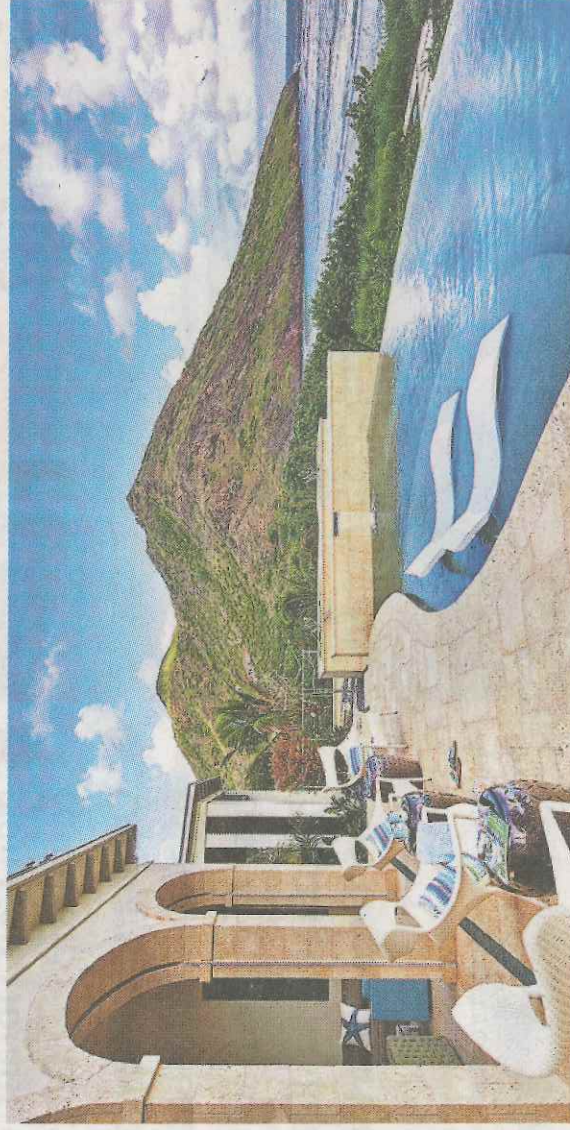


Paradise found in a Caribbean bay

Christophe Harbour, on a peninsula at the tip of St Kitts, is a luxury living dream, says Liz Rowlinson

When the seasoned superyacht skipper Aeneas Hollins dropped anchor in one of the scalloped bays on the southeastern tip of St Kitts in 2007, he decided to stay put. There he saw the opportunity to design a destination marina to rival those of Albany in the Bahamas or Porto Cervo in Sardinia. "With great flatwater anchorages, St Kitts is a natural cruising area for big boats," he says. "In fact, it's so quiet you can sail with a glass of champagne in



your hand." It wasn't so calm when, a decade later, Hurricane Irma passed through the Caribbean and battered the freshly planted palm trees at Hollins's state-of-the-art marina, although the damage could have been a lot worse.

Thanks to Charles P "Buddy" Darby, the American owner of Hollins's superyacht, who had shared his skipper's vision, the 24-berth marina is only one part of an assiduously planned 2,500-acre gated island community now known as Christophe Harbour.

Once a largely neglected peninsula with a stagnant salt lake, it was bought by Darby from the St Kitts government nine years ago. Christophe Harbour, where you can buy freehold berths from \$1.875 million, is undoubtedly a stunning natural playground. Its golden-sand beaches backed by green peaks are heaven for hikers. Although only a ten-minute drive away, you feel a million miles from St Kitts's main tourist hub of Frigate Bay, or the immense cruise ships coming into the port at Basseterre, its capital.

Darby likes to call it a "marina development designed by sailors for sailors" and, located in the chain of the Leeward Islands, it completes the yachting triangle between Antigua and St Barths/St Maarten. With room to accommodate boats up to 300ft "five or six years behind" the luxury marina development of Porto Montenegro in southeastern Europe. Behind the dock an elegant, colonial-style customs house will process arrivals (it is a designated port of entry) and provide the services that superyacht owners and crew require. This includes a handful of small "Mustique-grade" boutiques ready to meet visitors' beach-to-bar clothing needs, with restaurants and apartments to come at a later stage.

