

# Escape

## Caribbean Queens

BY PAUL RUBIO

*Despite increased competition from  
new resorts across the Caribbean,  
two tried and true favorites prove timeless  
benchmarks for ultra luxury*

# Escape



TOP: A LAGOON VIEW FROM AN AMANYARA PAVILION.  
ABOVE: THE RESORT'S BAR.

AMANYARA VILLA DWELLERS CAN ENJOY CONVERSATION IN A LOGGIA (ABOVE), LOUNGE BY THE POOL (RIGHT), DINE ALFRESCO (BELOW) AND ENJOY SERENE EVENINGS POOL-SIDE (BOTTOM).



## AMANYARA

In the remote northwest of the Turks and Caicos' Providenciales Island, the illustrious Amanyara consummates the ultimate Caribbean fantasy. Gracing the crystalline waters and white sands of Malcolm's Beach and framed by vast acreage of lush, unspoiled flora, Amanyara is a self-contained world of indulgence, excelling in the art of high-style rest and relaxation.

Dotting a secluded beach and proximate lagoons, the sole Aman Resort in the Caribbean surfaces as a series of more than three dozen Asian-inspired, glass-encased, stand-alone pavilions and 20 larger villas, spaced for maximum privacy. These understated masterpieces of high design embrace the splendor of the surrounding nature, enveloped by oceanic and floral serenity, a beauty enhanced by the clean-lined, wood interiors.

The exquisite, open-aired design spans beyond the pavilions themselves. A sprawling reflection pond lies at the resort's core, surrounded by prolific alfresco common spaces, including a principal restaurant and bar and

a sleek, volcanic lava stone, infinity-edged swimming pool overlooking the ocean blues. Lined with umbrella-capped loungers, high-rising timber cabanas and fire pits, the pool is at once seductive and sumptuous, often favored over the breathtaking beach that is, in fact, one of the finest in the entire Caribbean and Atlantic. An eye-catching reflection pond also anchors the spa, with treatment rooms branching out to create a floating effect.

For those seeking more than sun-kissed pampering and relaxation, Amanyara's surroundings foster a wealth of outdoor pursuits. Given its proximate location to Northwest Point Marine National Park, daily complimentary snorkeling trips venture offshore from Malcolm's Beach to patches of dazzling coral reefs. Divers can head deeper to experience the marine biodiversity of the world's third-largest barrier reef through either wall or reef dives. Those interested in conservation will want to participate in Amanyara's Turtle Initiative, one of several programs offered through the resort's Nature Discovery Centre. As part of the initiative, you'll catch, tag and release



**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: A VIEW OF LA CASA DE L'ISLE AT SUNSET; A GARDEN VILLA POOL; A BEACH-FRONT LIVING ROOM; A PRIVATE RETREAT JUST STEPS FROM THE BEACH; AN ALFRESCO LUNCH IN THE SAND.**



endangered green turtles, collecting valuable scientific data alongside a marine biologist. Back on land, bike and nature trails, tennis courts, a state-of-the-art fitness center, yoga and exercise classes round out the activities.

Never one to rest on the laurels of its existing excellence, Amanara continues to enhance its portfolio each year with new additions. This year, a new clubhouse brings games and fun for children and adults alike, with a ping-pong table, shuffleboard and more. A recently unveiled Pilates studio represents the latest chapter in Amanara's wellness offerings. The summer 2014 debut of a Jean-Michel Gathy-designed six-bedroom villa enclave—spanning 14,450 square feet and built around its very own reflection pond—has already redefined living large in the Caribbean and quickly become the object of envy among hoteliers and sybarites. What's next? Another new villa stunner, this time with a private lava-stone, infinity-edged pool boasting an ocean view, opening in spring 2015. Be still, our jet-setting hearts. ([amanresorts.com](http://amanresorts.com))

**CHEVAL BLANC ST-BARTH ISLE DE FRANCE**

St. Barths—the impossibly cool 8-square-mile sliver of Saint-Tropez in the Caribbean where luxury is a lifestyle—has reached another echelon of excellence.

Following a comprehensive three-year renovation, the island's bastion of tropical decadence, the Hotel Saint Barth-Isle de France, was rebranded the third "maison" of

the exalted Cheval Blanc collection (the others are Courchevel in France and Randheli in the Maldives). Like its predecessor, the newly christened Cheval Blanc St-Barth Isle de France marries seaside panache and glamorous French flair across the picture-perfect Flamands Bay. The renovations, however, have ushered in new greatness that includes 40 suites, bungalows and villas elegantly appointed by Bee Osborn of Osborn Interiors; a spa specializing in Guerlain treatments; an oceanview fitness center; and the ultimate in personalized service.

Accommodations are split between a beachfront enclave consisting of suites and rooms and proximate gardens strewn with bungalows that blend into the lush tropical landscaping. While the latter tend to be favored by privacy seekers, the former dole out breathtaking panoramas of blazing blue sea, sky and silky sands—the very image of Caribbean perfection. Though it's an everlasting battle among top Caribbean resorts for the superlative "room with a view," Cheval Blanc St-Barth Isle de France is indeed a top—if not *the* top—contender.

Given St. Barth's long-standing see-and-be-seen reputation, the resort is surprisingly relaxed and unfussy. While the legends of beautiful people and celebrity sightings are all true, the experience here of barefoot ultra luxury is a personal one. Those looking for a scene gravitate towards the hotel's alfresco, feet-in-the-sand beachfront restaurant, La Cabane de L'Isle, where guests and non-guests

RIGHT: A GARDEN VILLA LIVING ROOM. BELOW: LA CABANE DE L'ISLE.



commingle over off-the-charts food, libations, people watching and fashion spotting; or they amble tirelessly up and down Flamands Beach (often with several costume changes per day). Despite such opportunities for attention getting, the possibility of a low-key mental respite still lies within reach—poolside, beachside, en suite or in the comfort of your personal plunge pool and private beach swathe (if booking a beachfront suite).

Outside the resort, however, it's a slightly different story. Dress to impress while shopping in the capital city of Gustavia, where the yacht-lined harbor and small alleyways transform into catwalks. Expect big brand names like Cartier and Louis Vuitton as well as more original boutiques, often sister outposts to exclusive Pari-

sian designers, showcasing the latest in tropical-inspired fashion: sarongs, sundresses, bangles, linen pants and understated beachside jewelry.

You'll also want to bring your A-game if setting sail on a privately chartered catamaran for an afternoon of Champagne drinking, swimming and snorkeling on uninhabited Colombier Bay (you'll likely be eye candy for day-trippers trying to celeb-spot at sea). You'll also want to look your best stepping on and off the new fleet of luxe aircraft servicing the island—Tradewind Aviation's contemporary Pilatus PC-12s, which offer multiple flights daily to St. Barths from San Juan, St. Thomas and Antigua ([tradewindaviation.com](http://tradewindaviation.com)).

Because the daily agenda rarely strays from sun worshipping, liquid lunching, fine dining, shopping, posing, yachting and credit card swiping, it's no secret that appreciating the style and sophistication of St. Barths requires deep pockets. But on an island where even celebrities people-watch, St. Barths is all about indulgence in the good life—and unapologetically so. ([stbarthisledefrance.chevalblanc.com](http://stbarthisledefrance.chevalblanc.com)) ◀◀

## MILES AWAY FROM MAINSTREAM



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