

GREAT
ESCAPES
'11

St. Martin (background) provides the backdrop for No. 10 at Temenos Golf Club.

COURTESY OF CAP JULUCA

Seeking sanctuary

ONCE FOUND, **ANGUILLA** AND **TEMENOS** ARE WORTH A RETURN VISIT

By **Martin Kaufmann**

Anguilla

Even by the standards of golf's go-go era of course development – which ended only a few years ago, yet seems as distant as the Roaring '20s – the 2006 opening of \$50 million Temenos Golf Club on Anguilla was big news.

In golf circles, accustomed to new-course announcements from less exotic outposts such as Myrtle Beach, S.C., or Scottsdale, Ariz., the news raised two questions: 1. Where is Anguilla? (Answer: It's one of the northernmost Leeward Islands in the Lesser Antilles, about 180 miles east of Puerto Rico.) And 2. Does that part of the Caribbean have gold-flaked Bermudagrass? (No,

standard 419 Bermuda is grown there.)

Given the price tag and the economic tsunami that was about to sweep across the globe, what happened next was all too inevitable. By 2008, Temenos, a Greg Norman design, was closed, a victim of the recession and cost overruns in constructing seaside villas and a resort associated with the project. Cap Juluca, the luxurious beach hideaway that has anchored the southwest corner of the island for 23 years, stepped in to nurse Temenos back to health. The course, the only one on the 35-square-mile island, reopened for play in December

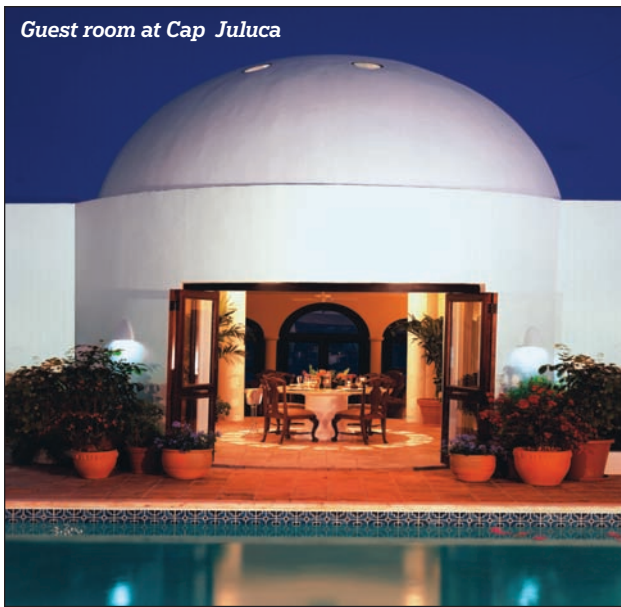
2009, offering a reprieve to golfers here and in nearby corners of paradise. These days, visitors arriving at the Blowing Point Ferry Terminal in the late afternoon are likely to see a couple of golf bags being loaded onto outbound vessels returning to bustling St. Martin, just across the Anguilla Channel.

"Bustling" would not be the adjective anyone would use to describe Anguilla, which is 20 minutes by boat

and a world away culturally from the tourist dives on St. Martin. Anguilla is, after all, a British territory whose capital is known as The Valley, which suggests less a center of commerce

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than a resting place. Temenos – a Greek term for sanctuary – neatly supports the broader theme.

“Anguilla represents a great sense of place in the Caribbean,” said Gary Thulander, general manager of Cap Juluca and a veteran of other elite Caribbean and U.S. resorts. “It’s very simple, unspoiled.”

That’s evident from the moment visitors arrive at Cap Juluca, where the complimentary rum concoction is as much a part of the check-in as the credit-card swipe. The resort is nestled on Maundays Bay, so close that guests noshing on crab and lobster dumplings at Spice, a seaside, open-air restaurant, sometimes flinch as waves crash against the restaurant wall, anticipating the spritzing that never comes. There’s a competing sense of size and intimacy; there are only 97 rooms, but they spread across 19 villas that occupy a secluded beach that’s nearly one mile long. The Moorish architecture favored here accentuates the locale’s exotic nature.

Caribbean hideaways don’t come much more remote than Cap Juluca. Guests, about 75 percent of whom are Americans, commonly fly to St. Martin, then take the six-mile ferry ride to Anguilla, followed by a short cab ride to Cap Juluca. (Princess Juliana International Airport is located on the Dutch-controlled side, and Cap Juluca’s ferry service is within walking distance of the airport; the northern half of the island is French-controlled territory.)

Sixty percent of Cap Juluca’s guests are repeat customers.

“Once people find us, they usually come back,” Thulander said.

The temperate climate doesn’t hurt. Average temperatures range from 78 degrees in December to 84 in July. Rates at Cap Juluca start as low as \$248 per night, but more typically range from \$500 in the summer to \$1,000 or more in the winter. The resort’s golf packages include a \$100 per night premium.

The ownership group headed by Adam Aron, former CEO of Vail Resorts, seems undaunted by the current economic climate. It has poured \$28 million into Cap Juluca since acquiring the resort in 2008 and has long-term plans to more than double the size, to 200-plus rooms, with an additional 20 villas on adjacent Cove Bay.

Meanwhile, the announcement of a new investor group to finish the Temenos resort and villas is expected within the next several weeks. The golf course is the project’s cornerstone amenity.

Norman, whose design portfolio includes some notably taxing layouts, has endowed Temenos with enough width to offset the prevailing easterly winds. A double green just off the beach is shared by Nos. 2 and 10, the latter a par 5 back into the wind that’s one of the finest holes on the course. The par 3s, with the exception of No. 8, tend to play through crosswinds, which make the tee shots unsettling, even if they only require mid-irons.

The loop forming holes 14-16 is an Anguillan Amen Corner of sorts on the western edge of the property. That gives way to the 17th, with its downhill approach to a peninsula-shaped green, and the difficult uphill closing hole.

Throughout, the hills of St. Martin form a striking backdrop to Temenos. If you want a more raucous tourist experience, you need only slip across the channel by ferry. But if a quiet sanctuary is more to your liking, you’ll find it on Anguilla. ○

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