



BIRD OF PARADISE VILLA

ANGUILLA, WEST INDIES

The sixteen-mile-long island of Anguilla looks like an impressive sandbar from the air, albeit with various construction sites and sprawling whitewashed resorts. Absent of the lush green hills that characterize other islands, Anguilla nevertheless reveals equal allure through its flat, sandy stretch and translucent aqua-blue waters. Undeniably the Caribbean island with the best walking

beaches—the expanses of powder-fine sand feel deliciously soft between your toes—Anguilla is a haven for beach lovers and sun worshippers. Basking in the shadow of its neighbor, the mountainous St. Martin, Anguilla feels every bit the castaway island with thirty-three different beaches, fiery flamboyant trees, wandering goats (arguably Anguilla's national animal), and enough beach bars to ensure a rum-soaked game of dominoes or steel-drum accented music is never difficult to find.

Like a golden crown, the 10,500-square-foot custom-designed Bird of Paradise villa sits atop one of Anguilla's most dramatic elevations, Sandy Hill, overlooking the bay with St. Barths and St. Martin in the distance. Designed by architect Guy Courtney of the lauded Wilson Associates, the Dallas architecture firm whose credits include the Four Seasons in Hawaii, Atlantis in the Bahamas, and Las Ventanas in Cabo San Lucas, this Southeast Asian tropical-style villa is a testament to the successful combination of high-minded homeowners and a prized professional. After seeing the architecture firm's work at Frigate Island in the Seychelles, industrious owners Melody and Jon Dill contacted them on the off chance they might be interested in a residential project. If any-

thing teaches a person to reach for the stars, Melody Dill's custom, uberluxe four-bedroom villa with lagoon-style pools, sunken veranda with trellises, and outdoor fireplace certainly does. A true labor of love and fastidious planning, the Bird of Paradise came together through the careful toil of Melody and interior designer Tonya Burke. Leafing through Melody's carefully organized binders of blueprints, interior sketches, furniture orders, and fabric samples is enough to ignite schoolgirl envy. Every detail is documented, from the trim on the pillows of the master bedroom's porch to the extra-heavy Balinese hurricanes on the dining room table. Perhaps the most fascinating element (and equally well documented in its own separate brief available to guests) is the extensive collection of indigenous artifacts displayed throughout the house. All of them were collected during the Dills' exotic travels in Southeast Asia and Africa (including a carved, life-size Indonesian love god). Avid travelers, the Dills count Papua New Guinea as one of their favorite spots and thus chose its rare and beautiful bird species—the bird-of-paradise—as the villa's namesake. Furthermore, the Dills are generous, involved owners, intent on ensuring your stay runs as smoothly as possible and that you enjoy

their villa, and island, as much as they do. Do not hesitate to ask them even the smallest request.

In a similar fashion to a luxury hotel's villa, the Bird, as it is affectionately known, features top-drawer amenities, from Frette linens and robes to Bulgari toiletries and multiple flat-screen HDTVs. The Bird also boasts a private chef, Zoe, who is available on either a meal-to-meal or all-inclusive plan. A native Californian, Zoe was trained in France and has been on Anguilla for fifteen years, first running a small restaurant and now cooking exclusively for the Bird's lucky guests. Every dish, from eggs Benedict and raspberry coffee cake in the morning to lobster salad at lunch, is homemade. Zoe's cooking is so consistently delicious that you'll find yourself shocked when you return home and realize the enormity of how well you've just been eating despite the seemingly simple presentation. Meals are served either on the long teak dining table on the veranda, the round kitchen table, or on special occasions, smack in the center foyer with the lagoon pool's LED light show creating the mood. Table settings include Balinese place mats and specially commissioned, emerald-colored china while the chair cushions and napkins are Jim Thompson's colorful Thai silk fabrics. The indoor-outdoor flow of the Bird's design allows the days to lazily slip away as you meander from one cushioned spot to another. Whether it's on the Indonesian *bale*, or daybed—correctly positioned according to Indonesian tradition at the entrance of the house—or in the reclined plantation chairs on the veranda, or in the teak deck

