



IT'S JANUARY, meaning the post-holiday gloom has set in...except, that is, in the Caribbean, where resort season is in full swing: the paparazzi are stationed in St. Bart's, cruisers are making their way to St. Maarten, partiers are heading to St. Thomas—and a small group of vacationers are getting some real relaxation time on Anguilla.

For a nearly Manhattan-sized island that secured electricity and running water only in the mid-eighties, Anguilla has an impressive pedigree. Its first resort, Malliouhana, welcomed Giorgio Armani as its inaugural guest when it opened in 1981; everyone from Bill Clinton to Beyoncé came later to stay at small hotels like CuisinArt. Picky travelers quickly discovered that Anguilla met all their Caribbean wants; although accessible (a four-hour flight and boat ride from New York), it feels remote, even unspoiled, with thirty-three white-sand strands, Michelin chef-prepared cuisine, and luxurious resorts done up in a refreshingly simple colonial-Caribbean style.

But even as this island welcomes each new development and celebrity guest, it walks a tightrope in its quest to become a hot destination while retaining its sleepy charm. And this season, Anguillans are hoping they can continue to teeter along on the same course, even after the arrivals of the types of properties they have never seen on the island: a large-scale resort, a slew of game-changing restaurants, and glossy new villas offering extravagant amenities.

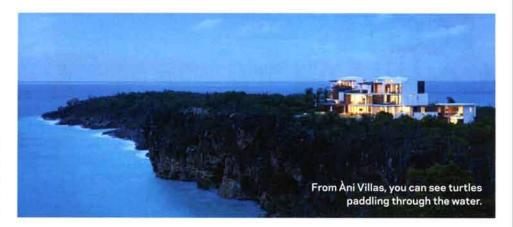
The biggest of the newcomers is Viceroy
Anguilla, which opened last winter with 135
rooms, 31 villas, 3 pools, and 5 restaurants on
35 acres. Although islanders questioned its
contemporary facade and sheer scale, most
were soon wooed by its organic-meets-modernist interiors: the cool, dark-marble lobby
has petrified wood, double-helix-like sculptures, and seventies black couches, and the
beige and metallic Sunset Lounge is furnished
in marble orbs, copper-cast mermen, and
gnarled driftwood chairs. "It's huge," says Sue
Ricketts, an island stalwart who cofounded the
Malliouhana and Cap Juluca hotels. "And we
were worried. But it's really marvelously done."

The Viceroy buzz piqued the interest of a young crowd that might once have gone to St. Bart's. Instead, they've begun booking into Anguillan villas like Le Bleu, a ten-bedroom 3.5-acre estate, which comes with house-

keepers and a concierge. Although its pointy gray gables look colonial, the decor features lacquer and travertine accents and an airy, open plan; everything from the junior suite to the bright white kitchen has sweeping sea views. Le Bleu's two tiny, private beaches, tennis court, and movie theater make it ideal for multigenerational families.

The season's other major new arrival, Ani Villas, is even more modern and lies just north of Le Bleu on the island's northwestern shore. The glass walls, jutting flat rooftops, and Scandinavian blonde woods of the property's two five-bedroom villas would have never appeared on Anguilla a few years ago; you can look down from its clifftop viewing point to watch sea turtles swimming to the tiny Little Bay.

Elsewhere on the island, dozens of modern new rentals offer everything from one to ten rooms—all sumptuously outfitted, and most sitting right on the beach. "There are far more deluxe beachfront villas available on Anguilla than on any other island in the Caribbean," says Tim Roney, senior villa consultant for LaCure Villas, which books rentals on twenty-five Caribbean islands. "While the best homes



in St. Bart's and Mustique are hilltop, Anguilla's best rentals open right onto the water." One such villa is the newly relaunched Sea, a Long Bay Villa (formerly known as Temenos), where guests can descend a staircase to their beach; the all-white upstairs has domed ceilings, white-marble floors, and sleeps ten.

