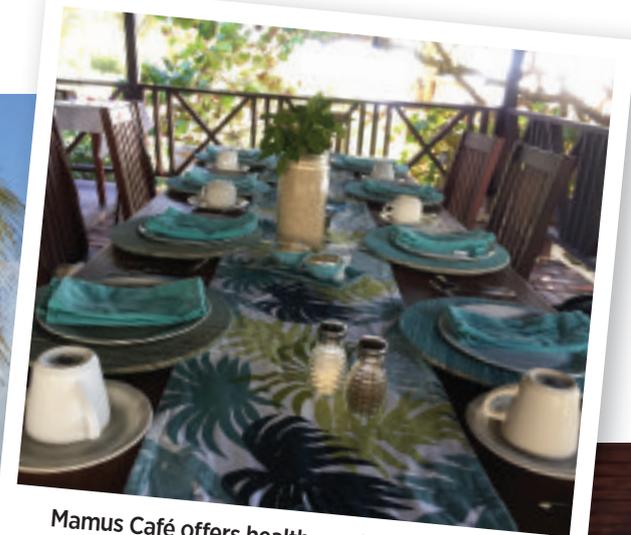
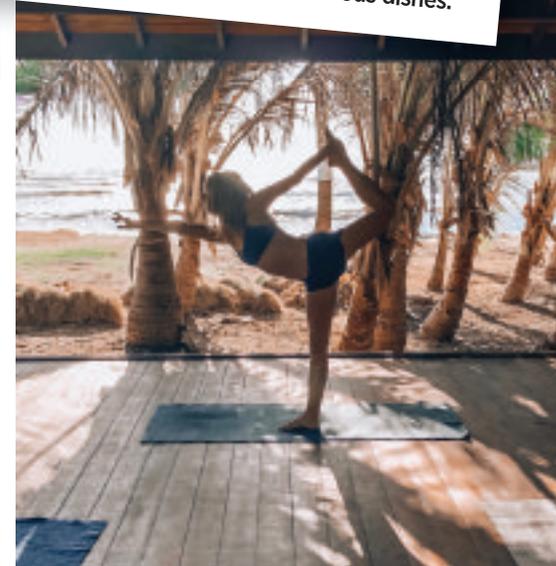




The beachfront at the four-star Ocean Two Resort & Residences is next to a surfing school for those who want to do more than body surf.



Mamus Café offers healthy and delicious dishes.



# Barbados

A luxury island for every budget

By Diana Ballon

My preconception of Barbados was as a luxury island, beautiful but unaffordable. Happily, a short visit altered this perception. The island has accommodations for every budget—from the most opulent Sandy Lane resort and Sandals resorts to two- and three-star hotels, guest houses and Airbnbs. And it has everything from the best restaurants in the Caribbean to the fast food chain Chefette (where you can pick up a decent roti) and local rum shops for delicious fish cakes and other Bajan (Barbadian) fare, drinks and gossip.

The year 2019 has been dubbed the year of wellness and soft adventure in Barbados. I love the Caribbean, I love ad-

venture, and of course, who doesn't want to be well. So I couldn't turn up the opportunity to visit the island.

Barbados is only 166 square miles. It is made up of 11 parishes, each with an Anglican church, likely some mischievous green monkeys, and possibly the massive bearded fig trees from which Barbados got its name—its trees distinguished by their aerial roots that drape down like an unkempt beard.

Here the ocean is turquoise blue, and the interior is lush and green. As we drive along windy roads we pass a sign that reads “sea turtle crossing.” It's clearly an island where water and land life meet.

Barbados is also very safe. Its drinking water is naturally filtered through what is

largely coral limestone rock, so you can drink from the taps. And set in the southeast end of the Caribbean region, it is outside of the main hurricane alley, and hasn't been affected by a hurricane in almost 65 years. Barbados is also easily accessible—by direct flights from Canada, and then once you are there, by local bus (for a mere BD \$2 or 1USD).

And it seriously does promote wellness, whether that means being super active or simply “chilling” or “liming” as it is referred to in the Bajan dialect.

Over four short days, I did a bit of both—the active and the liming. I drank mojitos and rum punch, in vat-sized glasses. I swam and snorkelled and body surfed in the ocean. I donned a helmet, knee and

elbow pads and gloves and waded and swam through water and spiderman-crawled through a cave like an explorer. I gazed out at the ocean upside down in downward dog at a yoga class and then ate a delicious organic breakfast overlooking the ocean. I had a massage lathered in geranium-scented oil. And I would have paddleboarded if only I had had more time.

