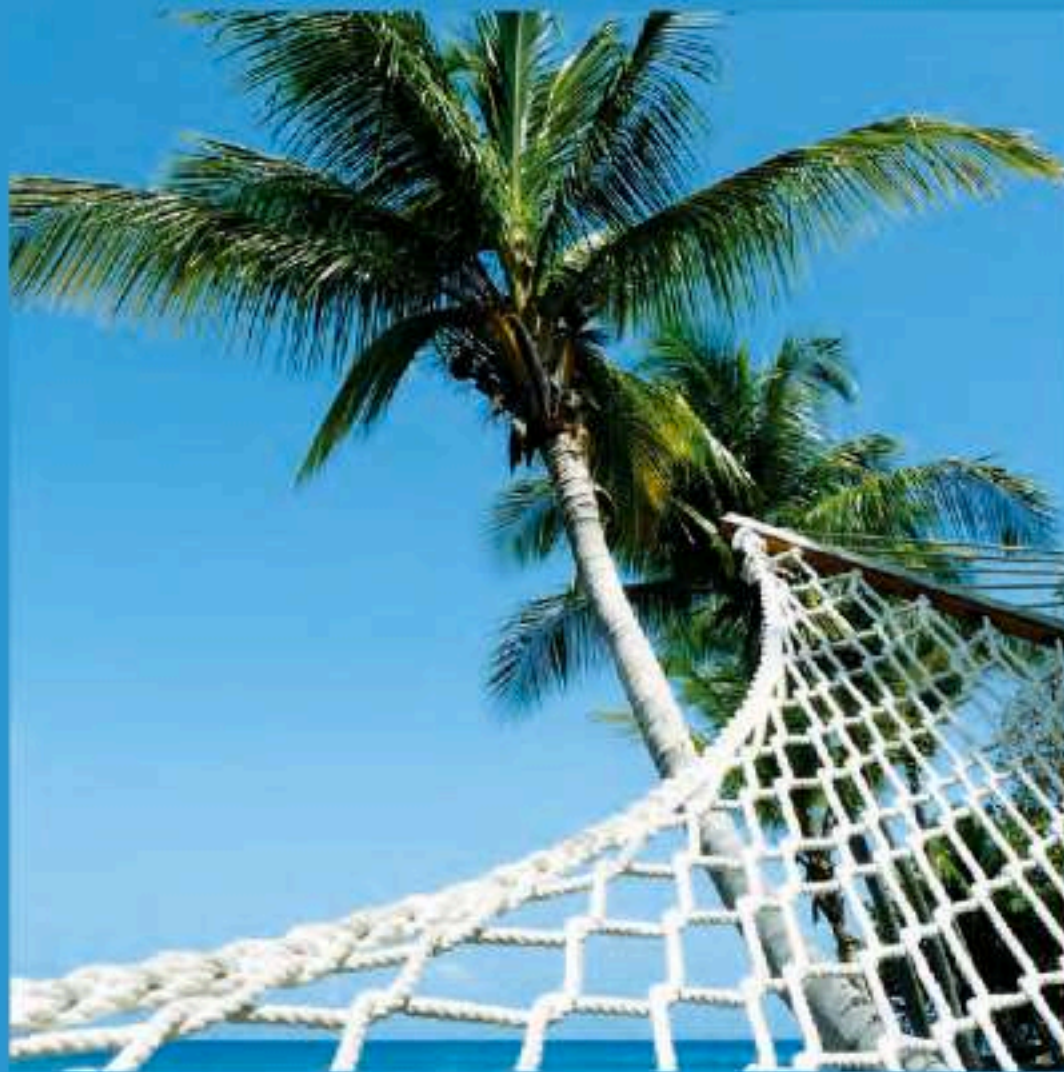


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BACK IN THE SWING

After the devastation caused by hurricanes Irma and Maria, a confident Caribbean is bouncing back with a slew of new luxury openings and opulent updates

Plus: Cambodia, 10 ways to sell Croatia, spas and wellbeing, family travel trends, river cruising, how to make the most of PR and on location with Never a Wasted Journey

Back to the beach

Little Anguilla was among the worst-hit destinations during 2017's hurricane season but now the island's luxury resorts are looking better than ever

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As all positive thinkers know, a setback can also be viewed as an opportunity – and that's certainly been the case for Anguilla, this small, low-lying British Overseas Territory blessed with some of the best beaches in the Caribbean.

On September 6, 2017, the island was ravaged by the 185mph winds of Hurricane Irma, yet within a month the authorities were announcing the island had reopened to visitors. A lot of this can be put down to its 14,000 residents pulling together, along with support from the UK Government that has amounted to £70 million.

"Irma has clearly had benefits," confirms Stephane Zaharia, managing director of Resorts & Residences by CuisinArt, which has two gleaming Mediterranean-style resorts and a Greg Norman golf course set beside the pristine sands of Rendezvous Bay. The largest, the 101-room CuisinArt Golf Resort & Spa, was forced to close for a year of reconstruction.

Now it has emerged totally transformed with a host of enhancements including serene all-white suites and a brilliant wet-play 'Splash Pad' that makes it a top pick for families.

Across the island – which is just 16 miles long – there is an exciting sense of Anguilla coming

back "better and stronger". The flagship for this renaissance is Cap Juluca, which enjoys a billion-dollar location beside the perfect crescent of white sand that is Maundays Bay. Purchased by Belmond in May 2017, this Moorish-style resort



How to book it

Seven nights at Belmond Cap Juluca costs from £3,600pp in a deluxe beachfront king room, including transfers, breakfast, flights from London via Antigua and UK airport lounge passes.

Tel: 01244 897 505, elegantresorts.co.uk

was shut when Irma blew in, but a mighty push was still required to get things up to speed when it opened to a full house last December. With 108 rooms, suites and villas, a new infinity pool and playful interiors by Rottet Studio, it is now one of the coolest escapes in the Lesser Antilles with fun touches ranging from a customised VW van to a daily cocktail party where guests can try sabrage – the handy art of opening a champagne bottle with a sword.

The wow factor

Belmond's "From Island to Island" package, which includes a half-hour ferry transfer and resort credits, makes it easy to pair this with sister property La Samanna on neighbouring St Martin. Split between Dutch and French sides, St Martin/Sint Maarten is a key regional hub and this 83-room clifftop sanctuary is also in sparkling form following a head-to-toe makeover – high points are a superlative breakfast spread exploding with French treats, a fabulous beach and an impeccable spa.

Blissful massages are also a star attraction back at Anguilla's Zemi Beach House Hotel & Spa, a 74-room resort on Shoal Bay East. Unlike at CuisinArt and Cap Juluca, which can feel isolated, here guests can walk along the sands to discover beach bars and restaurants – a plus-point for many, as taxis can be expensive.

The mile-long sands of Meads Bay have a similar appeal and are bookended by two more premium properties that have bounced back with gusto. With 181 rooms – but a rather corporate style – Four Seasons Resort & Residences Anguilla is one of the larger properties on the island, while Malliouhana, which is part of the Auberge Resorts Collection, is emerging as the surprise winner in the glamour stakes. From its statement lobby decorated with 20 antique diving helmets, to divine pool cabanas draped in black, white and yellow, this 63-room resort is a masterful blend of wow factor with expected holiday essentials, including complimentary yoga and beach fitness classes.

Big things are undoubtedly happening on this little island, so it's perhaps no surprise that the Anguilla Tourist Board recently announced visitor figures had hit a 26-year high.

Pictured
1. Zemi Beach House Hotel & Spa