



THE SUNDAY TIMES

This tiny Caribbean island is the next big thing in wellness



Lagoon Beach on Mustique

Mustique is known for rum cocktails and partying royals but the island is shifting gears visitors can now expect as many downward dogs as dirty martinis.

Susan d'Arcy

13 Oct 2025 04:00:00

Mustique is the super-exclusive Caribbean hideaway that's famous for being the place that one per-centers let their hair down. Princess Margaret scandalised high society in the Seventies by frolicking here with her toy boy Roddy Llewellyn. A decade later David Bowie was holding NDA-worthy soirées in his villa. These days stars such as Harry Styles have the party baton firmly in their grasp.

Based on that reputation, take a guess at the island's latest initiative.
Launching a champagne label perhaps? Opening a next-level nightclub?
Nope, it's getting into wellness.

Mustique and wellness? Shurely shome mushtake? But as a destination that revels in the unexpected, arguably, it's completely logical that the Mustique Company, which runs day-to-day operations on behalf of the island's 109 villa owners, is collaborating with The Healthy Holiday Company to get guests downward dogging (hate to disappoint the more liberal, non Lycra-clad Mustique regulars but that's a yoga pose).

Socialising — even with rum — has health benefits

This gear change is not without antecedents. This year the 1,400-acre dot, anchored in the Grenadines between Bequia and Canouan, was the first long-haul trip for the Princess of Wales in search of some wholesome R&R after cancer treatment, while last year the UK's second most famous Kate, Ms Moss, celebrated her [50th birthday](#) here with a spiritual retreat.

So I keep an open-mind as I sign up for its inaugural Health and Happiness week. It's in May, which is low season when occupancy levels at the villas and the 17-room Cotton House, Mustique's only hotel, drop as the weather gets hotter and wetter. Happily, it's invitingly sunny and dry when I arrive. It's also soon apparent that my seven days will constantly remind me of the scene in *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* where Aunt Voula nods on discovering the groom is vegetarian and then offers to cook him some lamb. "Auntie Mustique" takes similar artistic licence with holistic matters, believing they're better when fuelled by alcohol. Where other than Mustique would hold an annual Rum Run?



There are plenty of options for yoga

Socialising has been deep in the island's DNA ever since 1958 when the flamboyant 3rd Baron Glenconner paid £45,000 for this "rough diamond" and transformed it into an A-list party paradise. So the "happiness" aspect including must-do rituals such as Friday night's Happy Hour and a Half at the Beach Café is every bit as integral to this wellness festival as body-sculpting classes at its swanky fitness studio. As it happens, it has an unlikely ally in the World Health Organisation. In June the WHO released a report claiming loneliness is linked to an estimated 100 deaths every hour globally, and concluded that social connection can reduce inflammation, prevent medical issues and foster mental health.

Bolstered by this research, I join my first scheduled event, the Tuesday-night cocktail party in the Cotton House's airy Great Room, which is dotted with nostalgia-laden photographs including one of a young Mick Jagger head to foot in gold lamé (it's fancy dress ... I think). Attendance is basically

a three-line whip for all visitors, so you might find yourself mingling with royalty, rock stars or billionaires. No famous names for me, although I do spot Sienna Miller during my stay, and I swerve the complimentary Frozen Bligh's Blood mojitos with the next morning's 7am hike in mind.

I know it will be high-powered in at least one respect — my fellow wellness warriors. I'm the only one of the jolly group of 25, mostly single females and British with some couples and a smattering of Americans, who isn't a C-suite executive. Several are in the fashion and beauty industries, others are property developers and corporate lawyers.



Have cocktails in the Cotton House

Finding the island's wild side

The walk turns out to be turbocharged too in the best possible sense: scenically. Considering villas here can cost north of £150 million, I expect Mustique to be as primped and plastic as a *TOWIE* cast member. Instead,

it's wonderfully wild, with heart-warming rolling hills, rugged could-be-Cornwall cliffs and either-or coasts, one side offering honey-toned beaches lapped by a calm Caribbean and the other carved into coves by an angry Atlantic.



It's also ridiculously unflashy to the point of endearingly folksy. There are no cars, guests beetle about in golf buggies, and to keep things homely there are no traffic lights or street signs. While the villas hidden behind high walls and extensive gardens might be architectural extravaganzas, the shops, bars and restaurants on view are so cutesville they could easily double as a set from the BBC TV feelgood show *Death in Paradise*.

The pace picks up elsewhere with up to five hours of yoga, Pilates, kayaking, paddleboarding, circuit training and tennis on offer daily as well as

informative talks on gut microbiome and lifestyle, blissful spa treatments by Bamford (the upmarket British skincare range), and activities such as snorkelling with turtles and swim-rides with horses in crystal clear L'Ansecoy Bay where I get a close-up of Bryan Adams's and Mick Jagger's homes. As no one is checking registers, you can grab a sunlounger at glorious Endeavour Bay and "meditate" if you want time out.

I particularly enjoy yoga and breathwork with Tara Lee at the alfresco yoga pavilion on Lagoon Bay. Last year Mustique opened a vast, light-filled, expertly equipped gym, so pumping iron is gold standard here and I get great gym advice from Charlotte Woolf, a personal trainer who's worked with Rachel Weisz and Salma Hayek.



Swim-ride with horses in crystal clear L'Ansecoy Bay

Keeping our sociability levels topped up, Health and Happiness guests share villas including Trade Winds, which has five elegant en suite bedrooms, a huge Caribbean-style dark wood and white sofa'd sitting room, wraparound terraces with sea views and a spectacular infinity pool. Meals

are also communal. Lunch might be a beach picnic with an array of healthy salads, barbecued fish and chicken and fruit platters and sorbets. Dinner might be sharing plates on the Cotton House's veranda with tuna teriyaki rolls, chicken tikka skewers, shrimp in a citrus dressing, roasted pumpkin and spiced couscous and passionfruit meringue. Food feels home cooked rather than fine dining and service is always laid-back and friendly.

My overriding memory of the week has to be another island ritual, the fabulous Sunday-night sunset jazz session at Basil's Bar. Admittedly, that day most of the group had completed a 90-minute hike, a high-energy dance workout and a Pilates class and been snorkelling, but even so some of us tip the scales pretty heavily in favour of happiness, ordering bottles of champagne, two even chomping on cigars. But then I remind myself this is wellness Mustique-style.

Susan d'Arcy was a guest of Mustique Island, which has seven nights' full board from £5,790pp including a villa stay, fitness programme and flights to Mustique from Barbados or St Lucia (mustique-island.com). Fly to Barbados or St Lucia. Next year's Health and Happiness Week dates are May 14-21 and June 11-18.