

INSPIRATION FOR TRAVELLERS

# BOLD

## BARBADOS

R S V P



**PLUS** nepal, thailand, wyoming, belize, colombia



**RBC® AVION PRESENTS: BARBADOS**



# Barbados

The Marina in all  
its glory at the  
Port Ferdinand  
Luxury Resort and  
Residences.

## RSVP

On the 50th anniversary of its independence from Britain, Barbados  
gears up to celebrate in the most luxe way.  
Your presence may just be required

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By DOUG WALLACE

When your villa  
has a private  
elevator to the  
beach, nicknamed  
the Bikini Lift,  
you know you're  
in for a good week.



Happily, however, the food culture doesn't borrow too much from the Brits. No Heinz salad cream, brown sauce or things baked in a pie here – this part of my week of indulgence was full-on island style.

Quite simply, the food in Barbados is incredible, right from the high-end restaurants to the food trucks on the street corners. Even Chefette, the island's fast-food chicken chain, is something to write home about. Parking-lot food stands and main-street takeout counters are crowded with locals and tourists waiting patiently for their turn to order. And for good reason: They harbour some of the most delicious home cooking you will ever taste.

The Oistins fish fry is a Friday-night highlight, with dozens of open market stalls sizzling with goodness in the island's south end. For the food festival, the outdoor stage here was ablaze the night of my visit with cooking demos from international and local chefs, including cool culinary star Marcus Samuelsson and top Barbados chef Duayne Holligan.



A boat in Bathsheba beach.



From left to right: a perfectly prepared seared tuna salad; the Marina view from the Harbourside Villas at Port Ferdinand Luxury Resort.



Toronto's Craig Harding was the guest chef on my night at The Cliff Beach Club, a dramatic outdoor retreat with tiers of tables cascading down to the torch-lit seaside. I can still taste the barracuda crudo with mango, pink peppercorn and citrus sauce, and the sweet potato and lamb agnolotti; a fine marriage of Italian and Bajan flavours. Canadians love the fact that this restaurant's top dessert is The Flaming Snowball: a strawberry and ice cream concoction covered first in meringue and then Grand Marnier.

Cin Cin by the Sea owner Larry Rogers was the perfect host during a stop at his top Prospect-region restaurant, also beautifully situated on the ocean with a spectacular view. The comfortable lounge is a design addict's dream, perfect for a pre-dinner drinks, even if you're dining elsewhere. Rogers opened the new Primo Bar & Bistro in the St. Lawrence Gap area last year to rave reviews.

Propping up all the incredible food in Barbados with smart rum cocktails is the order of the day — Barbados is by all accounts the birthplace of rum, after all. Mega-distiller Mount Gay dates back to 1703, when it was discovered that the molasses they had been discarding after processing the sugar cane fermented quite nicely. Traditional rum "shops," roadside one-room bars where people gather to watch cricket and play dominos, are scattered throughout Barbados. Don't be afraid to belly up for a rum punch or a Banks beer.

Later in the week, I took advantage of my resort's house boat and meandered up the coast to the Port Ferdinand Luxury Resort and Residences, a new 120-slip marina for the international yachting crowd surrounded by 82 elegantly designed homes. I wasn't at all surprised to hear that Sophie, Countess of Wessex, had dropped in a week or two before my visit. With a tagline of "The Life That You Deserve," the marina is one of the island's most extravagant showpieces, a pampering playground complete with a restaurant and pool in the middle of the main pier, plus The Sandbox Tree Spa. Here, holistic and ayurvedic treatment methods are underscored with luxurious organic body products.

During the daytime in Barbados, when you're not at the pool, your itinerary needs to focus on the waterfront; hitting the beaches and the reefs is a no-brainer. The west and south coasts offer one stretch of finely ground coral sand after another — take your pick. Then, take a catamaran cruise, go kayaking or paddle boarding, or just sit on a lounge and enjoy the million different shades of blue. There are also dozens of dive sites to sink your mask into, with Barbados Blue at Needham's Point Pebbles Beach being the dive shop of choice — an excellent launching point to shipwrecks in Carlisle Bay.



Aerial view of the Saint Peters Bay Luxury Resort.

A couple paddling  
at the tranquil  
Bathsheba beach.



“Bajans are very much on top of what makes their tourism tick, they are also quite possibly the nicest people on the planet”

WORTH TRAVELING FOR

This year’s Caribbean Food & Rum Festival is November 17 to 20. Other signature annual events in the run up to Independence Day include the Barbados Open Water Festival on November 2 to 6, and the Run Barbados Marathon on December 2 to 4. Go to [VisitBarbados.org](http://VisitBarbados.org) for details.



The easy going east side of Barbados is where locals go to relax on the weekend – or surf. A day trip to the rugged Atlantic coastline of Bathsheba will reveal stunning views, plus a few hints of the island’s colonial past, particularly if you venture into the Atlantis Hotel, which dates back to the 1880s. Make a pit stop on the patio before taking a hike along the old railway tracks to watch the surfers at the Soup Bowl, a world-famous reef break.

And when the beach gets boring? You head to the sports pitch, of course. Cricket isn’t the only game in town, either: At Holder’s Polo Field, unending glass of Champagne in-hand, I cheered on the ponies in grand style. The popularity of polo in Barbados reaches back to colonial times, the first match being played in 1884. The Polo Club regulates four playing fields, welcoming international

teams in a season that runs from January through May. Royal connections abound here as well, as Prince Charles and Prince Harry have both played polo in Barbados many times.

I wound up my week at a beach party at the Hilton Barbados on Needham’s Point, dancing with men in stilts, lounging by the shore and cramming in the barbecue fare – beef brisket, pork loin, savoury shrimp; all so delicious. San Francisco celebrity chef Chris Cosentino arrived on the scene via Seadoo to blaring James Bond theme music, racing in to do a summer salad demo for a pumped-up crowd. After, Rapper Peter Ram helped keep the afternoon’s energy levels high.

Back at the Saint Peter’s Bay pool for a final dip, squeezing every last second out of the incredible rum punch in my now-swollen hand, I wondered if I could turn my Barbados visit into an annual event. I’m sure my hollow leg could handle it. ▲

Barbados is one of the international capitals of cricket.



Today Polo in Barbados is a popular sport, played by international teams to a local home crowd and their supporters who visit with them, to a loyal local crowd of polo enthusiasts and tourists.

