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LIFE'S A BEACH

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR UNDERSTATED LUXURY ON A FABULOUS BEACH THEN HOP ON A PLANE AND HEAD FOR BARBUDA SAYS RORY STORMONTH DARLING



AS VIRGIN, BRITISH AIRWAYS and US Air passenger jets descend on Antigua within 30 minutes of each other the small airport prepares for its Saturday afternoon mayhem. The airport heaves with new arrivals and we are at the back of the queue. Then I spot an airport official holding a notice reading 'Stormonth Barbuda' and our troubles are eased as we are whisked through customs to collect our luggage, before hopping on to a tiny Carib Aviation plane. A few minutes later and we are approaching Barbuda, which lies little more than twenty miles north of Antigua, its bigger and busier sister island.

We touch down at Codrington Airport, where one member of staff mans the scout hut sized terminal building. The suitcases go straight from the plane to the waiting car which in turn bumps us along a mostly unmade track to reach our destination.



The Beach House is uncompromisingly stunning, and it sits harmoniously within its natural environment. In the first half hour we realise it is a very special place. With only twenty-one spacious, simply decorated but luxurious rooms, the Beach House caters for guests who want to get away from it all. Each room has a private decked terrace overlooking the man made lagoon, the endless sands and the ocean beyond.

The main hub of the hotel is its expansive open plan clubhouse, which is filled with large white sofas, a laptop, pool table and has a bar and restaurant area. It is the perfect

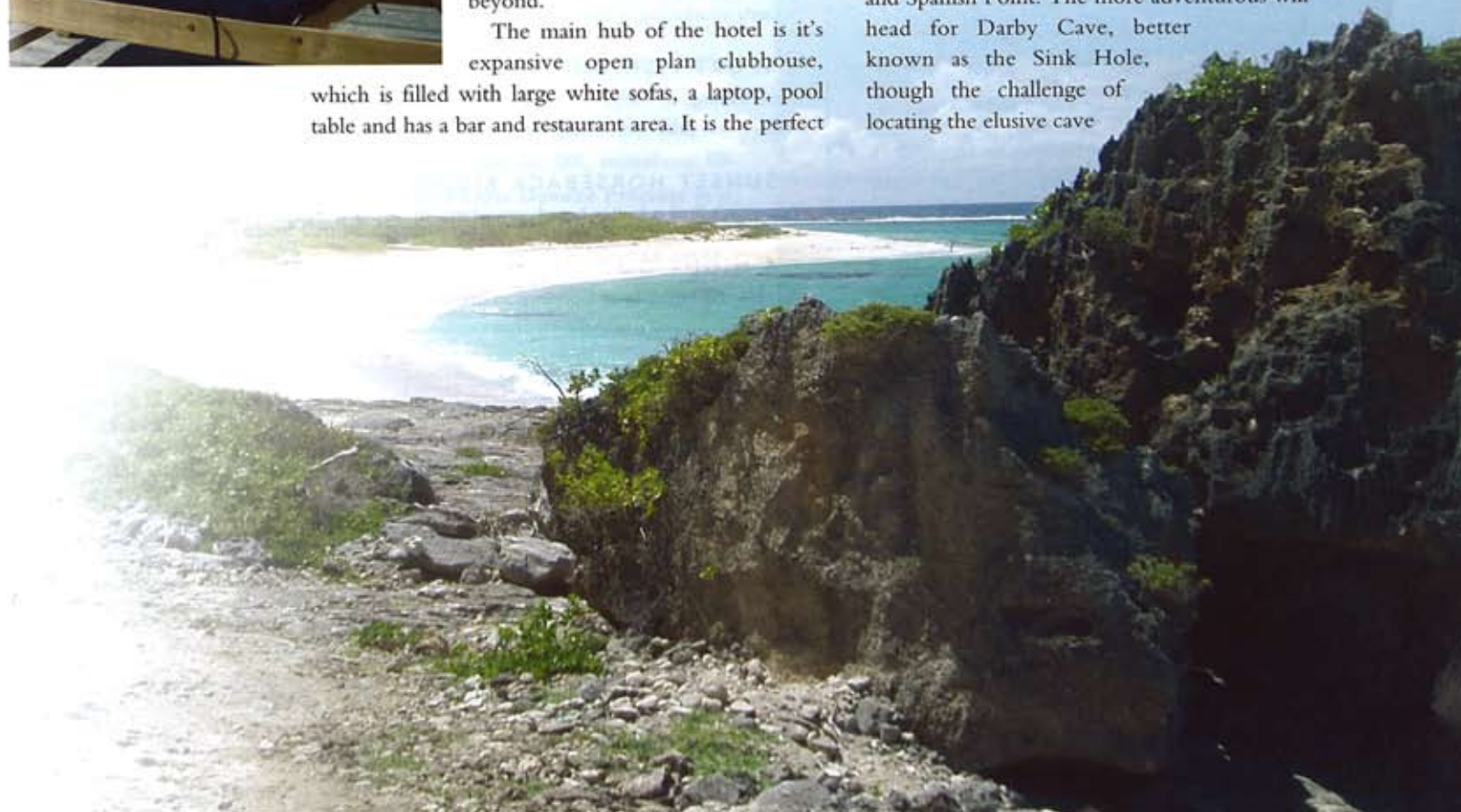
place to while away the hours playing backgammon, whilst enjoying a classic Caribbean cocktail. Music regularly fills the air and Bob Marley tracks are likely to be accompanied by the heavenly singing of one of the enchanting Service Ambassadors, whose role it is to ensure that all your needs are met. Though assigned individual Ambassadors for your stay, the practicalities of life at the Beach House will mean that after a couple of days you will know them all.

