

## BARBADOS Need to know

**Spend** The Brit favourite is well-known for attracting a wealthy and glamorous set, but it accommodates all budgets. A week in May, including flights from Gatwick, costs from as little as £719pp, room only, with BA Holidays (0844 493 0787, ba.com/barbados). Package holidays and all-inclusive resorts are your friend here, as the cost of living can be high. In February half-term, for instance, a week at Waves Barbados, an all-inclusive four-star beach resort, costs £1,374pp for a family of four with Thomas Cook, including Manchester flights (0844 412 5970, thomascook.com). If you'd rather go independent, chic little boutique hotels such as Little Good Harbour in Colleten can be snapped up at around £279 a night (for a one-bedroom cottage booked through littlegoodharbourbarbados.com or booking.com).

**Bank** When it comes to winter sun, Barbados rarely lets us down. Located 160km east of the main curve of Eastern Caribbean islands, it's usually bypassed by the hurricanes that can swirl through the region between August and October. The island's west coast is the most sheltered, and driest from February to April.

**Eat** The food scene is five-star but, unsurprisingly, doesn't come cheap — a main course of blackened mahi-mahi at beachside Daphne's (daphnesbarbados.com) will set you back £25. Cobblers Cove is worth the splurge for the island's best seafood feast, served up by Bajan chef Michael Harrison on an elegant waterfront terrace (cobblerscove.com; mains about £20). For more down-to-earth local fare, including fish cakes, pepperpot (meat stew) and pineapple upside-down cake,

try the huge Caribbean buffets at Brown Sugar (brownsugarbarbados.net, £19pp), or get drinking and dancing amid the smoking stalls of the Friday-night Fish Fry in Distins Bay Gardens (mains about £8).

**Flop** Barbados draws many regulars who return every winter, and the best beds go fast. The western, self-styled Platinum Coast is the smart strip, now over-developed but still with fabulous villas and pockets of charm. Base yourself here, around Holetown, somewhere classic such as the Colony Club, (eleganthotels.com; doubles from £245, incl. breakfast) or plant a tent in the wilder, westerly district of Little Good Harbour, with its one-bedroom cottages and a fine restaurant, Little Good Harbour (littlegoodharbourbarbados.com; doubles from £279, incl. breakfast).

(sugarbaybarbados.com). A week's all-inclusive stay costs from £1,399pp, including Gatwick flights, through Hayes & Jarvis (01293 735831, hayesandjarvis.com).

**Explore** The island is just 33km by 22km, and well worth a nose around. Hire a car for a few days, book some excursions, or jump on the local bus for 65p. Alternatively, a private four by taxi costs around £26 an hour. One must-see is St Nicholas Abbey (stnicholasabbey.com), a magnificent Jacobean house, along with the wild and breezy west coast, in general — there's a beach. The very afternoon time (around 4pm) at Martin's Bay (01293 735831) has horse racing (not a real one, though) at the Barbados Turf Club track in the parish of Bridgetown, where the original Carriacou and-heritage

site. Rum fans will be in their element, with more than 1,400 rum shops, or visit the Mount Gay or Foursquare distilleries.

**Great for...** Glam-seekers. Its upmarket restaurants and see-and-be-seen hotels are perfect for dressing to impress — without looking like you have, of course.

**Good for...** Caribbean first-timers. There's a huge selection of hotels, the place names and culture are reassuringly familiar, and everything's set up beautifully for tourists.

**Bad for...** Beach perfectionists. Other Caribbean islands (Anguilla, Turks & Caicos) have prettier and less congested sands.

**In three words** England with rhythm.



Cool waters: clockwise from left, pool at Little Good Harbour; sunset at Cobblers Cove; rum-tasting at Mount Gay distillery; St Nicholas Abbey



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