

# A Tale Of Toucan Hill: The Magic Of Mustique's Moorish Fantasy Villa

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One of Mustique's most fantastical rental villas, Toucan Hill is a Moroccan-style palace perched atop the island's highest peak with 360-degree views.

TOUCAN HILL

Perched atop the highest peak on Mustique in the West Indies with 360-degree views, [Toucan Hill](#), one of the private island's most extravagant rental villas, offers a true escape from the ordinary, just as its owner intended.

The sprawling Moroccan-style palace is built around a 50-foot-long, curved infinity pool that appears to flow off the edge of the cliff into the Caribbean Sea. Surrounded by lush gardens with four private master suites on two levels (plus a separate owners' suite

available on request), Toucan Hill is the brainchild of Tatiana Copeland, a businesswoman and philanthropist from Wilmington, Del.

Copeland and her husband Gerret, a member of the du Pont family who made his career in finance, started visiting Mustique during its 1980s heyday, rubbing elbows with the island's founder Lord Glenconner, Colin Tennant, who purchased it for £45,000 in 1958, his friend Princess Margaret, and other international jet-setters.



Golden hour at Toucan Hill.

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“I am a very type-A personality, so, this is the only place in the world where I could really relax—there’s no shopping, no museums, no golf—it was wonderful,” says Copeland, who is also, not surprisingly, a colorful personality with a witty knack for storytelling.

The Copelands were content to keep renting a villa each year, but 1993’s Storm of the Century changed everything by delaying their return home. As they waited for flights to resume, they decided to explore a newly available lot on the undeveloped south end of the island, just out of curiosity.

After climbing the steep slope on hands and knees through the jungle brush, they reached the peak with its sweeping views over the length and width of the entire island,

bordered by the Caribbean to the west and the Atlantic to the east. “I looked around, and I got goosebumps,” Copeland says. “So, I fell in love. I saw it at dawn, at dusk, at mid-day, and in the middle of the night with flashlights. My husband said, ‘Darling, have a good time.’”



"This had to be fantasy" says Toucan Hill's owner, Tatiana Copeland.

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As she embarked on the decade-long endeavor of building and designing her castle in the sky, Copeland had one word of advice from Arne Hasselqvist, the architect who built most of the houses in Mustique (under the tutelage of the British theatrical stage designer, Oliver Messel): Concrete. “Do not build a wooden house for any reason whatsoever,” she recalls him telling her, given the maintenance issues and termites.

Copeland pivoted away from the wooden plantation-style home she originally envisioned and began musing about what she could build with concrete. Alhambra, the famed Moorish palace in Granada, Spain, and *One Thousand and One Nights*, the compilation of Middle Eastern folk tales, came to mind.

“This had to be fantasy,” she says. “You have to be crazy to own a house here—I think every owner here is borderline nuts, but in a wonderful way.” Unlike other affluent enclaves, Mustique dispensed with rigid building restrictions allowing owners like Copeland to build their dream homes in whatever style they fancied.



The Pasha Suite, with wrap-around ocean views, is one of four expansive master suites on two levels.

TOUCAN HILL

“This is not how you would live in real life,” she adds. “I don’t come here to live a real life. And for the people who come here for one, two, or three weeks, I want to offer them a life of comfort and a certain degree of luxury, but also something they would never experience at home. What’s the point of coming to Mustique otherwise?”

The elaborate white-washed architecture—with columns, arches, domes, tile work, and crenellated rooftops worthy of an old-Hollywood swashbuckling scene—expresses a mishmash of influences from Morocco to Turkey and beyond.

“I wanted a very open house, which is dramatically opposite to Moroccan architecture that is closed around garden courtyards,” Copeland explains. “I took that thought and threw it open completely. I wanted the breezes, the view.”



Copeland opened up the concept of traditional Moroccan architecture to make the most of the breezes and views.TOUCAN HILL

She designed the interiors for barefoot comfort and in keeping with the home's colorful Arabian Nights theme with ceramic floors, large-scale upholstered pieces with abundant cushions, ottomans, carved wooden furnishings, Turkish lamps, and other exotic accessories. You'll also spot a toucan or two in a nod to the villa's name, which Copeland arrived at after doodling her initials and recalling the couple's motto, "One can't, but two can."

Surprisingly, she sourced her treasures not in far-flung souks or Istanbul's Grand Bazaar, but from upscale retailers like Neiman Marcus and boutiques and galleries in Wilmington, Philadelphia, and Napa, California, where Gerret indulges *his* fantasy at [Bouchaine Vineyards](#), which they founded in 1980.

"Some houses are furnished with antiques," Copeland says. "We have kids running around in wet bathing suits, and it was furnished with that in mind. It's supposed to be comfortable and relaxing and serene. I want you to be able to really disconnect from the rest of the world."



Spend days exploring the island or stay by the pool, where Toucan Hill's staff will cater to your whims.

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From its lofty perch, Toucan Hill makes that possible, if you want it. You can lose the entire day lounging by the pool immersed in the breathtaking view or a good book while the villa's staff looks after you with food and drinks. If you want to get moving, you can hike down to nearby Pasture Bay for a walk on a pristine beach, which you will likely have to yourself. The staff can also arrange for a beach picnic, one of the island's most popular activities, which also include snorkeling, diving, hiking, horseback riding and more.

And if you're feeling social, you can take one of the villa's vehicles down to the recently rebuilt [Basil's Bar](#), a legendary hangout with live music and great food. Another option is the [Cotton House Hotel](#), the island's only resort with a spa and fine dining at The Verandah restaurant or casual fare at the al-fresco Beach Bar on the shore of Endeavour Bay. Every Tuesday night in season, the island's owners and guests gather in the plantation-style Great Room for cocktails, canapés, and conversation. The atmosphere is clubby, yet welcoming and laid-back.

By design, Mustique is celebrated for its privacy and security, making it a popular destination for paparazzi-shy celebrities and royals, such as the Duke and Duchess of

Cambridge, Prince William and Kate Middleton, who vacationed there with their family last summer.



Toucan Hill takes inspiration from Alhambra and One Thousand and One Nights, creating a romantic and serene getaway from the every day.

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Even after 27 years, Toucan Hill still gives Copeland goosebumps when she's out by the pool at sunset or under a full moon. "I just look at it, and think, how did I do this?" Copeland says. "It is quite special. And at those times, the magic envelops me. Of course, the guests only see the magic."

*Rates for Toucan Hill start at \$24,000 per week, fully staffed and including the use of vehicles.*