

MACO destinations

CARIBBEAN & CENTRAL AMERICA

Antigua's Stingray Shuffle
Bewitched in **Costa Rica**
Mexico's Magical Mountain
Fine Dining in **Trinidad**



a house on the beach

Photography by Roberta Parkin

PINK SAND, HELICOPTER RIDES, PERFUMED TOWELS!
LIFE ON THE BEACH IN BARBUDA CAN BE A LUXURIOUS
AFFAIR AS ROBERTA PARKIN FINDS OUT

THERE IS MORE PROBABILITY OF A FISH WANTING TO LEAVE THE OCEAN THAN YOU WANTING TO leave the Beach House, but assuming you did, it would be very difficult.

Between you and the closest dwelling, not to mention the airport, are miles of white sand, streaked with pink, in every direction except south, which heads to the sea.

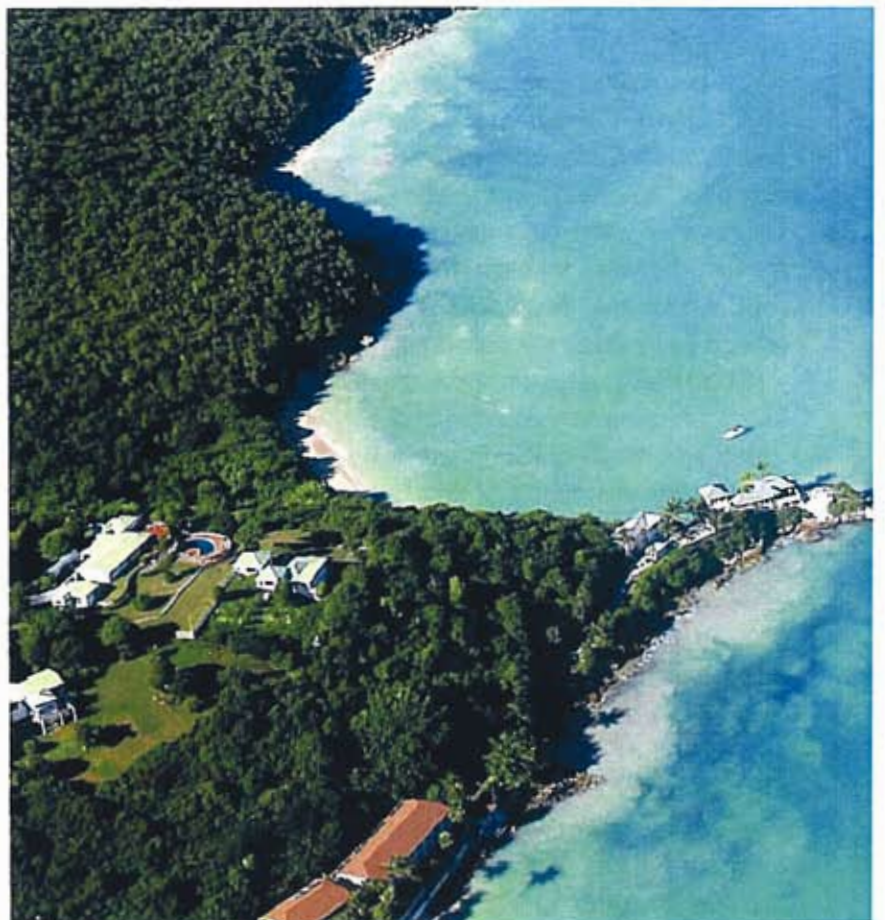
Your drive, when you land at the tiny airport, having arrived from Antigua in a twin Otter, takes you in part through Codrington Village, where there is a bank, a school and a small hospital, and then you hit the sand roads and just drive for miles. It's an extraordinary landscape where animals outnumber people by far.

Or you could just miss all of this and hire a helicopter that seats four people for about \$800 each way and land directly at the Beach House helipad! You would still, however, catch the wonderful sight of this lone building sitting on a vast beach, miles away from anywhere.

So where better than for the owners Fred Jackson and Mark Casolo (based in New York) to implement their philosophy of the art of relaxation. "There is nothing to do other than relax", says Andrea Gottfried, the on-the-ground manager, "and you watch the guests go through the various stages of withdrawal, unwinding and then finally letting go; it's quite fascinating."

