

## Travel

# Anguilla, an isle of sun and star-light

By Diane Bair and Pamela Wright | GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS APRIL 19, 2014

ARTICLE

COMMENTS (2)



DIANE BAIR FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Anguilla's Shoal Bay was named best beach in the world by Travel Channel.

PRINT REPRINTS E-MAIL SHARE

ANGUILLA — At 6 feet 9 inches tall, basketball legend Earvin “Magic” Johnson is tough to miss. And yet we never saw him, although we stayed at the same hotel at the same time. That’s how seamlessly celebrities seem to blend with the landscape on impossibly lovely Anguilla. Robert Downey Jr. was rumored to be vacationing somewhere on this sun-splashed, 16-mile-long island, too, but alas, we had no sightings of “Iron Man” either.

Ultimately, it doesn't matter. After a day or two on Anguilla, as you lose yourself to the seductive thrum of waves and indulge in some of the best food in the Caribbean, you'll start to feel like a celebrity yourself. Go in May, and you can live like Brangelina on a background actor's budget (well, sort of); hotel rates come down for the low season (May-November), making this luxury escape more affordable. Another reason to go in May: Anguillans celebrate the first step toward independence from St. Kitts-Nevis on Anguilla Day (May 30) with an island-wide party. Find a rocky perch to watch the Round-the-Island boat race, and then join the sailors at Sandy Ground for music, barbecue, and rum.

For years, St. Bart's was the Caribbean's "it" destination, then Nevis became the "new" St. Bart's. Meanwhile, folks like Beyoncé and Jay Z, Derrick Jeter, Liam Neeson, Ellen DeGeneres and Portia di Rossi, Sandra Bullock, and Michael J. Fox kept showing up on off-the-radar Anguilla, a sandy Caribbean paradise made of limestone and coral.

Not to be confused with Antigua, Anguilla is the northernmost spot of land in the Leeward Islands, just north of St. Martin, and a 20-minute ferry or seven-minute flight from there. Anguilla's 35 square miles are ringed with 33 pale-blond beaches, all surrounded by peacock blue water. Mother Nature's palette of aqua, cream, and taupe is so dazzling that hotel designers don't even try to compete: Kelly Wearstler, who fashioned the look of the Viceroy Anguilla resort, used a sand-water-sky theme when choosing the colors for the property. "She even avoided using colorful blooms in the plantings because she wanted the azure ocean to stand out," said Richard Alexander, Viceroy general manager.

#### Related

- [If you go to Anguilla](#)

Anguilla's tastefully low-key resorts entice A-listers to the island. There's no hotel "strip" spoiling the look of the beach, no casinos, and not a single chain restaurant. You won't find zip lines, ATV tours, or miniature golf. And there's no glitzy night life; for that, you can pop over to St. Martin. Anguillans are fond of telling visitors that there are more goats than people here, something you may notice yourself if, like most visitors, you rent a car and head out to explore.

It's really all about the beaches here. One of them, Shoal Bay, was named best beach in the world by Travel Channel. As you gaze out at the sea from your lounge chair, you can see St. Martin, and, on a clear day, the humpy forms of volcanic Saba and St. Bart's.

Anguillans are nonchalant about celebrities. Even vacationers are typically cool in the presence of stars at the next table. "Perhaps it's our legendary tranquillity that has [that] effect," said Chantelle Davis of the Anguilla Tourist Board.

Whether you're a big-name actor or athlete, or one of the rest of us, the days fall into a happy rhythm. By day, the beaches exert an irresistible pull, but if you're feeling energetic, you can snorkel amid parrotfish (the best spots for that are Little Bay and Shoal Bay) or take a long walk. A trip to Sandy Island by sea shuttle from Sandy Ground Pier is worth leaving the lounge chair for. The aptly named island is an offshore cay where you can enjoy a traditional drum-pan barbecue lunch. There's Anguillan (spiny) lobster on the menu, and the cooler is always stocked with cold beer. Here, you'll feel like a very lucky castaway.

If you need a break from the sun, rent a car and pop into the Heritage Museum in East End, and visit the galleries that make up Anguilla's thriving arts community. Galleries include Devonish, Uhuru, and Cheddie's Carving Studio, where Cheddie carves sculptural pieces (at prices ranging from \$150 to \$17,000) out of a single branch of wood, letting the form of the wood dictate its shape.

But if it's Wednesday or Friday afternoon, head to the Dune Preserve for some serious "liming" — Anguilla-speak for chilling someplace public with your friends. It's all about catching live music at a bar or restaurant — and this often takes place in the middle of the day. Local music legend Bankie Banx plays and hosts guest musicians at his wildly popular beach bar, The Dune Preserve, where you can bust a move on the beach if the bar is too crowded, and jump into the sea when you get hot. Local joints take turns hosting limes. The go-to zone is Sandy Ground, home to beach bars like Elvis' and Johnno's. Try to catch a set by Omari Banks (Bankie's son) sometime during your stay.

Probably the toughest decision you'll make all day is where to eat dinner, mainly because the choices are so enticing. A good place to start the evening is at the Sunset Lounge at the Viceroy, where you can watch the sky turn to shades of sherbet and nibble from platters of sushi and nigiri. From there, da'Vida on Crocus Bay offers Asian-Caribbean cuisine featuring favorites like roasted Thai beef salad, crayfish tails with jasmine rice, and tasty tapas like lobster spring rolls. Make sure you make it to Veya Restaurant, one of the top tables on the island, where chef Carrie Bogar offers a jerk-spiced tuna that is perfection and her signature Moroccan spiced shrimp "cigars." Perhaps the ultimate Anguilla dining experience is a seat at the chef's table at the CuisinArt, an epicurean journey that includes produce from the resort's hydroponic farm, exquisite food, and bread and wine pairings.

Back at home, there's traffic and stress and the usual chaos. But for now, all of that can wait. You're on Anguilla, you're liming, and your inner celebrity has come out to play.

*Diane Bair and Pamela Wright can be reached at [bairwright@gmail.com](mailto:bairwright@gmail.com).*

<http://www.bostonglobe.com/lifestyle/travel/2014/04/19/liming-like-celebrity-anguilla/hyYhq2iW35Z2BDdZJds55O/story.html>



**Sunset warms the limestone along the coast of Anguilla seen on a boat ride to Little Bay.**