

out of this world



The new perfectly formed Cheval Blanc St-Barth Isle de France. Writer Stephanie Plentl aboard watchmaker Richard Mille's sailing boat



T-shirt by Petit Bateau, €60



Bikini top by Orlebar Brown, €122.70



Shorts by Orlebar Brown, €155



Bag by Anya Hindmarch, €425



Watch by Richard Mille, €95,000



Espadrilles by Chanel, €370

Les Voiles de St Barth

St Barths is glamorous even from the air. First glimpsed on the tiny propeller-plane transfer from St Maarten, the island's slender frame is hugged by the electric blue waters of the Caribbean Sea. Then, you make out the red roofs of the villas scattered among the aloe and native gaiac trees, and then you spy the super yachts. Regulars pick out the boats as they descend, to find out who's in town – a great distraction before the hair-raising landing. This diminutive (only 21 sq km), but much-loved island oozes Gallic chic. There is a definite Saint Tropez in the 1960s vibe and St Barths has yet to be superseded as the ultimate island hideaway in the West Indies.

The newest arrival is the Cheval Blanc St-Barth Isle de France. Set on a stretch of Flamands Beach, it is mission control for artists, billionaires, musicians and socialites; the kind of place where deals are made and new loves are found. The hotel is

pretty, petite and perfectly formed – think French country house prints and simple peasant dresses. The staff are so well-dressed in pale pink and blue seersucker that you'll want to buy their uniforms from them; in fact some probably have.

In April, however, the jet set and sailing fanatics descend for Les Voiles de St Barth. Sponsored by Geneva-based watchmaker Richard Mille, and with fashion photographer and local resident Patrick Demarchelier as ambassador, it is one of the most prestigious events in the nautical calendar. Now six years old, the regatta hosts 80 of the most expensive sailboats, and some of the world's most famous sailors compete in the four-day race (although anyone can apply to be crew). The attendant glamor of the regatta inevitably brings the revelers out in force, especially on the crew's day off, held at one of the island's famous beach clubs. Fueled by jeroboam bottles of rosé and boats of sushi, the day's aqua antics include water polo and jet skiing races, against a backdrop of chill-out beats and barefoot dancing on the tables – St Barths at its quintessential best. *Les Voiles de St Barthis on from 13 to 18 April, lesvoilesdesaintbarth.com.*

Stay at Cheval Blanc Saint Barth Isle de France, stbarthisledefrance.chevalblanc.com; or Hotel Emeraude Plage, from €315 per night, emeraudeplage.com