She tells the story of the stressed international banker who went to pieces because the Internet line went down and after a huge scene of "You don't realise who I am", slowly had to accept the status quo, fell in love with his wife again and went around acting like a lovestruck teenager. "It was wonderful to see", she says, smiling. "You should have seen the joy in his eyes".

And this is what happens to you at the Beach House. There is no TV, the beds are the most comfortable you are likely to





encounter in your life—you sleep on Fili D'oro (golden threads) high-count cotton and ding goose down featherbedding; it's like sleeping on marshmallow—and the only colours that surround you are white, blue and dark wood. There are very few places in the world that offer this kind of tranquility.

Life becomes looking at the cool colours of the dawn in the morning from your private wooden deck, chilling by the super blue pool, walking down the white sandy beach, where you're far more likely to meet roaming donkeys than another human soul, eating the most delightful food cooked by Andrea, the Italian chef, and watching the sunset as it filters in, throwing its golden cast over the dark wood.

It is a place where the horizon is yours and you become master of time, instead of the other way round. That feeling, almost fear of "What on earth am I going to do today?" suddenly becomes a thing of the past and you recollect your thoughts and where they came from.

There is a lot of subtle planning going on behind the scenes in order to make all this possible for the guests. The service is discreet, yet attentive, running almost imperceptibly in the background. On arrival you are introduced to your service

ambassador, dressed in cool and unobtrusive white, always available to attend to any personal requirements, and you are also given a cell phone with \$20 free calls on it. If your ambassador is not right there, he or she will only be a one-digit cell call away. And all rooms have wireless internet connection.

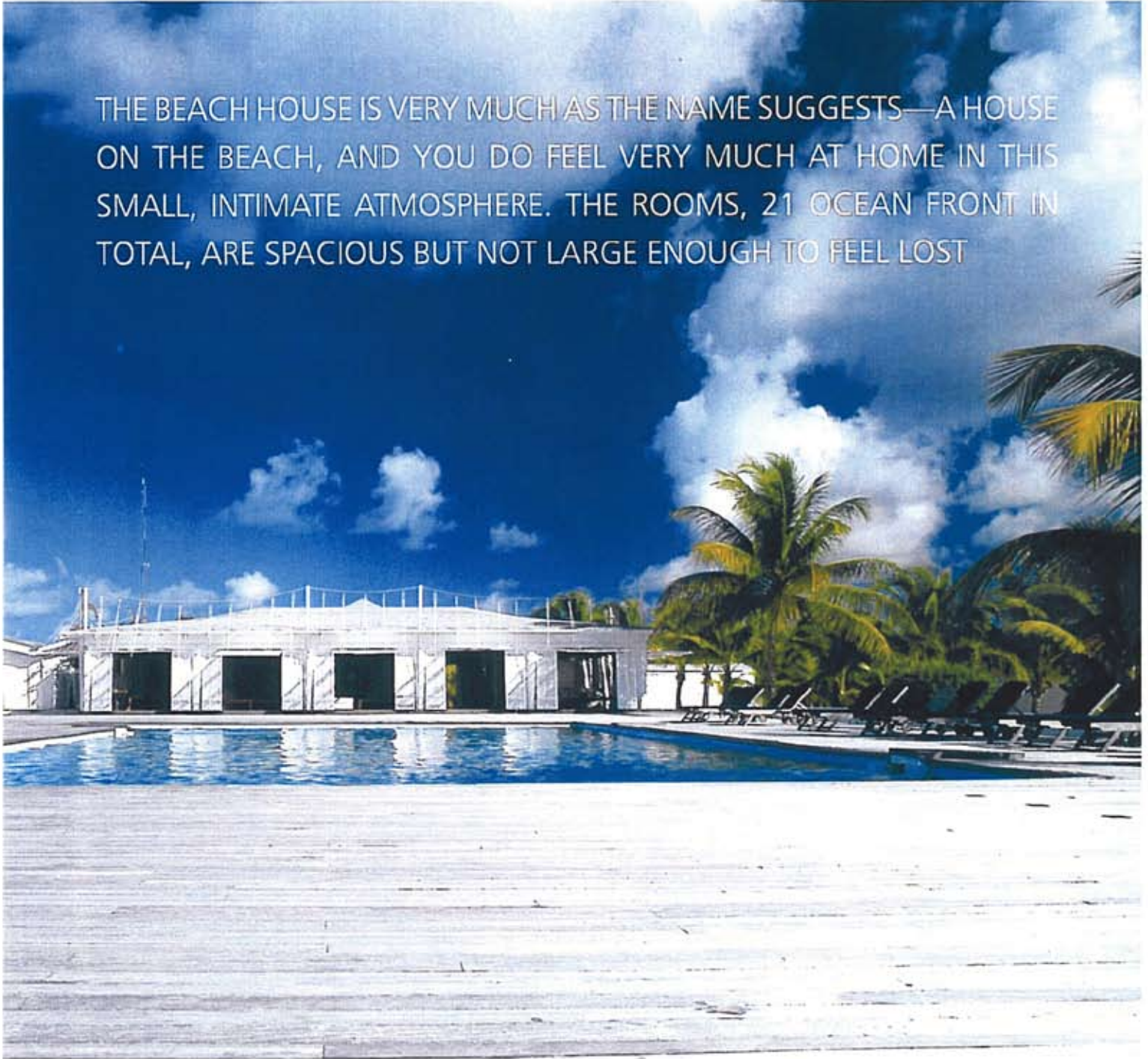
You are greeted with refreshing, perfumed towels, a fruit drink and cool ocean views and breezes. You are also offered a complimentary half-hour body massage which goes toward helping with the task of relaxing, and happens in the comfort of your own room.