## Exploring The Island By Region

The west coast has some of the best restaurants and posh hotels and villas in the Caribbean, calm waters and upscale prices. It's also here where celebrities tend to flock, including Barbadian-born singer

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and icon Rihanna, who owns a condo here. The island's capital, Bridgetown, is located in Carlisle Bay, which is the largest of two marine parks on the island, and a popular dive site. Come by at sunrise and watch the racehorses from nearby Garrison Savannah being washed here and having a swim! Or by daylight, take a catamaran cruise. We joined Cool Runnings Catamaran Cruises ([coolrunningsbarbados.com](http://coolrunningsbarbados.com)), and snorkeled just a short way from shore, where we swam over two shipwrecks, a couple of turtles, as well as stingray and a plethora of fish.

The east coast bordered by the rugged cliffs of the Atlantic is more tranquil, and less developed. Although dangerous undercurrents make it not recommended for swimming, there are still calm beaches a close drive away.

One of my favourite places here is the village of Bathsheba, overlooking the wild Atlantic, which is relatively untouched by tourists, with massive rock formations that jut into the water and beautiful white sand beaches. Stop by the local Sea Side Bar for a Banks beer, a flying fish sandwich and a great view of the ocean. And watch the surfers at Soup Bowl, site of the biggest wave on the island, and international surfing competitions.

Nearby is the charming Atlantis Historic Inn ([www.atlantishotelbarbados.com](http://www.atlantishotelbarbados.com)) where we enjoyed the restaurant's famous West Indian buffet lunch, available Wednesdays and Sundays by reservation, with Barbadian classics like pepper pot, plantain and yam, macaroni and sweet potato pies.

The interior of Barbados is very green, and the road underfoot is bumpy and twists. We pass a woman sitting curbside selling bananas out of the lid of a styrofoam box and children dressed in uniforms with satchels on their backs. Fields are lush with sweet potato, carrots, guava, coconut and mango trees, and with horses grazing along the side of the road.

Barbados has a long history of sugar cane production: visit St. Nicholas Abbey ([www.stnicholasabbey.com](http://www.stnicholasabbey.com)), one of two restored plantation houses on the island that you can tour.

Also here in the central uplands of the islands is Harrison's Cave ([www.harrisonscave.com](http://www.harrisonscave.com)), which has been around for centuries, but only open to exploration since the 1970s. You can do so now by a gentle tram tour, or by taking their 3.5-hour eco-adventure tour as we did. But be prepared to get wet and muddy! You'll find yourself swimming

through a pool of water, meandering over live stalagmites and travelling at times on hands and knees, or even slithering serpent-like, with helmets and head lamps, and knee and elbow pads to protect various body parts.

You can also visit Coco Hill, a 53-acre forest that is being used as part of an agroforest project for organic farming and permaculture. One of the few remaining forests in Barbados, local Bajan and owner Mahmood Patel says they have planted about 48 varieties of fruit trees, several types of forest trees and spices in places that had been traditionally used for "monoculture farming," or the exclusive production of sugar cane.

"With integrated farming, we now plant four to five crops together, without using pesticides," says Patel. And they have mixed agriculture with tourism: you can take one of their two-hour hikes or try forest bathing.

The south coast of Barbados is the most developed part of the island, with a range of accommodations and restaurants. St. Lawrence Gap or simply "the Gap" is a 1.3-kilometre long street with nightlife, bars advertising happy hour, street vendors and dance clubs. We stayed just off the strip at Ocean Two Resort & Residences ([www.oceantwobarbados.com](http://www.oceantwobarbados.com)), a four-star hotel with well-appointed suites overlooking the beach, and a surfing school next door if you want to do more than body surf.

Nearby is the recently opened Blue Pineapple ([www.bluepineapplebarbados.com](http://www.bluepineapplebarbados.com)) beach lounge restaurant, where we had a table on the beach, but you can also dine seated on cushions with bamboo mats on AstroTurf. Service is slow, but the vibe is cool and the blackened fish tacos and Moscow mule cocktail are a hit.

