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AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2008

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SUITE DREAMS

Aquamare delivers the privacy of a villa with the services of a hotel

MEGARESORTS, shopping malls, golf courses, and late-night club scenes are not part of the British Virgin Islands' landscape. Instead, vacationers will find intimate coves rimmed with deserted white-sand beaches, grassy hillsides manicured by grazing goats, laid-back beach bars serving up fruity rum-laden Painkillers, and an underwater world of colorful coral reefs and ancient shipwrecks. Smaller in scale and less populated than the U.S. Virgin Islands, the 60 islands that comprise the BVI are in close proximity to each other within the Francis Drake Channel, making them ideal for island-hopping sailors. Those who prefer to keep their feet on land can check in to one of a handful of upscale hotels and small resorts—or go it alone and rent a villa.

Although renting a villa offers more space, privacy, and freedom than a traditional hotel room, renters are often faced with a lack of services, outdated electronics, and antiquated decor. Aquamare, an enclave of three 8,000-square-foot homes located on the western coast of Virgin Gorda, one of the BVI's four main islands, is designed to bridge the gap between hotel and villa. Guillermo Paz, one of Aquamare's developers, says he chose Virgin Gorda to launch his first villa venture because of its history (the island was once the winter retreat for the Rockefellers), lack of congestion, and good infrastructure. "After we decided on the location, we started talking about our experiences with renting villas—we had some awesome ones and some awful ones," he says. His priority was to add hotel-like amenities



Aquamare's three-villa enclave is set on a sandy stretch of private beach in the British Virgin Islands. Each of the bedrooms is designed as a master suite so that all guests feel like they have the best room.



that provide the conveniences of staying at a resort. "Vacationing at Four Seasons is not the same as staying at someone's home. There are such different pros and cons to both," says Paz. Priced from \$12,500 to \$25,000 per week, Aquamare's villas follow upscale hotel models with nightly turndown service, Frette linens, iPod stereos, and flat-screen televisions.

Set on a half-mile of pristine beachfront in the quiet cove of Mahoe Bay, the villas offer a location that is secluded, yet never feels isolated. Services include the attention of a personal concierge who can deal with unexpected glitches, as well as book island experiences, such as diving trips to the nearby Wreck of the Rhone. Aquamare also has beach attendants, private chefs, two yachts for

cruising and deep-sea fishing, and yoga on the beach. "We have a runner to take care of errands," says Paz. "If you need an extra case of champagne, he'll get it."

Nestled between mountain and ocean, the homes have open floor plans, multiple terraces, and tall ceilings to ensure that guests always have a view. A neutral color palette incorporating travertine marble, local stone, and hardwoods helps keep the focus on the natural elements. When determining the layouts of the five-bedroom villas, Paz paid attention to vacationers' egos as well as their needs for privacy. "We designed each home with three master suites," he says. "So you never have to worry about who gets the best bedroom." [Kim Fredericks]

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