

MACO

C A R I B B E A N L I V I N G



US \$7.95

THIS IS WHERE THE PARTY STARTS AT CHRISTOPHE HARBOUR, ST KITTS, IN A BEACH BAR "WHERE SAILORS MEET CIVILIANS"

sweet place called salt





CHRISTOPHE HARBOUR'S OCEAN-SIDE BEACH BAR ON ST KITTS MIGHT JUST BE THE ONLY SUCH VENUE IN THE REGION WITH A PURPOSE-BUILT DANCING TABLE. "We planned it that way from the start," says internationally renowned architect and designer John Haley.

"It's a long blue and white painted concrete table opposite the bar. You can sit either side of it, on the table, dance on it—whatever. Beautiful people can jump onto it and inspire everyone else to dance."

Haley understands that creating an outstanding shoreline saloon isn't just about original design, friendly service and inventive cocktail; it's also about mood and memories. "The best thing about SALT Plage for me is that everybody is happy. There hasn't been one unhappy person I've met there."

The 2,500-acre Christophe Harbour project on the island's south-east peninsula encompasses a superyacht marina, upcoming Park Hyatt and golf course, some very ritzy real estate, and a lavish beach club, as well as the award-winning SALT Plage on Whitehouse Bay.

So what was owner Buddy Darby's brief to Haley? "He wanted a place where you could sit and enjoy the sun setting over the sea. And just about every day of year, you can do exactly that."

The bar's name derives from the harvesting of salt that took place on this part of the island. "We found the foundations of a building that we think was used to bag the sea salt before it was shipped out from the pier right opposite," remembers Haley. "There was just one three-foot high wall left, and when you sit at the bar—one long lovely piece of teak— your legs dangle right in front of that same original wall."

Authenticity is important to Haley: "Everything I build is anchored in the place where it's going to live." The corrugated tin roof was reclaimed from an old Basseterre sugar factory. "The idea was to use it so that the structure didn't look brand new. So we created the whole building, then repurposed it—that was the idea." The light industrial theme includes a funnel-shaped cauldron hanging over the bar, gas lamps and factory-style fittings in the bathrooms. "It's all from my imagination," reveals Haley.



Design out in front of the bar is more 21st century. “I wanted that part to feel like a contemporary club—new, playful and fun.” So there are multi-coloured lighting cubes, uplighters in the deck the colour of warm firelight, and spots in the trees shining down cool moonlight. “Out on the pier, we lit the pilings underwater so they would glow and you’d know where the edge is at night.”

Haley preserved some existing trees and planted new palms to create an oasis feel around the bar. “It’s essentially an open-air bar under the sky and stars—that’s what we always wanted. You can watch the sun go down and the lights of Basseterre come up—a really pretty sparkly spectacle.”

Depending on the mood and the size of the party, there are different chillaxing areas. “We’ve crafted a variety of eating spaces, so you can dine at a low cocktail table or up on bar stools, at a banquette, or round more traditional dining tables with chairs.”

There are trampolines, hammocks, daybeds under a sail-like awning, and an ipe (Brazilian hardwood) jetty jutting out over the cobalt water. “That particular wood is the perfect decking material in the climate—it turns a beautiful soft grey and is especially good if you have bare feet on it.” No detail is too small for Haley.

SALT Plage can be approached by sea or by road. So visitors arriving straight from the airport, St Barths

