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LIFE'S A BREEZE

The Caribbean island of Nevis is a honeymoon destination for all seasons

By ANNIE DALY

If you and your partner are trying to plan an easy breezy honeymoon, the small, unspoilt island of Nevis is a great choice — quite literally.

Nevis is the smaller of the two Caribbean islands that make up the nation of Saint Kitts and Nevis, and the birthplace of Alexander Hamilton. To escape the heat, you can head up to Montpelier Plantation & Beach, located 750 feet above the sparkling Caribbean Sea, in the hills of southern Nevis. While the rest of the island, and the Caribbean at large, can feel a bit muggy during the summer months, Montpelier is a breezy sanctuary year round, thanks to its ability to catch the island's soothing tradewinds.

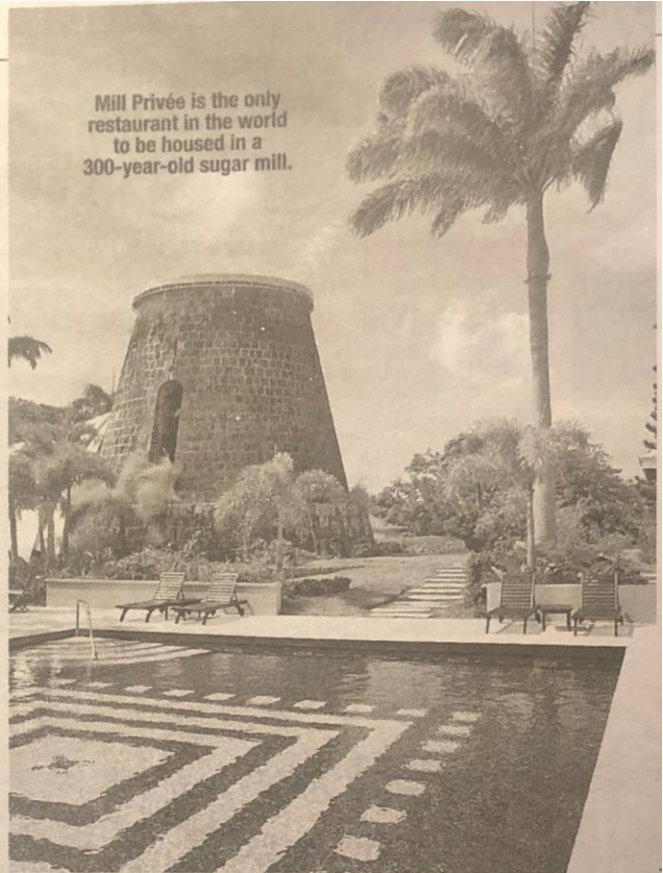
The luxury boutique property's relaxed oasis vibe is so strong that when I was there earlier this month, it only took me an hour or so to get New York out of my system and surrender myself to the wind and wine (in that order).

But the tradewinds aren't the only element that make Montpelier such a great place for honeymooners to unwind and chill. Built on one of Nevis' 18th-century sugar plantations, the hotel is reminiscent of a time when traveling wasn't so much about Instagramming your vacation as it was about actually enjoying it. There aren't any TVs in the 19 rooms or the three villas, and the furniture is elegant and sophisticated, but nothing fancy — think crisp white beds with blue and green pillows, tiled floors and big windows that invite the outside in. It's the sort of place where you wake up to birds chirping, and forget to look at your phone because you're too busy spotting monkeys, donkeys and lizards outside your door. The hotel's main entrance area is

built around a sprawling fig tree that seems to hold years of stories, with long branches that invite you to come in and stay awhile. And the 60-foot freshwater pool oozes serenity with its view of nearby 3,232-foot Nevis Peak, which reminds you of the strenuous hike to the top that you are decidedly not doing.

"People come to Nevis to take it slow," the hotel's head chef Halva Brown told me on the first day of my trip, and he was right: All signs point to chilling.

That said, honeymooners who want to do things here and there definitely have options. Montpelier offers guided bike rides and rain-forest hikes, including one to the top of the aforementioned Nevis Peak, plus kayaking, sunset boat rides, tennis, golf, scuba diving, and day trips to St. Barts or St. Kitts. There's a private 3-acre beach, too, although the hotel isn't located directly on its sands — you have to take a 15-minute shuttle ride. Once there, you'll enjoy a cocktail bar along with sun cabanas and gor-



Mill Privée is the only restaurant in the world to be housed in a 300-year-old sugar mill.

geous ocean views. Honeymooners can even sign up for a "seductive dinner" on the beach, which the staff equips with tiki lights, and a "picnic hamper for two" on the sand during the day.

The spa is a must for couples, since it's actually an outdoor shed built into the land, and they offer special couples' spa treatments.

The hotel has three restaurants, and it's a known truth around Nevis that their food is worth traveling for. In fact, guests staying at the nearby Four Seasons (the only franchise hotel on the island) often make the journey over for dinner just for the coveted experience. The hotel's pièce de résistance is Mill Privée, a restaurant that's actually inside a 300-year-old sugar mill and, not surprisingly, the only one of its kind in the world.

Here, honeymooners can enjoy a candlelit tasting dinner inside with wine pairings for two, and can even accompany Chef Halva to the market earlier in the day to help him pick out fresh ingredients.

For all other fancy nights, there's Restaurant 750. Dinners here always start with cocktails and daily appetizers in the Great Room, hosted by the hotel's owner, Muffin Hoffman, who purchased the hotel with her son Tim and late husband Lincoln — a former New York Citibank executive — in 2002.

A natural hostess, Muffin makes her way around the Great Room each evening, taking care to make each guest feel at home, if home happens to have an incredible vaulted ceiling and sexy crystal hurricane lamps from Poland.

If you want a more casual scene, it's Indigo, the poolside restaurant that serves lunch, dinner and happy hour tapas.

Or you can venture out into Nevis to enjoy one of the island's other charming restaurants; the nautical-themed Gin Trap is a local favorite.

Honeymoon packages are \$1,915 per person for seven nights from April 1 to December 19. Regular room rates start at \$235.

The writer was a guest of Montpelier Plantation & Beach.



Rooms overlooking the dormant volcano of Nevis Peak catch the tradewinds year round.

HOW TO GET THERE

To get to Nevis from NYC, you have to fly into St. Kitts first, and then take either a private 10-minute water taxi to Nevis (\$150 per couple or per person), or the 45-minute public ferry (\$20). Montpelier Plantation can help arrange your water transportation. American Airlines and Delta offer direct nonstop flights from JFK to St. Kitts on Saturdays only. For all other days, American Airlines flies from JFK and Newark to St. Kitts with a stop in Miami or Charlotte. This route offers the most options and best fares (usually around \$500 or so). Delta and JetBlue also fly from JFK to St. Kitts, with a stop in Atlanta or San Juan, Puerto Rico.