It's not only the accommodations that have seen an upgrade. Just down from the Viceroy on the mile-long Meads Bay is **Jacala**, whose jaunty French owners serve such light fare as watermelon-tomato-and-goat-cheese salad and fresh-from-the-ocean tuna carpaccio. In season, it's one of the best places to while away an afternoon with a long lunch, a beach chair,

and a few glasses of white wine—as is the alsonew Da'Vida, which serves Asian-Caribbean fare (tamarind-glazed grouper, cinnamontinged lobster bisque) on the unsullied, bright blue Crocus Bay.

But in the end, the island's real value is in its beaches; even with all the new developments, it's still easy to find your own stretch of sand. Such quiet seclusion is a rarity on any Caribbean island, and on Anguilla, it's a point of pride. Ask islander Kenroy Herbert whether his home could become the next St. Bart's and his face clouds with worry: "Could that happen? Absolutely. Will it? We can only hope not." We hope not, too.

INSIDERS' ANGUILLA

Where to stay, eat, and adventure on this quaint Caribbean island.

STAY

VICEROY ANGUILLA. For: Young couples, interior design buffs. Book: Room 302 is a one-bedroom suite with a plunge pool overlooking the mile-long Meads Bay. Rooms from \$895; 264-497-7000. CAP JULUCA. For: Honeymooners, swimmers, traditionalists. Book: Every room is on the beach, but Villa 3. Room 3 is midway between the main house and the beachfront casual restaurant, Blue. Rooms from \$995. 264-497-6666. ANI VILLAS. For: Modernists, those who keep kosher, and the handicapped-the kitchen can be readied and blessed by a rabbi before arrival, and the South villa is the only fully wheelchairfriendly one on the island. Book: Of the two villas, North has more clifftop viewing points. Five-bedroom villa from \$40,000 a week. 264-497-7888. INDIGO. For: Generational families, privacy-seekers. Book: Try to nab the master suite, Seashell, before anyone else does: it's separate from the main building, with an indoor-outdoor shower.

Nine-bedroom villa from \$28,875 a week. Through Tim Roney of LaCure Villas, 800-387-2726.

LE BLEU. For: Big clans with small children: there's room for twenty, and the two small beaches are very safe for young swimmers. Book: The Sky room, a ground-floor bedroom that's steps from the infinity pool and has spectacular views. 10-bedroom villa from \$41,200 a week. Through Tim Roney of LaCure Villas, 800-387-2726.

"EAT

JACALA. Light fare on the other end of Viceroy's Meads Bay beach. Dinner for two around \$100; 264-498-5888. VEYA. Vietnamese-inflected food in a soft, chandelier-lit dining room. Dinner for two around \$130; 264-498-8392. SMOKEY'S AT THE COVE. An island mainstay serving stellar BBQ and snapper sandwiches. Dinner for two around \$70: 264-497-6582. DA'VIDA. Seafood with Indian and Asian influences in an indoor-outdoor pavilion. Dinner for two around \$120: 264-498-5433.

JOHNNO'S BEACH STOP. The quintessential beach bar. Order the grilled whole snapper, which comes perfectly seasoned with slaw and rice and beans; on Sunday afternoons, there's live jazz. Dinner for two around \$75; 264-497-2728.

· DO

SCUBA DIVE. Douglas Carty is an adventurous Anguillan dive coach who knows the island and its seas better than anyone. From \$90 for a half-day; 264-235-8438. TAKE A BOAT TOUR. Head to off-shore dining islands and snorkeling spots: eat a BBQ lunch at the Gilligan-like Sandy Island, snorkel at Little Bay, and end the day with rum punch at the popular Scilly Cay. From \$500 for a half-day. Through Gotcha Garfield's Sea Tours, 264-497-2956.

GLASS-BOTTOM KAYAK. Sutcliff Hodge just built 400 wooden steps leading from a clifftop to the bottom of Little Bay; from there, you board a glass-bottom kayak for a tour of the island's northwestern coast. \$80 for 3 hours; 264-235-7008.