



Petit St. Vincent
PRIVATE ISLAND

Women's Health Online

Date: 09.08.2019

MUB: 500,000

AVE: £3,500

Women's Health

Petit St. Vincent: 'I Learnt to Free Dive on This Crazy Caribbean Break'

Yes, that means holding your breath the whole time

 BY PHILIPPA TURNER 08/08/2019





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Have you watched *Free Solo*, the 2019 (Oscar-winning) documentary, which follows pro climber Alex Honnold as he preps to scale El Capitan, a sheer-faced mountain in Yosemite Park - without any harness, rope or safety, whatsoever?

Well, allow *WH* to introduce you to its eminently more achievable cousin. Free diving is diving *sans* equipment. Yep, that means holding your breath for the duration, while you glide under water and see what's going on, beneath the waves.

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Hoping to learn how it's done, I travelled to the Petit St. Vincent resort on the Caribbean island of St. Vincent.

How I learnt to free dive at Petit St. Vincent

My first impression of free diving

The rumours are true - there's not much that can compare with the feeling you'll get descending into glittering waters, using nothing but your own controlled breath.

Without equipment to hamper your movement or distract your mind the experience of being underwater becomes one of serenity; noise and brain chatter silenced as you get closer to ocean life than you probably thought possible.

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Within seconds of my first dive, I found myself surrounded by fish, stingrays and starfish. A few days later, I was swimming with turtles in the sand-bottomed lagoon of Tobago Cays.



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Learning to hold my breath

My dives varied from 30 seconds to two minutes, with equally pleasing snorkelling breaks in between.

And while we weren't working towards a specific time goal, others in the group were able to hold their breath for three minutes - plenty of time to explore the up to 15 metres below.



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You'd be surprised how long you can hold your breath for when the situation requires it, especially with the guidance given by world-famous free diver Hanli Prinsloo @hanliprinsloo - this special trip in collaboration with I Am Water involved breathwork sessions and exclusive yoga workshops each day to help you make the most of your lung capacity.

As a novice yogi, I was apprehensive, but Hanli put me at ease with simple exercises and yoga flows to flex my deep-breathing muscles.



PHOTOGRAPHER: PETER MARSHALL

There's a focus on getting the basics right, so each morning we began with rope training, where a weight is attached to a floating buoy, the perfect aid to help you duck-dive and descend head first.

While the sea was choppy on the surface, taking a composed breath and diving metres below, is like being transported to a place of stillness and calm.



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The accommodation at Petit St. Vincent

Petit St. Vincent's private island resort provides the ideal set-up.

Phones are happily surrendered when you arrive, enforcing a digital detox, and each of the 22 stone cottages boasts a private hammock, perfect for afternoon dozing once you've slathered on the SPF.



Or head to the Balinese spa - tucked away in the treetops - to enjoy a treatment using skin-boosting products made from the island's own herbs and fruits in the stunning open-air rooms.



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Who needs a whale music playlist when you have the IRL soothing sounds of waves crashing and birds chirping?

For those more inclined to sweat than stay loose, a 20-station fitness trail winds its way around the western part of the island, including battle ropes and apparatus for pull-ups and sit-ups.



Plus a 60-minute hike will see you to Marni's Hill 275ft summit, the island's highest point, where a spectacular 360 view of the lower Grenadine islands awaits.

Want to take those warm fuzzies back home with you? Easy.



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**RN, this Fitness Retreat is
£199**

The cost of each visitor's diving trip is fully reinvested in I Am Water Ocean Conservation, a non-profit organisation that works with underprivileged kids from coastal communities around the world,

teaching them to swim and enjoy the wonders of the ocean on their doorstep.

How much does it cost to stay at Petit St. Vincent?

Petit St. Vincent Private Island cottages from £956 per night based on double occupancy, full board, non-alcoholic beverages and resort facilities included; petitstvincent.com.

Diving experiences are additional and offered by the resort from £72: iamwaterfoundation.org

Return flights from London to Barbados with Virgin start from £425. Flights from Barbados to Union Island with Grenadine Air Alliance start from £236 return.

Now you know all about free diving in Petit St. Vincent, read up on [Reform, Restore Holidays](#).