

INSPIRATION FOR TRAVELLERS

# BOLD



THE CARIBBEAN

## The 5 Best Caribbean Islands to Go in 2017

4 DAYS AGO *by* DIANE SLAWYCH

**S** Silky white sand, warm turquoise waters and a gentle, salt-sprayed breeze.

Nothing says vacation like the islands of the Caribbean. Here, in no particular order, is our list for the 5 Hottest Caribbean Islands for 2017

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## Anguilla: True blue

### The Caribbean's little known upscale gem



**Why go?** Tell people you've just been to Anguilla and chances are you'll get one of two responses: "Where?" or "Angola?" No, Anguilla – east of the Virgin Islands in the Caribbean. The lack of name recognition may have to do with the fact that it's a small island (26 km long and 5 km wide) and a relative latecomer to the tourism industry. But being somewhat off the radar is ideal for those seeking a relaxing getaway without the crowds.

A dry, low lying isle, Anguilla is primarily known for its superb beaches, innovative cuisine and high-end, sometimes over-the-top resorts. It's almost impossible to take a bad photo of one of the 33 beaches here including standouts such as Rendezvous Bay, Maundays Bay and Meads Bay – long, stretches of sand that are almost blindingly white. One glimpse of the clear blue water and you'll understand the tourism slogans, from “tranquility wrapped in blue,” often seen on brochures, to “Anguilla: 50 shades of blue,” on an overhead sign near the ferry terminal. If you're here in March and like reggae music come for the Moonsplash Festival.

**On the other hand** There are no nonstop flights to the island, and not a lot to do, plus accommodation can be very pricey with some rooms and villas starting at \$2,000 a night.

**Quintessential experiences** A short trip to Scilly Cay, a tiny coral spec, is a must while on Anguilla. If the boat's not at the dock when you arrive, just wave and someone will fetch you for the “120 second” free ride to the cay. Come for lunch – chicken, lobster, crayfish and fish – plus the rum punch, as 175,000 have apparently been served in the past 29 years!

**Insider tip** Even if you're not staying at Zemi Beach House, the newest resort on Anguilla, you can still enjoy some of what it has to offer. There's the Rhum Room, which has more than 100 different rums from about a dozen countries including some of the finer spirits going for upwards of \$650 shot, and the Zemi Thai House Spa, with an authentic 300-year-old house transported from Thailand plus an amazing hammam, one of the few in the Caribbean.

**Explore** Drive around the island or hire a cab to see the beaches or check out local attractions such as Wallblake House (built in 1787, it's the island's only surviving plantation house), the Heritage Museum and the distinctive looking Bethel Methodist Church. Informative guided tours can be arranged through outfits such as Nature Explorers Anguilla (which offers bird watching, photography tours and more) and the Anguilla National Trust (hikes, tours to historical places). Recent rains have filled up the salt ponds, which will make for superb bird watching for months to come. Another option is a visit to a few of Anguilla's cays including Sandy Island and Prickly Pear Cay where you can stop for lunch, hear the bananaquits chirping in the palm trees, or spot one of the indigenous iguanas.

**Eat** Grilled Anguilla crayfish, spiny lobster, coconut shrimp, grouper, snapper are some of the fresh seafood items found on local menus. Curry makes an appearance in pasta salads, springs rolls and goat dishes. The ahi starter at Pimms at Cap Jaluca is a crowd pleaser, as is the Caribbean sampler at Davidas. One local hotelier described Tasty's and E's Oven as two restaurants where you can experience "5-star food at 3-star prices." Mabel Gumbs' hearty corn soup (\$5 a bowl) is a local favourite and available at a roadside stall in The Valley every Saturday from about 10a.m. to 2 p.m.

**Splurge** The Malliouhana, An Auberge Resort – where luxury meets the warmth and gracious hospitality of the Caribbean – is highly regarded as one of the finest resorts in Anguilla, since its opening in 1984. With 44 rooms and suites, the boutique resort is built atop a panoramic bluff overlooking the Caribbean and reaching down to the white sands of Meads Bay and Turtle Cove beaches. Rooms start at \$500 US per night.

*[malliouhana.aubergeresorts.com](http://malliouhana.aubergeresorts.com)*



**When you go** Fly to St. Maarten and take one of the frequent ferries to Anguilla, which takes under 45 minutes. Options for getting around include renting a car (you'll need a temporary driver's license, which costs about \$20 U.S.) or hiring a taxi for \$25 U.S. an hour (more after 6pm). Departure tax is \$28 U.S. [ivisitanguilla.com](http://ivisitanguilla.com)

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