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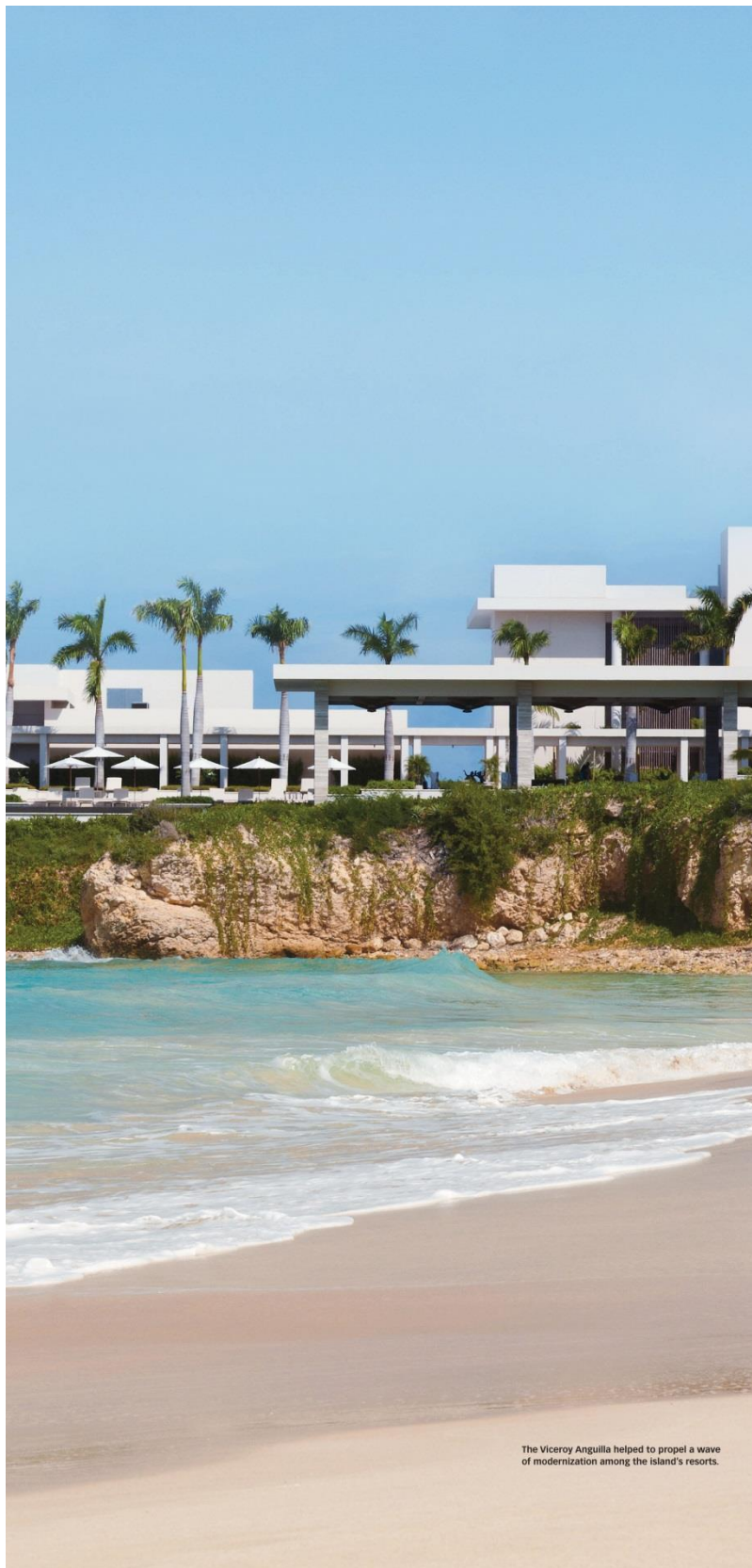
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ALL EYES ON ANGUILLA

This sleepy
Caribbean
island is
waking up to
big changes.

BY PAUL RUBIO





The Viceroy Anguilla helped to propel a wave of modernization among the island's resorts.

In the shadows of glitzy St. Barths and casino-strewn St. Martin, Anguilla has long positioned itself as the quiet, simpler alternative to its neighbors, embracing unpretentious luxury over flash and fame. However, in the past several years, this ultra-laid-back island nation has propelled into fast-forward—and there's no pushing pause.

The catalyst: 2009's design-savvy Viceroy Anguilla, a half-billion-dollar modern masterpiece of 166 rooms, suites and villas straddling two exquisite beaches and redefining Caribbean cool. With its infinity-edged excess, South Beach swank and Kelly Wearstler interiors, the Viceroy effectively instigated Anguilla's love affair with modernity. Later that year, the unveiling of the jaw-dropping Ani Villas estate, a duo of high-design, 10,000-square-foot luxury villas on a cactus-laced promontory towering over Anguilla's azure Little Bay, also spawned major waves. As word spread of this new paradigm, "classic Caribbean" developments across Anguilla were quickly scrapped for contemporary alternatives.

Drive through Anguilla today and roadside billboards preview the modern sanctuaries that lie ahead for 2014 and beyond. Atop Meads Bay, the iconic 55-room Malliouhana—rebranded as an Auberge Resort—has embarked on a head-to-toe renovation led by TAL Studio and SB Architects, of Hotel Jerome and Dorado Beach fame, respectively.

Over on the powdery beaches of Shoal Bay East, the Zemi Beach Resort and Spa has completed the first of seven tropical chic enclaves, which together will house 55 hotel rooms and 28 two- and three-bedroom residences priced from \$2 million to \$3.1 million. Construction has already begun on The Reef by CuisinArt, a hipper, younger sister hotel to the more traditional CuisinArt Golf Resort & Spa.

Not to be outshined by the new kids on the block, Anguilla's original grand dame, Cap Juluca, spent most of 2013 under the knife. The first changes are immediately noticeable: a bolder, more colorful open-air lobby, draped in ornate chandeliers and light fixtures, opens directly onto the sea. A high-end boutique replaces the original check-in area, which has moved adjacent to the common beachfront living room. While all 69 rooms have received soft upgrades, a brand-new 3,290-square-foot villa, the Jonquil Suite, now stands as the resort's premier reservation, inclusive of two master bedrooms, a full-service kitchen, an oceanfront dining terrace and a private, freshwater infinity pool and Jacuzzi. A fourth resto-bar has been added on-property, the Moroccan-inspired Spice lounge, which kicks into full gear on Monday and Friday evenings with local live music.

Renovations notwithstanding, Cap Juluca will always have something the newbies don't—Anguilla's superlative beach. The property perfectly nestles the entirety of what is arguably the Caribbean's most breathtaking unity of sun, sand and sea: Maundays Bay. The turquoise hues here seem almost surreal, especially as they wash ashore the steps of the resort's distinctive Greco-Moorish buildings. With a fresh look and all its natural bounties, Cap Juluca is not just enshrined in the history books of Anguilla luxury—it has decidedly found its way into the next chapter, right alongside its contemporary counterparts.

Aleta, one of five restaurants onsite at Viceroy Anguilla, offers an island-inspired poolside menu and views of Meads Bay.



Zemi Beach Resort and Spa overlooks Shoal Bay East, with plans for residences that will start at \$2 million.





With its infinity-edged excess, South Beach swank and Kelly Wearstler interiors, the Viceroy effectively instigated Anguilla's love affair with modernity.

Anguilla's original grand dame, Cap Juluca, went through a total renovation last year.



The Ani Villa estate is perched above the crystal blue waters of Little Bay.