

## ■ CRUISING YACHTSMAN

### The Mustique Mystique

One of the world's most exclusive islands welcomes you.

By Mary South

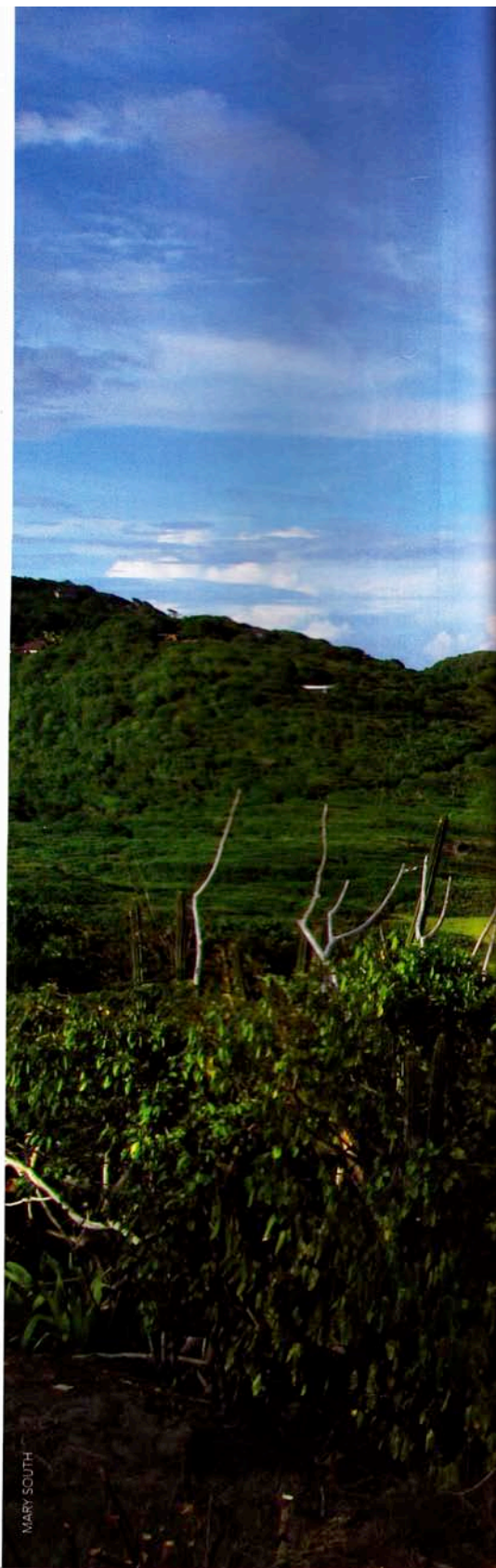
It is spectacularly beautiful — everything you summon in your mind's eye when you start craving winter escapes. Crystalline turquoise waters make a lazy retreat as warm foam from soft white shores. The fronds of palm trees whisper in a gentle breeze. Sunshine seems to seep through your skin and into your veins, inducing a gentle, narcotic bliss.

For more than 40 years now, Mustique has been regarded as the ultimate getaway for the rich and famous — because in addition to its tropical splendor, Mustique is also very, very private. The 1,400-acre island is owned by the Mustique Company, a consortium made up of the island's 50 resident villa owners. Over the years, these have included Mick Jagger, Bryan Adams, Tommy Hilfinger, Felix Dennis, Shania Twain and Princess Margaret. They're drawn by Caribbean paradise, of course, but lots of islands are pretty. This one is also very rich, very exclusive and — did I mention? — super private. There are few places left in the world that are as safe from the prying lenses of paparazzi as Mustique, which is no doubt why Prince William and his fiancée, Kate Middleton, recently vacationed here.

