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# CARIBBEAN HEAVEN: ANGUILLA

**By Dorri Olds**

*It was a morning in February and every 10 minutes NY1 said it was below 20 degrees. As soon as I got out from under the covers, my teeth chattered. It grew closer to rush hour and I dreaded the crowded concrete sidewalks and whipping winds. I wondered how the heck I was going to make it through till spring. This year I knew the answer was a getaway trip. We chose a Caribbean island named Anguilla. Its 30 beaches, aquamarine water and coral encrusted islets, are all public. And, get this, topless sunbathing is legal. The island was sunny and warm every day with an average temperature of 80 degrees.*

We flew American Airlines directly to Anguilla. As soon as we deboarded the plane we were enveloped in a 360-degree view of palm trees and lilies. It was a clear azure-blue sky day and we took a taxi to Sandy Hill Bay beach and our luxurious villa at The Bird of Paradise ([www.anguillabird.com](http://www.anguillabird.com)). The Bird is located on a small bluff overlooking the Caribbean Sea and the neighboring islands of St. Bart's and St. Martin. It has awe-inspiring Asian-Tropical architectural detail—finely chiseled rock walls, stained wood interior ceilings, and plenty of tranquil peace and quiet. The grounds are home to lagoon-style pools and hot tubs. That romantic night we saw a breathtaking tropical tangerine sunset. Later we were lulled to sleep by soothing sounds of surf.

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## Anguilla

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We rented a car ([www.islandcar.ai](http://www.islandcar.ai)), which I strongly recommend. It was easy because of the free car delivery and pickup. That offered us freedom to explore. We wanted to pursue water sports, gourmet restaurants, horseback riding, and shopping. On our first full day on the island we spent most of our time on the crescent-shaped Sandy Hill Bay beach—only a short walk from our villa. The beach offered excellent swimming and snorkeling and we saw small yachts rocking gently in the bay. After a lobster dinner that night we signed up for a 20-minute ferry ride for a one-day adventure in St. Martin. I had serious shopping plans (Gucci, Louis Vuitton, etc.) and wanted to stock up on French wines.

Almost everybody spoke English and our U.S. dollars were accepted throughout the island. Credit cards were also fine except at a few small shops. Our adventures included biting into tender fish croquette in Creole sauce at Smokey's beach restaurant on Cove Bay. We walked along Rendezvous Bay to check out the Dune Preserve. We ambled over to the beach bar for rum and cokes then took in live reggae at Planet Dune. Here's a tip: for the best rum punch and

local island charm check out Smitty's at Island Harbor with a view of Scilly Cay Island. Smitty grills lobsters, crawfish, and other daily freshly caught local fish.

We visited with an American couple we met at Planet Dune. They were staying at Villa Azure (<http://www.azurevilla.com>) and invited us for a play date. Their room faced the azure sea and opened onto a deck where we could look out over Shoal Bay beach. Our pals' luxury oasis was made up of four levels, six decks and terraces and located in the center of Anguilla's largest marine park. For lunch, with our new friends we enjoyed gourmet barbeque grilled fresh Anguilla lobster under a thatched roof on the pool deck. In the afternoon the four of us enjoyed amazing snorkeling and swimming.

We were smart and wore tons of sun block the entire vacation to avoid that hideous bright red sunburned traveler look we saw a few times. In the past I'd found it depressing to return from a pleasure trip, but this time I felt satiated. When we flew into JFK and saw the beloved city skyline, Frank Sinatra's New York, New York came into my head and I knew I'd make it through March.

