

# HAUTE ISLAND

THE BEACH VIEW  
AT BARBADOS

*The allure of BARBADOS shines with its GLAMOUR quotient. This GLITTERING island is still the hotspot for celebrities and INDULGENT travellers*

By JULIE EAGLETON

*b*arbados does old-school glamour like no other island. Joan Collins, Simon Cowell, Michael Winner, Rihanna, Tiger Woods, Cliff Richard, Michael Caine, Philip Green and Aga Khan are representatives of a denomination who have all been sprinkled with Barbados' unique blend of Bajan aquamarine stardust. There's the Caribbean, and then there's Barbados.

It may be residual from the heady days when Barbados was the only holiday destination on the Concorde's schedule. With a mere four-hour time difference with the UK and a flight time of just three hours 50 minutes, flamboyant globetrotters could be sipping a rum punch under a verdant palm before they actually left London.

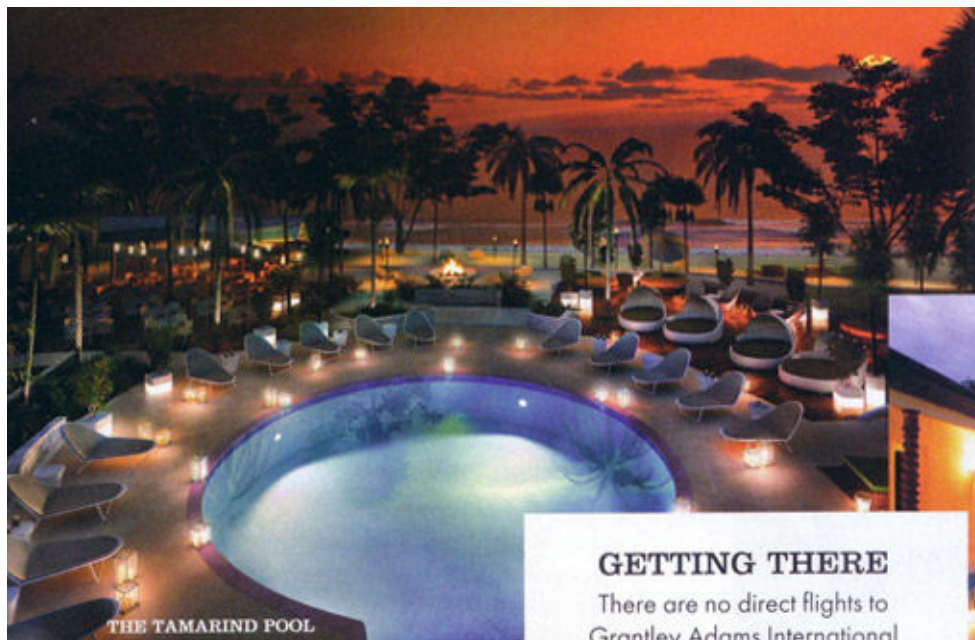
THE HAWKSBILL  
TURTLE



DAPHNE'S  
AT BARBADOS







THE TAMARIND POOL

A PRIVATE VILLA AT SANDY LANE HOTEL



## GETTING THERE

There are no direct flights to Grantley Adams International Airport in Barbados, but you could break your holiday with some city buzz and shopping spree at either London or Miami.

## BEST TIME TO VISIT

The weather is warm and balmy year round, but travel season is from December to April. The official hurricane season is from June to November-end, so steer clear then.

## CURRENCY

The Barbadian Dollar (BBD) works out to roughly ₹ 23. What's more, it's no secret that their liquor duty-free has unbeatable prices.

Or possibly it was when former British prime minister Sir Anthony Eden bought Villa Nova: A plantation house in the hills where he entertained the Queen, Prince Philip and Princess Margaret. The purchase put Barbados on the high society map. Hot on his heels was socialite Ronald Tree, who built the legendary Sandy Lane Hotel in the 1960s as a place for visiting friends to stay; the first guests were Baron and Baroness Guy de Rothschild.

Over the years the Kennedys, Aristotle Onassis and Viscount Astor would all visit. In 2004, Tiger Woods chose Sandy Lane's immaculate golf resort, The Country Club, for his wedding with its stunning views of Barbados' platinum coast (named after the area's powdery-white sand). Having recently undergone a £100 million renovation, Sandy Lane is back to its glittering and effervescent best. As you float through reception on a gentle Barbadian breeze, waiting is a fairytale cornucopia of marble, grand, flowing staircases, dazzling sea views, rose crystal and the glorious candy floss-pink sun umbrellas creating a vibrant splash.

Sandy Lane may be Barbados' grand old dame, but she isn't the only place to stay on the Platinum Coast. This stretch on the west coast of the island is home to several gems, including the newly-redesigned Tamarind in Paynes Bay, St James. Resting on a 750-foot crescent of pristine sandy beach, this contemporary paradise is from the Elegant stable of hotels and has a refreshing indoor/outdoor feel, with lounges and funky orange pods transforming pool areas into exterior 'living rooms', with the crystal sea literally yards from your sofa. The new Aqua School offers a range of complimentary watersports and instruction ranging from paddle-boarding (think of it as a slow surf with a paddle) to snorkelling and waterskiing. It's a fantastic destination for a family too with The Flying Fish Kids Club which offers fun for the little ones.

Right next door to the Tamarind is the The House, also from the Elegant group. This is an adults-only, beautiful beachfront retreat. It's an intimate and stylish boutique hotel with a South Beach feel – think dark wooden floors and brilliant white sofas combined with accents of Caribbean flair and visionary Bajan art. It is also home to Daphne's, one of the most famous restaurants on the island. Twinned with Daphne's in London's South Kensington, the Barbados version is equally glamorous with the same delicious modern Italian fare, except here you can dine to the accompaniment of crashing Caribbean waves. The sunken cocktail bar is a nice feature and the Daphne's signature

watermelon martini is a must.

After indulging in a couple of martinis, you may be in the mood to sample a little Barbadian nightlife. If so, grab your Jimmy Choos and head to the Lone Star in St James, the current hotspot on the island. An exclusive boutique, restaurant and bar – the latter which has been described a 'temple of cool'. Try the Bajan flying fish with sweet plantain. However, my favourite nightspot was the lively Second Street in Holetown, St James and in particular, the Lexy Piano Bar with its relaxed retro vibe and extremely talented piano players.

A visit to Barbados wouldn't be complete without a sail on its iridescent turquoise waters. Try the Good Times catamaran, a perfect way to capture a view of the Platinum Coast. The crew is happy to point out billion dollar properties and drop discreet hints about former cruisers (including Tony Blair). There's also an opportunity to swim with placid hawksbill turtles, snorkel over ancient shipwrecks and delight in a rum punch... or three.

For a small island, Barbados has managed to beat off stiff competition from the likes of St Barts, Jamaica and St Lucia. In the timeless and unerring glamour stakes, Barbados' old-school reputation is quite safe. ■