

## Destination: Mustique



### Just Back From

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### Just Back From...Mustique



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My introduction to Mustique was a memorable one. "Have you been before?" my row-mate, a regular, yelled over the roar of the airplane's propellers. I answered in the negative. "You'll love it!" he replied. "If you don't, something's wrong with you." With that we careened over a hilltop and landed smoothly on Mustique's runway, a stretch of pavement approximately the length of suburban driveway.

At first my new-found airplane friend seemed a little sure of himself; but after a few days on the island, I understood.

There's not much to dislike about Mustique. This 1,400-acre private island, a 45-minute flight from [Barbados](#) or a 25-minute flight from [St. Lucia](#), provides the perfect retreat for weary families and friends in need of a true vacation, a time to disconnect from the real world and reconnect with each other.

What's the secret? There are a few.

- Each of the seventy-two villas comes with a staff, so guests need not worry about cooking or cleaning. There's something deliciously relaxing about uttering "I feel like fish tonight" and knowing someone else will handle the details.
- Safety is a non-issue. Teenage kids can roam the island at will – everyone knows each other and crime is nonexistent. It's fine to sleep with windows open and doors unlocked.
- There are no stoplights, no road signs, and everyone drives around in golf carts. A traffic jam consists of two turtles crossing the road at the same time.

Apart from the basics, there's also a wonderful community of sophisticated and interesting regulars who return every year. Yet somehow the island manages to avoid a clubby, exclusionary feel. If it's your first time on Mustique, people will introduce themselves at the [Cotton House's](#) Tuesday night cocktails or Jump Up Wednesdays at [Basil's](#) (if not on the airplane over). Kids ride together in pony camp (horses are shipped in from England and are trained in dressage, of course), and villa guests invite each other over for dinner or parties. Although regulars say the overall vibe has become more clique-y as the owners have changed from the likes of Princess Stephanie, island founder Colin Tennant and famed stage designer-turned-island architect Oliver Messel to American hedge fund managers, there are few places as equally exclusive and welcoming as Mustique.

Mustique has gained a reputation – and not undeserved – of being a retreat suitable only for the uber-wealthy. While the peak period of Christmas is quite expensive, the rest of the year offers real value. Mimosa, the newest home and one of my favorites, rents for \$12,000 per week during the summer, which is a wonderful time to visit (plan from mid-July through late-August, when Europeans come for school holiday). One of the most glamorous, the uber-sexy Yemanjá, a seven-acre property with 360-degree views, four pools and five bedrooms, clocks in at \$35,000 during the winter, outside of peak weeks. If the sprawling main house isn't enough space, guests can extend to an additional three-bedroom guest cottage and separate children's quarters with four bunkrooms for sleeping up to sixteen children. Cheap it is not, but when you consider the space, the staff and the amazing setting on a pristine Caribbean island, the rates are pretty remarkable. For travelers who don't have the budget or the inclination to commit to a big house, the island's one hotel, the charming and chic Cotton House, offers standard rooms as well as connecting options for families who want to give Mustique a try.

Before I arrived, I thought I would love the same things about this island as I do [St. Barth's](#). Although both have a groovy bourgeois-boho combo difficult to find elsewhere, it's a very different experience on Mustique, where relaxed house parties are the main attraction, and there is one bar on the island (but a great one). [St. Barth's](#) is sexier, offers more distractions in shopping and dining out and certainly has better nightlife. But for groups of friends or families whose main goal is to spend time with each other in a beautiful setting, Mustique is a rare place to disconnect. And that's something worth sharing, on a plane and beyond.

[Read about some of the island's top villas.](#)

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**[Henley Vazquez](#)**

## Jacaranda



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playroom in addition to the twin bedroom.

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I prefer the hilltop villas with their expansive sea views, but beach lovers may want to consider a house like Jacaranda, situated directly on L'Ansecoy Bay. Although the house was built in 1987 (and renovated recently), it has the look of an Oliver Messel original, with wide verandas, plantation style furniture and a mix of island art and framed nautical maps. Rumor has it that the villa's chef, Ronny, is also amongst the best on the island. The villa has four bedrooms, three in the main house and a master suite in a detached cottage just beyond the pool. The children's wing, just beyond the media room, includes a nanny room and a nursery or

## Les Jolies Eaux



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To live like royalty, rent Les Jolies Eaux, the Oliver Messel-designed villa built by Princess Margaret on the southern tip of the island. Although it's far from the most lavish of Mustique's houses, HRH's home has a wonderful sense of place thanks to the traditional colonial architecture, plantation shutters, antique furnishings and lush gardens. The current owners of the home have done extensive renovations to bring the house up to modern standards. It is now fully air-conditioned and has wifi, iPod docking stations, and a media room equipped with a flatscreen tv and dvd player.

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## Mimosa



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One of my favorite houses on Mustique is Mimosa, the island's newest villa. The house was designed for family gatherings and although the contemporary design looks straight out of a shelter mag, it's the kind of place where sandy feet and video games are welcome. There are technically four bedrooms, but a media room and living room can be converted into extra sleeping space for younger guests. Possibly the best feature is the view over the tiny Mustique runway in the distance, where toy-like prop planes landing and departing provide endless diversion.

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## Plantation House



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As impressed as I was with the houses on Mustique, I found that most had one fatal flaw – a serious lack of childproofing. Families traveling with young children, especially toddler age, should look to Plantation House, which possessed the very only set of safety gates to close off the pool that I saw on the island. The villa also has four of the six bedrooms under one roof and in close proximity to each other, making it a more comfortable set-up for parents traveling without an army of nannies to track a child's every step. The interiors are done in a neutral palette, pairing nap-worthy overstuffed sofas and chairs in an off-white cotton with beamed ceilings made from pickled wood and cool limestone floors. Two extra bedrooms sit in an adjoining cottage, each with its own kitchenette.

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## Scheherezade



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Completed in 2009, Scheherezade combines both an authentic Mexican vibe with the kinds of modern amenities and design that will appeal to the choosiest guests. The compound is divided into two sides with four bedrooms on the family side and three additional suites on the "guest" side. An outdoor dining palapa and infinity pool as well as an indoor living/dining area in case of inclement weather serves as the meeting place between the two. Bedrooms are furnished with romantic four-posted beds draped in mosquito netting, woven Mexican rugs and modern marble baths with double vanities. Additional amenities include a private gym, office, media room and AstroTurf tennis court. The children's bedroom has fun boat-shaped twin beds and a healthy collection of toys, but it is a bit removed from the parents' quarters so is better suited for older children or families traveling with a nanny.

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## Toucan Hill



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This Moorish palace occupies the highest point on Mustique. Although the over-the-top decor, including an ornate four-poster bed adorned in gold leaf in the master suite, won't suit minimalists, couples looking for a dramatic retreat and some of the island's best views will love the setting. As an added bonus, the villa's chef is trained in a variety of exotic cuisines so whether guests want a Thai feast or a Moroccan-themed cocktail party (complete with belly dancers flown in from [Barbados](#)), the staff can make it happen. Keep in mind that there are no televisions, telephones or WiFi in any of the five bedrooms and each is very private, so Toucan will be a better fit for groups of adults versus families.

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## Yemanjá



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One of Mustique's most glamorous homes is the uber-sexy Yemanjá, a seven-acre property with 360-degree views, four pools and five bedrooms. If the sprawling main house isn't enough space, guests can extend to an additional three-bedroom guest cottage and separate children's quarters with four bunkrooms for sleeping up to sixteen children.

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