

WHERE TO STAY

TAMARIND HOTEL

Sparkling from a recent multimillion dollar makeover, Tamarind (part of the Elegant Hotels group) reopens on 1 November. Guests can expect plush rooms, a new spa, a late-night poolside tapas lounge, outdoor living rooms, plus Daphne's Restaurant is on the doorstep. There's also a new kids' club and teen lounge, so ideal for families. Doubles from £135. elegant-hotels.com

THE SANDPIPER

This 47-room gem is one of the island's best small luxury retreats. Colonial elegance reigns throughout with torch-lit tropical gardens and tranquil koi ponds. Double rooms with breakfast from £275. sandpiperbarbados.com

ATLANTIS HOTEL

Set on the dramatic east coast with its Atlantic breakers, this chic boutique hotel has stylish colonial furniture and a bright colour scheme. Book Glen Bernie or Three Boys' oceanfront suites with draped four-posters. Doubles from £166. atlantishotelbarbados.com

ALMOND CASUARINA BEACH RESORT

Facing south onto the tranquil waters of Dover Beach, this is a great all-inclusive resort for couples or families. Set in lush grounds, there's plenty to do from swimming pools to watersports, and guests can walk to the buzzing nightlife of St Lawrence Gap. Double rooms from £138. almondresorts.com

LONE STAR HOTEL & RESTAURANT

Previously a garage, this bijou hideaway couldn't be more fashionable if it tried. It has four oceanside suites and one of the island's best restaurants. Doubles from £357 with breakfast. thelonestar.com

THE SEA-U GUEST HOUSE

Dedicated to preserving the

natural beauty of the unspoilt east coast, Sea-U Guest House recently received a Green Globe certificate. All seven rooms are decorated with mahogany furniture, louver windows, rattan chairs, locally handcrafted clay

lamps and batik art. Double rooms (ocean view studio) with breakfast £71. seaubarbados.com

WHAT NOT TO MISS

The **Barbados Food & Wine and Rum Festival** (foodwinerum.com) during 19-22 November, where cou-cou meets haute cuisine, is a must. Sign up for a Barbados Gourmet Card and save 25 per cent at selected restaurants (barbadosgourmetcard.com).

In January, the **Barbados Jazz Festival** (barbadosjazzfestival.com) bursts into life. Alicia Keys and Anita Baker have headlined in the past.

Every Wednesday (January-April), the **Barbados National Trust's Open House** programme (barbados.org/openhse.htm) gives visitors a through-the-keyhole experience of private homes, ranging from historic treasures to luxe mansions.

The local **Crop Over Festival** (barbadoscropoverfestival.com) – to celebrate the ending of the sugar-cane harvest – starts around May and brings the whole island alive with glorious marching bands and general island revelry.

The must-see plantation house is **Holders**, which dates back to the 1640s and is the family home of Jodie and Jemma Kidd. The house and its grounds are open every March for the Holders Season (holders.net), a celebration of arts and music, which attracts everyone from adopted islander Cliff Richard to culture-seeking tourists.

Catch an **international test match** at Kensington Oval or head to Fontabelle, the site of the new Cricket Legends of Barbados Museum, for legendary tales of

Sir Garfield Sobers. While the island's rolling greens and prestigious courses, like those at Sandy Lane (sandy-lane.com), are a high point for golfers.

WAY TO GO

TAKE OFF

British Airways flies to Barbados from London Gatwick daily. Flight time: approximately eight hours.

BA MILES

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* World Traveller return, excluding taxes, fees and surcharges

