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BY KIM-MARIE EVANS

ISLAND TREASURE

HEAD TO BEQUIA NOW—BEFORE THE BARS OFFER BOTTLE SERVICE
AND THE BEACHES ARE MORE ABOUT THE SCENE THAN THE SEA

What does one superyacht owner say to another superyacht owner when they meet on a wild beach in the south Caribbean? There's no punchline. This is the kind of thing that happens when you spend time in Bequia (pronounced BEK-way) and the surrounding islands.

Having recently “discovered” Bequia and the necklace of tiny islands that make up the Grenadines south of St. Vincent, I'm inclined to keep the secret. But that's not why I was invited by Bengt Morgenstern, owner of Bequia Beach Hotel and the *Star of the Sea* superyacht. He is Bequia's biggest benefactor and cheerleader, and after spending a weekend with him, I'm wearing the team colors. In case you're wondering, superyacht owners discuss the other yachts they considered buying and what type of beer they like. I overheard Bengt's conversation while doing extensive research on the ability to nap in the sand after a day spent aboard his superyacht and swimming with turtles. He apologized for leaving me to chat with his new friend. He seemed genuinely tickled at the meeting and gushed, “The world is just so small!” For the .01 percenters, it most certainly is. »



The Island

1

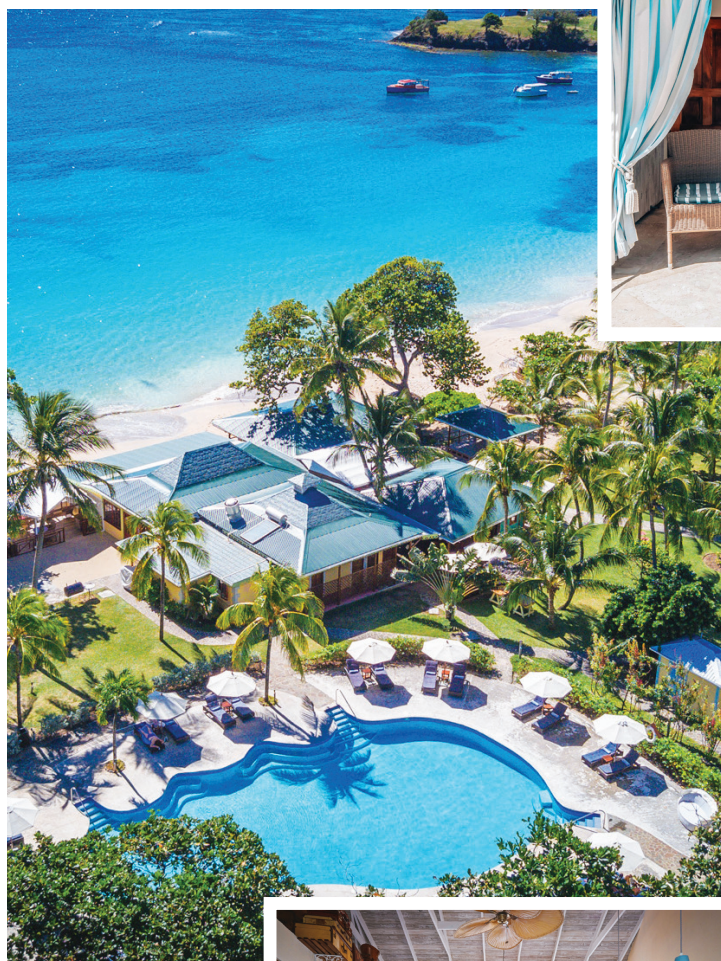
GETTING THERE

Getting to Bequia isn't impossible, but it's not easy either. Most guests fly to Barbados (JetBlue flies there from JFK daily) and then take a forty-five minute island hopper to the island. Bengt and his team are introducing a private charter that will alleviate the pain of waiting for hours in the Barbados airport for an inter-island transfer. Rates will depend on number of passengers and time of flight.

2

MAKE WAY FOR BEQUIA

Bequia is the same size as St. Barths, but that is the only similarity. There's only one road on the island, no stop signs, no road signs; and despite repeated attempts to understand security risks, I was only able to ascertain that there were some police (between four and six depending on who you ask), and someone thought "they might have gotten a car last year." There are only 5,000 residents, and as unlikely as it sounds, they all know each other. Driving back from dinner one night, I spotted an older couple, clearly tourists, strolling along the road to their hotel in the dark. This isn't a scene you come across on many islands where the resorts are gated and walking alone at night is unadvised.



You won't find a single hotel or restaurant chain; there is a "Pizza Hut," but it's a brightly painted, well, hut covered in soft pink bougainvillea vines with rum punch on the menu.



Beach Front Junior Plantation Suite



3

HOME AWAY

The **Bequia Beach Hotel** sits on the windward side of the island facing Mustique. Though it was built in 2009, it has all the charm of a 1950s getaway for the jet set. The front desk sits atop a hot-air balloon basket, and the lobby feels a bit like Hemingway's library. The authentic tiki bar and pastel cottages topped with gingerbread trim add to the illusion that this little hotel has always been here.

Though there are fifty-eight rooms on the property, even at capacity it feels like a private getaway. The room choices start at a classic room with a garden view that can be booked for as little

as \$265 per night. Breakfast is included with every room. I stayed in a Junior Plantation suite with a four-post canopy bed and a view of the ocean. Each room is individually decorated in Tommy Bahama-meets-Errorl Flynn style. The vintage travel posters framed in the rooms are original paintings commissioned by Bengt to add to the throwback feel of the resort. Junior Plantation rooms start at \$380 per night.

The most popular choice for families are the stand-alone two bedroom villas. There are only three, and each has its own pool. These start at \$525 per night. There are two restaurants on-property and both serve impressive cuisine. As Bengt and I chatted about how good the food was, he admitted that early on he had hired an executive chef to run the kitchen; it took him seven months to learn that his chef couldn't actually cook. Running a first-class hotel with a gourmet restaurant on a tiny island isn't easy. »

The Experience

The “town” of Port Elizabeth is referred to as The Harbour and is home to the fruit and vegetable market, complete with friendly Rasta merchants. The businesses range from swank coffee shops with wi-fi to folding tables selling handmade bracelets. And despite the island’s diminutive size, there are twenty-five restaurants.

It’s about a twenty-minute walk from town to Princess Margaret Beach, where you’ll find another of Bengt’s ventures—Jack’s Bar and Grill. Bequia Beach Hotel guests enjoy charging privileges and have access to the sun loungers on the No. 1 beach on the island.

Bequia nightlife is not the sea of drunken tourists you may imagine. The “place to be” moves nightly, but everyone knows where the action is. We hit Laura’s on a Friday night, and the place was hopping. The food was just this side of awful, and the service matched, but the party? The party had the feel of a family reunion (with a little pole dancing). The crowd was an intoxicating mix of locals, young and old, expats, yachties and tourists. I danced with the restaurant manager, local kids and a grandpa in cargo shorts. It was the best night I’d had in a long time—and I had just been on a superyacht.



WANT A SUPERYACHT? The *Star of the Sea* is available for charter for \$6,500 per day or \$18,000 for three nights, food and fuel are not included. It has six en suite cabins and can sleep twelve guests. For a beautifully appointed and fully staffed Benetti superyacht, it’s actually a reasonable deal. (Or maybe the rum punch has gone to my head.)