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## BOHO CHIC MUSTIQUE

Despite the glamour of celebrities and royals and their luxurious villas, it's the barefoot way of life in Mustique that captivates Written by GINA CHRISTMAN

THE SMALL ISLAND of Mustique in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is unlike anywhere else in the world. The hundred or so private villas dotting the hills and private beaches are blanketed by mangrove, subtropical shrubs and climbing vines, so obscured that overall the island looks like a lush wildlife sanctuary. There are no traffic lights, no billboards, no street signs or visible power lines, no nightclubs or golf courses (hop a 10-minute flight to neighboring Canouan Island for that) and, most importantly, no paparazzi allowed.

Mustique has a story to tell. In 1958, an eccentric, irascible Scot named Colin Tennant (later Lord Glenconner) bought the island—then virtually uninhabitable—for a mere £45,000 after admiring it from his boat. His vision was to develop a fantasy island that would lure his aristocratic friends to visit and build villas.

In the 1960s, development on the island began in earnest. As it happened, Lord Glenconner and his wife, Anne, lady-in-waiting to Princess Margaret, hosted the princess who instantly fell in love with the island. As a wedding gift for the princess upon her marriage to Antony Armstrong-Jones, Lord and Lady Glenconner offered up 10 acres at the south tip of the island to build the villa, Les Jolies Eaux.

Other British royals soon caught on. The relaxed, barefoot paradise away from their otherwise very public lives was indeed a lure—Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, Prince Charles and the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge have vacationed here.

Locals call Mustique Island a community, not a resort, and it remains on the hot list today because it has adopted Colin Tennant's Bohemian spirit as its own. It was this mix of escapism and grit, in a world caught

between vacations and real life, that also attracted celebrities and business tycoons wanting the sun and the sea minus the razzle dazzle of, say, St. Barts. Mick Jagger, Bryan Adams, Tommy Hilfiger and David Bowie all built villas here.

For architectural direction in the early days, Tennant enlisted Oliver Messel, a British stage designer and, coincidentally, the uncle of Antony Armstrong-Jones. Messel designed all the first villas on the island, including Les Jolies Eaux. Today, villa architecture varies according to individual homeowner preferences, but Messel's signature style is pre-eminent.

The island is now owned and governed by the Mustique Company, which in turn is owned by its 104 shareholder-homeowners. At present there are 75 privately owned villas, complete with chefs, butlers, housekeepers and gardeners, that are



clockwise, from left The veranda at The Cotton House. Lord and Lady Glenconner at his "Golden Birthday Party" in 1976. A picnic on Lagoon Beach. The site of the Mustique Blues Festival and social center of the island, Basil's Bar shines by night. Basil Charles, on the island since 1971, was awarded the Order of the British Empire in 2005.

opposite Les Jolies Eaux (Beautiful Waters), the villa Oliver Messel designed in 1971 for Princess Margaret, occupies a private peninsula on the southern tip of the island.



available to rent throughout the year.

There are two hotels: The 7-room Firefly, perched on a hillside overlooking Britannia Bay is known for its Boho funkiness and the best sunset views from Patrick's Bar. The 18-room Cotton House (currently offering a new "Stay for 7 Nights, Pay for 5 Nights" package May 1 through August 31, 2021) is the original Messel-designed building on the island. Besides the dining options—the Veranda and the Beach Café and Bar—the Great Room Bar is the hotel's social gathering spot, especially for the weekly Mustique Company-hosted cocktail parties. Cocktail parties are a way of life in Mustique. In earlier years, residents even voiced their opposition to building a larger runway in place of the airstrip near the hotel, saying that besides the noise, putting lights on the runway would destroy cocktail hour.

If the relaxed lifestyle is the heartbeat of Mustique, Basil's Bar is the soul. The beachfront open-air pavilion is a cluster of hippy-fied bamboo huts with a recent Balinese-style updo by Philippe Starck. Potent cocktails, a Caribbean-influenced menu and live blues make for informal socializing. In late January, A-list musicians and blues artists perform at the annual Mustique Blues Festival, where a Mick Jagger sighting is not uncommon (although it's treated as no big deal, this is Mustique after all). [mustique-island.com](http://mustique-island.com)

For up-to-date travel requirements and restrictions, visit [mustique-island.com/travel](http://mustique-island.com/travel)



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