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ACCESS ALL AREAS

A European princess, a biotech entrepreneur and a rockstar's progeny – 50 years on, Mustique has lost none of its glittering allure

On a balmy July night, stars twinkling up above, the inspiring octogenarian Calypso Rose provides the first of the evening's post-dinner entertainments. I'm on the dance-floor with a group of 14-year-olds, surrounded by a rock star's prodigious offspring, an internationally famous artist, a supermodel, a couple of hedge-funders, two top art dealers, a supermarket heir, a European princess and a Formica kitchen magnate.

Nearby, surveying his empire, stands Basil, eponymous creator of the famous bar. It's the 50th "birthday" of Mustique, the legendarily discreet island resort in St Vincent and the Grenadines, where the world's most wanted enjoy, if not total anonymity, than at least privacy.

Earlier in the evening, I'd been introduced to our future king (I couldn't possibly reveal which one) and his wife, who'd popped in for celebratory cocktails, leaving before the night's more decadent festivities. If that seemed a bizarre encounter, it is nothing compared with the handsome Swedish biotech entrepreneur I'm seated next to at dinner, who tells me about his beloved, deceased German shepherd, its likeness immortalised in a huge gold pendant around his neck, and that he's currently having cloned!

Made famous by pioneering early residents, from Princess Margaret to Mick Jagger and David Bowie, Mustique is a holiday location built on its reputation for eccentricity and revelry as much as its natural beauty. The stakes are high for marking the island's half-century, and the Mustique Company, whose job it is to govern this mini-colony of the privileged, has created a

week-long succession of events to celebrate and raise money for the island's foundation.

It clearly has form for mustering up a bash. The finale begins with cocktails at Basil's, then dinner for 500, under the longest marquee I've ever seen, snaking it's way along the seashore. Awash in Whispering Angel rosé (the winemaker himself pouring it from magnums), it ends with a jaw-dropping firework display over the bay, followed by an all-night knee's up at Basil's. At 4am, the iconic, recently rebuilt wooden bar over the harbour is still packed with happy partygoers. It's the latest night

An idyll where the world's most-watched themselves become spectators

I've had in decades but, on Mustique, the night is, apparently, still young.

Colin Tennant's dream of a Caribbean idyll, free from inquisitive eyes, where the world's most-watched themselves become spectators, may have outlived its creator but its unique appeal is as potent as ever. This time, we're staying with friends at their luxurious Colonial-style hillside haven, Carissa, with its extending views over tangled jungle, a jade green saltwater bird reserve, and on to the open turquoise sea, where I've been a grateful guest over the decades.

My first trip predated family life and the comforts of a villa. For Millennium New Year, a raggle group of single friends clubbed together to rent an ancient wooden sailing vessel and we moored up in Mustique's famously uncomfortable harbour. Meaning only to stay one night for the island's extravaganza to mark the new

century, we found ourselves awash in hospitality and lingered a whole week, enduring rolling mooring and somewhat basic accommodation on a bellyful of free cocktails.

A homestay on the island, rented or bought, famously provides entry to an elevated circle of billionaires, royalty and rock stars that for decades has made it the most aspirational and exclusive of destinations. It's a *Truman Show*-style haven; tortoises roam the perfect lawns, crickets and frogs compete with sprinklers for ambient backdrop sounds and you'll find graffiti by Bernie Madoff on the beach.



Villa with a view: Carissa

On Mustique, the sun always shines, the service is impeccable and the most arduous task is navigating the privacy ensuring total lack of signage in your ubiquitous golf cart. One of the few landmarks, aside from the fantasy homes themselves, is a statue of two giant copulating tortoises, donated by the late publishing magnate and resident Felix Dennis. Their looming presence offers a salutary reminder that, on Mustique, you are definitely inhabiting a fantasy world.

The five-bedroom Carissa villa is available through the Mustique Company (mustique-island.com) and costs from \$25,500 (£22,800) a week.