

A PERFECT DAY ON

# Saba

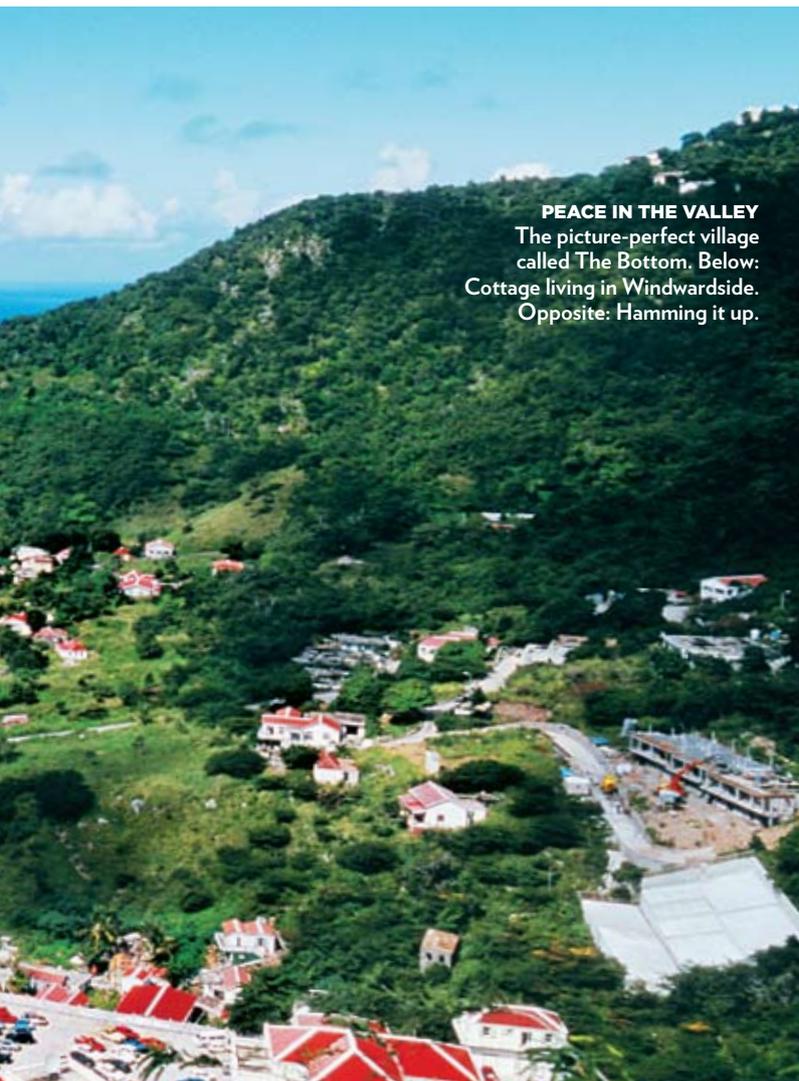


**S**aba shatters many a Caribbean stereotype. There are no beaches to speak of, and a cool mist claims the top half of this nearly vertical island 30 miles south of St. Martin. The climate seems to suit its visitors, most of whom are here for active pursuits: hiking and birding amid the rainforest of Mount Scenery or diving underwater pinnacles, sea mounts and reefs.

The scuba-certified should make time for a morning two-tank dive with Sea Saba. First stop: Eye of the Needle, a pinnacle favored by blacktip reef sharks. For the second act, ask the divemasters where they've recently spotted frogfish, elusive animals that resemble sponges with arms. They'll lead you right to these odd-shaped swimmers, and likely a few seahorses as well.

Après dive, taxi up to the main town of Windwardside, a collection of red-roofed cottages perching precipitously on Mount Scenery's otherwise uninterrupted swath of green. Have lunch at the Rainforest Restaurant, where the menu changes daily, depending on what's fresh from the gardens and sea (the seared tuna and homemade passion-fruit-rum

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: NIK WHEELER/ALAMY; BOB KRIST/CORBIS; DENNIS COX; ALAMY



**PEACE IN THE VALLEY**  
The picture-perfect village called The Bottom. Below: Cottage living in Windwardside. Opposite: Hamming it up.

with turtles, starfish, tree frogs, orchids and more. Whether you're at her Booby Hill, Windwardside studio for a lesson or simply to shop at this unique souvenir outpost, she welcomes anyone with an interest. After a 15-minute lesson, she turns on the flame-thrower and lets participants have at it. It's far safer than it sounds, and addictive. An hour and a half of studio time easily produces between six and ten beads. But should you find yourself taken with her glass mermaid statues, better to simply pony up the \$125; learning those techniques would require trading your day-tripper status for that of resident. — Brooke Morton

**GETTING THERE**

The *Dawn II* ferries passengers from St. Maarten to Saba on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. 599-416-2299; sabactransport.com. The *Edge* makes the journey Wednesdays through Sundays. 599-544-2640; stmaarten-activities.com. Winair Airlines offers up to six daily flights for \$186 round-trip. 866-466-0410; fly-winair.com

**WHERE TO STAY**

Juliana's Hotel  
From \$95 in low season (\$110 high)  
866-783-3319; julianas-hotel.com

**MORE INFO**

599-416-2231; sabatourism.com

ice cream are good bets). Credit owner Tom van't Hof for the fresh fare: Like most Saba residents, he's well in tune with local ecology. In addition to founding Saba's marine park, he's also an expert on cloud forests and is keen to answer questions about hiking or the local flora and fauna.

Before starting a hike, stop at the Saba Conservation Foundation at the foot of Mt. Scenery. The well-informed staff will arm you with guides to the trails and to the birds and other wildlife. If the sun chases the doughnut of fog from Mount Scenery, the bird's-eye view of the village below and miles of unblemished seascape warrant the steep climb to the top; otherwise, opt for a mellower walk, such as Sandy Cruz Trail. Both paths wind under the rainforest canopy that twitters with life, from chirping *coquis* (tree frogs) to buzzing green-throated Carib hummingbirds. Between bursts of ferns and bromeliads, orchids shimmy along the tops of branches, daubing purple, pink, red, yellow and white as they go.

After logging time underwater and in the rainforest, you'll understand where glassblowing Artist Jo Bean finds inspiration. She adorns her Venetian-style handmade beads

