



Photo by Susana Lay

I'm swimming in the turquoise waters of a secluded beach on the west coast of Barbados. The sun is shimmering on the undulating water. I raise my eyes to see some boats drifting toward the horizon and wish I could pause this scene. From the shore, one of my friends waves me over as she makes a toast with a glass of wine. I submerge myself into the glassy waters and ask myself: If this is not paradise, then what is? Barbados has everything you need for an absolute disconnection: deep-rooted culture, fish fries and rum, and soca music, all against a backdrop best described as paradise.

Where to Stay



In Barbados you are never more than 12 miles from the sea. The best way to understand the island is to divide the map into five parts: the tranquil upper west coast, the tourist central south coast, the wild east coast bordering the Atlantic, the island's interior, and the capital of Bridgetown, or “Little England” as many call it. Depending on what you're looking for during your stay, you'll find Barbados has a lodging to fit every taste and budget. My friends and I decide to rent a three-bedroom house steps from the ocean, with a comfortable kitchen, a small plunge pool and a lovely deck overlooking the sea. There's no better way to mix with locals and have a real sense of place than by being part of a neighborhood, buying groceries like everyone else and waving hi to the waiters at the next-door restaurant (which, by the way, is called [Fish Pot Restaurant](#) and is a gourmet, upscale spot).

Little Good Harbour House



As we head to the quiet village of Shermans on the west coast of the island, our driver, called James Bond, jokes about the long drive from the airport to our rented [Little Good Harbour House](#). “Who chose this house?” he asks with a touch of sarcasm in a Bajan (Barbadian) accent. For the whole trip we wonder if we've made a good choice about accommodations. But as soon as we step into this superb home, we know we have. Set on the water's edge, this cozy cottage is the perfect place to stay with friends, soak up the warmth and unplug from the digital world.

Little Good Harbour House, Shermans, St. Lucy, Barbados. +1 246 432 6930; [realtorsluxuryvillarentals.com](#)

Diving and Snorkeling



Photo by [Julian Svoboda](#)

Once I've checked with locals about the currents and tides in this particular spot, I'm ready to jump into the calm, blue waters. You don't have to be a professional diver to snorkel in the Caribbean and tropical western Atlantic reefs, so as soon as I have my snorkeling equipment ready, my journey begins. Through my mask I see the seabed composed of coral rubble and a few copper sweeper fish swimming hurriedly to the deep. As I try to follow their pace I discover a surrealistic spectacle: a school of French Grunt swimming among the rocky reefs and the elongated body of a lonely trumpetfish camouflaged by the coral reef. For a moment this image seems like a dream, like being swallowed by a sense of infinity that minimizes my body and amazes my mind. The experience of immersing in the undersea universe is sublime. Later on, I find out there are more than 40 [dive sites](#), an extended listing of dive operators and many more reefs yet to be explored in Barbados. But for me, to see the pristine living coral and countless colorful fishes right outside my door is enough.

Eco Dive Barbados, House of Pillars, Cavens Ln., Bridgetown, Barbados. +1 246 243 5816; [ecodivebarbados.com](#)

Out and About in Speightstown



Little Bristol Beach Bar via [Facebook](#)

There are many ways to move around in the island. You can hire a retainer taxi, rent a car or take public transportation (buses run from early morning till midnight). We decide to rent a car, grab a map and explore Barbados at our own pace. Our first stop is historic Speightstown. Originally settled around 1630, this small town was once a busy port and commercial center connecting the island with London and Bristol. We learn these interesting facts from Richard, aka Yardie, a friendly barman at [Little Bristol Beach Bar](#). Here we try our first Barbadian meal: steak fish sandwich, shark wrap and the fresh tomato and watermelon salad, plus Yardie's specialty, a coconut-flavored rum cocktail.

Before heading to the Speightstown boardwalk, which runs along the seafront between the town's jetty and the northern end, we take a glimpse at the 17th-century [St. Peter's Parish Church](#), one of the island's oldest churches. The current building dates to 1837 and is an example of Gothic-influenced Georgian architecture. Afterward, we stop for groceries and see what routine days look like for Speightstown residents. On our way out, I jot down the names of two eateries I'll surely be back to taste: Juma's (perhaps for a "[Full Monty](#)" breakfast or anything from the French-Bajan-Thai menu) and Fisherman's Pub, a classic Speightstown spot filled with local flavor. Time to take out our cameras and get ready for a magnificent sunset stroll along the promenade.

Little Bristol Beach Bar, Queen St., Speightstown, St. Peter, Barbados. +1 246 439 1592; [Facebook](#)
Juma's, No. 2 West End, Queen St., Speightstown, Barbados. +1 246 432 0232; jumasrestaurant.com
Fisherman's Pub, Queen St., Speightstown, Barbados. +1 246 422 2703; [Facebook](#)

Mullins Beach



On our way to Holetown (claimed for England in 1625), we spot Mullins Beach. We take a quick swim in the crystal waters and then walk barefoot to [Mullins Beach Bar](#), a west coast institution. There we order cold Banks beers and taste the delicious shrimp roti as the Bajan music plays and the jubilant waiters move around deftly in their monkey logo T-shirts. We promise to return, but next time in a boat.

