

From: La Samanna
St. Martin, French West Indies

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For Immediate Release

Echoes of a Mediterranean Villa
The Architecture of La Samanna

Perched on the edge of a seaside cliff stands La Samanna, St. Martin's most luxurious hotel. A secluded, elegant edifice, La Samanna's architectural design has become the standard by which all other hotels in the Caribbean are measured. But this 80-room hideaway almost never saw a guest...

The original owners of the land on which La Samanna was built, yearned to build a romantic retreat for themselves. While touring Greece, the couple found the architectural inspiration they sought. But it was not the grandeur of the ancient monuments that had captured their imagination; rather, it was the whitewashed sunny houses nestled on the shores of the Mediterranean.

Upon returning home, they decided that they wanted to recreate the cheerful, simple lines of these warm seaside homes in St. Martin. Renowned architect Happy Ward, of the firm Robertson and Ward, was commissioned to create an intimate residence that would evoke the archetypical Mediterranean villa. As the plans started to take shape, Ward and the couple realized that this romantic hideaway could be transformed into something truly unique -- a hotel that felt like a home. And so, La Samanna was born.

Construction began in 1971 and was completed in 1973. When it was finished, Ward knew that he had created something special. And he was right -- La Samanna's design and use of columns and arches would eventually influence hotel architecture throughout the Caribbean.

Overlooking Baie Longue, the largest and prettiest beach on the island, La Samanna is the essence of understated elegance. True to its Mediterranean forebears, La Samanna feels like a villa, yet also bears the personal imprint of its creators. Broad arches, Arabesque lines, and angular windows echo the front entrance to the Alhambra, Spain's greatest building. Inside, thick walls with rounded edges and austere columns support ornamental vaults that are splashed with tropical sunlight.

A breathtaking view of the turquoise Caribbean Sea from the reception area sets the tone for the villa. Eschewing the grand, intimidating foyers of old-world hotels, La Samanna's

reception area is built on a human scale that is decidedly cozy. Whitewashed walls, hardwood floors, handmade wicker chairs and native prints in warm blue, coral, and green are the decor. Bamboo and mahogany woods complete the interior of this 80 room private hideaway.

La Samanna was built to be a harmonious blending of art and nature. Sun and sea air are invited into the over-sized rooms, while tiny sugarbirds flutter throughout the compound. Lush tropical foliage abounds, punctuated by the colorful splashes of flowerbeds.

The guest rooms are luxurious yet radiate domesticity. Native prints, Mexican tile, soft tropical colors, and terra cotta are all used to create an atmosphere that feels like a close friend's home. The pool and grille both offer spectacular views of the beach and Caribbean sea, while the bar is an eclectic mix -- an Indian wedding tent covers the ceiling, while a life-sized wooden rhino and lion watch over the patrons.

The hotel itself feels informal, private, and elegant. Amenities include pool and beach swimming, tennis courts, a fitness pavilion, and a dining terrace that boasts the most spectacular view on the island.

Palm trees and dense native foliage surround the villa, while a catwalk leads down to the pristine white sands and turquoise waters of Baie Longue. All together, the hotel is a rare and successful example of the virtue of simplicity.

Outside the whitewashed walls of La Samanna lies the tropical paradise of St. Martin, an island jewel set in the ocean crown of the Caribbean Sea.

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