

BlackBook

A GLOBAL GUIDE FOR THE DISCERNING TRAVELLER

Belmond La
Samanna,
which will
reopen in
December on
St Martin



THE RENAISSANCE

A Spirited Recovery

Last year's hurricanes brought devastation around the Caribbean. Now, after months of rebuilding, some of the leading resorts are re-emerging and looking better than ever. By **NIGEL TISDALL**

A year ago some of our favourite islands in the Caribbean took a serious hit when two category five hurricanes stormed through in close succession. Now they are reopening for business with a new vigour, with many top resorts offering enhanced rooms, innovative restaurants and refreshed spas sparkling in the tropical sunshine.

Typical of this resilient mood is tiny Anguilla, which boasts some of the most bewitching white-sand beaches in the world. Within a month of being mauled by the 300kph winds of Hurricane Irma this plucky British Overseas Territory was back

welcoming visitors. By January, **Quintessence Hotel** (qhotelanguilla.com), a new Relais & Châteaux property with nine meticulously designed suites and a gourmet French bistro, had opened beside Long Bay Beach. In April, **The Reef by CuisinArt** (thereefbycuisinart.com) followed with 80 contemporary rooms set on the beach at Merrywing Bay. Come November, fans of dream seaside escapes will be able to check into two more prestigious openings. Blessed with a one-in-a-million location beside the perfect crescent of Maundays Bay, **Belmond Cap Juluca** (belmond.com) will feature 52 rooms, 15 suites, 15 pool suites and four villas, while at **CuisinArt Golf Resort & Spa** (cuisinartresort.com) the havoc wrought by Irma has been seen as “a silver lining” opportunity to transform the entire Mediterranean-style property. New amenities will

include a Morocco-inspired KazBar and a Caribbean-chic pool with teak loungers and private cabanas.

On neighbouring St Martin, restyled **Belmond La Samanna** (belmond.com), which overlooks the splendid sands of Baie Longue, will once again be serving refined cocktails and langoustes fraîches grillées des Caraïbes when it reopens on 10 December. Meanwhile on St Barth, several luxe resorts have chosen to close for a full year of restoration in order to meet the high standards expected by regulars. Opening 15 October, **Hotel Le Toiny** (letoiny.com) will offer eight new villa suites featuring full terraces and oceanview infinity pool overlooking the island’s Côte Sauvage while among the outstanding relaunches slated for November is **Le Sereno** (serenohotels.com), which will unveil a new restaurant, fully redesigned rooms including family



Clockwise from top left: the pool at Belmond Cap Juluca on Anguilla; a view from a villa at Le Sereno, St Barth; the course at CuisinArt Golf Resort & Spa; a plunge pool at Secret Bay, Dominica

MUSTIQUE MOMENT It’s party time on the most famous private island in the Caribbean as the Mustique Company celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. Created by the eccentric Scottish aristocrat Colin Tennant, this tiny, beach-fringed escape in the Grenadines, much loved by rock stars and royalty, maintains a sophisticated but low-key style. Over 80 of its fabulous villas can be rented, including Tommy Hilfiger’s eight-bedroom Palm Beach estate and a treasury of heritage homes designed in the 1970s by Oliver Messel. To mark the occasion, Basil’s Bar has received a makeover by Philippe Starck while a new speedboat, *Lady Anne*, offers exhilarating trips around the islands. The Cotton House, where it all began, is now a romantic 17-room boutique hotel that has just completed a full refurbishment, including new duplex suites and a dignified Great Room styled by Parisian designer Tristan Auer. mustique-island.com



Clockwise from above: lobster tail at Dominica's Secret Bay; the Baie Longue, St Martin; a tortoise on a Necker Island beach



WINTER WONDERS

Over 70% of Caribbean destinations were unaffected by the hurricanes, and many islands also have inviting new or improved resorts for the coming season



The first **Mandarin Oriental** resort (*mandarinoriental.com*) in the region also opened this summer. Set on Canouan, in St Vincent and the Grenadines, this comes with 26 opulent suites, a Balinese-style spa and a Jim Fazio-designed golf course with stunning views.

Dorado Beach, Puerto Rico, is one of just six Ritz-Carlton properties in the world with the elite Reserve status

suites with private pools, plus improved spa and fitness facilities. In December, LVMH-owned **Cheval Blanc St-Barth Isle de France** (*chevalblanc.com*), which is the only hotel outside mainland France to enjoy "palace" status, will unveil 19 new suites designed by Jacques Grange, along with two ocean-facing restaurants and a kids club, The Carousel. Oetker Collection's **Eden Rock** (*oetkercollection.com*) will open just a few days before Christmas following a top-to-toe renovation by Martin Brudnizki Design Studio London, including a new Rémy Room and Bar named after the hotel's original owner, with three brand new suites to follow in 2019.

Farther west in the British Virgin Islands, a complete rebuild was required at top dive spot **Cooper Island Beach Club** (*cooperislandbeachclub.com*), which now boasts ten beachfront rooms and a solar-

powered microbrewery. **Anegada Beach Club** (*anegadabeachclub.com*) has also reopened following a \$3m refurbishment of its oceanview tents raised above the dunes, while Richard Branson's **Necker Island** (*virginlimitededition.com*) will open in October, no doubt with a restocked wine cellar after its celebrated owner sheltered inside during the storms.

On the north coast of Puerto Rico, which was ravaged by Hurricane Maria, **Dorado Beach** (*ritzcarlton.com*) will reopen in October. Currently one of just six Ritz-Carlton properties in the world with the brand's elite Reserve status, its ultra-luxe amenities will include a new Omakase & Ceviche Bar, a revitalised Spa Botánico and grounds replanted with more than 300,000 flowers. Maria also dealt a particularly harsh blow to Dominica, but that hasn't stopped **Secret Bay** (*secretbay.dm*), the island's sole five-star hotel, from determinedly rebuilding ahead of its opening on 1 November. Its six sustainably crafted one-bedroom villas will now feature private plunge pools to complement their indoor-outdoor living room and gourmet kitchen, while an impressive range of concierge services includes night snorkelling, culinary classes and a private jazz concert. It's an inspiring recovery across the region, no less for its quality than its incredible speed. ●



On the nearby island of Bequia, **The Liming** (*thelimingbequia.com*) is a new collection of nine hilltop villas with one to five bedrooms that will open its doors on 1 November.



Hodges Bay Resort & Spa (*elegant-hotels.com*), a \$100m development on the north coast of Antigua with 79 premium rooms, will debut this winter.



Independently owned **Silversands** (*silversandsgrenada.com*) will bring a new level of contemporary elegance to Grenada's Grande Anse Beach with 43 spacious suites and – at 100m – the longest pool in the Caribbean.