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AUGUST 2005



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LONG WEEKEND >

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PAST LIVES AND PARADISE

Four days
at the Mind,
Body, Spirit
program at
Cap Juluca

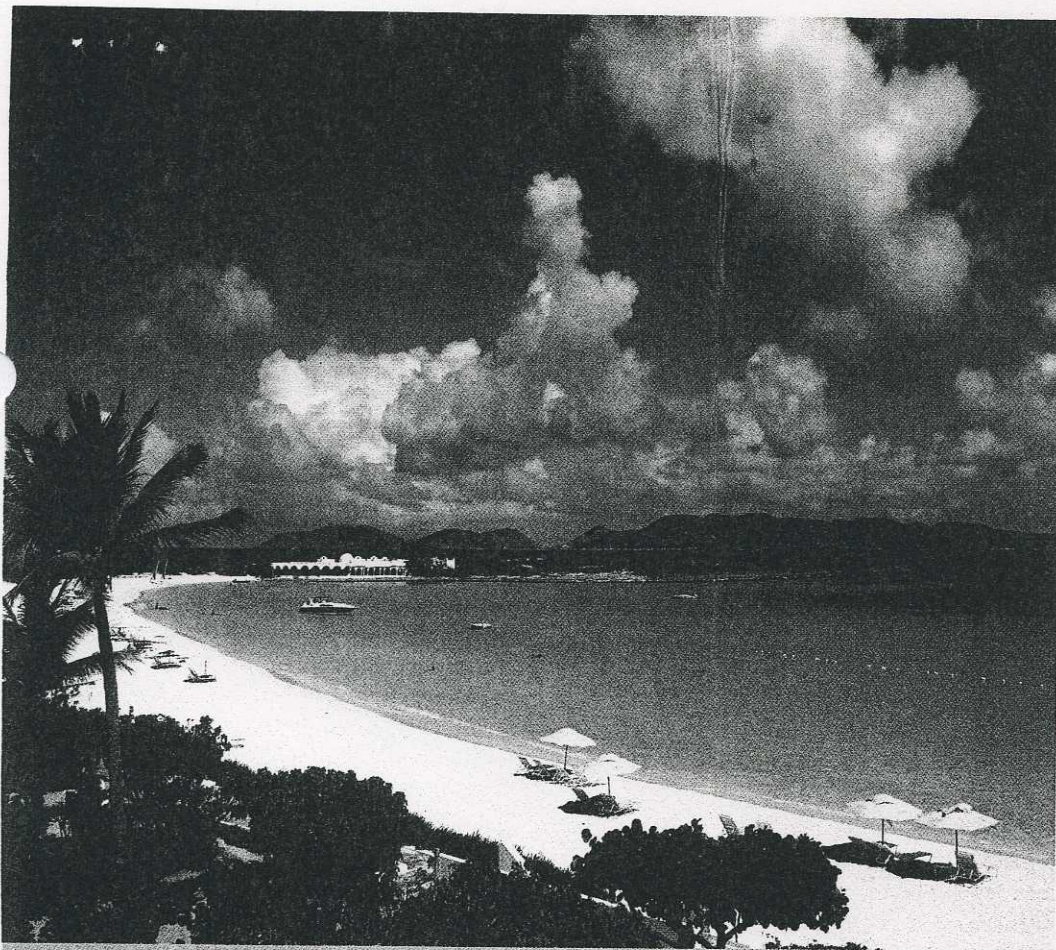
BY ANDREW WINER

Located on the British West Indies' island of Anguilla, Cap Juluca has been consistently cited as the Caribbean's best resort by *Travel + Leisure* and *Conde Nast Traveler*, and here's why: a completely private mile-long crescent-shaped beach of the softest, powdered-sugar sand your toes have ever felt; stunningly white arches, domes, parapets, and turrets festooning waterfront villas that make you feel like you're in an Arabian Nights dreamworld; breezy trade winds blowing off a pure azure sea; riotous splashes of bougainvillea, orchids, jasmine, and palms; mangrove forests and peaceful lagoons and ponds teeming with turtle doves, herons, egrets – you get the idea. This is no ordinary resort. And that's just the material aspect of the place.

If the sheer mystical beauty of Cap Juluca wasn't strong enough to completely remove the residue of stress, anxiety and cynicism of life in the States,

Cap Juluca's Mind, Body, Spirit program certainly was: the treatments that we received in a mere four days did more for our spirits than years of expensive therapy back home. This isn't your ordinary "spa" experience. Operating on the principle that one cannot separate the health of the body from the health of the soul, and coordinated by intuitive healer Diana Bourel, Cap Juluca's Mind, Body, Spirit program includes – in addition to more traditional activities such as yoga and movement classes – less typical encounters like channeling, past-life regression, storytelling, shamanic healing, and spiritual astrology. The program will, as Emily Dickenson believed the best poetry ought to do, "blow the top of your head off."

