



St. Barth's Travel Cheat Sheet: What's New In 2022



A lagoon view of Rosewood Le Guanahani. Courtesy Rosewood Le Guanahani

St. Barth's has long been a favorite **Caribbean** destination for Indagare members, thanks to its stylish resorts and restaurants, lively beach scene, sophisticated shopping and pulsing nightlife. Here, we tapped some of our favorite island insiders for the latest intel—everything you need to know if you're heading to the island right now or planning a visit in the future. We have also been following all the latest hotel news, restaurant openings (and closings), Covid protocols, entry and testing requirements, the hottest spots for cocktails, people-watching and much more.

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What to Know About Booking Your Hotel: Don't Delay

"The island is booming right now—it's insane," says [Le Sereno](#) Managing Director Samy Ghachem, whose boutique bungalows and villas are popular with Indagare members (many of whom return each year). "Le Sereno had the busiest November in the history of the hotel. The island is packed. Every hotel, every car rental company has been sold out!" So our advice: Based on the pent-up demand we are seeing during the holidays and beyond, securing a top hotel early is key. Even in November, Ghachem noted, some guests had to switch hotels in order to be able to enjoy a longer stay on-island. The same applies to car rentals. Be sure to reserve yours as soon as possible, as the car supply on the island is fixed.

Getting There

"This year we are bringing more aircraft and crew to the Caribbean for unprecedented demand," says David Zipkin, Vice President of **Tradewind Aviation**, which offers direct flights from San Juan. "Our St. Barth's bookings are already up 50 percent and our Anguilla route is doing very well, too. My suggestion to anyone looking at a trip to St. Barth's is to book as soon as possible! Our inventory, along with the hotels and villas, are all very booked up, so it will be increasingly difficult to find space. We'll also be starting new scheduled flights between St. Barth's and Anguilla. This will begin in late January and operate three to four times per week." Those flying through San Juan don't need to clear customs and, as an added bonus, Tradewind has a private lounge with drinks, snacks, wine and beer.

Winair and **St. Barths Commuter** also fly to St. Barth's via St. Maarten, but unlike flying from San Juan, you have to clear customs in St. Maarten upon arrival. Ferry service is also available and may be right for those who didn't book their flights early enough—or those who aren't thrilled by the short runway landing in St. Barth's.

Hotel News



*Pool Suite at the Tropical Hotel, photo by Maison Numéro 20**

This year the most exciting hotel news is the opening of two long-awaited, newly renovated properties: Tucked away on its own private peninsula within the Bay de Grand Cul-de-Sac nature preserve, the long awaited [Rosewood Le Guanahani](#), has been fully rebuilt following Hurricane Irma in 2017 and opened November 16 with 29 cottage-style rooms, 27 one-bedroom suites and 10 two- and three-bedroom suites. The

location, with glorious views of Marigot Bay is as impressive as ever, and Luis Pons Design Lab has softened the vibrant color palette and given it a slightly more residential-beach house look. The hotel now has two outdoor pools and five different dining spaces, among other amenities. The **Tropical** hotel in St. Jean is the second oldest hotel on the island and in its newest incarnation, rooms and suites have a tropical chic, vintage feel. **The Patio** restaurant serves French, Mediterranean, Italian cuisine in a lush garden setting, and some dishes are grilled Robata-style in front of you. There's also a pool and bar and yoga and fitness are available on-property.

