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RESORT REPORT By Michael Baginski

Serenity now!

New adults-only luxury resort promises guests something special in Saint Lucia

SAINT LUCIA, WHICH BOASTS SOME OF THE WORLD'S most luxurious resorts, has a brand-new option to entice visitors. Serenity at Coconut Bay opened June 1 with a tried-and-true formula: sophisticated adults-only all-inclusive with personal butler service. However, the 36-suite hotel comes with its own unique twists and a "re-imagined concept" of luxury that General Manager Bernard Mazet promises is an "oasis of peace and tranquility... a slice of heaven," and which CEO Mark Adams vows will deliver an "outstanding, personalized experience seeing to guests' every need."

Mazet likens Serenity to a "European-style boutique hotel in the Caribbean," while Adams touts its "casual Caribbean elegance" – either way, or in combination, clients are certain to discover something special in Saint Lucia.

WHAT IS SERENITY?

Essentially a hotel within a hotel, Serenity at Coconut Bay is a 36-suite/ villa property located adjacent to the popular Coconut Bay Resort & Spa. However, with 34 hectares of land for the two resorts, guests of Serenity would hardly know that the 250-room sibling resort is there unless going to the beach, or choosing to take advantage of its many amenities (eight restaurants, seven bars, five pools, fitness centre, tennis and basketball courts, full-service salon and oceanfront spa, and the island's largest water park) – all of which are available to Serenity guests (though guests of the larger resort cannot go the other way).

"Serenity is unique in Saint Lucia because it gives you the benefit and the seclusion of the private villa with all access to Coconut Bay Resort and Spa," says WestJet Vacations' Cindy Gerhardt, who stayed at the property in August. "I think it will be very appealing to people that prefer the serenity, but with options for some busy interaction. They can take it or leave it."

Though inextricably linked, Serenity will be marketed separately from Coconut Bay.

QUALIFYING THE CLIENT

To start with, adults only; no kids. Beyond that, the ideal client for Serenity includes:

- ▶ Honeymooners
- ▶ Mature adults seeing a private and romantic escape
- ▶ Discerning travellers looking not only for luxury accommodations but superior amenities, pampering and intuitive services as well.
- ▶ Small high-end groups
- ▶ Past guests of Coconut Bay are "very likely" to give Serenity a try, according to WestJet's Gerhardt. "If they stayed at the Harmony (adults-only section) last time, this will be an extra special treat with a step-up on the romance scale."



SALES TIPS

From Natalia Greene, Director of Marketing, Serenity at Coconut Bay

- ▶ Recommend Serenity as the new luxury product in Saint Lucia. Why? Luxurious and spacious accommodations, exemplary butler services, prime location and value. Look at the rates for other butler/plunge pool accommodations on the island and compare to Serenity's 2017 rates. Our grand opening offers provide the best rates for this level of luxury product.
- ▶ Point out to your clients our ideal location close to the airport; what this means is they don't lose their day of arrival or day of departure due to a two-hour transfer (to the north of the island) and early airport check-in requirements.
- ▶ Note the bonuses and incentives we have for agents at SerenityResortRewards.com.
- ▶ Show your clients the videos on our website so they can see the level of privacy our suites offer and the level of service they will receive. Our suites are designed and landscaped to be the perfect havens for clothing-optional honeymoons.

► Gerhardt adds that the Serenity client is closer to a Sandals client than someone who would go to Jade Mountain. "Jade is quite a unique retreat that I can't compare to anything else. Serenity and Sandals appeal to a wider variety of upscale clientele. Serenity is much smaller than any Sandals though, so peace and solitude here is the norm. I guess in that way it's like Jade Mountain."

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Serenity at Coconut Bay is unique on Saint Lucia: a south-end resort. That means it is close to island attractions, but also Hewanorra International Airport (five-minute drive) in Vieux Fort. As most Saint Lucia resorts are found in the north (with a few in the middle), that means guests are sipping cocktails while others are still completing their journeys.

The location is "absolutely a pro," agrees Air Canada Vacations' Dina Bertolo, adding, "The interesting thing is you could never tell it is located so close to the airport; no noise!"