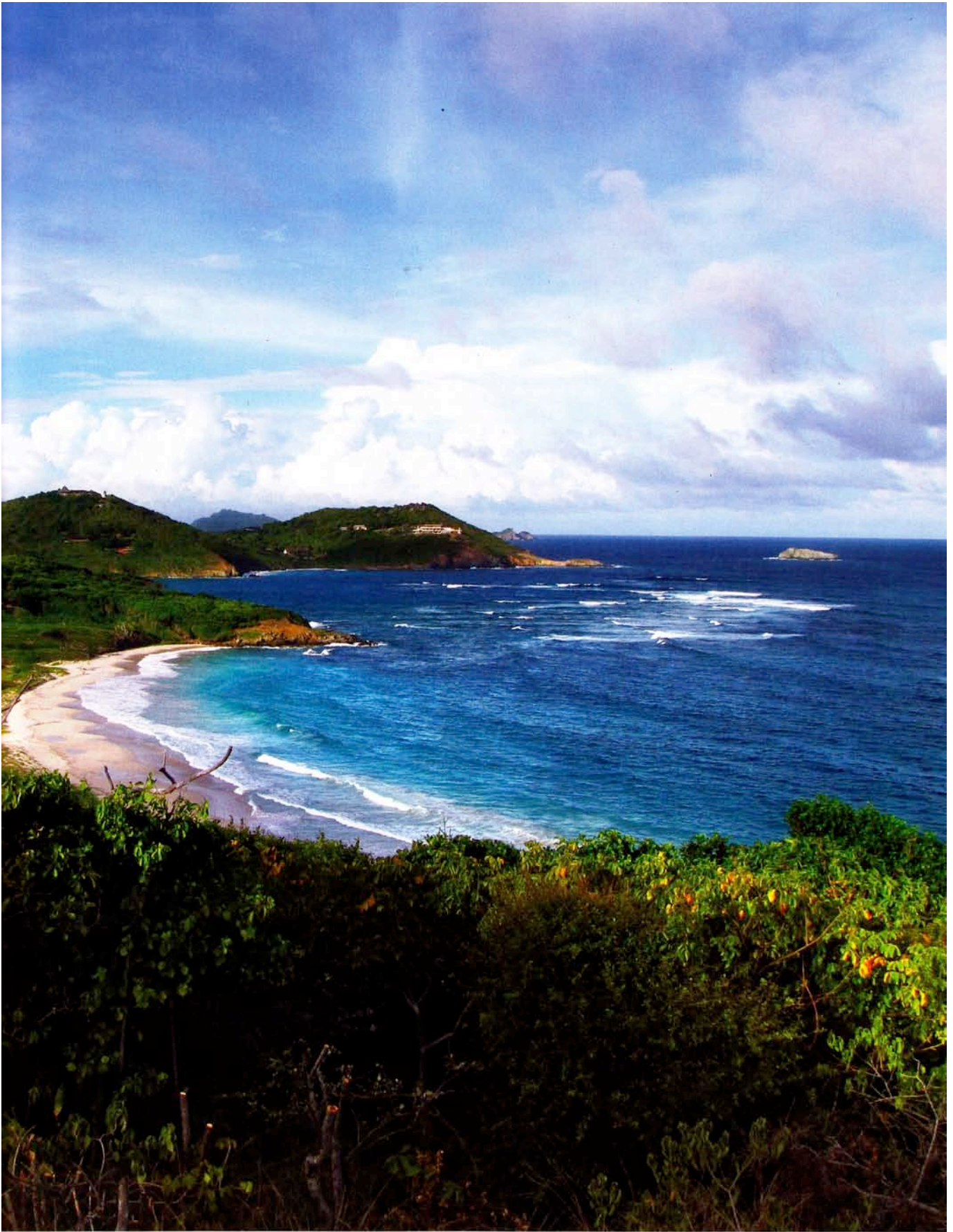
Originally an 18th century warehouse and sugar mill, the Cotton House is Mustique's five-star resort, managed by GLA International. The late British designer Oliver Messel restored many of the original features of the coral-built Cotton House. In the mid-'90s, the entire resort underwent renovations and the Coutinot House was added, bringing five of the most distinctive rooms and suites to the property. The two-bedroom Cotton Hill Residence, two duplex suites, a large swimming pool and a number of plunge pools were added in 2004, and all the existing rooms were refurbished in a style that is elegant and neutral with a colonial top note.

To visit Mustique is to be temporarily transported to a world you're just not worthy of. When you arrive at the tiny airport, a car and driver await with rolled, icy-cold face towels for refreshment. A few moments later, as you cross the veranda into the shaded coral and mahogany Great Room, your bags are whisked away and you're shown to a sofa or club chair, while

**WILD BEAUTY:** Mustique has many beautiful beaches, and, thanks to the private nature of the island, visitors often feel they have them all to themselves.



MARY SOUTH



## A HOP, A SKIP AND A JUMP

### Flying to Mustique

Most people going to Mustique connect via San Juan, Puerto Rico, or Barbados for quick flights to St. Vincent. A ferry service runs between St. Vincent and Mustique, but almost everyone opts to take another puddle-jumper to reach the island. Mustique Airways ([www.mustiqueairways.com](http://www.mustiqueairways.com)) offers frequent service between the two islands as well as charter flights from other nearby islands to Mustique. Mustique Company also offers a daily charter flight to and from Barbados for \$495 round trip, as well as private flights to and from nearby islands. Guests who wish to arrive by jet must fly into St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Barbados or Bequia and transfer because Mustique's beautiful runway is not long enough to accommodate jets.