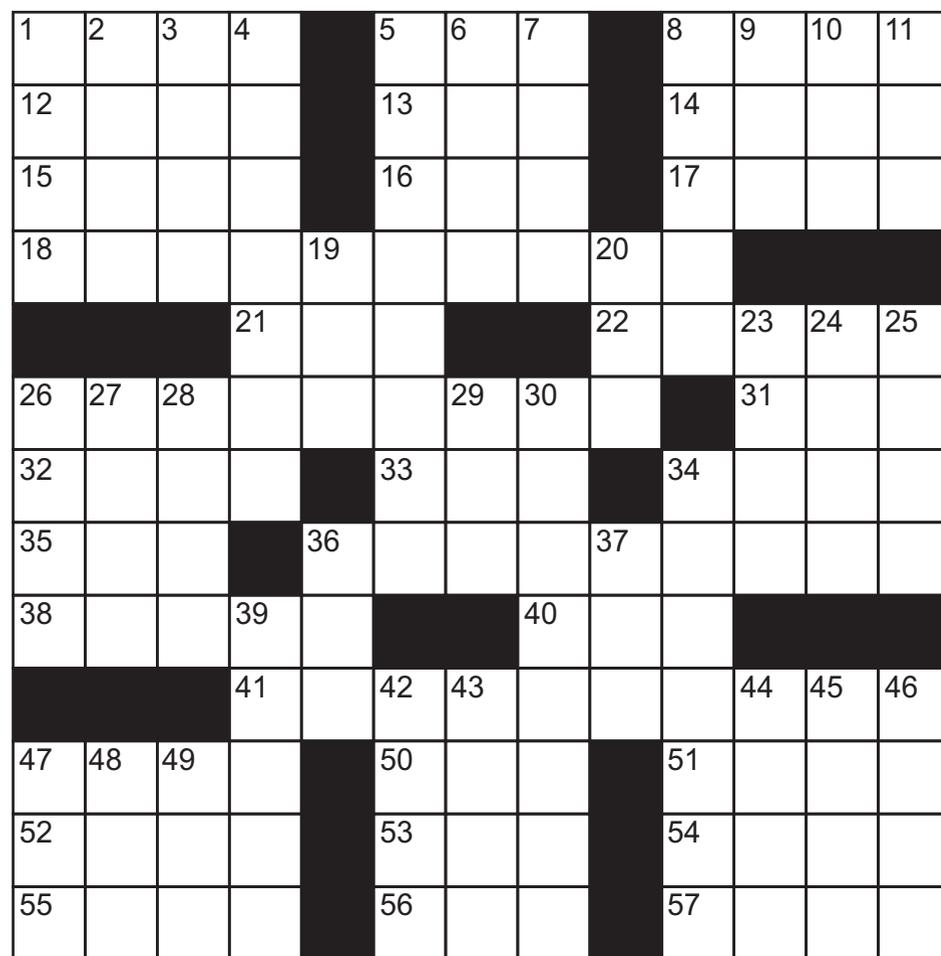
On the southeast coast, you can stay at the reasonably priced OceanSpray Apartments ([oceansprayapartments.com](http://oceansprayapartments.com)), do yoga or surf, and enjoy amazingly healthy and delicious meals at their restaurant, Mamu's Café with some of the food grown at Coco Hill, which Mahmood also owns.

Mahmood works with bushman and herbalist Ken Browne and chef Jason Howard (of the newly opened Top Deck Restaurant) to bring organic fruits, herbs and vegetables and a modern twist to Caribbean cooking to "reinvent Barbadian cuisine."

"The idea is that food is medicine, that we eat what we grow, and grow what we eat," says Mahmood.

*For more information, view [visitbarbados.com](http://visitbarbados.com)*

# fy Crossword



## ACROSS

- Town in Alberta
- Animal valued for its milk
- Cry plaintively like a cat
- Employee benefit
- "Riverdale" actor
- Rice-shaped pasta
- Small ornamental case
- Mischievous
- Wading bird
- Grasp the meaning of
- \_\_\_ excellence
- Yoga sitting position
- Insurance against loss
- Part of a pair of pants
- Make a ship stay in place
- Opposite of WSW
- Tropical tuberous plant
- Cooking container
- Vertical pole used as a support
- Not rounded
- Pair of performers
- Exclamation of

## praise to God

- Small fishing boat
- Hither and \_\_\_
- Technical name for the knee
- Level of amateur sport in Canada
- Arabian Nights bird
- Female chickens
- Round roof
- A bit of
- Travel laboriously

## DOWN

- Oil cartel
- Mother of Apollo and Artemis
- Percussion instrument
- Ship's captain
- Red wine
- Brightly coloured fish
- Walk in water
- Text of a song
- Canadian film director Ball
- Israeli submarine gun
- "Ha ha ha!" (text message abbreviation)
- River in the

- Alberta Rocky Mountains
- Negative answer
- Jai \_\_\_
- Emperor of Rome
- Ancient Greek contest
- Devil's offspring
- Ark builder
- Lady of Portugal
- Square peg \_\_\_ round hole
- Repeated habit
- Idea
- Mineral spring
- \_\_\_-de-sac

- Word that has the same sound as another
- The Harp
- Bird with a weird cry
- Make fun of in a mocking way
- A queen of Great Britain
- Ear of corn covering
- Mom's mate
- Ear prefix
- Computer memory type

## ANSWERS

