

Strike

a pose

From underwater breathwork to yoga with a view, **Estella Shardlow** explores wellness at the renovated Windjammer Landing Villa Beach Resort

I'm standing in tree pose – balancing on one leg, arms stretching up towards a pastel-streaked sunrise – when my yogi-like gaze into the middle distance is distracted by a flutter of electric-green feathers. A hummingbird. It's hovering around the hibiscus bushes in Windjammer Landing Villa Beach Resort's hilltop gardens, dipping its bill into the crimson blooms.

Turning my head to watch its flitting movements, I wobble precariously and tip sideways, domino-style, into my friend. We whisper apologies for the graceless collapse, but instructor Neima Holder

merely chuckles back: "No stress – it's OK to have some fun in yoga, you know. You're in Saint Lucia!"

This is my first inkling of the island's appealingly laid-back take on wellness. Self-care that doesn't take itself too seriously – and that prioritises pleasure over perfectionism – comes as a breath of fresh air.

"Our chilled Caribbean culture sets the tone," Neima explains. "Guests can slow down to 'island time' here, ideal for recovery, stress management and mindfulness. We place importance on community, spiritual health and appreciating our surroundings." ➤

PICTURE: Windjammer Landing

DESTINATIONS

CARIBBEAN | SAINT LUCIA



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Windjammer Landing's beach; hot stone therapy at the resort's Serene Wellness & Spa; live music in Jammer's Bar; overwater relaxation



PRESCRIPTION: NATURE

The surroundings are certainly easy to appreciate on this teardrop-shaped island. Carved by volcanic eruptions and cloaked in rainforest, Saint Lucia boasts some of the Caribbean's most jaw-dropping vistas, topped by the soaring twin peaks of the Pitons. On the northwest coast, Windjammer Landing embraces this dramatic landscape, its 130 whitewashed villas studded like pearls across 60 acres of lush grounds that tumble down the hillside towards Labrelotte Bay's horseshoe of golden sand.

Delving deeper into the mist-cloaked valleys on a day excursion, we pass banana plantations and various trailheads – hiking is huge here, and runs the gamut from a precipitous, scrambling ascent of Petit Piton to the easy-going 45-minute Tet Paul Nature Trail. Our driver, George, displays laudable clutch control on the plunging, corkscrewing roads, depositing us safely at Sulphur Springs. Formed by dormant volcano La Soufrière, the site's steaming geothermal waters may smell unenticing (think eau de rotten egg), but its mineral-rich 'miracle mud' is said to aid everything from circulation and sunburn to sleep.

After I've slathered on a full-body mask and let the nutrients sink in, nature provides a power shower and invigorating plunge pool in the form of Diamond Falls – 15 metres of cascading fresh water in the Botanical Gardens. When the dip inevitably works up an appetite, nearby Harmony Beach Restaurant, part of the newly opened, adult-only Paradise Hotel, dishes



RESORT REFURB Contemporary island chic

Fresh from a \$12 million refurbishment, Windjammer Landing is a masterclass in contemporary Caribbean style – a backdrop of crisp whites accented with pops of Caribbean blue and natural rattan furniture. The lobby's framed fan coral artworks and anemone-shaped chandeliers make a smart first impression while I sip a welcome cocktail of fruity rum punch. The coastal-cool aesthetic continues around the main pool – including outdoor sofas strewn with coral-patterned and nautical-striped cushions – and the restaurants.

Sitting sleekly on the beachfront, meanwhile, are the new Point Residences. These two or three-bedroom villas are flooded with natural light from floor-to-ceiling windows and maximise outdoor living with private infinity pools and vast terraces (I even had a one-on-one Pilates class on mine), plus a dedicated concierge desk and guest lounge adding to the aura of exclusivity. This refresh by Apple and Iron Concepts and G&G Interiors shows that more than 30 years after opening its doors, Windjammer Landing isn't resting on its laurels.

up wholesome lunches of organic local vegetables and freshly caught fish.

