

# Divi Resorts rebounds on St. Maarten

By Mark Orwoll

It was more than a typical cocktail event one evening last December at the Divi Little Bay Beach Resort on St. Maarten. It was even more than a “grand reopening party,” as it was billed. This poolside soiree, attended by resort employees, media and local VIPs, was something else entirely. At once a sigh of relief and an all-out celebration, it was also a determined step into a new and hopefully better future.

But for a moment, on Sept. 6, 2017, it was doubtful there would ever again be reason to celebrate.

On that day, the Divi Little Bay was nearly wiped out by Irma, a Category 5 hurricane that destroyed or seriously damaged 90% of all structures on the island (the Dutch St. Maarten and the French St. Martin share the 34-square-mile island).

So, yes, when the Divi Little Bay finally reopened in full 15 months after the disaster, there was just cause to let the good

times roll.

“It’s a labor of love to bring a resort back from such an event,” said Beverley David, marketing director of Divi Resorts. “And we’ve made it quite clear from almost the moment the hurricane passed that we were going to focus on the future.”

Among the renovation highlights:

- The Pureocean Pool, a multitiered complex with hot tub and swim-up bar, promises to be the new center of daytime activities. Guests also have the Seabreeze Pool and Infinity Pool at their disposal.

- Among the six eateries on the premises, two are new: Pureroc serves meat dishes cooked on lava rocks, and the Shack replicates a traditional Caribbean jerk cafe. The resort’s signature restaurant, renamed Pureocean, has been renovated with more dining space, an open kitchen and fresh, Mediterranean-style decor and features a new chef.

- All soft goods, artwork, lighting, TVs, doors, moldings and appliances have been replaced in the resort’s 34 guestrooms and 176 rentable timeshare suites. The entire resort has been repainted inside and out. One thing that hasn’t changed: ocean views from every room and balcony.

The resort’s quarter-mile stretch of sand came through relatively unscathed. “One



A one-bedroom suite at St. Maarten’s Divi Little Bay Beach Resort, where room renovations included new soft goods, artwork, TVs and more.

of our biggest assets is our beach,” said Joan Samson, sales manager. “It’s our most spectacular feature.”

The resort had opened partially last May to accommodate the many timeshare owners who desperately wanted to return.

“It looks pretty much like it did before — but better,” said Pam Fitzmaurice, who, with her husband, Rich, has been coming to the Divi Little Bay since 1991. “The friendliness of the staff is the No. 1 reason we come back.”

That friendliness (St. Maarten is nicknamed the Friendly Island) was certainly apparent at the December reopening party.

Among the happiest people that night was Anne-Marie Brooks, the resort’s general manager.

“We’re very lucky to be one of the first big resorts to reopen,” she said. “We’re feeling pretty good about where we are right now.”

Rates at the Divi Little Bay Beach Resort start at \$189 in low season and \$295 in high season. For more information, go to [www.diviresorts.com](http://www.diviresorts.com).