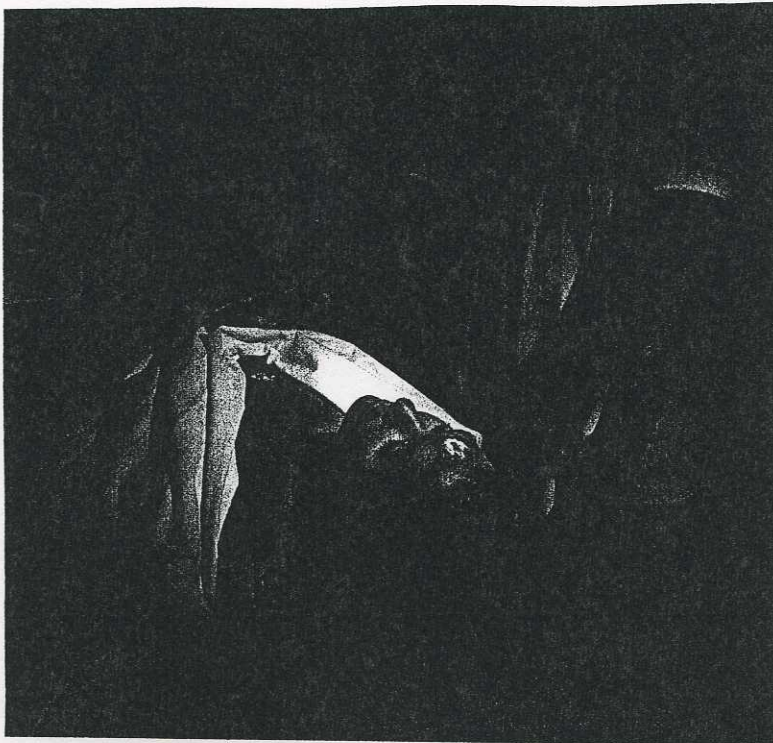
A little context might be necessary here: I have never believed in things like astrology, past lives and shamanism. All that changed under the spiri-



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tual guidance of three people whom I have come to call the "French Gurus of Cap Juluca": the aforementioned Bourel, who is really an American but has been living and practicing long enough on the ritzy French West Indies' island of St. Bart to be an "honorary" French woman; Thierry Lot, a shamanic French healer with piercing blue eyes; and, finally, the warm, funny, and lovable spiritual astrologer, Hubert Delamotte.

Hubert is a kind and gentle Frenchman who sports a waxed handlebar moustache – imagine a more affable Salvador Dali in linen pantaloons – and literally acts out your chart (he offers you a priceless tape recording of your session). After plugging a few of my statistics into an HP calculator and drawing some oblique-yet-fascinating symbols on a chart, Hubert informed me that my particular kind of Gemini consisted of four selves, and he then proceeded to enact an argument between my various selves in four distinct voices. He ended my session with a bang: my four selves in a dialogue with God, who, under the aegis of Hubert's whimsical method-acting, had a distinctly French accent. Hubert's chart-reading was surprisingly apt in terms of important dates in my life and his identification of me as a "survivor" – I left his villa with the dumb, happy and dazed feeling you might have after seeing a good comedy film about your own life.

It was on to Thierry Lot, who offers several kinds of encounters, variously entitled "Soul Awakening" and "Tree of Life." I experienced both in one explosive hour. Thierry is an extremely serious, if not sententious French mystic whose large eyes seem to peer down into your soul from the far sides

of his head. After finding muscles around my spine that I never knew existed, Thierry got down to business: "What is your deepest fear?" he asked, nay, barked at me. (And therein lies the magic of Thierry's method. The man operates on you like a fire-and-brimstone preacher, throwing questions at you that pierce through whatever armor you happened to carry into his villa.) Normally, I wouldn't reveal my deepest fear to anyone, not even my dearest friend, but the combination of Thierry's strong hands working my abdomen and back and his tractor-beam eyes seemed to lock me into some kind of Obi-Wan Kenobi trance that prevented me from withholding anything: I revealed all to that wrathful guru and presently found myself sobbing uncontrollably at the wisdom of his responses, the truth of his advice-ridden aphorisms. By the end of the session, which concluded with the application of crushed gemstones to the tissue around my belly-button (to alleviate stress, anxiety and depression), I found myself believing in nothing less than God Himself: I fairly stumbled out of Thierry's room and down to the beach, where I offered, per Thierry's instructions, the crushed gemstones to the sea.

That was just my first day at Cap Juluca. By way of taking a breather from so much "awakening," I spent the next few days walking on the largely unpopulated beach, swimming in the crystal clear, reef-protected waters, touring the herb and endangered species gardens (where the full-time horticulture specialist helped me pick the perfect blend of herbs for a custom-designed tea), and luxuriating in lengthy soaks in my sinfully large double-occupant bathtub (the size of a small pool, the tub comes complete with two underwater benches and pillowed headrests); where I gazed out of the all-glass bathroom enclosure at the turtle doves strutting atop the walls of my private outdoor solarium. My spacious suite – with its hardwood louvered doors, Italian tile floors, and Moorish-influenced design – afforded me a restful environment in which to lounge, read, or take catnaps, and my private, sea-view terrace was the perfect spot to receive several Balinese massages that I can't recommend highly enough: the resort employs a trio of women from Bali who are highly-trained in the art of Balinese and Thai massage.

Now would be the appropriate time, I suppose, to mention the other special program currently offered by Cap Juluca that helped awaken my soul: the aptly titled "Gastronomic Celebrations." For a few days each month, Cap Juluca pairs a world-renowned chef with a world-renowned winemaker, both of whom present several dinners.

I happened to be in Cap Juluca when the gas