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Anguilla Stronger volunteers minding the organization's distribution center

# ANGUILLA

Supported by a quartet of luxury hotels, a cadre of volunteers is leading a recovery effort as expansive and beautiful as the island's legendary beaches

**THE SWELLS ARE BIG TODAY;** the winds, bigger. But on May 30—Anguilla Day—locals still take to the ocean for their annual around-the-island sailing race that celebrates their homeland's independence from St. Kitts in 1967.

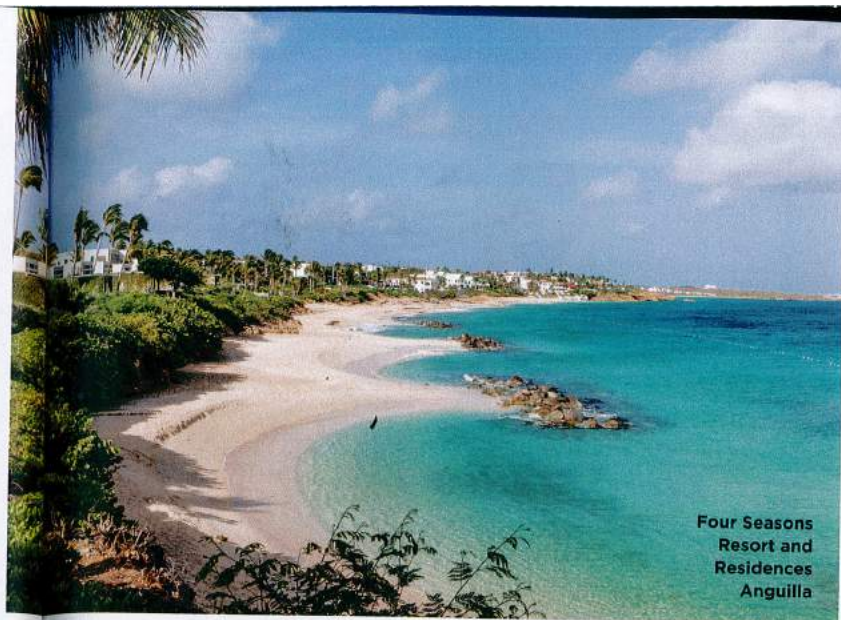
In rustic, shallow-draft schooners with oversize sails (the traditional, hand-built watercraft Anguillans have used for centuries in trade and sometimes smuggling), crews of as many as 25 work in the tightest quarters to keep their boats upright and tacking. All around them bobs a wild barge-and-boat party of locals who've come out to watch the action and cheer on their friends. On shore, hundreds more islanders cluster in spots to picnic and watch, many spending the whole day mirroring the route from land.

It's a really rough day on the water this year, and one boat—a favorite to win—capsizes. But after the crew swims quickly to safety, the post-race party at the funky outpost of Sandy Ground feels like the best night ever.

That's because this is the first Anguilla Day since the northern eye wall of Hurricane Irma passed over the low-lying, 35-square-mile island, destroying most of its homes and schools, uprooting

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Four Seasons  
Resort and  
Residences  
Anguilla



Famed Anguillian  
musician  
Bankie Banx

trees and power poles, making 90 percent of its roads impassable, leaving damages exceeding \$190 million, and killing one resident.

But what Irma took away, this feisty, warm-hearted island took back—and fast. Ringed by 33 beaches of fine white sand, Anguilla has attracted a community of high-end resorts and real estate owners who dug deep and fast to move the tourism base back into action. Starwood Capital Group, the vast hotel holding company, formed Anguilla Stronger, a consortium of real estate owners and four of the island's largest hotels. Their combined purchasing power and infrastructure brought in food and supplies for islanders, procured rebuilding materials for homes, and supported organizations involved in human services on the island.

The base camp for Anguilla Stronger—a trailer office and a trio of refashioned shipping containers on the property of the Starwood's Four Seasons Resort—is a model of efficiency and goodwill; employees and volunteers wear matching T-shirts while they sort products, pack up bags of necessities for weekly distribution, and make deliveries to islanders. They help load new doors and windows into a truck for a couple rebuilding their house. They hit the road for the afternoon, checking in on elderly islanders living in damaged homes, popping by a day care center, and delivering tote bags full of new books to an after-school program and then hanging around to listen to the kids read some of them aloud.

When the main rounds are done for the day, Four Seasons employee and Anguilla Stronger organizer Travis Simpson heads to the beach to check in on his friend Garvey Lake. The young men grew up together; Simpson went to work in hotels, and Lake opened the SunShine Shack, one of a cluster of beloved beach bars and restaurants on Rendezvous Bay. Irma wiped the whole beach clean, taking away Lake's livelihood as well as the Dune Preserve Beach Bar, the renowned hangout of Anguilla's best-known musician, Bankie Banx.