DEEP BREATHING

Saint Lucia's natural wonders are a tonic for mind and body – which Windjammer Landing leans into with its revamped wellness offering, notably the Underwater Breathwork programme.

First, we learn a series of breathing techniques while sitting on the resort's sun-

drenched dock, before heading to Pigeon Island's coral reef with scuba instructor Eget Martyr. I know that breath controls buoyancy in diving, but these exercises bring a new awareness to the power of each inhale and exhale, magically letting me levitate off the sandy seabed and float towards the sunlit shallows. Closing my eyes in the big blue, I adopt a lotus position, let the Darth Vader hiss of my respirator fill my ears like white ➤

DESTINATIONS

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ABOVE: Adopting the lotus position during an Underwater Breathwork session at Windjammer Landing

noise and – unusually, considering I’m something of an anxious diver – a deep sense of calm takes hold.

WELLNESS REWIRED

Back on dry land, Windjammer Landing’s Serene Wellness & Spa similarly embraces the island’s natural bounty. Body wraps incorporate island-grown aloe vera or silky cacao, while my blissful 80-minute Signature Treatment uses papaya leaf (sourced from the on-site naturopathic garden) to thoroughly exfoliate, before hot stones and bamboo are used to knead the knots from my laptop-strained back.

“Our guests have become more health-conscious since the pandemic, which has inspired us to reflect on how we deliver a meaningful practice,” explains spa director Alex Danila of the expanded wellness programme. It includes such holistic offerings as the Full Moon Ritual, which comprises a night-time boat ride, a night dive with underwater yoga and breathing, Yin yoga (on dry land), a communal plant-based dinner, stargazing session and massage therapy.

Dedicated detox, immunity and weight-loss retreats are becoming ever more popular, but this isn’t the sort of resort where you’ll be judged for having a mid-morning piña colada (trust me, I put that to the test) or pushing back bedtime when the live music in Jammer’s Bar gets you dancing.

‘Everything in moderation’ was the mindset for my trip, so ab-crunching HIIT classes and sunset meditations were experienced alongside indulgences like sipping

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champagne in my villa’s private plunge pool and even baking banana bread in the fully equipped kitchen when a sudden craving struck. And there’s also the sheer silly enjoyment of surmounting the beach’s inflatable waterslide (an upper body workout in itself). For those travellers – like me – who might see more-stringent wellness retreats as inaccessible, intimidating or simply incompatible with a relaxing holiday, Windjammer Landing essentially lets its guests build their own adventure, which is as perfect as the island itself. **TW**

BOOK IT

Sovereign has a seven-night stay at Windjammer Landing Villa Beach Resort from £1,500, departing on October 9. Price includes flights from Gatwick, daily breakfast and private transfers. Activities such as yoga can be booked from £20. [sovereign.com](https://www.sovereign.com)

Find out more and access agent training on the **Saint Lucia Tourism Authority** trade site: [slex.recommend.com](https://www.slex.recommend.com)

ASK THE operator

“Windjammer Landing offers a huge range of packages for both individuals and couples. I particularly like the Full Moon Ritual, but there are also twice-daily yoga classes. In fact, they take the practice pretty seriously, offering paddleboard yoga sessions along with hummingbird yoga classes that take place in the gardens and which attract the birds. In general, the island lends itself to many outdoor wellness activities, such as hiking, tai chi and gentle watersports. Many of the ingredients used in the spa treatments are grown locally, and the techniques have been developed on the island – aloe vera facials, massages with coconut, lavender and lemongrass oils, and volcanic mud baths, to name a few.

Customers can take the wellness element of their stay as far as they like – be it a full wellness retreat or simply by adding an element into the itinerary. It also doesn’t have to be extortionately expensive because there are so many beautiful areas that are accessible to visitors – you can take in the natural beauty of the beaches and enjoy the peace of the underwater world while snorkelling.”

Erin Johnson,
marketing director,
Sovereign Luxury Travel

