

DESTINATIONS

CARIBBEAN | BARBADOS



CLOCKWISE
FROM ABOVE:

The main pool,
Lovers Lane bowling
alley, Rolls-Royce
transfer service and
swim-up suites

PICTURES: Roger Paperno;
DSH Digital Imaging



Sandals
Royal
Barbados

Tried & Tested

THE FACTS: A 14-acre resort close to Grantley Adams International Airport and the party zones of Oistins and St Lawrence Gap. The property shares the immaculately kept sands of Maxwell Beach with the adjacent Sandals Barbados resort. Both are couples-only and share facilities, giving guests a total of 17 dining options. Amenities include a spa, fitness centre, watersports, diving, tennis and nightly entertainment, and a wide array of excursions.

BOOK IT: Sandals offers seven nights in a South Seas Crystal Lagoon Club Level Barbados Suite with Balcony Tranquility Soaking Tub from £2,449 per person, with Virgin Atlantic flights from Heathrow and transfers, valid from December 1-12. sellingsandals.co.uk

ACCOMMODATION: The 272 suites come in a bewildering choice of 17 categories, with the majority looking on to a pool or garden. For clients who want to push the boat out, the Love Nest Butler Suites, on the third to fifth floors of the Stargazer Building, are as glamorous as it gets, with butler service, a lordly view over the beach and a private Sky Pool. A less costly but still elevated alternative are the fifth-floor Royal Seaside Penthouse Suites, while the South Seas Walkout Suites are an appealing ground-floor option. Suites have a bright and uplifting style that gets you straight into the holiday mood and all feature a soaking tub for two; those with butler service include premium spirits and sparkling wine.

AMBIENCE: Opened in 2017, this is the youngest resort in the Sandals portfolio. A huge central infinity pool creates a sense of space, enhanced by the low occupancy rate (20%) during my stay, with few North American guests present due to the pandemic. Dining options confirmed the adage 'simple is best' – a lunch of fresh snapper baked in tinfoil at Jerk Shack was more memorable than a fancy multi-course dinner at French-themed La Parisienne. Booking a suite with a butler can elevate the experience no end. After my wife expressed

dismay that there were no Caribbean dishes on the breakfast menu, the following morning she was presented with a plate of Bajan specialities.

SELLING POINTS: The resort is only 15 minutes from the airport, with complimentary transfers by Rolls-Royce for top-category suites. One attraction guests won't find at any other Sandals is the Lovers Lane Bowling Alley. With four lanes, craft beers and familiar beats, it is great fun. Another is the rooftop Sky Bar pairing a lofty view with intriguing smoked cocktails and elaborate martinis.

COVID-19 PROTOCOLS: The resort has been open since September, and leaflets in the suites outline the cleaning regime. Current regulations (barbadostravelprotocols.com) require UK travellers to have a negative PCR test taken three days before arrival, followed by a rapid antigen test at the airport and a second PCR test five days later, remaining in their room until the results are received. Sandals staff can arrange the PCR test in-resort (\$150) or book a taxi to a public health centre (around \$60 return) where it is free. We did the latter and were in and out within 30 minutes with the results emailed in 48 hours, allowing us to explore this charismatic island to the full. **TW**

REVIEWED by Nigel Tisdall