



POLYNESIA'S LOVELIEST LITTLE ATOLLS

# ISLANDS

January/February 2005

## American Paradise:

Gibney Beach, St. John,  
U.S. Virgin Islands

The Pristine Side of  
**Maui**

Secret, Secluded  
**St. John**

The Riviera's Most  
**Romantic Island**

PLUS

The Next Galápagos

Samoa's Boy-Girls

Gems of the French Caribbean



## Secrets of the other Mafia

TANZANIA'S GOT A SECRET, AND IT'S CALLED MAFIA ISLAND. The name has nothing to do with the Mob (some say it is a corruption of "Ma'afir," the name of a group of ancient Arab traders), and everything to do with flawless beaches, radiant marine life, and 24 villages happily stuck in a time warp. The 170-square-mile parcel of paradise lies south of Zanzibar and a scant 10 miles off the Tanzanian mainland, and is a **MAFIA ISLAND** melting pot of 45,000 Arabs,

Africans, and Pakistanis, the result of a wild history involving power-hungry sultans that reaches back to at least A.D. 400. Explore that history at the Mafia Island Lodge on sandy Chole Bay. The new owners have revitalized the former government-run hotel with a dive center, alfresco dining room (with Swahili cuisine), and an enthusiastic staff eager to show off the somnolent isle.



Your best bet—sail to Chole Island in a *ngalawa*, the local sailing craft fashioned from mangrove and mango wood, and stop at a sandbar for cowrie shells if the tide strikes right. You can also explore

ruins from the 15th century, watch boatbuilders make *ngalawas*, and stop at Popo Park, the preserve for flying foxes, also known as fruit bats. Best of all: The only way to get whacked on Mafia Island is by a coconut. Room rates are \$50 per day, per person, all meals included. Coastal Aviation runs flights daily from Dar Es Salaam (in Tanzania) and can arrange tour packages. Contact: [www.mafialodge.com](http://www.mafialodge.com) and [www.coastal.cc](http://www.coastal.cc). B.B.



Travel Web site [goto stcroix.com](http://goto.stcroix.com)'s new beach cam got 76,000 hits in its first week. The cam is stationed on Frederiksted Beach, at the Sand Castle on the Beach resort. Check the site for sunset times.



**life's a beach house** More often than not, on Barbuda, the tranquil Caribbean island off Antigua, you'll be the only person on an endless pink-sand beach. That does not mean you have to live *Survivor*-style, thanks to the new luxe hotel, The Beach House. Located on the island's southwestern point, the hotel has 21 suites to choose from. Crisp white over-stuffed couches, dark heartwood decks overlooking powdery beaches, and laid-back island elegance characterize this lavish retreat. The Beach House does not have a reception desk, but provides each guest with a personal "service ambassador" who will unpack suitcases, mix special drinks, arrange massages, and book tours around the island. While on Barbuda, make sure to visit the famous Darby Cave (nicknamed "The Sink Hole"), an underground jungle of lush greenery and an anomaly on an island with annual rainfall of less than 40 inches. Rates are \$500-\$1,400 (d.o.). Contact: 888-776-0333, [www.thebeachhousebarbuda.com](http://www.thebeachhousebarbuda.com). R.E.