.

So what makes the hotel so special?

It's location alone, between beach and lagoon, makes this a winner. Clean, simple architecture, extra-large rooms, a convivial staff, and superb dining earns it all-around acclaim.

How are the rooms?

Vast. Furnished simply, but with impeccable taste. Oversized beach-related color photographs in wooden frames and nary a hint of Caribbean kitsch. Sofas

are deep, soft, and inviting. Open-air showers in some, soaking tubs in others. Lots and lots of attractive wood. Nothing garish.

Are there any good food options on site?

Aux Amis, the main restaurant, is open to the elements under a stunning ceiling sculpture of dozens of blue and green handblown glass fish. The food is refined and remarkably varied—I had veal sweetbreads, meunieres style, my companion tried crispy blood sausage, neither a predictable choice in the islands, and both superb. Breakfast is a healthy buffet, self-served adjacent to a counter for takeaway coffee. For lunch at Aux Amis Plage, don't miss the mahi-mahi ceviche with lime and coconut milk.

How's the service?

Oh so very French, and oh so very chic. Most of the staff is young and amiable; all spoke impeccable English. Bartenders at the open-air rooftop bar were eager to suggest their own creations as well as a kick-ass Espresso Martini.

Who are you likely to find booking the neighboring room?

Curious first-timers looking to check out a new hotel on the island, well-mannered families from France, romantic couples, and water sport enthusiasts.

What's the surrounding area like?

The approach is through a small warren of buildings—you'd never know it was there. Beyond, the village of St. Jean and the airport are only a ten minute drive, the capital, Gustavia, another ten. If you have a car, don't miss turning left on the main road and exploring Le Côte Sauvage (the Wild Coast) along the island's southeastern flank. The hotel can give pinpoint directions for some thrilling hikes to watering holes backed by scenery more reminiscent of Northern California than the Caribbean.

Is there anything else we should be sure to check out while staying here?

Outdoor sunset yoga overlooking the beach. The instructor is gentle, but you'll be challenged in ways not previously encountered. It's an especially refreshing experience under a passing rain shower. Another unusual perk is that Le Barthélemy has the island's only underground parking garage—a minor miracle of construction which means there's hardly a vehicle in sight after you check-in.

Okay, it all sounds great, but is there anything you wish would get an upgrade?

Only one, and it's small: There should be water glasses in rooms and baths. There are Champagne glasses galore, but nothing from which to gargle from

So for whom would you recommend this hotel (and, by extension, a vacation on St. Barts)?

Two new, six-bedroom villas, Bleu and Aqua, were added during renovations. To say they are large is a gross understatement—each has four refrigerators in the kitchens. Completely private and yet directly on the beach, they could easily accommodate a family or group of friends looking for a rental with all of the amenities of a top-notch resort.