

# Island Life

US \$5.00

*Prime Properties, Caribbean Style*

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Terracot  
Barbados

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Villa Being  
Tobago

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Flamingo Villa  
Bequia

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Wreck Diving  
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Dim Sum Dining  
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travel

# b e i n g t h e r e

Trinidad photographer,  
Stephen Broadbridge,  
falls under the spell of  
a Tobago villa and  
discovers architectural  
links to his late father





**Previous page** - In the master bedroom, a mahogany four-poster bed, white bedspread and mosquito netting express the clean, classic Caribbean look. • **1** - Hardy teak furnishings on this side deck are designed to withstand the elements. • **2** - The villa in all its natural splendour. • **3** - Sherina, the housekeeper is one of the smiling staff whose hospitality makes Villa Being a truly memorable experience. • **4** - The swimming pool, an engineering feat in itself, seems to hang in space over the ocean below. • **5** - A breakfast nook next to the kitchen provides an informal yet colourful corner for an al fresco meal. • **6** - Green marble floors and soft coral-pink furnishings turn the living room into a cool retreat from the noon sun.





**Arrival at Villa Being**, high in the hills of Tobago, was an unexpected experience. It was like a sudden elevation into another world.

We stepped into its white walls and everything around seemed to go into high relief. The vibrant blue of the sky heightened into a stark almost harsh contrast with the intense range of greens in the forest behind the orange parapet wall.

A passing sea gull gleamed, lightning white, and disappeared, leaving his cry behind him like the lingering scream of a jet airplane. Apart from this lonely cry the world is silent below.

We are in Tobago to work. While others will be busy writing, I am here to photograph the wonders of this island for a local publication, as well as some of its historic buildings. We are at Villa Being, because the Poon sisters have invited us to sample their new rental villa, perched on the Rocky cliff-face of Secret Mountain Estate, a six-acre organic farm.

It is a wondrous series of pavilions, pitched like tents, opening out to little wooden walkways that lead to a swimming pool that hangs over the ocean below. We linger for a minute in the little sitting pavilion, cosy with music equipment, books and comfortable chairs and many cushions, then we explore.

First, the kitchen pavilion where a complimentary bottle of champagne is waiting. A member of staff greets us with a smile. Breakfast will soon be ready.

The staff consists of Engine and Sherina. We have to restrain Sherina, who is the cook, from immediately embarking on a cake-making project after we commented on the wonderful basket of home-made breads in the kitchen. Between these two, we are soon fully informed about the neighbourhood and the house, and the neighbours in the nearest village a short drive away.

The neighbours helped to build the house. One neighbour, Marley a skilled welder, made the ironwork. The woodwork and some of the furniture come from neighbouring Trinidad. Antiques are from all over the Caribbean. Some come from as far away as Belize where one of the Poon sisters had worked as a tourism consultant to the Belize government.

#### AN EXTRAORDINARY HOUSE

As Engine and Sherina show us around, it is obvious they are proud

of Villa Being. And justly so, because it is an extraordinary house. Each bedroom is a separate pavilion, with its own outdoor bathroom facilities. That's right. You go out doors for a shower - traditional Tobago village style.

We toss for rooms. Mine has a king sized mahogany four poster bed, white billowing chiffon curtains, Cool white tiled floors and Demerara windows. All of the bedrooms have private decks for viewing and cooling-off.

Each bedroom is different. The master bedroom pavilion is large, with double doors on three sides that offer 180-degree ocean views to the horizon. Wooden shutters let in the natural air-conditioning of the trade winds. We are soon asleep.

#### DIFFERENT, YET SO FAMILIAR

Next morning it dawns on me that while it is all so different, Villa Being is somehow so familiar: the Mediterranean whites, the eclectic features such as Dutch pediments welded to stark modernity, and traditional features of Caribbean shutters, dormers and balustrades, all leave me with a nagging disquiet of almost memory.

So I ask about the architect. Sure enough, the concept came from John Lewis, partner of my late father, architect Bernard Broadbridge. The firm did many holiday homes in Tobago and houses in Grenada. The style is recognizable and typical of John Lewis - exotic and not quite practical. We are told that a table had to be built in the kitchen because the door was not wide enough for it to pass through.

The estate that surrounds the villa supplies us with fruit and vegetables, all organically grown. The birds, fruit and masses of red bougainvillea make for a lush landscape in wet season. The bougainvillea blooms throughout the year, even during the drier 'winter' months of the tourist season.

All of this, as you may well imagine, costs more than the ordinary bed and breakfast. From January next year, the rental rate for Villa Being will be US\$1,500 per day. This includes a ten percent accommodation tax, airport tax and transfers, breakfast, staff wages and a start up larder, and also a rental car or jeep.

Sure, it's pricey, but this is niche market accommodation. And those who can afford it will store memories to last a lifetime. (1)