Fast-track immigration for owners is a selling point. Whether you arrive into St Kitts's Robert L Bradshaw international airport by British Airways (direct flights twice a week from Gatwick) or private aircraft, it's possible to whizz through the VIP lounge and be on your boat within 30 minutes of touchdown. Non-yachting owners can enjoy a rum punch in the members' Pavilion beach club, or relax in their villa.

Through the American-style purchase set-up, you can buy custom home sites from US\$740,000 (£547,500), on which you can have your home built by a recommended developer at \$500 to \$650 a square foot. Or you can buy a resale property, with four-bedroom villas typically just under \$4 million. "These would be \$12 million if located in St Barths," says Genevieve Conroy, the vice-president of marketing for the development. There are spacious turnkey two-bedroom, two-bathroom



This four-bedroom furnished villa in Christophe Harbour is \$3.99 million

bungalows at Ocean Grove from \$1.3 million, or there is fractional ownership — you can buy a one-tenth share (five weeks a year) of a four-bedroom villa for \$450,000. These fractions qualify for the island's 33-year-old Citizenship by Investment programme that has a \$400,000 threshold. Most buyers on St Kitts are from the US, with smaller numbers from Canada and the UK.

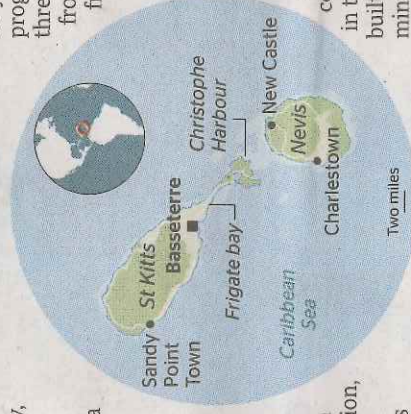
Wealth preservation and lifestyle, not citizenship, are the driving forces for those who buy here, says Darby. "Prices of the resale properties here have gone up 35 per cent in four years," he says. Elsewhere on the island prices are static, and there's not much competition — yet. Various schemes in the north of the island have been built with citizenship-scheme buyers in mind, but not all are faring well, as buyers will often sell (at a loss) after five years.

However, investors might be attracted to a Hilton condo complex, Embassy Suites, planned for 2018 in Pelican Bay, near Basseterre, and also the \$180 million Koi Resort & Residences development near Frigate Bay.

In response to the issue of high crime (local gang-related, rather than against tourists), Darby points to the one-road access to the Christophe Harbour peninsula. "Where else in the Caribbean can you control the security on a 2,500-acre piece of land?" he says.

The newly opened Park Hyatt hotel — the first of its kind in the Caribbean — is secluded Banana Bay, looking across the strait to the island of Nevis, is also a key milestone in putting Christophe Harbour on the radar, according to Darby.

Though the lively Sunday nights at Salt Plage, Christophe Harbour's stylish go-to beach bar, cannot compete with the variety of top-quality restaurants and amenities that Barbados and St Barths offer, for lunch you can pop across to Nevis, a smaller island that has an affluent expat crowd that is only embryonic on St Kitts. Yachties take note — there's a superyacht marina planned there too.



Custom-build your dream home on a vacant plot in Sandy Bank Bay in Christophe Harbour. Plots start at \$3.3 million



The island of Nevis can be seen from this four-bedroom villa, which is on the market for \$3.695 million, in Christophe Harbour

THE TIMES
CURRENCY SERVICES

Buying
or selling
property
abroad?

Trust us to take care of
your transfer.



- ✓ No transfer fees*
- ✓ Lock in a rate for the future

0207 294 7971

timescurrencyservices.co.uk

International money transfer from
The Times and The Sunday Times | WORLD FIRST