

EPICUREAN LIFE

A WORLD OF LUXURY... FOR THOSE WITH DISCERNING TASTE



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CHRISTINA RAPTIS VISITS THE GORGEOUS CAP MAISON IN SAINT LUCIA AND MAKES A LASTING

CARIBBEAN CONNECTION

Of all the islands, in all the Caribbean – I walked into Saint Lucia, an idyllic paradise. With the Atlantic Ocean to the right, and the Caribbean Sea to the left, the island is distinguished by the Pitons; the twin peaks, on the southwest coast that soar high above the ocean floor. Embedded in history and colonisation, travelling throughout the island, it's hard not to spot the imprint of the cultures that have inhabited it.

The island stands out from the rest; luscious foliage covers the mountainous island with dense rainforests, and acres of banana plantations. As we drove through rugged terrain, we climbed the twisting, and turning roads until we emerged on a cliff top, and the challenging journey proved worthy. Nestled high amongst the greenery at the northern most point of the island at Cap Estate sits Cap Maison.

The mélange of cultures was evident as the courtyards, fountains, and bougainvillea create a Spanish Caribbean feel throughout the resort, while white-washed buildings, and scattered terracotta urns create a wonderfully relaxed ambiance and are perhaps more reminiscent of Greece. Secluded villas line the lush estate, each with a terracotta tiled roof, large private balconies, and spacious roof terraces, nine of which have a private pool. Inside, my spacious villa exudes Spanish colonial elegance. Dark woods and marble flooring expand through the spacious kitchen, and living area. A balcony lines the front of the villa with breathtaking ocean

and estate views. On the kitchen counter sits a chilled bottle of French Champagne, and all the ingredients to create a traditional Caribbean rum punch—the perfect thirst-quenching refreshments for a hot day.

Panoramic views of the sea are breathtaking, over the cliff the hotel's own Smuggler's cove beach, and their famed Naked Fisherman restaurant look like places I need to explore. Amusingly, the restaurant is named after a group of local fishermen who head out before the sun rises every morning and fish in the nude.

Unfortunately, I was not able to catch a glimpse of these famed fishermen as they wake up at ungodly hours! Naturally, however, the question remains and perplexes many who visit: why are the fishermen naked?!

Take the ninety steps down to the sand and you'll find a secluded beach housing the Naked Fisherman's rustic bar and restaurant serving up grilled food and seafood specialties, from crispy calamari with chilli salsa, to freshly grilled island catch, wagyu burgers, and seafood platters. During our first night at the resort we were welcomed with a BBQ of the finest seafood, ceviche, grilled razor clams, jerk chicken satay, and aged New York strip steak; we sat in awe, gazing out at the endless dark blue waves crashing against the shore as we started our gastronomic emersion week.

Cap Maison boasts some of the best food on the island, with St Lucia's French heritage being a major inspiration. Executive Chef Craig Jones, an intriguing Welsh-Rastafarian, mixes cultures in his culinary creations. His



Ocean view Villa Suite

'Their famed naked fisherman restaurant is named after a group of fisherman... Unfortunately, I was not able to catch a glimpse!'



Naked Fisherman Restaurant

rigorous training at Michelin-starred restaurants in Europe, combined with living in Saint Lucia for 17 years, influences how Craig elegantly presents fresh local produce and seafood in every dish he creates.

At The Cliff at Cap restaurant, hovering on a cliff, overlooking the ocean, Chef Craig puts his classic French training to excellent use. For a truly special evening, dine on the sea at Rock Maison. This is Cap Maison's best kept secret. Accessed by a flight of stairs that descend to the beach, the wooden deck is perched on a rock and surrounded on three sides by the crashing sea. We ventured down what seemed to be a never ending staircase and onto Rock Maison. A beautiful, secluded, romantic hideaway, with a candle-lit table set up for dinner, it's the perfect private area for an intimate meal. An inventive touch to the night is a zip-line connecting the restaurant to the guest's below that delivers Champagne from the bar above. We were treated to the Saturday night tapas menu including epicurean delights like seared foie gras, shrimp tempura, and caramelised mahi mahi with squid ink risotto.

