

NORTH AMERICA · BEACHES · FOOD · DIVING · HISTORY · NIGHTLIFE

 Barbados

Calm Caribbean bays, a wild Atlantic coast and a deep vein of history share an island just 34 km long. Snorkel with turtles over wrecks in Carlisle Bay, ride a tram through Harrison's Cave, watch surfers at Bathsheba's Soup Bowl, then eat grilled fish at Oistins on a Friday night. Visit during Crop Over if street parties are your thing.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Barbados and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 23 January 2026.

 CAPITAL Bridgetown	 CURRENCY Barbadian dollar (BBD) £1 ≈ BBD 2.67	 LANGUAGE English, Bajan Creole	 BEST TIME Dec-Apr
 DAILY BUDGET £85-£400 £££ Expensive	 PLUGS Type A, B 115V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 8h 50m direct ~£450-£950 return	 TIME ZONE UTC-4 standard time

Barbados is the most easterly of the Caribbean islands and feels it: the west and south coasts face calm Caribbean water, while the east takes the full Atlantic swell. The sheltered west, nicknamed the Platinum Coast, has the smart hotels and Holetown's restaurants; the south coast around St Lawrence Gap and Oistins is livelier and cheaper. Inland, sugar-cane fields, gullies and plantation houses lead to Harrison's Cave and the rugged Scotland District. Most visitors base themselves on one coast and make day trips — the island is small enough that nowhere is much more than an hour's drive away, and Bridgetown's UNESCO-listed historic centre and Garrison are easy to add.

Barbados is not a budget destination: accommodation, imported groceries and restaurant meals are priced closer to London than to Bangkok, though rum shops, roadside cutters and the public buses keep daily costs in check. Direct flights from London take around nine hours, and the island draws a loyal British crowd, from families at half-term to cricket fans at Kensington Oval. Life runs on a relaxed but orderly rhythm — Anglican churches, village cricket, Sunday lunch — and many first-timers are surprised by how Bajan the island remains beyond the hotel strips. December to April is busiest and priciest; the wetter summer months bring lower rates and the build-up to Crop Over.

Top 5 highlights

1

NATURE

Bathsheba and the Soup Bowl

Giant mushroom-shaped boulders, undercut by the Atlantic, stand in the shallows off this east-coast village. The Soup Bowl reef break draws international surfers; swimming is risky, but the rock pools and rum-shop lunches are not.

2

NATURE

Harrison's Cave

An electric tram carries visitors deep into this crystallised limestone cave in St Thomas parish, past stalactites, stalagmites, streams and still green pools. Tours are short and popular, so book ahead in high season.

3

BEACH

Carlisle Bay

Just south of Bridgetown, this sweep of calm water is a marine park where several shallow shipwrecks attract turtles, rays and shoals of reef fish. Snorkel from the beach or join a catamaran trip.

4

HISTORY

St Nicholas Abbey

Despite the name, never an abbey: a Jacobean mansion built in 1658 in the northern parish of St Peter, now a working rum distillery with a heritage steam railway. Cherry Tree Hill's viewpoint is next door.

5

HISTORY

Historic Bridgetown and its Garrison

UNESCO-listed since 2011, Bridgetown's old core and the British military Garrison to its south hold the Barbados Museum, horse racing on the Garrison Savannah and George Washington House, where the future US president stayed in 1751.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Bridgetown

≈ 110,000 people

The capital's compact centre mixes Parliament's neo-Gothic buildings, Broad Street shops and the Careenage marina; stay for lunch, then head south to the Garrison and Carlisle Bay's beach.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Speightstown

≈ 2,600 people

Barbados's second town was once a busy sugar port nicknamed 'Little Bristol'; today its old balconied streets, Arlington House museum and fishing jetty make a calm stop on the west coast.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Oistins

≈ 1,200 people

A working fishing town on the south coast, famous for its Friday-night Fish Fry, when stalls grill marlin, tuna, mahi-mahi and flying fish to a soundtrack of soca and dominoes.

Barbados has only one sizeable urban area: Greater Bridgetown, which sprawls along much of the south-west coast. Speightstown and Oistins are small towns, and their figures are census counts for the town centres only.

