

ANGUILLA

HOME TO
MOVIE STARS,
LONG DOGS,
AND EXPAT
ENGLISHMEN,
ANGUILLA IS SO
PRIVATE AND
SO EXCLUSIVE
THAT IT'S, WELL,
PRACTICALLY
SHOCKING.
TAMA JANOWITZ
REPORTS.

Each of Cap Juluca's 18 Moorish-style villas faces the calm waters of Anguilla's southwest coast (opposite).

RISING



LATITUDE 18°, LONGITUDE 63°, or is it the other way round? Anyway, dateline: Anguilla.

My trip begins before I even get there. For weeks I seem to be surrounded by this tiny island in the Caribbean Sea. A morning talk show sponsors a wedding there; the papers are full of the details of Brad and Jen's visit and mentions of Beyoncé and Jay-Z sightings at Cap Juluca. One friend recommends Shoal Bay East beach, another a cove just to the right of the Malliouhana Hotel. Others rave about the villas for rent at Altamer with names like Russian Amethyst and Brazilian Emerald. They'd gotten tired, they told me, of Saint Barths. Oh, they all sighed, how lucky you are to be going to Anguilla.

I knew very little about the place—only, in fact, that Christopher Columbus landed here in 1493 and that he took one look at its long and skinny shape and christened it with the Spanish word for eel. (Today the island is a British Overseas Territory.)

After a three-hour flight from New York to Saint Martin, a quick ferry to Anguilla, and five days on the island's 33 fabulous beaches, I think I've got it. This place, so chic, so hot, with its beautiful white

Moorish-style hotels and phone book-thick wine lists and menus, has managed to preserve a healthy dose of original island character (not to mention fantastic roadside barbecue). There is no duty-free shopping in Anguilla, no chain hotels, no casinos, no cruise ships in sight. This is a place where the elusive Anguillian "long dog"—a wild canine descended from pups who reportedly made it to shore after a shipwreck long ago—shares the white sandy beaches with leggy blonde celebrities and their potentially estranged husbands. My mission for this piece was to decode the secret of Anguilla's au courant status as Destination: Most Wanted.

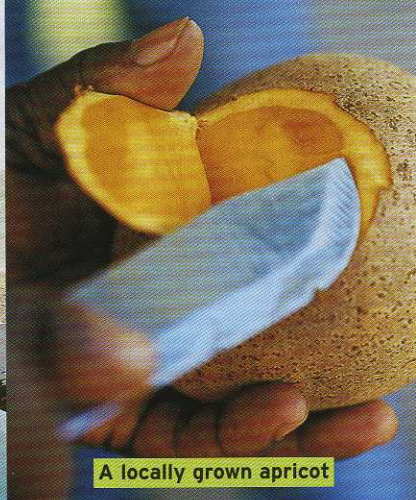
I began my research, believe it or not, by staying at the Malliouhana Hotel & Spa (*maliouhana* is the pre-Columbian name for the island). My terrace faces some kind of turquoise lapping water, possibly the sea, possibly shark infested. I am told by several reliable sources, however, that there are no sharks and no jellyfish. A lack of danger lurks everywhere in Anguilla.

Dawn, day one (okay, so it's maybe ten in the morning). I wake. The Malliouhana was built more than 20 years ago and was the first