We got to know Craig a little better the next day when he took us on a tour around the vibrant Castries market, where we explored and walked through numerous stalls and met local market traders who were showcasing their products. If you are looking for any kind of herbs, spices, or exotic fruits and vegetables, you are bound to find it all here. Later, we headed back to the estate for a private cooking class, held in

one of the hotel's larger suites. Jumbo prawns were seared with the chefs own Caribbean spice and herb rub, and put on top of a bed of thinly sliced vegetables with a citrus vinaigrette. A refreshing and light lunch to keep us going for the rest of the day's activities.

After a day of exploring the island and enjoying culinary delights, it was time to escape even further to a state of serenity. Luxurious body treatments are offered at Spa Maison from facials, to body scrubs. I was in for a truly indulgent chocolate delight body treatment (perfect for a chocoholic like myself). Using locally produced cocoa, I enjoyed the sweet scent of chocolate as all my dead skin and imperfections were scrubbed away. Covered from head to toe in this sticky mess a shower was a must and left my skin feeling velvety smooth. Next, I was treated to a relaxing massage with warm chocolate oil. Divine!

Whilst on the island be sure to take a cruise down in Cap Maison's private boat to Marigot Bay, and visit the Rainforest Hideaway Restaurant. Situated in the sheltered bay, alongside the port, the rustic restaurant is attracting guests with one of their unusual dishes. Known to many as lethal and a danger to other fish and sea creatures, some may be wary to try lionfish because of the myths surrounding this venomous fish. However, owners John and Judith Verity assure me that Lionfish is just as delicious as any other fish, and are creating awareness by putting a stop to the myth and cooking up a storm of ▶



Villa Suite Living Room



Rock Maison

lionfish for their esteemed customers. Excited to try this rare fish, we went behind the scenes into the sweltering kitchen to meet the chef who showed us a demonstration on how to handle the fish, and prepare it for cooking. She explained the fish only has only a few fins which hold venom, but once the fish is submerged in hot water the venom is naturalised. Once filleted, you are left with a soft, thin, white meat reminiscent of Sole. Before tasting I felt like shouting 'Kiss me. Kiss me as if it were the last time!' I can attest it has a mild taste and yes, I am alive to affirm the myth is not true. We enjoyed the rest of the night, cocktail in hand looking out onto Marigot Bay, a perfect day escape from our luxurious stay. Be sure to visit the Rainforest Hideaway, and say hello to the very hospitable owners, John and Judith, who are extremely welcoming and show off the Caribbean spirit in their restaurant.

The next day, after a short ride from the estate we emerged on Pigeon Island, a national park comprising of two towering grassy hills and an old British fort. The excursion and hike to the summit offered the trip's best views of the island

all the way to Martinique.

Later, we ventured out to see a St Lucian tradition, the late night Anse-La-Raye Fish Fry, an open-air street party where local chefs showcase their catch in a fish fiesta. We made our way through the crowds of dancing and drinking locals on the main street, past a colourful bunch of worn-wood houses occupied by DJ's blasting RnB, to find stalls selling hand-made crafts, street vendors selling piles of fried food, and, of course, rum punch. It was the perfect outing to get a real feel of St Lucian culture.

Our amazing holiday getaway was coming to a close, but we had one last surprise, an evening of sniffing and sipping in the wine cellar with Jaspar Kok, Cap Maison's wine connoisseur. We left the night heat, and entered the dimly lit, cool cellar filled with endless bottles of exclusively sourced wines. The table was set with place settings for each person, adorned with a selection of cheeses, breads, and fruit to go along with each glass we were about to indulge in.

Cap Maison's immersive gastronomy week, gives epicurean enthusiasts a chance to try their hand at cooking (and eating) St Lucian-style.

Forage in the St Lucian rainforest for island ingredients; discover banana plantations, food markets, and street feasts. Saint Lucia is, as you would expect: a truly exotic and beautiful destination. It will grant you an unforgettable experience without even trying. A morning walk along the beach, naked fishermen stalking their prey on a rock at dawn, bathing in the sun, snorkelling, and discovering all the finest Caribbean specialities, Cap Maison - I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship. 

A garden view room starts from £275 per night on a B&B basis (two sharing) whilst a one-bedroom ocean-view villa suite with private pool and roof terrace costs from £801 per night on a B&B basis.

Cap Maison's immersive gastronomy holiday costs from £2,500 per person for a seven-night stay in a one bedroom villa suite, on an all-inclusive basis including all activities.

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Infinity Pool



Courtyard and Pool