Mullins Beach Bar, Mullins Beach, St. Peter, Barbados. +1 (246) 422 2044; [Facebook](#)

Holetown



Lone Star via [Website](#)

As we move on to Holetown we notice some popular restaurants, such as [Lone Star](#), [Ju Ju's](#) and [Santi Beach Bar and Grill](#). Barbados has a bountiful culinary scene thanks to the diverse cuisines, styles and influences of

the islanders. No matter where you go, you'll likely find a charming place for a tasty meal. Our mission is to keep driving south, and as we do we pass luxury villas and hotels, finally reaching Holetown. Holetown combines historic streets and modern life, with plenty of beaches (of course) and shopping. For a moment we wonder if we should explore the artificial reef where the *Stavronikita* shipwreck is or jump back in the car and discover the caverns and crystallized formations of [Harrison's Cave](#). Instead we manage to find a lonely, tiny beach where we spend a relaxing evening under the lovely Barbadian sky. We still have some days left to immerse ourselves in adventure.

Harrison's Cave, Welchman Hall, St. Thomas, Barbados, +1 246 417 3700; harrisonscave.com

Bridgetown



Driving all the way to Bridgetown from the west coast takes us through a panorama of colorful [chattel houses](#) with jalousie windows. The city's outstanding architecture includes buildings like the neo-Gothic Parliament Building, St. Michael's Cathedral and National Heroes Square. Our walking tour begins at Broad Street, where we find Barbadians and tourists glancing at storefront windows and rambling along the busy city's streets. Led by banks, duty-free shops and jewelry stores, this is the core of the capital city. After our walk, we drive to the [famous house](#) where George Washington once spent six weeks. The best part of roaming back to Bridgetown's central area is crossing the [Chamberlain Bridge](#), where we take in a view of white sailboats.

St. Lawrence Gap and Oistins



Now that we've managed to get all the way here, we go by some of the most popular beaches of the south coast between Bridgetown and the fishing village of Oistins. We are lucky to step down at Accra Beach and walk through the newly built coastal boardwalk. On most of the beaches we find local vendors who offer fresh coconut water and beach chairs for rent.

The sun is almost setting, and as we keep driving south we pass by a bustling street that runs alongside a bay reaching the touristy and teeming area of St. Lawrence Gap. We know this is the place if you're up to partying all night and joining an international crowd. But since we're more of the isolated kind of gang, we decide to experience a Bajan [fish fry](#) before heading back to our peaceful west coast abode.

Meet Your Guide



The first person who greeted us upon our arrival in the Little Good Harbour house was Catherine Nurse, who asked us to call her Cathy. After some days of chatting with her I ask if she could take me on a tour around the island and she agrees. As we leave, I tell her I don't want the traditional touristy tour and she tells me not to worry. Once on the road, she looks at me and says, "Our first stop: my home in the parish of St. James."

Catherine Nurse, The Garden, St. James. +1 (246) 825 5582

On the Road



Cathy and I are heading to the northern tip of the island after seeing her neighborhood and visiting a fish market. As we pass by a school we notice it's recess time and several kids are running and laughing in their shining orange uniforms. "This is where I went to school," she says. "I've lived all my life in this house, which used to be my mum's." When I hear this, I understand why she waves to everyone we pass. Cathy knows literally all the people on this side of the island and I'm guessing many more. We keep driving north until we glide by sugarcane fields and green patches that extend along the road. "Stop here!" I plea. All I need is a minute to contemplate the endless expanse of grassy fields and drifting clouds.

Where the Caribbean Meets the Atlantic



I trust my guide so I'm not even asking where we're heading. The only thing she's said for now is, "We're reaching the tip of the island." Once there I find out we have arrived at the [Animal Flower Cave](#). As we begin to stroll down some impressive geological formations, the cave's openings are revealed. The view of the coastline and the sounds of waves crashing against the cliffs are captivating. I'm not sure how long we stare at the wild scenery in silence before Cathy offers to take my picture while I gaze pensively at the waves. Then I take hers.

Animal Flower Cave, North Point, Barbados. +1 246 439 8797

The East Coast and Bathsheba



Our trip is almost over and we've decided to spend our last day on the island's east coast. As we head

toward the T-junction (as local neighbors have instructed us), we follow the road to Horse Hill and see St. Joseph Parish Church, a charming historic parish with an amazing view of Hackleton's Cliff.

We're excited to discover the amazing coastline of the east side, so we continue until we reach the seaside village of Bathsheba. As soon as we encounter the wild sea and dazzling rock formations we're struck by the force and beauty. *Next time I visit the island, I'll stay here*, I think, as I recognize the famous "soup bowl," the name given to one of the biggest wave breaks on the island. As we descend, we spot little brightly colored houses on the green hill and a few rum shops. The five of us jump out of the car and start running toward a hill while a gust of wind shakes out our hair. The sight of the rock formations and the waves enchants us. I know what we're all thinking: We wish we could stay in the peacefulness of the island forever.

http://www.savoteur.com/world/how-to-spend-a-week-in-barbados?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Pilot%20-%20World&utm_campaign=How%20to%20Travel%20Green%20-%202017-03-01&utm_term=SVT%20World%20-%20English