PRIVATE ENCLAVES

More than a suite, not quite a villa, Serenity's "enclaves" are designed for comfort and privacy. Three room categories range in size from 1,200 to 1,900 square feet, with beautifully appointed decor and hand-crafted finishes that includes Saint Lucia river rock, granite and mahogany seamlessly integrating indoor and outdoor spaces. All suites feature plunge pools, custom-made mahogany king beds, oversized soaking tubs, and separate rain showers in ensuite bathrooms.

"The main difference between the three categories is the amount of physical space," says Serenity's director of marketing, Natalia Greene. "They are all luxurious. They all have king beds and private plunge pools with waterfalls." They also all feature butler- and 24-hour room service.

As an abbreviated overview:

- **Plunge Pool Butler Suite:** 1,250 square feet
- **Premium Plunge Pool Butler Suite:** 1,500 square feet
- **Grande Plunge Pool Butler Suite:** 1,900 square feet corner suite

SERENITY'S AMENITIES

A brief list of Serenity services and inclusions:

- Private airport transfers
- In-suite check-in
- Intuitive butler and 24-hour room services
- Reservation-free and/or in-suite gourmet dining
- Unlimited wine, premium spirits, crafted cocktails and beverage service
- Daily signature cocktail with souvenir recipe card and mixology lesson
- Personalized wet bar refreshed as needed
- Private plunge pool & hammock
- Pillow menu
- Bathrobes and slippers
- Complimentary wifi and long-distance calling
- Bose entertainment unit
- In-suite espresso machine, coffee and tea maker
- Molton Brown toiletries
- Poolside wait and butler service; private pool cabanas & aqua beds
- Golf cart transfers to the beach and oceanfront spa
- Firepits
- Taxes and gratuities



THE BUTLER DOES IT

What would being (happily) stranded on a Caribbean island be without having one's own Man Friday? Fortunately, Serenity suites come with a butler who will do anything and everything from unpacking suitcases to ironing, drawing a bath, providing wake-up calls, serving breakfast in bed, or making restaurant reservations – and all provided with the "highest level of service and distinction."

The hotel points out that "no detail is too small" to be considered and that the "intuitive" service means guests "may not even have to ask." GM Mazet notes that travel agents are welcome to contact him directly for special requests for their guests, such as placing champagne in the room upon arrival. "Any request, I can make it happen," he laughs. "I am a super butler!"

WATER EVERYWHERE

► **Pool:** The signature Serenity Pool area, scenically laid out in front of the Great House, features an impressive lap pool, computerized fountain arcs, aqua day beds, cabanas, poolside bar and attendants serving craft cocktails and hors d'oeuvres. A state-of-the-art music system provides sound equilibrium throughout – never too loud in any particular spot. The pool comes alive at night with multi-coloured spotlights.

► **Beach:** Coconut Bay's beach (a short walk or golf cart ride away from Serenity) is so long that guests don't believe it all belongs to the resort. Comprised of Paradise and Eternity beaches, the mile-long stretch is ideal for swimming, walking, kite surfing and photo ops (especially for wedding or honeymoon couples). It is also a protected sanctuary for sea turtles, which return annually to nest. With views of the Maria Island Nature Reserve, the beach also fronts a marine park, meaning motorized water vessels are prohibited. The Paradise beach bar saves guests from having to return to the resort for drinks and exclusive cabanas are being constructed for Serenity guests on a quiet part of the beach, accessible by golf cart shuttle.

CULINARY

In the style of a grand Saint Lucian mansion, Serenity's Greathouse Restaurant offers guests a menu of Caribbean-inspired cuisine making the most of fresh local ingredients (including the resort's own greenhouse) and flavours from the catch of the day to more traditional dishes. Gluten- and meat-free dishes are also on the menu, and all meals are accompanied by an extensive international wine list.

In addition to the main dining room, a large, private gathering room with seating for 10 is available for group dining. The latter is also the venue for special chef's table seatings with renowned local chef Auntie Debbie, who is lending her talents and island recipes to the kitchen after retiring from running her own restaurant.

WHO'S SELLING IT?

- Air Canada Vacations and WestJet Vacations, with both hotel packages and flights.
- Sunwing is expected to soon have the property in its system.
- U.S. carriers offer connecting services through gateways such as Miami and Charlotte.

INFO

- Serenity / Coconut Bay is represented in Canada by Klint & Associates Inc. (KAI); contact annika@thekaigroup.ca; 1-705-286-0110, or toll-free, 1-855-686-0110.
- Visit www.serenityatcoconutbay.com. ✱