The Latest on Our Favorite Spots

At **Eden Rock**, the beach scene is buzzing again at this larger-than-life resort, from the Rémy Bar to **Sand Bar**. This year, extending the brand off-property, Eden Rock has also taken over Maya's To Go in St. Jean, so now you can grab a coffee and a small healthy bite or a meal (salads, sandwiches, pastries) or pack a picnic at **Eden To Go**. (Those renting a villa can also have all their catering needs met here as well). Back at the resort, keep an eye out for the Dr. Sturm products in the spa, thanks to a new partnership with the skin health pioneer. Barbara Sturm was a guest on our Indagare Global Podcast last year, and we can't get enough of her skincare line, which is formulated to hydrate and regenerate—essential at the beach! At **Cheval Blanc**, **La Cabane** has added the brand-new **Tiki Bar**, serving up tropical concoctions day and night. There's a new villa with a view at **Le Sereno** on the island's Grand Cul de Sac, and this hideaway is the place to be on Monday nights from 7:00 p.m. onwards. Have a cocktail and listen to one of the island's coolest singers, Soleil, work his raspy *magique*, before (or during) dinner. Taking full advantage of its rugged southeast coast location, **Le Toiny** is launching a brand-new **Surf Shack** boutique and surfing school directly on-property, with lessons available for all levels—from beginner to experts—with a pro surf champion. The hotel has also renovated its 13 Signature suites with new decks, pools and larger bathrooms with bathtub and shower, and there's a fantastic new four-bedroom villa overlooking the ocean. *Contact your Trip Designer for more details or assistance with booking the island villa that best suits your needs.*

The Dish on Restaurants

The biggest St. Barth's restaurant news of the moment is that (sadly, for many) **Maya's** is no more. The longtime restaurateur and her husband Randy have left the building and served their last guests in June. In its place: **Sela** will serve Israeli dishes. It's not open yet, but word on the island is it will be before the holidays. Also opening in Gustavia later this season (most likely spring) next to the post office, is **Opera**, a restaurant/night club; an outpost of **Coya**, the Peruvian restaurant, is also, reportedly, coming soon.

Hot Tables: Consensus seems to be that [L'Atelier de Joel Robuchon](#) in Gustavia is the “new big thing.” When you see the fire engine red shutters, you’ll know you’ve arrived. Inside, the ground floor L'Atelier is all dark woods, red and black bar stools and tables with views of the kitchen, but we recommend a table by an open-air window overlooking Gustavia Harbor on “Le Rooftop.” Also offering a glimpse of the yacht scene, [La Petite Plage](#) is another popular new spot that opened last season. An outpost of the St. Tropez original, it’s expanding this year and has a menu of fresh fish and French classics.

More New Arrivals: This year there are new chefs at long-time favorite [Tamarin](#) (Jérôme Lebeau, known as a “creator of flavors”) and Med-inspired [Amis St. Barth](#) at Le Barthélemy (helmed by French chef Vincent Gomis and his wife, sous chef Marie Cécile Gomis-Alexandre, who have also launched private Experience Tables this year). At Point Milou’s [Hotel Christopher](#), *Michelin* two-star chef Arnaud Faye melds Mediterranean flavors with local fare and lots of shared plates at [Riviera Plage](#). There’s also a new chef (Benjamin Zannier) and a new menu at [Francois Plantation](#) at [Villa Marie](#), and brunch will now be served on Sundays. With a menu by Pierre Gagnaire, [Le Foquet’s](#) at [Le Carl Gustaf](#) debuted in Gustavia last year with a menu of surf-and-turf classics and harbor views. Also on our list: [Quarter Kitchen and Cocktail Lab](#) is still a buzzy new favorite.



A daily catch carpaccio at Gyp Sea. Photo by I. Lindbergh, H. Sadou

For lunch (or a lazy day) at the beach, the usual suspects—[Nikki Beach](#), [Pearl Beach](#), [Lil' Rock](#), [Sand Bar](#), [Shellona](#)—are back for the season at full tilt. At last year's newcomer [Gyp Sea Beach Club](#), [Villa Marie](#)'s beach club offering, may remind you of Mykonos, with its blue-and-white look, Med menu and plenty of grilled options. Book early at all of the above. For lighter fare in town, try **Heiko**, the poké bowl bar in Gustavia. **L'Arawak**, a café space in the courtyard between Cartier and Hermès, is now serving light fare for breakfast and lunch, as well as cocktails and tapas with a DJ from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. If after-dinner cocktails or a little late-night fun are what you're after, **Kinugawa** has a DJ and bar with a guaranteed scene. And **Casa** (formerly Ociela) is a fun new spot for French-Italian, and the open loft space upstairs turns up the volume after dinner (until well after midnight). You'll still find us at **Baz Bar** and we'll never turn down whatever Johann is suggesting for a cocktail before (or during) dinner at [Bonito](#).

