



Fifteen cottages dot Fond Doux Resort & Plantation, built on land that King Louis XIV of France granted to settlers of St. Lucia. ■ Photos: newsday.com/travel

## Where history happened

BY ALISON GREGOR  
Special to Newsday

**T**he ruined sugar mill is a cultural icon for many islands in the West Indies, appearing on everything from brochures to cocktail napkins, but many visitors leave without learning its function. The same is true of the great plantation estates.

However, in recent decades, several historic plantations on a handful of Caribbean islands

have been renovated and converted into upscale inns that now play a role in heritage tourism. Some of these hotels even continue to operate as working plantations, growing cocoa beans and fruits. While the 18th century plantations, mostly sugar-producing, helped create the landscape of the

islands, the plantation inns, which often have a great house along with cottages and acres of land, are helping to sustain it.

Frequently family-owned and managed, the plantation inns, which typically offer an intimate experience featuring fine cuisine, translate a heritage of sugar, slavery and a

plantation economy into a tourism attraction, enabling visitors to experience the unique culture of each island. In lieu of a seaside stay, most plantation inns offer beach clubs or shuttles to nearby beaches, as well as verdant gardens and rain forest trails.

Here are four:

### Fond Doux Resort & Plantation

Soufrière, St. Lucia  
758-459-7545  
From U.S.: 315-307-2348  
fonddouxestate.com  
\$230 per night and up

**HISTORY** About 250 years ago, St. Lucia was punctuated with small estates that produced coffee, cocoa and, later, sugar. One of the estates, Fond Doux, was granted by King Louis XIV

See **CARIBBEAN** on C20



# Plantation vacations



**Lyton and Erolene Lamontagne made Fond Doux an eco-resort that grows its own produce.**

FOND DOUX HOLIDAY PLANTATION

## CARIBBEAN from C19

to French settlers in 1713. The plantation had been abandoned for decades when purchased by the father of Lyton Lamontagne, who with his wife, Erolene, created the resort with its 15 cottages. The Lamontagnes brought a 250-year-old French Colonial-style house from elsewhere, reassembled it and called it Angelina, after Erolene's sister. "About five cottages were moved from other parts of the island," Erolene Lamontagne says. "The rest were built from scratch." With their verandas, louvered windows and intricate gingerbread trim, the cottages evoke the days of French colonization, and Fond Doux initially opened as a heritage site in 1999.

**TO DO** The 27- by 14-mile island has two majestic tropical peaks called the Pitons; Fond Doux is part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site protecting them. Fond Doux, with two fine restaurants, a spa and hiking trails with views of the Pitons, not only offers many activities, but is a true eco-resort, growing its own organic produce and cocoa. It's offering a 30 percent discount through Dec. 14.

## Ottley's Plantation Inn St. Kitts and Nevis

869-465-7234  
From U.S.: 800-772-3039  
ottleys.com

\$199 per night and up  
**HISTORY** Sugar was central to the Kittitian story for 350 years,

and cane fields shaped St. Kitts' picturesque terrain, now dotted with chimneys and mill ruins. Ottley's plantation, with its breathtaking views, was founded by Drewry Ottley of England in the 1700s, remaining in his family through the 19th century. In 1988, the modest great house and plantation were purchased by the Keusch-Lowell family, New Jersey booksellers and longtime St. Kitts visitors. They added to the great house, remaining true to the English Colonial style, and it now offers deluxe rooms. They renovated buildings, such as a cotton house with original stone walls and terra-cotta floors that is now the English Cottage Royal Suite, says part-owner Nancy Lowell, who along with her husband, sister and father, helps to greet guests and make them feel at home.

**TO DO** The sugar trade on St. Kitts folded about a decade ago, leaving behind a small railway, now used by tourists, that circumnavigates the island. Ottley's, which offers fine dining and a spa, borders a rain forest with hiking trails. A recent addition is a nearby black sand beach that was previously inaccessible, and a garden tour given by Lowell's husband, a plant scientist, is a highlight. The hotel is offering seven nights for the price of five through Dec. 22.

## Golden Rock Inn

Charlestown, St. Kitts and Nevis  
869-469-3346  
goldenrocknevis.com  
\$110 per night and up

**HISTORY** The sugar mill may be a Caribbean cultural icon, but on Nevis, there's one hotel where you can actually stay in one. The Golden Rock Inn opened decades ago in the ruins of a 19th century sugar plantation; it has 11 rooms in cottages and a duplex converted windmill. The mill has a spiral staircase, rounded stone walls, a terrace and window seats. While the hotel's most recent owners, artist Brice Marden and his wife, Helen, don't focus on the history, they continue to respect the plantation's



**The original sugar mill at Golden Rock Inn on Nevis has been converted into a duplex with a spiral staircase and stone walls.**

buildings. The Mardens created a new restaurant, an alfresco dining terrace and a luxurious tropical garden. The rooms, with bright-red trim and funky furniture, have high-end amenities but no air-conditioning.