PHOTOGRAPHS BY FREDERIC LAGRANGE



Tama at Temenos Sea Villa



A locally grown apricot



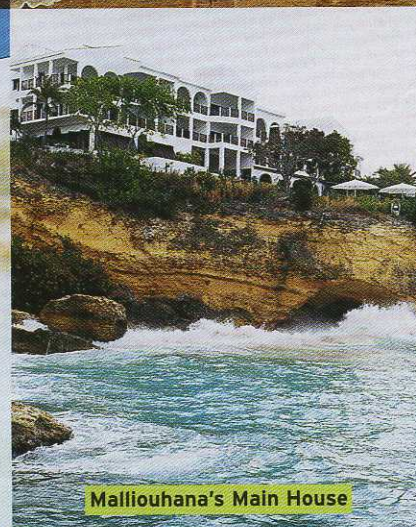
The lounge at the Malliouhana



The African Sapphire Villa at Altamer



Tama in paradise



Malliouhana's Main House

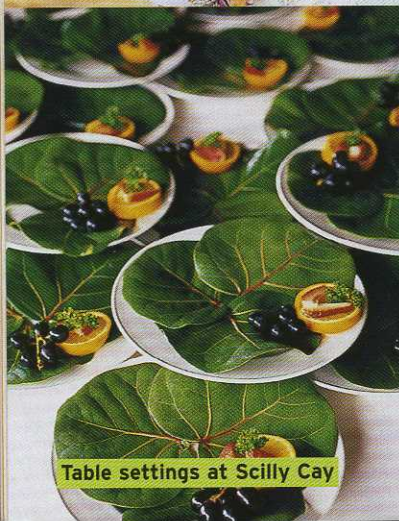


Table settings at Scilly Cay



A view from Temenos

top-of-the-line Anguillian resort (now sharing the mantle with Cap Juluca and CuisinArt, it will soon have to compete with the latest venture from the Los Angeles-based Kor hotel group, the team behind the überstylish Viceroy in Santa Monica). The Malliouhana is the kind of place that people come back to year after year, usually in late December and anytime private schools take a holiday. It is also one of those blissful hotels where no matter how many people are staying in its 55 rooms, it always seems as though you have the place to yourself. The two-story guest villas dotted throughout the 26-acre compound are situated at the end of a long row of royal palms. Each is done up with Haitian art from owner Leon Roydon's personal collection.

The cottages fulfill everyone's fantasy of a Caribbean house, with wooden blinds and ceiling fans and pastel-hued bedding that makes you think about nap time from the moment you wake up. The reception hall is in the main building, as is the restaurant (you dine and breakfast perched atop the amazing cliffs, where the waves look to be about 20 feet high as they break over the rocks). There is a swimming pool just off the perfect little bar, where they serve perfect little homemade potato chips made in an old-fashioned potato chip machine along with your drink. Everywhere are open walls and windows. Amazingly, there are no insects. Since things that sting or drink blood usually adore me, I find their absence most charming.

Roydon came here from Britain in 1982 and had the foresight to find and develop this piece of land long before Anguilla became a who's who type of place. Though his son Nigel has taken over the day-to-day management, Leon still greets each guest personally on arrival. He has a kind of David Niven quality—suave and unassuming. He is part of a large expat community on the island—people who came here from somewhere else and found themselves...unable to leave. Tanya Clark, for example, the delightful director of the recently built spa at the Malliouhana, hails from Vancouver Island, B.C. All that Vancouver and Anguilla have in common is that they are both long and narrow.

The new spa is located in a two-story building right on the beach, with three private suites on the second floor. Each suite has its own balcony (where you can have the open-air Ocean Chair Terrace massage) and one has its own Jacuzzi. The staff comes from Thailand, India, and those corners of the world where massage techniques are ingrained in daily life. It has been decided that before setting off on my exploration of Anguilla, I must prepare by receiving the signature massage, which consists of hot stones being placed between my toes by a wonderful woman named Tang.

I am then lulled into sleep on the beach and thus almost a full day is lost as I lounge on the amazing white sands. After waking, I fortify myself with a frozen daiquiri made with local limes. Sour, icy cold, and so, so refreshing.

Not that there aren't other things to do here: early-morning oceanside workouts with a local former cricket champion, tennis on clay courts, morning golf on the curiously named People's Golf Course. There's a place to swim with the dolphins (not for

free, of course, unless you get lucky and bump into one while swimming on your own), snorkel, and scuba dive. Sunday afternoons people chill at Gwen's Reggae Grill; Friday and Saturday nights there is dancing and reggae bands at The Pumhouse and Johnno's. (Tip: In season—late November through April—Friday night is mostly tourists, Saturday night is more of a local scene and much more fun.)

Or you can get married: Anguilla is known for making it super easy to get a license—and a JP—in two days. If you're desperate to shop, there is a ferry to duty-free Saint Martin. But I don't think you are going to want to do these other things.

