50 years of Mustique magic

The island of Mustique, in the Grenadines, is celebrating 50 years this week.
Here’s why it’s still our favourite tropical hideaway….

by Francisca Kellett

There’s talcum-powder sand and gin-clear, turquoise water - but that’s just one reason why you come to Mustique. You come to Mustique because it’s deliciously laid-back, the sort of place where you kick off your shoes at dinner rather than don your Louboutins. You come because everyone is friendly, even if everyone is famous. You come because it’s where the impossibly glamorous have been coming for decades. You come for the villas and the sea and the lush tropical vegetation. And you come for Basil’s.

Basil’s Bar is that iconic beach-side institution where everyone from Jerry Hall and Cara Delevingne to the Middletons have eaten grilled lobster and danced on the impromptu dance-floor, fuelled by lime daiquiris and rum punch.

It’s still run by charming Basil Charles, confidante of royalty and rock stars alike. His beach bar has just had a makeover and a grand reopening to celebrate 50 years since Mustique was bought by Colin Tennant, later Lord Glenconner, who put the place on the map when he snapped up this parcel of paradise in 1958 for £45,000. Clever chap.

Tennant then gave his great friend Princess Margaret a 10-acre plot of land as a wedding present in the Sixties, and the rest is history. She adored it, built the famous Les Jolies Eaux (which you can now rent) - and the great and the good followed: Aristotle Onassis, Mick Jagger, David Bowie.

But the crowd – and the whole island - has always been low-key. Perhaps that’s why the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge love it so much. There is no bling, no showing off. This is not St Barths.

There’s just one small hotel – The Cotton House – and a guesthouse called Firefly. Most visitors take a villa, such as the gorgeous Palm Beach, set right on the sand at L’Anescoy Bay and sleeping 16, or the tranquil Pangolin, set in the lush hills and sleeping eight.
In terms of actually doing anything? There’s very little, and that’s part of the appeal. The beaches are what it’s all about, from beautiful Macaroni, great for surfing, to our favourite, calm and quiet Gelliceaux Bay, which was Princess Margaret’s favourite. And then, come sundown, everyone congregates at Basil’s for another night of delicious seafood and rum, of laid-back, barefoot revelry. Here’s to the next 50 years...
The Queen arrives in Mustique in 1977 greeted by Princess Margaret

Princess Margaret and her friends Lord Colin Tennant and Lady Anne Tennant waiting on the jetty at Mustique to greet Queen Elizabeth II, during her Silver Jubilee tour of the West Indies
Mick Jagger and Jerry Hall on a beach in Mustique, 18th February 1987

Jerry Hall with her daughter Elizabeth Jagger, Mustique, circa 1991

Princess Margaret's home in Mustique

Mick Jagger's home in Mustique
Tommy Jeans Photo Shoot in Mustique: Ian Webb, Lauren Bush, Lizzy Jagger, Jake Sumner, Ally Hilfiger, Tommy Hilfiger, Alexandra Richards, Amy Lemons, Paul Stiell and Theodora Richards