

Q&A

WYNDHAM GRAND BARBADOS SAM LORD'S CASTLE Marc Balanger, general manager, and Michele Olivier, director of sales and marketing

INTERVIEW BY Alice Barnes-Brown

Q. What's the story behind Sam Lord's castle?

Michele Olivier: The castle is named after Samuel Hall Lord. It was built in the 1820s – we suspect he probably got it from his dad.

Marc Balanger: Legend says he used to lure boats by putting lanterns on the trees in front of the castle to make captains believe it was Bridgetown. He would then pillage the shipwrecks. People tell me that underneath the castle there is all the money that Sam Lord had taken from the boats. At the hotel entrance, we have a mural of two trees on the walls, with lanterns that change colours – we represent the story of the castle and Sam Lord.

Q. What is the castle's role?

MB: The castle is still in front of the hotel, but only the facade. There are plans to reconstruct it, but it belongs to the government and safety restrictions mean we can't go inside. It's part of our hotel – one of the buildings and a restaurant facing the castle are named after it.

MO: The outer walls are in fantastic shape. But we had a fire in 2010 – and the inside is a mess. The focus now is on cleaning up inside then restoring the lighting. It's going to be magnificent and, eventually, guests might be able to go inside again.

Q. Why was the area picked to build the new hotel?

MB: All the hotels in Barbados are on the west coast, so this [eastern] part of the island is a new place to develop. We have a nice beach, which is different from others



PICTURE: Estudio Brienna Delpiatz Fotografía

because it's well preserved and there aren't many people coming. It was the place to be 20 years ago, which is what we want to bring back.

Q. What activities can guests expect from a stay?

MB: We are all-inclusive, but want some activities that will attract people from outside the resort. For example, we want to do a full-moon party once a month by the beach. We already do a 'pink party' – a rosé wine party – in one of the bars.

Q. Are there any unique selling points agents should know about Sam Lord's Castle?

MB: Our natural landscape is the main thing – it's between green areas and the sea. The hotel is also very concerned about sustainability, which guests look for now.

MO: My favourite sustainability initiative is the chef's garden and greenhouse. We plan to have

kids' activities in there, to raise consciousness of how to look after plants.

Q. What do guests think?

MB: When people arrive at the hotel, the first thing they see looks like a big corridor that ends at the sea – it's fantastic. They also love our spacious rooms, which have large patios and front or side views of the beach. Some of the patios are as big as the rooms.

MO: We have a kids' club with many activities themed around *Pirates of the Caribbean*. We can do plenty of things in the hotel and on the beach – and people like that. A bunch of children in pirate costumes were playing swords the other day, which was so cute. The rosé party is also popular. The



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food and beverage director recently told us that we consume more rosé per capita in Barbados than anywhere else in the world. So, we are experts!

MB: Once a week, we hold 'general manager's cocktails', where guests have the chance to meet all the managers. We hear directly

from them – what they like or what they would change, and if they have any suggestions.

Q. What's new for 2024?

MB: Our spa facility opened this month with its own swimming pool, saunas and six massage rooms. The fitness centre opened in late January.

MO: We're excited about the new Virgin Atlantic airlift, which means Virgin, BA and Tui now run regular flights to the island. We love UK guests because they stay for a long time and like to see the island. **TW**