

PETIT ST. VINCENT

By Kelly Magyarics

Petit St. Vincent is everything you might imagine when you hear the term “private island.” Want lunch served in your beachside palapa? No problem. How about breakfast delivered to the terrace of your cottage with a view? It’s as easy as raising the yellow flag outside your front door—or hoisting the red one for privacy. The phrase “but of course” is *di rigueur* in this enchanted little spot in the world.

The southernmost island in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, PSV (as it’s called) has just 22 villas spread out on 115 acres. Getting there requires flying to Barbados and then taking a small flight to Union Island; you can’t miss PSV’s unmistakable whale-like shape from the air. After a fifteen-minute speedboat ride, guests are met by affable manager Matthew Semark and his equally friendly staff.

Each freestanding one- or two-bedroom accommodation was built with hand-quarried island stone. Some spill out onto a private patio with lounges and a hammock, just steps from a white sand beach ripe for early morning walks to collect sea glass or conch shells; others are elevated on a hill or bluff, with sweet vistas of the sea whose colors changes from darker blue to turquoise to electric aqua and then back again, depending on the sun.

Villas—referred to here as cottages—are well-appointed, with contemporary accent decor in soothing pastel hues, teak and natural fabrics. All have king-sized beds, a lounge area, indoor and outdoor dining tables, sundeck, sliding glass doors, Bose iPod dock, Nespresso machine, Italian linens, Mascioni towels and BVLGARI toiletries; some accommodations include both an indoor and outdoor shower. A minibar is stocked daily with complimentary snacks and non-alcoholic beverages as well as more potent libations. What you won’t find in your room—blessedly—is wifi or a television set. Even the telephone only rings out so guests won’t be surprised or annoyed when they are trying to enjoy some repose. Staff at PSV encourages everyone to unplug and turn away from their devices—and towards one another.

But while you are welcome to be left to your own devices, you can also be assured of astute yet unobtrusive service, thanks to a staff to guest ratio of more than three to one. The aforementioned driftwood flagpole system outside every cottage is an ingenious method to summon a meal, beverage, housekeeping or whatever else you desire, while also serving





as a clever take on the do-not-disturb sign. Select the appropriate menu from the in-room binder—early morning coffee, breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner or drinks—check off your selections noting any special requests, roll up the menu, place it in the bamboo container, and then raise the yellow broadcloth flag for service. Staff is constantly driving around in carts to make sure you don't have a long wait for your French toast and pressed green juice or chef's catch of the day.

You'll want to try all of the local seafood,

from grilled mahi mahi to jerk shrimp skewers over a Greek salad to Caribbean salmon with plantain chips. When you aren't having a meal in your cottage you can dine at a beach palapa, or at one of two restaurants. The Beach is a casual, toes-in-the-sand delight with Mediterranean- and Caribbean-inspired dishes as well as sandwiches, burgers and clay oven pizzas. The Main Pavilion Restaurant and Bar is a bit more upscale, with a daily-changing menu, stellar selection of Caribbean rums and a wine cellar that holds 3,000 bottles—an impressive stash for a resort so small.

Grab a table inside, or a romantic spot for two on a stone patio tucked into the frangipani blooms, and order dishes like blackened tea barracuda with spiced chickpeas or slow-cooked pork belly with ginger, chili and makrut lime leaf.

There are plenty of activities to keep you busy, yet you often have them all to yourselves. Borrow racquets and balls from the front office for an early-morning tennis game, tackle the outdoor calisthenics trail, practice your sun salutation at the yoga pavilion, or hike the trail leading to the summit of



Marni Hill for a panoramic view of surrounding islands like Petite Martinique. (Keep an eye out on the island for turtles crossing and the flock of sheep taking a respite from the tropical sun under some shady trees.)

Pop by the water center to take out a kayak, SUP, Hobie Cat, Sunfish, windsurfing equipment or snorkeling gear to use right off the beach, or book a half-day snorkeling expedition to a coral reef to Tobago Cay. During the trip you'll also spend time on one deserted island where you can swim with huge, curious sea turtles and visit another with iguanas sunning on tree branches and scurrying up the hillside. The resort's dive center owned and operated by Jean-Michael Cousteau and his colleague Don Santee offers introductory and advanced SCUBA courses and dives.

The spa is Balinese-inspired, and some of the therapists hail from Indonesia. Treatment rooms are open-air (air conditioning optional), with options including an Island Haze Aromatherapy Massage, coconut body scrub or shirodhara, an Ayurvedic healing technique where liquid is poured onto the forehead before a head, scalp and body massage. Post-treatment, you can lounge on the thatched-roof patio with a cup of tea, taking in the heady scent of fuchsia-hued hibiscus flowers floating in an oversized stone bowl.

For a more secluded beach, keep walking west past the palapas and lounge chairs at Caribbean Beach that's adjacent to The Beach Restaurant. The flagpole system out on the main path works here too if you want to take your lunch in-between dips. Walk around the bend and you'll come upon Conch Bay, whose narrow sand offers the best opportunity for an afternoon hideaway; but keep in mind the sand disappears at high tide.

And when the private island where you are staying just isn't quite private enough, staff can arrange to shuttle you and the makings for a picnic à deux via small speedboat to Sandy Island, a tiny spot just big enough for a thatched palapa and 360 beach. Set out the blanket, uncork the bubbly and toast your island companion as you commandeer your own tropical hideaway--if only for a blissful hour. Paradise found.





Plucking in Paradise

If you've been meaning to take up guitar but just can't find the motivation, Petit St. Vincent recently hosted its inaugural week-long acoustic guitar workshop, with plans for the next one scheduled July 16-23, 2022. The course is taught by Justin Sandercoe, one of the world's leading guitar instructors, who has nearly a million and a half subscribers on YouTube and has been offering online and in-person instruction for more than twenty years. Classes are held in the open-air main pavilions with gorgeous views of the beach and covers topics like major keys, scales, chord progressions, 12 bar blues and blues improv. It also offers the chance to hone performance skills during several "campfire jams" and a final concert. Not only will the course help you improve no matter your current level, it's all great fun, and Sandercoe is adept at helping you get to the next level, no matter where you currently are in your acoustic journey. The price is \$9,100 for one student and one partner at leisure, in a one-bedroom cottage, which includes accommodations, food and beverage and guitar tuition and materials including use of a guitar; it does not include flights, transfers or airport taxes.