For more flight information, contact Mustique Airport at 784-456-3336 or e-mail [airport@mustique.vc](mailto:airport@mustique.vc).

you're checked in. That's right. A cold drink arrives before you even reach — from the depths of your comfy spot — for your credit card. Next step, you're escorted to your accommodations — in my case, a deluxe room with private plunge pool overlooking the Caribbean. With

my Kindle and a very large trust fund, I imagined myself staying forever.

If you're spoiled, and tire of the small beach and the parade of tropical drinks and casual fare offered by the adjacent Beach Café, there are horseback riding, tennis lessons, excursions to other islands and a little bit of shopping along Britannia Bay. There are also a gym and spa that are as soothingly elegant as the rest of the resort. If you start to feel restless, Firefly is a lovely guesthouse overlooking Britannia Bay with a charming restaurant and bar and a handful of beautiful rooms ([www.fireflymustique.com](http://www.fireflymustique.com)).

My tour of the island included the famous Macaroni and Pasture beaches, several stunning villas and — by request, because I always like to peek behind the curtains — the desalination plant and the nursery. Mustique, of course, is forced by its location to be self-sufficient in its infrastructure. It operates so smoothly, though, that the end result is that most people never consider what's required to run a tiny island at such a luxurious level. But the Mustique Co. has taken great pains to preserve the island's natural beauty and ecosystem, while still supplying reliable creature comforts to residents and guests.

Despite a surprising lack of facilities for visiting yachtsmen, we're an intrepid lot who have failed to be discouraged — and Mustique is worth the trip. Britannia Harbour is protected from the trade winds, and moorings are available for boats that draw as much as 15 feet. Mooring charges start at \$77 per night for yachts less than 70 feet and range to \$192 per night for

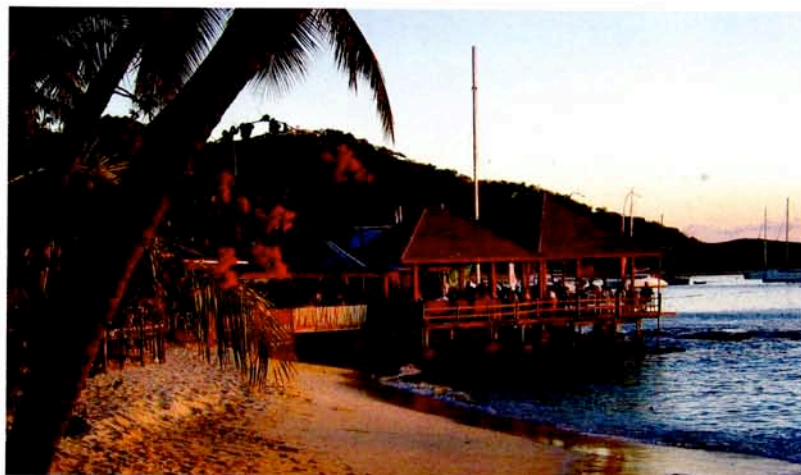


those longer than 100 feet. Nothing could be more relaxing than checking into the Cotton House after a few weeks at sea, booking a first-class dinner at its lovely Veranda restaurant or just grabbing a burger at the Beach Café. But the enduring reason for Mustique's steady stream of yachtsmen is Basil's Bar.

Built out over the water, Basil's offers cuisine that ranges from simple (grilled shrimp, callaloo soup) to decadent (escarrot Chablis, lobster Mustique — local lobster tail stuffed with shrimp and flambéed in cognac!). The sunsets are magnificent, and many nights you'll find the man himself enjoying good times with friends. Basil Charles, OBE, and his bar add a dash of energy and excitement to the otherwise too-perfect serenity of Mustique. Residents rely on Basil's year-round, but the joint really gets wild in late January each year when the Mustique Blues Festival, founded by Charles and Dana Gillespie, comes to town. Some of the greatest blues musicians in the world make the trek to Mustique to strut their stuff while raising money for St. Vincentian schoolchildren. And the audience is usually star-studded too. If you can't make it down for the blues festival, you can always order the CD at [www.basilbar.com](http://www.basilbar.com).

To experience Mustique for yourself, book a room or suite at the Cotton House (from \$610 to \$4,560 per night) at [www.cottonhouse.net](http://www.cottonhouse.net). Or contact Jeannette Cadet ([jeannette@mustique.vc](mailto:jeannette@mustique.vc)) to rent a villa (\$4,000 to \$48,000 per week, including staff) and do it like Jagger does. There's really no bad way to experience this beautiful Fantasy Island. □

**THE PLACE TO BE:** Basil's Bar is the island's hottest spot and is popular with residents and visitors alike.



MUSTIQUE COMPANY