TRAVEL+ LEISURE

This Luxury Resort in Anguilla Has a Whole Bar Dedicated to Rum

Courtesy of Zemi Beach House

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Zemi Beach House, an upscale resort on Anguilla's Shoal Bay Beach, puts the spotlight on an underappreciated spirit with the Rhum Room: a clubby lounge devoted entirely to its namesake spirit. (The word *rhum* isn't an affectation — it's the term used on the Caribbean's Francophone islands.)

Courtesy of Zemi Beach House

I recently visited during a winter trip to the island, and was greeted by a dedicated "rummelier" who helped guide us to our perfect glass. Princess, who has a bottomless knowledge of the more than 100 varieties on hand, tries to source new bottles from each and every island in the region. This includes forbidden-in-the-U.S. Cuban rums, as well as a selection of Cuban cigars. (Don't worry: magically, it does not smell of cigars at all.)

All the rums (which start at $30 per serving) are served neat in snifters, the better to appreciate each one's unique qualities. Try some selections tailored to you based on your other favorite drinks, or go for a flight that shows off how many dimensions rum can have.

Anguilla is The Best Caribbean Island in 2018
For the second year in a row, Anguilla takes the title

In case you're wondering, that $650-per-glass rum is a rare 50-year-old edition from Appleton Estate. Even Princess has only tried it once, thanks to a customer who was feeling especially generous that night.

Not a rum fan? Princess can change that — but if you'd like a single malt (or a local lager) from the bar next door, just say the word. You can even ask them to put on some footy...you're technically in England, after all.

APPLETON ESTATE
50
JAMAICA
INDEPENDENCE
RESERVE
JAMAICA RUM

Courtesy of Zemi Beach House

The Rhum Room is but one of a hundred things that set the 65-key Zemi Beach apart. Take the bathrobe, the best I have ever worn. Other resorts think the thicker the terrycloth, the posher the robe — but the Caribbean is a hot place, so here, they're a lighter Turkish cotton. Plus, they aren't sized for a basketball player.

Thoughtful touches like this permeate your stay at the resort. How about a television that lives in the footboard of your bed until you summon it up with a button? (Arise!) When you open the door to your balcony, the AC goes off and then automatically back on when you shut it again. The music, the general manager confirms ("Thank you for noticing!"), has been planned carefully — and sets different moods around the property at different times, including a welcome section of beach with no music at all. This in contrast to my vacation last year, where we came to breakfast each day with a Groundhog Day-esque greeting of the same Sergio Mendes song.

Courtesy of Zemi Beach House

Other every-need-anticipated amenities include clear-bottomed kayaks, free sunscreen and after-sun lotion by the beach, and indestructible polycarbonate glasses for your Earl Grey martini that are safe to drop on the pool patio. They even have wheelchairs designed specifically for sand. *And towels with pockets that fit over the top of your lounge chair, so they won't bunch up or slide down.*

The owners are from New York and sometimes feel like having brick-oven pizza, so that's available, too.

Unlike other resorts on the island, Zemi survived Hurricane Irma with almost no damage — reopening as soon as the power and roads were back online, just five months later. (It was built in 2016 with the "new normal" of hurricane season in mind, and is tucked into a protected hillside on the leeward side of the island.)

There are no direct flights to Anguilla from the U.S., but there are many to St. Martin where you can catch an air taxi or a shared charter ferry.

Courtesy of Zemi Beach House

To book: zemibeach.com; doubles from $710 in high season. Rhum Room open Thursday through Saturday nights, or by request. It is open to non-guests, as are the fine dining restaurant, Stone, and the more casual beachside café 20 Knots.

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