When Lake returned to a completely destroyed building the day after the storm, he put off repairs for two weeks to help a neighbor get his business rebuilt first. Now back in its opulent yellow glory, the reborn SunShine Shack sports Lake's mantra of "Live Up, Love Up, Live On" right above the bar. "Hang out! It's a beautiful day!" he hollers at Simpson, calling for a round of beach drinks and settling in at one of his picnic tables in the sand. And Lake is right: The wild seas of Anguilla Day have subsided, and Rendezvous Bay is a tranquil shimmer of turquoise. It's a day for talk, and laughter, and plans for the future. It's an Anguilla kind of day.



Garvey Lake,  
at his rebuilt  
SunShine Shack





**HELP RIGHT NOW**

**Anguilla Stronger** provides assistance and building supplies for permanent residents, as well as helping rebuild hospitals, schools, and charitable organizations committed to improving the lives of residents. Contribute at [pledgeling.com/anguilla-stronger](http://pledgeling.com/anguilla-stronger).

**GET HERE**

Clayton J. Lloyd International Airport is easily accessible by air through Puerto Rico, St. Martin, Antigua, and St. Kitts, as well as by ferry from St. Martin.

**STAY HERE**

Perched on a bluff between Barnes and Meads bays, the bone-white, dramatic **Four Seasons Resort and Residences Anguilla** (right) possesses ample gifts: spacious rooms (80 percent of which have ocean views), beautifully appointed villas (some of which are beach-front), three pools, tennis courts, and an elegant spa. The open-air Sunset Lounge more than lives up to its name, and Cobà, the most upscale of the three restaurants, may be one of the most romantic spots in the Caribbean. Rates start at \$650; [fourseasons.com/anguilla](http://fourseasons.com/anguilla).

On Shoal Bay East, **Zemi Beach House Resort & Spa** is a luxuriously bohemian boutique hotel with a spectacular spa that inhabits an 18th-century Thai estate imported to the property. There's beachfront and fancier dining on-site, plus the enduring pleasures of the Rhum Room, with a roster of more than 100 small-batch, single-estate rums. Rates start at \$358; [zemibeach.com](http://zemibeach.com). **The Reef by CuisinArt**, a sleek, modern resort on Merrywing Bay, reopened this spring with myriad updates, including a top-to-bottom interior refurbishment, new restaurant and bar concepts, and a refocus of its spa on whole-body wellness. Rates start at \$475; [thereefbycuisinart.com](http://thereefbycuisinart.com). Just up the beach, the **CuisinArt Golf Resort & Spa** reopens in November with redesigned rooms, new restaurants, golf programs, and a spa. Rates



start at \$550; [cuisinartresort.com](http://cuisinartresort.com). **WIMCO Villas** provides top-shelf concierge services for 55 luxury properties—from delightfully personal to expansively modern—across the island. Inquire about the select villas in the collection that are participating in a “free night” promotion this fall; [wimco.com](http://wimco.com).

Already reopened late in 2017 with improvements including new windows and doors that opened up bigger Caribbean Sea views, the pale pink **Frangipani Beach Resort** on Meads Bay will debut a new rooftop lounge and Balinese spa in November. Rates start at \$500; [frangipaniresort.com](http://frangipaniresort.com). Under new ownership and reopening in November, **Belmond Cap Juluca** has emerged from a \$121 million refresh. The result—improving its haute-romantic strand of beachfront guest rooms on Maundays Bay, reimagining its stunning open-air restaurant, and adding a new sea-edge infinity pool and spa complex—is breathtaking evidence of Anguilla's return as a Caribbean getaway of the highest order. Rates start at \$904; [belmond.com](http://belmond.com).

**DOMINICA**

One of the Caribbean's wildest islands invests even more in eco-tourism and design to withstand climate events

Beloved for its volcanoes, hot springs, rain forests, and low-key vibe, Dominica was the first Caribbean island in Maria's path. The category 5 hurricane made landfall on September 18 with winds of 165 miles per hour (and higher gusts), ravaging the lush landscape—reducing most of its buildings to rubble, leveling its vegetation, and taking 31 lives. But with inspiring grit and ambition, Dominica has come back not only to reopen hotels and restore eco-tourism areas, such as Trafalgar Falls, Indian River, the Botanic Gardens, and the Syndicate Nature Trail, but also to rebuild with the goal of being “climate-resilient.”

One of the island's most luxurious and distinctive resorts, intimate **Secret Bay** reopens in November with updated villas and a new restaurant, spa, and wellness pavilion. The resort also offers a post-hurricane **Nurture the Nature Island** volunteerism package, which includes working with local naturalists and fishermen to learn about and help restore habitat while staying in a luxury villa. Rates for Secret Bay start at \$705. Nurture the Nature Island packages start at \$535 per night (one night complimentary in appreciation of your service and two if your stay is seven nights or more, some blackout dates apply); [secretbay.dm](http://secretbay.dm).

In the capital city of Roseau, the refurbished **Fort Young Hotel** continues to add new guest rooms, and is an ideal base camp for exploring Dominica's natural sites. Rates start at \$182; [fortyounghotel.com](http://fortyounghotel.com).

**HELP RIGHT NOW**

**Resilient Dominica (RezDM)** helms a variety of local programs, including one that provides food for primary-school lunches but also stockpiles reserves in case of a natural disaster; [rezdm.org](http://rezdm.org).

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