There are no other hotels on the beach, and you can genuinely walk for miles without seeing a soul. Part of the magic is that there is hint of ruggedness about the expanse of pink and white sand in front of the hotel's large saltwater pool, yet just around the corner is a long stretch of a classic Caribbean beach with the warm turquoise sea gently lapping on the pink sand.

Foodies will love the Beach House, as the dining experience is as good as anywhere in the Caribbean and considerably better than several of the well known top-flight hotels of Barbados and Antigua. Excellent use is made of fresh local produce, and lobster from the Codrington lagoon is a regular feature on the short, but ever changing menu.

Dinner is served in the clubhouse, by the pool, in your room or should you wish, on the beach.

This is the ultimate in bare foot luxury, but for those prone to itchy feet there is a surprising amount to do on the island. A service Ambassador can organise car hire, and it is well worth negotiating the roads and tracks to see Two Foot Bay, Access Beach and Spanish Point. The more adventurous will head for Darby Cave, better known as the Sink Hole, though the challenge of locating the elusive cave



proved insurmountable for us. A day on an open skiff to see the frigate birds, to fish for tarpon and to snorkel off North Beach is a must do activity and a trip to a Barbudan race meeting is an unforgettable experience.



There is very little one can criticise at the Beach House. All in all it is a wonderful hideaway, but visitors should remember that they are in the Caribbean. The service is excellent but relaxed. Things do get done, but in a mellow way. The rhythm of life in the Caribbean, and particularly in Barbuda, is decidedly (and rightly) very laid back. It is sheer bliss!

On departure you might find that two or three Service Ambassadors gather around to sing you a cappella farewell. When they come to the hotel entrance to wave goodbye you would be forgiven for shedding a tear.

A barbudaful week

Stay: The Beach House, Oceanfront Junior Suite

No of nights: 7 nights

*Departure Between: 04 Apr - 30 Sep 06 or
16 Nov 06 - 12 Dec 06*

*Flights: London Gatwick with British Airways
(World Traveller) or Virgin Atlantic (Economy)
flights to Antigua and onward Carib Aviation
flight to Barbuda*

Meal Plan: Full Breakfast & Dinner

Cost: From £2218 per person per week

*Included in cost: Private transfers & lounge
pass at London Gatwick on departure flight.*

For more information call 020 7838 5942

Things to do in Barbuda

• FRIGATE BIRD EXCURSION TOUR

Take a boat trip from Codrington to see the extraordinary frigate birds in their natural habitat.

• DARBY CAVE EXCURSION

Visit the Darby Cave, better known as The Sink Hole, on the northern side of the island. Some 400ft long and 85ft deep, it is known for its lush vegetation and self contained eco-system. As you climb down, you will discover the water falling from above called The Silaga, and a variety of birds and fauna enjoying this unknown paradise. Make sure you go with a guide as it is easy to become disorientated when trying to locate it.

• TWO FEET BAY & THE CAVES TOUR

Located on the north-eastern side of the island, otherwise known as Highlands, this 108 feet high hill offers breathtaking views of the ocean. The caves at Two Foot Bay range from small crawl-in holes to huge cavernous areas complete with stalactites and stalagmites and many fossils.

• DARK CAVE EXCURSION

Dark Cave is two miles to the south of Darby Cave. The cave has a narrow entrance leading to a vast cavern containing pools of water, which were probably a water source for Amerindian inhabitants as a variety of artifacts have been found nearby. Dark Cave is the habitat for several rare species of crustaceans, including blind shrimp.

• ISLAND TOUR

The Beach House will organise a tour of as much of Barbuda as they can bundle in! The tour, which can be tailored to your requirements, will usually include Spanish Point, Two Feet Bay, Codrington Village and surrounding Schools, Churches and landmarks, the Lagoon and Martello Tower.

• SNORKELING BY BOAT

Superb snorkeling is available by boat at either North Beach or Spanish Point.

• SPORT FISHING

Bone fishing, or Tarpon fishing in the saltwater lagoon, or offshore with a guide in a 'local open skiff' with equipment, bait and encouragement provided.

• SUNSET HORSEBACK RIDING

You won't find a better beach anywhere to go for a magical ride.

• A NIGHT OUT

Sample the nightlife of Codrington and make sure you go to the Green Door and the Lyme!