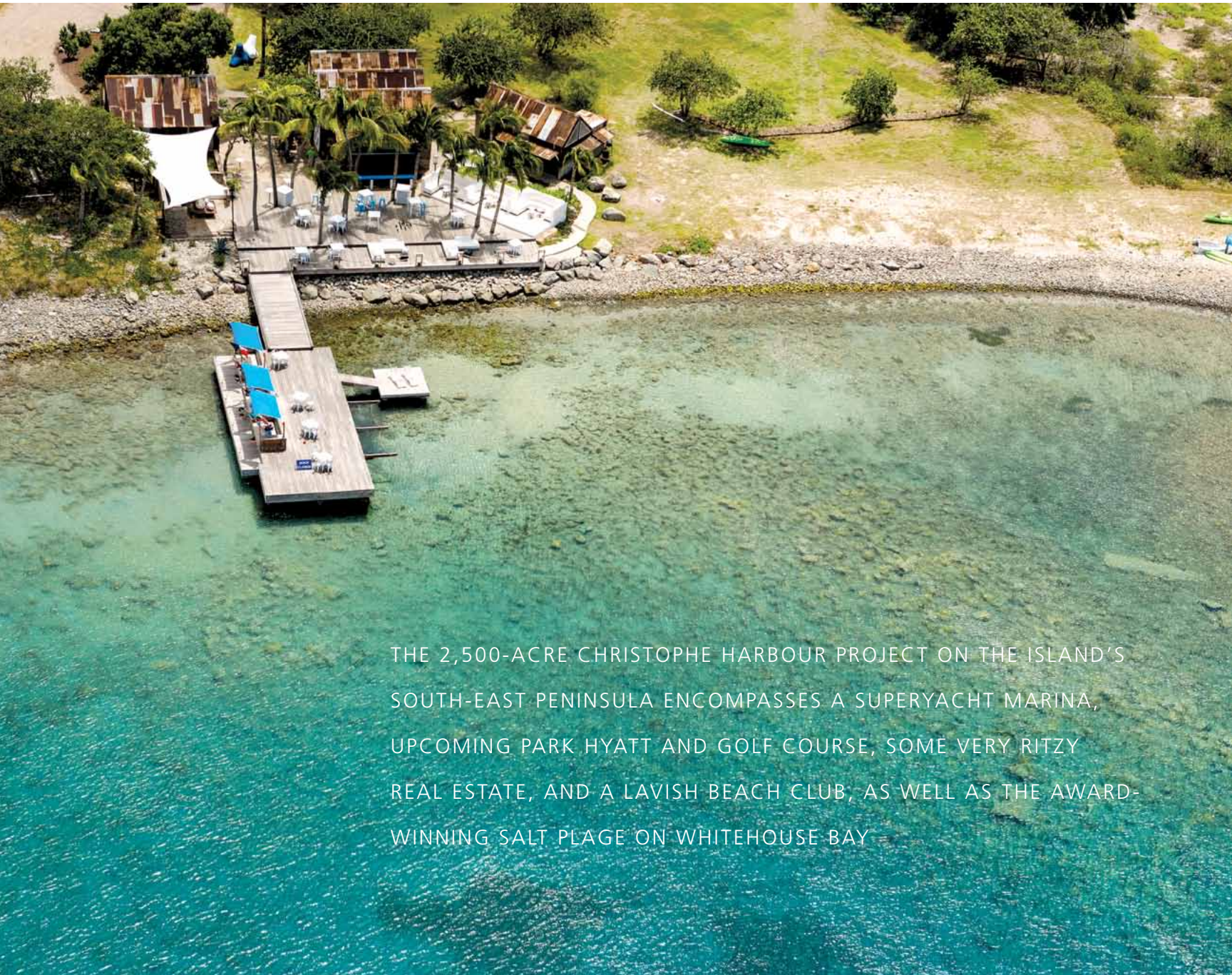
or across the Narrows from Nevis can disembark right onto the bar’s private tender dock, while guests staying at Christophe Harbour, elsewhere on St Kitts or at the soon to be finished Park Hyatt just around the corner, have a short drive. “It’s where sailors can meet civilians,” says Haley with a smile.

And then there’s the staff led by exuberant mixologist extraordinaire Christian Zamora. The signature cocktail, and Haley’s favourite, is a SALT Plage Jumbie—a rum-based frozen affair—but Zamora is constantly devising new drinks, some even based on the time of day. “After a hike, you might want something thirst-quenching with tarragon, star anise or roots, while in the evening a cultivated and niche experience appeals.”

The menu is more about grazing and sharing than three-course formality. International fare with a Caribbean twist includes jerk baby back ribs, grilled lamb chops with scallion chimichurri, and thyme panisses (chickpea pancakes) with BBQ aioli.

Haley’s current project at Christophe Harbour is the new Customs House and surrounding retail buildings right on the marina: “It’s kinda British colonial meets Italian hill town, with a photo op round every corner.” And to celebrate the opening, well, there’ll be another party at SALT Plage—with more boogying around, and almost certainly, on the “dancing table.”^M





THE 2,500-ACRE CHRISTOPHE HARBOUR PROJECT ON THE ISLAND'S SOUTH-EAST PENINSULA ENCOMPASSES A SUPERYACHT MARINA, UPCOMING PARK HYATT AND GOLF COURSE, SOME VERY RITZY REAL ESTATE, AND A LAVISH BEACH CLUB, AS WELL AS THE AWARD-WINNING SALT PLAGE ON WHITEHOUSE BAY

