



A TINY PATCH OF PARADISE

LIZ KAVANAGH VISITS PETIT ST VINCENT

There are few places in the world which can truly claim to be a true hideaway, but Petit St Vincent is one of them.

A small island in the Grenadines in what is often described as the most beautiful stretch of water in the Caribbean, Petit St Vincent has 113 acres of softly rolling hills surrounded by two miles of white sandy beaches.

Getting to Petit St Vincent is almost as much of an adventure as staying there. A small plane from Barbados brings you to nearby Union Island over sparkling sea and coral reefs before you are transported by the most luxurious of motor launches past breathtaking scenery and other tiny islands to Petit St Vincent itself.

Lying well off the tourist mainstream, PSV could be best described by what is not there.

Even when you first arrive the natural beauty of the place hits you. Gently landscaped gardens lead down to the beaches around the island where double hammocks under palm-covered cabanas tempt away.

Accommodation on the island is simple yet luxurious, with just 22 cottages discreetly scattered around the hillsides beaches and cliffs, so that each has its own views and ultimate privacy is guaranteed. There are wraparound sun terraces and sun loungers, a large sitting room and even bigger bathroom, with huge windows looking out over the sea below.

It is pretty easy in fact to stay entirely self-contained at Petit St Vincent as with room service included in the price of stays and a no tipping policy across the island, all you need do is drop your food and drinks order into a bamboo flag pole outside your cottage, raise the flag and delicious meals appear as if by magic, driven straight from the island kitchens to your door. The flag service extends to West Beach, where lunch can be served on the sand, so you didn't even have to leave your sunspot.

We loved the little extras which came with our cottage, like the double hammock which provided the perfect place from which to star-gaze. Outside, the ice box was constantly replenished, while a candle lamp was provided for alfresco dining after dark. ▶

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If you tire of lazing, you can borrow boats and windsurfs, canoes and catamarans and make the most of the gentle waters. Snorkels and fins are provided, allowing guests to enjoy the underwater life around Petit St Vincent and its untouched coral reefs.

For those in need of even more activity, there is a 20 station fitness trail set up around the perimeter of the island and a two-mile hiking trail up to the summit of Marni Hill that provides spectacular views of the neighbouring islands. The island's resident Labradors will often join you for part of the way, and we spent a happy couple of hours being shown the island by one of them, who had obviously decided to escort us all the way round. If you want to be even more energetic again, there is even a tennis court for those who fancy a game in the early morning or late afternoon although the natural distractions of the resort make tennis almost surplus to requirements.

You could almost spend an entire day without seeing anyone else on Petit St Vincent as food can even be delivered to your door and left outside if you are in need of even more privacy, but the resort's restaurant serves daily breakfast, lunch and à la carte dinner and the bar area has live music after dark which makes a good 'evening out'.

Evening entertainment, it had to be said, was limited, which was in fact, wonderfully refreshing. There is no television on Petit St Vincent and no phones in the rooms and we found ourselves talking about everything and nothing, enjoying romantic walks along the beach at sunset, dancing to reggae on the radio and on the rare occasion that a storm blew up, watched dramatic lightening flashing away from inside with almost childlike glee.

The week passed all too quickly with an evening beach barbecue by candle-light a real highlight. The visiting steel band got everyone up and dancing on the sand and the fresh fish and giant shrimps pulled out of the sea that day melted in the mouth.

The next morning we motored out to Petit St Vincent's nearby sand spit with a picnic breakfast, complete with coffee pots, and china, and were left there alone, just the two of us for an hour, during which we were surrounded by sea in absolutely idyllic surroundings.

The resort has a yacht and a motor launch that will take you out to visit the neighbouring islands and the Tobago Cays are a must. The protected reef offers snorkelling that is compared to that around The Great Barrier Reef and underwater, the marine life was spectacular, with coral and fish galore as well as playful turtles who soar around you as you swim.

It is this sense of privilege that makes a stay at Petit St Vincent so special. The island is as unspoilt as a holiday destination could be, yet has everything and more you could wish for. There was no formality just relaxed bliss and the chance to truly escape. No doubt word will soon spread but somehow you get the feeling that the beauty and seclusion of the place will remain unchanged. This resort truly is a tiny patch of paradise. ■

ITC Classics is offering nine nights at Petit St. Vincent from £3,395 per person based on two adults sharing a cottage on a full board basis including economy flights with Virgin Atlantic from London Gatwick to Barbados and shared charter flight to Union Island and transfers. Tel. 01244 355 527. www.itcclassics.co.uk