

## DESTINATIONS

WEDDINGS & HONEYMOONS | ANNIVERSARY

# Q&A

**MARIE MARSHALL,**  
HAYS TRAVEL, EPPING

INTERVIEW BY Natalie Marsh



### Q. How did you meet your husband?

A. I was on an educational in Saint Lucia in 1992 and we stayed in what is now Sandals Halcyon Beach. My husband was in the Royal Navy and his ship was en route back to England, but they stopped in Saint Lucia. We met there, I carried on seeing him when I got home, and the rest is history!

### Q. Why did you decide to return to Saint Lucia?

A. We always said that on our 25th wedding anniversary we would take all our family and friends back to Saint Lucia for a vow renewal. We had booked another trip to Malaysia for last April but when that trip was cancelled, we decided on Saint Lucia again. We knew it was going to be the two of us, and the week before we were due to go in October, my husband said 'let's renew our vows', so we contacted Sandals and they were just amazing.

### Q. How did the renewal of vows go?

A. The ceremony was at 4pm and at 3.30pm the heavens opened. I had my hair done; my other half went down to the gazebo and waited there for me. The wedding coordinator came and got me from the room and I walked down to the gazebo to *A Million Dreams* by Pink. There were a few guests who were going to be on the beach with us, but as the weather was awful they sat on hammocks under cover watching the ceremony,



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### MARIE'S TOP TIP

Get the message across about how safe Saint Lucia feels and how stress-free it is to organise a wedding abroad. You've got a wedding coordinator on hand for free – you'd pay a fortune for that if you were doing it in this country.

which was really sweet. We said our vows, they brought champagne and a lovely cake and left us in the gazebo, and we danced. It was just perfect.

### Q. What made you choose Sandals Grande St Lucian?

A. The plan was to stay there and have the ceremony at Sandals Halcyon Beach, but it wasn't open. I'd never stayed at the Grande before. We've been fortunate to have stayed at Sandals all over the Caribbean, but I have to say I've fallen in love with this one. The staff are so good and so happy. It's got the most fantastic, stunning beach and amazing restaurants. We couldn't fault it.

### Q. How did you find the Covid-19 safety measures in Saint Lucia?

A. What a fantastic job the island

has done. I cannot praise it enough. It was inconvenient when we landed as we had to queue for almost two hours to get through immigration. But they check and triple check that every person coming in has the right paperwork, has had a valid Covid test and filled in the right forms, and they do a temperature check.

### Q. What were the safety measures like at the hotel?

A. Staff have to wear masks all the time, but you could still tell they were smiling. We had to wear our masks inside the hotel and if we were at one of the indoor restaurants and got up from our table. Outside, you didn't have to wear one and you could just

forget there was a pandemic. I would not hesitate to send any customers out there. We thought you wouldn't be able to do any excursions, but they were safe. We went on a boat trip and there were just four couples. You can space out and sit separately. It feels like you're on a private trip.

### Q. Would you recommend a wedding or vow renewal to customers?

A. I've booked a few weddings over the years, but never completely understood how they worked. Sandals booked us a meeting on the Monday with the wedding coordinator to go through everything. We tasted different sponges and icings for the wedding cake, and they went through all the different bouquets and where to do the vows – they really know what they're doing. **TW**