**TO DO** The 36-square-mile island of Nevis is permeated by

ruins of the sugar cane industry; it even has a handful of private homes in converted sugar mills. Other plantation hotels on Nevis include the Hermitage Plantation Inn (hermitagennevis.com), the Montpelier Plantation & Beach (montpeliernevis.com), and the

Nisbet Plantation Beach Club (nisbetplantation.com). Golden Rock has a 50-foot swimming pool, nature trails and local plants in which green vervet monkeys often appear.

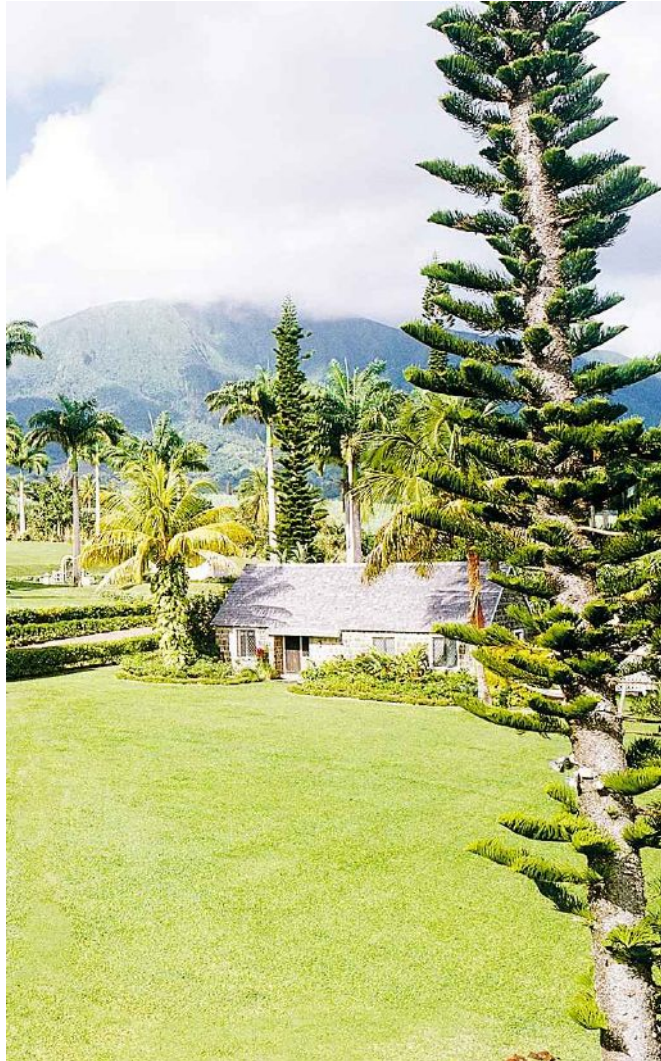
## The Old Fort

Bequia  
St. Vincent and the Grenadines  
784-458-3440  
theoldfort.com  
\$160 per night and up

**THE HISTORY** Local hearsay indicates that the Old Fort was a former plantation, and maps from 1763 bear this out.

Perched on Bequia's highest point, Mt. Pleasant, with views of all the surrounding Grenadines, the Old Fort was a rubble-strewn ruin of walls, cisterns and foundations when it was discovered in 1978 by Otmar and Sonja Schaedle, visitors from Germany. They began a lengthy restoration of the estate in the French Colonial style, using timber from local forests and the same





Drewry Ottley of England settled on St. Kitts in the early 1700s and established a sugar plantation that remained in his family through the 19th century. The current owners created a resort with amenities that include a spa and a black sand beach.

Restorers of the Old Fort on Bequia used local woods and the same kind of stone found in the ruins of the property's original structures.

OTTLEY'S PLANTATION INN



OLD FORT PLANTATION

stone as that of the ruins. The Old Fort now consists of eight rooms, six in the reconstructed plantation house and two built within the foundation of an ancient sugar mill. When it comes to focusing on plantation history, director and co-owner Quirin Schaedle says, "I want to go more and more in that direction." **TO DO** Bequia, a tiny island of green hills

that's become synonymous with sailing and model sailboats, has several beaches. The Old Fort has complimentary breakfast, a swimming pool with waterfall, kids' pool with grotto, hiking trails, spa services and fine dining. The hotel is offering 15 percent off for those who book for a week, and the entire property is available for rent by large groups.



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