

## Press Coverage 2018: Sugar Beach, A Viceroy Resort

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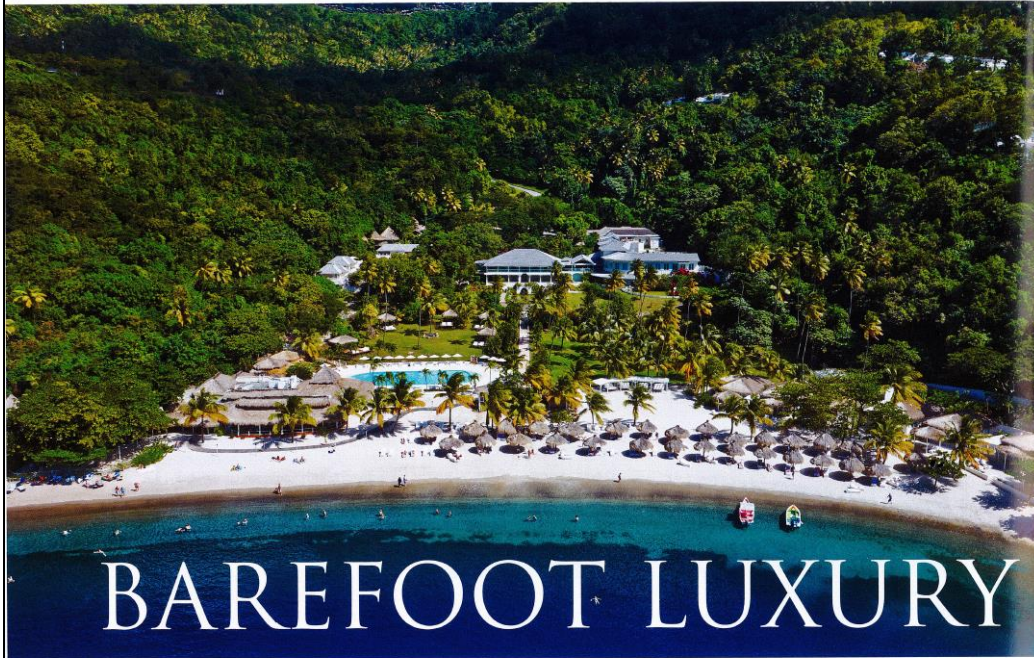
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# BAREFOOT LUXURY

Whether it's a family holiday or a forever holiday home, Venetia van Kuffeler discovers Sugar Beach in St Lucia has it all

**N**ESTLED IN THE MAJESTIC valley of the Pitons, St Lucia's Sugar Beach resort must be located in one of the most spectacular locations in the world. Listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, Gros Piton and Petit Piton are volcanic spires on the southwestern coast of the island. This natural phenomenon has created an amazing environment for the hotel, which is spread across 100-plus acres of tropical forest, with the only white sand beaches in the area.

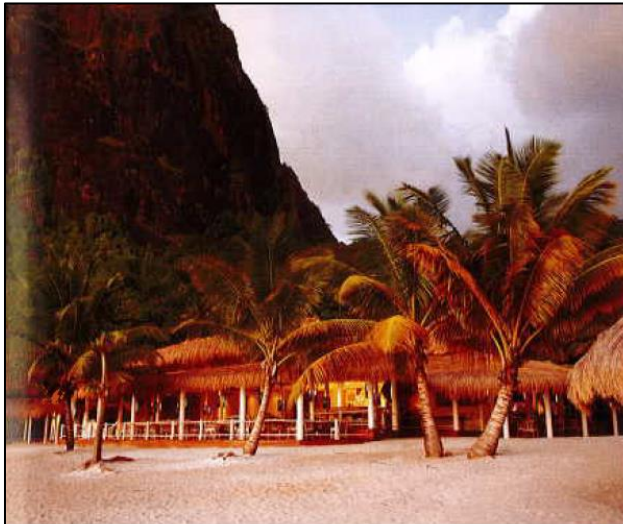
Formerly a working sugar plantation, the property has a long history of owners including Lord Glenconner, famously known as the 'Man Who Bought Mustique,' and for his friendship with Princess Margaret. After selling Mustique, he bought this land and moved to St Lucia with his pet elephant Bupa. Today, the resort is owned by Roger Myers, who in 2012 completed a three-year transformation that saw the property rebranded and relaunched under the management of the Viceroy Hotel Group. Driving down the steep hill into Sugar Beach at twilight, it's plain to see what Lord Glenconner saw all those years ago: the views are gobsmacking.