Related See our favorite [Top Tables](#), here:



Jean Georges Vongerichten's Sand Bar at Eden Rock on St. Barth's. Courtesy Eden Rock

Shopping

We're excited about some stylish arrivals on the scene since we last visited: In Gustavia,

there's a chic concept store from [Le Crillon](#) creative director and Parisian events and floral designer Djordje Varda, a.k.a **Varda**, and a fun pop-up shop called **Le Carré**, created by L'Officiel Magazine for a three-month stint. **Dior** will also open its doors in time for the holidays. **Atelier Ced & Rod**, a new made-to-measure atelier with couture and ready-to-wear dresses in silk and lace, as well as jewelry handmade from turquoise, corals and Murano glass has also made its début. **Eden Being** at [Eden Rock](#) will now carry such European brands as Maison Michel Paris, Zimmerman, [Emporio Sirenuse](#), Joanna Ortiz, Missoni, Alexis, Patbo, Alberta Ferretti, Barrie and Etro, among others. And we never miss [Faby Jaca](#)'s fabulous [Lolita Jaca](#) outpost at Bonito or her main Gustavia boutique.

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Courtesy Lolita Jaca St. Barth's

For those looking to enjoy the island's quieter side, stop in for a cold, crisp glass of rosé at under-the-radar locals' favorite **Le Papillon Ivre**, a wine bar in St. Jean, take a stroll on the white strand of **Saline Beach**, one of our favorites on the island, or climb to the lighthouse and take in the views of Gustavia, buzzing below.

Covid & Testing Protocols

Because guests spend a lot of time outdoors, and because all locals are vaccinated and proof of vaccination is required to enter St. Barth's, masks are generally worn only on airplanes, in taxis and indoor public spaces such as the local supermarket, small shops and boutiques. Many hotels offer testing on-site. If you let the hotel know of your needs in advance, a nurse may be able to administer a test on-property timed to your departure. Testing on-island is available at the French Red Cross Screening Center, located across from the Pearl Beach hotel in St. Jean (from 8:30 a.m. to 1:45 p.m., except Sundays and holidays), with PCR tests given at 9:30 a.m. Masks, passports and pre-registration via <https://centredepistage.fr> are required. You will receive a QR code and show your passport upon arrival. Payment is by credit card. Antigen test results are sent by email within one hour. RT-PCR results are sent by email within 48 hours.

Just for Fun

Fashion photography lovers take note: During the holidays, 10 of the island's top five-star hotels will be showcasing the work of 10 top fashion photographers, including Ben Watts and Ellen von Unwerth, at the St. Barth's Photo Festival, so keep an eye out. A show called "Emergence," featuring the work of emerging photographers is also on view at the **Wall House Museum**, through December. From December 2 to 19, St. Barth's hosts its very own **Christmas Village** in Gustavia, with holiday shopping and musical entertainment in the evenings, along with tastings and activities for kids—including a visit from Santa. Always a hot topic on the island over the holidays is where to ring in the new year: duking it out for party of the year in the days between Christmas and New Year's—it's a toss up between the annual White Party at Lil' Rock, the 20th Anniversary party of Nikki Beach and Eden Rock's New Year's Eve party themed "To the Moon and Back," from 7:00 p.m. until 3:00 a.m.

Last but not least: For those curious about the ongoing controversy surrounding the new **Hotel L'Etoile** (formerly Emeraud Plage, located just down the beach from Eden Rock, and now held by the owners of Le Barthélemy) that's been under construction in St. Jean for some time, you'll have to wait a bit longer to learn the fate of the underground parking garage that has been the subject of great debate (and an environmental impact study) on the island over the past year.

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- Jen Barr on November 30, 2021

