



The cerulean waters off Long Bay Villas

Life in the Slow Lane

One of the Caribbean's most picturesque islands mixes luxe sensibilities with laidback indulgence. *by Nicola Chilton*

THERE'S A BEACH on the island of Anguilla where the powdery coral sand is almost pure white, lapped by waters that transition from turquoise to cerulean to Tiffany blue. It's called Shoal Bay East. A little further west is another. And another. Keep counting and you'll eventually reach 33.

Anguilla is the kind of place people speak about in hushed tones, one of the Leeward Islands in the eastern Caribbean, just a stone's throw from St Martin and St Barths, whose under-the-radar glam extends far beyond its idyllic beaches. November this year, for instance, will see the arrival of **Aurora Anguilla** (auroraanguilla.com), a reimagining of the property previously known as Resorts & Residences by CuisinArt,



Quintessence Hotel's tranquil beachfront, along Anguilla's Long Bay

which will feature its own fleet of jets, a Greg Norman-designed golf course and 178 suites set along gently curving Rendezvous Bay.

It was British businessman Leon Roydon who pioneered luxe accommodation in Anguilla. When he opened **Malliouhana** (aubergeresorts.com) in 1984, it attracted a smart crowd who were drawn by the hotel's spectacular location on one of the Caribbean's most beautiful beaches and its exceptional French cuisine by legendary French chef Joseph Rostang. After a multimillion-dollar renovation in 2015, followed by another in 2019 post-Hurricane Irma, Malliouhana today is as compelling as ever. The duck-egg-blue lobby

is open to the breezes and contains curiosities collected by Roydon over the years, including a wall of antique diving helmets. The terraced infinity pools, flanked by recliners and umbrellas the colour of ripe mangos, are made for lounging away afternoons.

There are several other standout hotels on the island – the **Four Seasons** (fourseasons.com) ticks all the right boxes; **Cap Juluca** (belmond.com) is a slice of breezy seclusion; and the diminutive, family-owned **Quintessence** (qbotelanguilla.com) excels in the kitchen – but there is another side of the island's hospitality that is equally fêted: the extraordinary private villas.

More often than not approached by an incongruous bumpy dirt road, the villas offer up the paradigmatic Caribbean experience. Try one of the three at **Long Bay Villas** (long-bay-villas-anguilla.com), on the northwest coast, for a Mykonos-meets-Marrakech vibe with white walls and tall windows that fill the living areas with Caribbean blue. Next door, the nine bedrooms of pastel-coloured **Santosha** (santosha-villa-anguilla.com) have a more traditional feel, with polished-wood floors and breezy verandas with rocking chairs. Sharing this stretch of coast is the Balinese-inspired **Nevaeh** (nevaehanguilla.com), surrounded by pretty pink hibiscus bushes, and featuring its own golf simulator and Peloton bikes.

Wherever you stay, the cuisine is bound to be a highlight because Anguilla is a place that takes food seriously, even in the most casual



Sailing on *Tradition*, the island's oldest wooden sloop



Above:
grabbing a bite
at Blanchards
Beach Shack
on Meads Bay;
left: outside the
oceanfront Cap
Juluca hotel

of atmospheres. Over in the west of the island, **Straw Hat** (strawbat.com) on Meads Bay elevates the concept of morning eggs to a new level with its Lobster Johnny Cake Benedict. If you still have room for lunch afterwards, a bit farther along the beach is **Jacala** ([instagram.com/jacala_restaurant](https://www.instagram.com/jacala_restaurant)) where Jacques and Alain – both Malliouhana alumni – offer the best French food on the island. For a lighter snack, colourful little **Blanchards Beach Shack** (blanchardsrestaurant.com) is the home of the MBLT (a mahi, bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwich) and frosé on tap. Finish off the day on the opposite end of the bay with sushi and sashimi at the Sunset Lounge at the Four Seasons.

Out east, it's a much more rural place, with spiky shrubs, squat cacti and scurrying lizards filling the landscape. Look out for roadside **Artisan** (+12 642 356 116) in Island Harbour, a rustic, unpretentious boîte where Liechtensteiner Jürgen turns out the island's best pizzas – certified by the Associazione Verace Pizza Napoletana – from his wood-fired oven. A couple of minutes away is **Pit Stop By Ben** (bybenrestaurant.com), another unassuming spot where the menu includes soupe à l'oignon, duck confit and moules marinières served from a cosy blink-and-you'll-miss-it roadside shack.

An hour spent with Eduard Balan at the Rhum Room at nearby **Zemi Beach House** (zemibeach.com) is a revelation. Crafting the most inventive cocktails on the island, his alchemic blends make use of everything from sea grapes to local mauby-tree bark as well as 110 different rums from across the Caribbean and beyond.

Anguilla is ideal for guilt-free beach days, but don't leave without visiting its offshore cays.

Sandy Island (mysandyisland.com), a tiny spit of sand with a bar at its centre, is the place to eat barbecued lobster and dance the afternoon away. Or spend the day aboard **Tradition** (tradition-sailing.com), the last surviving wooden sloop of its type in the Caribbean, made by hand in Grenada in 1978 and originally used for trading – as well as a fair amount of smuggling. As the sails billow overhead, the prow slices through the blue waters and the mimosas flow, you'll understand why those who have discovered Anguilla like to keep it to themselves.



A view to the turquoise Caribbean from the Four Seasons