The resort houses 96 Luxury Villas and Cottages, Beachfront Bungalows and Sugar Mill Rooms nestled into the mountain side. Our Ocean View Grand Luxury Villa was the perfect accommodation for our family, as my husband and I were travelling with our two- and four-year old sons.

With elegant white interiors and wooden polished floors throughout, villas come complete with a small kitchen. The master bedroom was furnished with a four-poster bed, and the sofa bed transformed the sitting room into a second bedroom each evening. The beautiful bathroom had an enormous walk-in shower and separate roll-top bath. Outside, the oversized plunge pool provided hours of entertainment for the kids, freeing us up to while away the afternoon on a sun lounger.

Our personal butler was on hand 24-hours a day, via a mobile phone supplied to us on arrival. He was happy to arrange day trips, transfers up and down the hill, dinner reservations or organise a DVD for the children. For children aged four and up, there's a complimentary programme of supervised activities like movie nights, either in the childrens club or out in the gardens (nature walks and sandcastle building, for example).

There are various meal plans that can be modified for your stay, and although it took a few days to establish this, food for children under five years old is on the house. For the most part we ate beachside in the Bayside Restaurant, save for one night when my husband and I enjoyed



Caribbean-influenced fare in candlelit surroundings at The Great Room found in the original, grand plantation building.

When swimming and sunbathing became too much, there were plenty of on-site activities from snorkeling and kayaking to fitness classes in the impressive gym complex, or a gloriously firm massage in a tree house treatment gazebo at the Rainforest Spa.

Outside the resort, St Lucia has dramatic undulating topography and natural beauty, which has to be explored. The island is mountainous and lush with hidden waterfalls, rainforests, sandy coves and stunning scenery. Just three miles from the historic town of Soufriere, Sugar Beach has endless adventures for guests to embark on, ranging from mud baths and rustic plantation tours to hiking up the Pitons, ziplining, rainforest hikes, and a full day's sailing, with deep sea fishing or whale and dolphin watching thrown in. Knowing our limitations with two small ones, we opted for a trip to the nearby 'drive-in' volcano complete with hissing steam and bubbling mud, followed by lunch at the original Hotel Chocolat estate. As a working cocoa plantation, pretty much everything we tasted in the restaurant was infused with raw cacao. We were in heaven!

Larger parties can find the ultimate barefoot luxury in renting one of Sugar Beach's privately-owned Residences. These range from one to four bedrooms in size, and some are even for sale, including a two-bedroom plantation style

villa (for US\$3.2 million) and a four-bedroom oceanfront residence (for US\$7.2 million). These rare opportunities to purchase a rental pool villa include plenty of ownership benefits like an attractive rental return and freehold title to the property, and of course, fabulous ocean views.

Sugar Beach has also recently completed two stunning contemporary Beachfront Collection homes. With two more in the pipeline, owners stand to benefit from beautiful architectural design, cutting edge technology and sliding timber screens revealing dramatic seascapes. Perched further up the hill, four four-bedroom Piton Residences are due to start construction soon, and available to purchase off-plan. Yes, owners will be further away from the beach, but the view alone is worth the sacrifice. With the resort managing these properties, these ownership options offer the very the best in turnkey, hassle free living.

**Sugar Beach, A Viceroy Resort, St Lucia**  
**T: 001 758 456 8000**  
**E: [sb.reservations@viceroyhotelsandresorts.com](mailto:sb.reservations@viceroyhotelsandresorts.com)**  
**[www.viceroyhotelsandresorts.com/en/sugarbeach](http://www.viceroyhotelsandresorts.com/en/sugarbeach)**

Those interested in villa sales should contact:  
 Penny Strawson  
 Property Director, Sugar Beach Residences  
 T: +1 (758) 456 8091  
 E: [Penny.Strawson@sugarbeachresidences.com](mailto:Penny.Strawson@sugarbeachresidences.com)  
[www.sugarbeachresidences.com](http://www.sugarbeachresidences.com)