chairs off the guest room's individual terraces, locations for lounging with a good book or catnapping are widely abundant. Given the villa's exposed hilltop location, the Christmas winds (which seem to last into early February) can be quite strong; fortunately the villa's designers installed a stylish jatoba-wood screen on one side of the veranda to protect the dining table and brush bottoms on all the screen doors so they don't bang in the wind. If the weather proves inclement or the sun too strong, the richly appointed colonial-style living room with coumarou vaulted ceilings, cove lighting that can be dimmed, folding glass doors framed in mahogany, and pastel fabric pillows from Raoul Textiles, Duralee, and Hargett makes for quite an elegant shelter. Furnishings like the carved Madura coffee table from John Erdos, the custom teak side tables from Bali, and the simple rattan sofa from Bauer lend a soothing, neutral tone to the eclectic details like the copper bird from Borneo, the colonial-style ottomans, and silver lamps from Uttermost. The concerted mixture of name-brand furnishings, custom Asian imports, and artistic collectibles give the room an unpretentious feel while remaining elegantly composed. The Bird of Paradise strikes that elusive balance of being both full of distinct character and yet widely appealing.

ROOMS

The four bedrooms of the Bird of Paradise are set on three different elevations and are generously spaced around and below the main building. The master suite is tucked off to the right, shrouded by palms and connected to the main building by a small Balinese footbridge over the lagoon pool, and marked at the entry with a wall carving from Borneo featuring birds-of-paradise. Befitting a master, the suite has a large separate bathroom with Jacuzzi tub and walk-in vanity area. The walls are hand finished in beige plaster and the four-poster Madura bed, teeming with cream-colored linen pillows from Bergamo, looks out through a set of French doors over a small dipping pool to the sparkling sea and distant outline of St. Barths. Despite the master suite's detached location, the suite with the most privacy is the guest room below the main building, accessible by a set of stairs off the outdoor living room. Secluded on its very own level with a crescent-shaped stone terrace that seems to jut out over the water, the lower guest room is the preferred room for a hideaway stay. The four-poster queen-size bed is littered with linen pillows in robin's-egg blue from Raoul Textiles and Morella. A Balinese wall carving hangs over the head of the bed while silver necklaces brought back from the Dills' trip to East Africa adorn the other wall. The two sets of French doors have separate screen doors, ideal for filtering the bugs and breeze while sleeping with the sounds of the sea. The room's separate bar area with a premium coffeemaker and stocked minifridge is a hotel-style delight, as are the spacious closets with

PREVIOUS PAGE *The lacquered footbridge leading to the master suite.*

OPPOSITE *The inspired living room featuring a carved Madura coffee table.*

shelves, cloth-lined rattan drawers, and even a minisafe. The stone-tile floor and shower, brushed-nickel fixtures from Kohler, and amber-colored granite counters give the bathroom a desert appeal, while the simple cream walls and teak doorframes keep the room rooted in a neutral palette. The third and fourth bedrooms are stacked on top of each other in the same building on the opposite side of the main house than the master. The upper-level suite features a wall of sliding doors directly in front of the bed that retract completely to unveil the eastern-facing view—bliss for early risers. A sitting room in the back doubles both as an office with a flat-screen television and a separate entrance to the outdoor living room. The sofa can be made up for nannies or is a perfect spot for small children to nap or watch a DVD. The lower suite has two double beds and an impressive collection of woven baskets, carved masks, and tapestries from Africa adorning the walls, making it easily the most ornamented room in the house. Each of the suites has both ceiling fans and air-conditioning (should the island breeze be insufficient) along with Wi-Fi in case the outside world must encroach. The small beach below is just a two-minute walk down a cut path, and though not quite long enough for a real jog, it provides a nice cove for quick swims or a short strolls. The beach is also quite empty, used only by the three other neighboring villas. Although other beaches on the island have far smoother sand, the convenience and privacy are easily appreciated (particularly at night or dawn).





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The moat-like pool separates the master bedroom; original West Papuan artifacts in the guest room; an authentic Indonesian daybed located, customarily, by the villa's front entrance; the robin's-egg-blue palette in the deluxe guest room.

Cozy teak lounge chairs overlooking the sea and the island of Saint Barth's in the distance.