The Beach House is very much as the name suggests—a house on the beach, and you do feel very much at home in this small, intimate atmosphere. The rooms, 21 ocean front in total, are spacious but not large enough to feel lost in. They are simple but by no means lacking in comfort or luxuries; there is an espresso coffee machine and a beautifully packaged box containing essential elements for the bath and body.

In the evenings, the guests dine outside by the pool or inside the open fronted lounge (or in your room, if you prefer). Fortunately, as there really is nowhere else to go, the food is divine, so good in fact,



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that it does divert your attention from the annoying mosquitoes that are a natural hazard. It is advisable to bring long-sleeved shirts and cover the legs in the evening; using a good repellent helps. It is best not to rely on the one provided as the mosquitoes seem to have built up a resistance to it. Under construction is a fully

air-conditioned, closed restaurant that will offer refuge if you need it.

On the menu, which changes daily, are four courses for dinner (included in the \$1,000 nightly room charge) with a choice of two dishes per course. It is always hard to choose between the two, but whatever the dilemma,

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all will be an eclectic mix of Italian/Asian with plenty of fresh local ingredients and a little twist a la Andrea. Lobster melts in the mouth with subtle flavours following close behind, seafood has never tasted so fresh and the meat dishes are second to none. And desserts—iced coconut and papaya trifle with creme anglaise, just one example, and no more needs to be said.

Breakfast, healthily light but indulgent too, is also included in the overall price, but lunch is not. Here you have a choice from a menu of three courses or you could simply have a pizza, a salad, an interesting sandwich or simply a hot dog or toasted cheese sandwich.

Cocktails (look for barman Rodman George with his Barbuda Blue and Barbuda Smash) are available all day from the bar in the open lounge and there is also a library, a pool table and numerous games that many guests play after dinner seated on the comfortable white sofas

around large, wooden, carved tables, just as if at home.

If you are seeking a little adventure, Barbuda does offer world-class snorkelling and scuba diving; you can go horse riding along the endless beach, go offshore fishing, or visit the frigate bird sanctuary or the caves at Two Foot Bay. Such trips are organised by the Beach House as well as picnics at different locations, where they will take you to, and pick you up from, when you have finished.

Barbuda is in itself a fascinating island, that moves at its own beat and the Beach House takes pride in being part of that. The staff is mainly Barbudian and will bring you into their life as well as you bringing them into yours, making for a very special, personal experience at the Beach House.M

(The Beach House does not take children under 16 years of age).