

# BY LAND AND BY SEA



**I**T WAS A DAZZLING CARIBBEAN sailing day. The trades were pumped, the sun was shining and the sea was ice-blue with white trim. The 108' Holland-designed sailing yacht *Gleam*, was in her element, heeling just enough to cause the white wine and mushroom sauce to pool up on the leeward side of my lunch plate where I could soak it up with fresh bread. The scallops and linguine with asparagus were long gone. I was at serious risk of slipping into a blissful epicurean coma.

As the afternoon progressed, the breeze eased and skipper Tom Miller ordered up the Mickey and Minnie Mouse reachers. The boat punched through 12 knots and I collapsed into the cockpit cushions for a nap.

That evening I found myself in a Jacuzzi on a mountaintop on St. Barths, a glass of cabernet in one hand and a fat Havana cigar in the other. The trade winds were up again and howling over the mountain. From where I sat, I could see

most of St. Barths and a monster swatch of moonlit Caribbean. Satisfied that I'd taken hedonism to a record single-day level, I ambled inside, closed the big doors of my bungalow and crashed.

*Gleam* and the Villa at the Top comprise a sail-and-stay (a.k.a. surf-and-turf) charter package, an increasingly popular phenomenon that combines first-class yacht charter and first-class landside accommodations. In this case, the owner of the yacht also owns the villa. While each can be chartered separately, the sail-and-stay option offers luxurious respite for guests who may not be up for staying on a boat for their whole vacation. Charterers can structure their stay any way they want: They can spend a week on the boat and a week in the villa, they can meet the boat down-island and commute to the villa or they can use the boat to explore the islands near St. Barths—whatever suits them.

I boarded *Gleam* in Antigua. The yacht's owner enjoys fine food and it



A luxury sailing yacht accompanied by spectacular shoreside accommodations can make Caribbean magic. The 108' *Gleam* (lower left) and the breathtaking Villa at the Top on St. Barths (top left and above) are part of a sail-and-stay charter package. Guests can charter just the yacht, just the villa or the combination.

showed. On board was chef Daniel Fauquenot, a French-born expert who has worked all over the world and specializes in converting local ingredients into high gastronomic art. My first night aboard, at anchor near Green Cay off the eastern shore of Antigua under a brilliant tropical moon, Fauquenot produced an exquisite spiny lobster grilled with olive oil and herbs. It was preceded by an appetizer of paper-thin slices of smoked swordfish with cucumber salad in creole dressing.

The well-appointed *Gleam* accommodates six charter guests and carries a full complement of communications and entertainment equipment, as well as a jet ski, water skis and windsurfers and fishing, snorkeling and dive gear. She is air-conditioned and has extensive sunning space on deck.

After the inspiring 100-mile sail from Green Cay, we arrived at St. Barths in the evening. Miller handled the Customs formalities and handed me over to the staff of the Villa at the Top. The Villa occupies a mountaintop with sweeping views of the island and the sea. It is actually a group of five sumptuous bedroom suites connected by a walkway to a central liv-



ing/dining space with a patio and a blue-tile pool. A walkway above and behind the compound leads to a deck on the pinnacle of the mountain with a 360-degree panorama that brought me to my knees.

The Villa has a permanent staff who will prepare meals if guests prefer, as I did. But most choose to take advantage of the French restaurants on St. Barths. La-Casa-Del-Habano in the village of St. Jean at the bottom of the mountain is a must-stop for lovers of Cuban tobacco. Jam, the affable proprietor, provided a glass of Armagnac and a sample of the merchandise as I examined his selection.

For polished escapists, this package delivers some of the highest highs in the Caribbean. Just avoid the scale when you get home.

—Kenny Wootton

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