On perfectly still evenings, when there isn't a cloud in the sky, groups gather at the Malliouhana bar or on the beach. They wait and they wait to see the green flash. This takes place for only one split second, when the tropical sun dips below the horizon. At that exact moment the yellow sun and blue water collide, creating an electric flash of neon-intense green. The whole event is over, almost, before you know it. And if instead of staring at the horizon you are lulled into a trance by the view of the empty beach and the ceaseless drama of the waves, you will miss the flash completely. It won't matter to you.

This is life on Anguilla's West End, the side with magnificent hotels and some of the world's most beautiful rental properties (villas that can go from upwards of 35 grand a week). On the more residential East End, the roads are rougher and goats wander freely. In my search to find the secrets behind Anguilla's chicness and to satisfy my newfound obsession with the long dog, I head there with Mimi Gratton, the ever helpful executive director of the Anguilla Hotel and Tourism Association. Mimi has been on the island—she's from Montreal—for more than 11 years and has a four-year-old daughter with an Anguillian father.

We drive from the Malliouhana to the home of Jo-Anne Mason, who lives up a steeply pitched (by local standards; to anyone else it's flat) dirt road in a house surrounded by loblolly trees and coral outcroppings overrun with the most amazing crabs. "Oh geez," Mimi says.

"I have a crab sanctuary!" says Jo-Anne—sounding slightly defensive—as we enter the compound.

"Of course you do...." Mimi says soothingly.

Toto, I've a feeling we're not at the Malliouhana anymore.

The crabs are called soldier crabs, and they are among the most peculiar and enchanting creatures I have ever seen. Each has selected a beautiful seashell in which to live and prances about, clicking lightly, like a tiny ballerina.

We sit at a picnic table under a gazebo. A large group of crabs are waving their claws at the sliding glass door, apparently trying to break in. "They dream about getting into the house," Jo-Anne explains, seconds before she releases the dogs. They are a pack of five—all mixed breed and rescued. In an instant I recognize that two are the elusive and exclusively Anguillian long dogs I have yet to spot. Slightly shaggy, with a distinctive fluffy area similar to a saddle, they have medium-length plumed tails, spaniel ears,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 233 >>

PRIVATE PARADISE

For those seeking complete privacy, even a suite at the Malliouhana won't do. "Supervillas" are built with these guests in mind. Mansions by any definition (the smallest is about 6,500 square feet), supervillas rent for \$40,000 to \$75,000 a week in the high season and almost double that between Christmas and New Year's.

CERULEAN was designed by Deborah Berke, the architect behind the exquisite minimalism of the Calvin Klein stores. The seven-bedroom compound has a 3,000-square-foot pool deck. Aestheticians trained by Susan Ciminelli, of the spa at Bergdorf Goodman, are on hand to administer massages and facials. 📍 From \$42,000 per week; 212-285-2070

THE ST. REGIS TEMENOS villas look as though they were plucked off the caldera rim at Santorini. Dubbed Sand, Sea, and Sky after their respective orientations to the beach, the villas each feature a St. Regis-trained staff (translation: flawless service). From \$40,000 per week; 264-222-9000

ALTAMER has more of a traditional resort setup, with a reception area, restaurant, and conference center. The three residences—Brazilian Emerald, Russian Amethyst, and African Sapphire—come with a pool table, a screening room, a volleyball court, and an MP3 system loaded with 30,000 songs. From \$38,500 per week; 264-498-4000

EXCLUSIVITY is a five-bedroom behemoth that has its own helicopter pad, a beach difficult to access from the road, and landscaping so thick even telephoto lens-wielding paparazzi don't stand a chance. Owner Remi Brooke accepts guests, who range from ex-royals to NBA players, as she sees fit—and only a few times a year. Lucky selectees eat meals prepared by Prince Rainier's former personal chef and swim in a pool just short of Olympic size. 📍 From \$60,000 per week; 860-379-9052

—TARA MANDY



The private pool at Altamer's African Sapphire Villa