

Generation game

Two teens, one mother-in-law, and a luxury resort in Antigua. What could possibly go wrong, asks Phil Davies

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Never go back, the old adage goes, so it was with a degree of trepidation that the Davies family took the plunge and made our return to Carlisle Bay in Antigua.

Seven years on from our last visit to the resort, set in an idyllic, crescent-shaped sandy bay, and my two children are now well into their teens and no longer reliant on kids' club activities.

Yet my mother-in-law, Ruth, was insistent my wife and I repeat our multigenerational holiday to the property she fell in love with when we last visited with two primary school-aged youngsters in tow.

Happily, it was just as we remembered. She was greeted



We were greeted like long-lost friends by Winston, who had dispatched our bags to our suites in 2011

like a long-lost friend by Winston, the same porter who had swiftly dispatched our bags to our respective suites in 2011.

We were doubly delighted to discover that 'Magic' Marvin - mega-star of the children's Blue Crew club, who taught Tilly and Hal to snorkel - is still dividing

his time between running water sports and supervising activities for children.

It's a testament to the hotel that staff remain so loyal, meaning guests, including my son Hal, 13, and 16-year-old daughter Tilly, feel straight at home.

ROOM WITH A VIEW

Ruth, who has stayed in more high-end hotels than most travel agents, let alone seasoned travel journalists, was wowed by her beachfront room last time, and her expectations were once again exceeded by the quality of accommodation. Her split-level Ocean Suite featured a stylish open-plan bedroom-sitting room with sun terrace.

Being conscious of the conch was one of the first things we learnt after checking into our family suite. We were greeted with a giant shell in our beachfront apartment and told to leave it outside the door if we wanted privacy, so no one would disturb us. Such attention to detail is just one illustration of why so many British holidaymakers flock to flop at one of the Caribbean's loveliest luxury resorts.

There are 87 suites set on either two or three levels, with two-room Beach Terrace or Beach Balcony suites located in the family half of the resort, laid out with a studio-style master bedroom with king-size bed →

and a second twin-bed room, both with access to a large bathroom with shower and bath.

We loved the four restaurants, including two set right on the beach, and serving everything from sushi and seafood to beach barbecues, all geared up for family dining.

SPORTS RESORT

As part of the free activities laid on, I managed to get to grips with double-handed backhand thanks to ever-patient tennis coach Clifton. My wife, meanwhile, took to her sunbed on the sand, where ice-cold water, fresh fruit and ice lollies flavoured with pineapple and ginger are handed out, so guests don't have to move a muscle.

The hotel also offers complimentary hilltop treks through the rainforest, snorkelling trips, and sunset yoga and



LEFT:
Beach Suite

BELOW:
Phil with his children and mother-in-law

PICTURE: ENVISIONWORKS PHOTOGRAPHY

Family feedback



Tilly's verdict
"From morning to evening, I seemed to have a smile on my face. A gorgeous Asian restaurant called East served

delicious noodles and sushi, and waking up to the sound of the waves crashing on the white-sand beach felt pretty surreal."



Hal's verdict
"As soon as we arrived, I knew I was going to have a great holiday. All the staff were extremely welcoming. My

favourite part was at 11am each day when hotel staff came round with tropical fruit kebabs along the beach."



Ruth's verdict
"Being in Antigua with my family, including two teenagers, was the ideal holiday. The hotel was perfect for

all ages: gorgeous rooms, delicious food and amazing staff. I was sorry to leave and hope to go there again."



Fresh fruit and ice lollies flavoured with pineapple and ginger are handed out, so guests don't have to move a muscle

pilates. Kayaks, pedaloes, stand-up paddleboards and dinghies are also available free of charge.

I couldn't resist buying a Wadadli beer T-shirt from Gwendoline's shack on the beach, where she also sells hair braids and handmade jewellery. Not



only is it the local beer of choice, but Wadadli is also the original name of the island itself, bestowed by its native Arawak people before Columbus christened it Santa Maria la Antigua.

We discovered this from informative taxi driver John Henry on a trip along the island's south coast, past some of its famous 365 beaches to the yacht haven of Jolly Harbour.

He rates Darkwood Beach among the best, and we could see why, with its stretch of soft sand and views across to Montserrat.

While we didn't venture quite as far as the neighbouring volcanic island, snorkelling on Cades Reef, a 10-minute boat ride offshore from Carlisle Bay, is an experience not to be missed. It's a chance to spot some of the multi-coloured marine life that inhabits the waters of the Lesser Antilles, such as barracuda and parrotfish. Part of the reef has been designated as an underwater park, and there are many dive sites for those more experienced.

Antigua is welcoming to all, from families with young children to couples seeking quality time together. It's even visited by global superstars, as we saw with the arrival of multimillion-album-selling singer Mary J Blige, who checked in to coincide with Antigua's lively carnival season. Less Carlisle Bay, more Carlisle 'yay'. [TW](https://www.travelweekly.co.uk)



The Inspiring Travel Company offers a week in a Beach Terrace Suite for two adults and two children under 12, from £7,499 in total. The price for an adult staying in an Ocean Suite for seven nights a single occupancy starts at £3,740. Both prices include breakfast, flights and transfers, for travel between April 23 and November 30, when booked by February 28. [inspiringtravelcompany.co.uk](https://www.inspiringtravelcompany.co.uk)