When to go to Barbados

Best time: **Dec–Apr**.

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

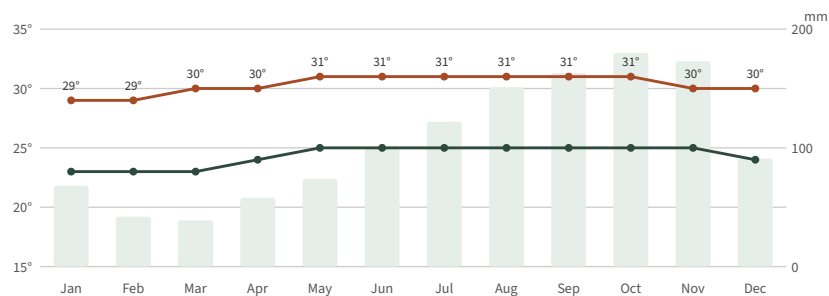
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Bridgetown

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Feb	Holetown Festival A week of street fairs, music and parades in Holetown marking the arrival of the first English settlers there in February 1627.
Mar-Apr	Oistins Fish Festival Held over the Easter weekend, it celebrates the south coast's fishing community with fish-boning contests, boat races, music and plenty of grilled catch.
Jul-Aug	Crop Over The island's biggest festival grew out of sugar-harvest celebrations. Weeks of calypso tents, fetes and street parties climax on Grand Kadooment Day, the first Monday in August.

How much does Barbados cost?

SHOESTRING £85 per person / day ≈ BBD 227 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £190 per person / day ≈ BBD 508 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £400 per person / day ≈ BBD 1,069 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Cou-cou and flying fish

The national dish: cornmeal and okra stirred into a smooth, firm cou-cou, served with steamed flying fish in a spiced tomato and onion gravy.

Pudding and souse

A Saturday tradition: pickled pork with lime, cucumber and hot pepper, alongside steamed sweet-potato 'pudding' seasoned with herbs.

Bajan fish cakes

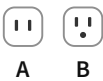
Salt-cod fritters spiked with herbs and Scotch bonnet, eaten by the bagful or tucked into a salt-bread roll as a 'bread and two'.

Getting around

Barbados has a cheap, flat-fare bus network: blue government buses, yellow privately run minibuses and white ZR route taxis with a maroon stripe, all fanning out from Bridgetown's terminals. Taxis are unmetered, so agree the fare first. Hiring a car opens up the east coast and interior; you drive on the left, roads are narrow and signage patchy, and rental firms issue the required visitor's driving permit.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



115V — bring a UK-to-A/B adapter

DIALLING CODE

+1-246

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Ambulance: **511**

Fire: **311**

Police: **211**

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

TIME ZONE

UTC-4 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Generally safe to drink

DRIVING

On the left

TIPPING

Many restaurants add a 10% service charge — check the bill. Otherwise tip 10–15%; round up taxi fares and leave a little for hotel housekeeping.

ETIQUETTE

Bajans are courteous and greet before business: say 'good morning' before asking anything. Keep swimwear for the beach, and note that wearing camouflage clothing is illegal for civilians.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Grantley Adams International Airport (BGI), Bridgetown

Visas & entry for Barbados

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You do not need a visa to visit Barbados.

You will be told how long you can stay when you arrive. If you want to extend your stay, you must apply and pay for an extension through the Barbados Immigration Department.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Chikungunya

Dengue

Bat Lyssavirus

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever certificate is only required if you arrive from (or transit through) a country with yellow fever risk — not if you fly direct from the UK.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Barbados

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Mon 30 Nov 2026

Independence Day

Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Sat 26 Dec 2026	Boxing Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Thu 21 Jan 2027	Errol Barrow Day
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Wed 28 Apr 2027	National Heroes Day
Sat 1 May 2027	May Day
Mon 17 May 2027	Whit Monday
Sun 1 Aug 2027	Emancipation Day
Mon 2 Aug 2027	Kadooment Day
Tue 3 Aug 2027	Emancipation Day (observed)

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Know before you go

US dollars are accepted almost everywhere at a fixed rate of BBD 2 to USD 1, but change usually comes in Barbadian dollars, so carry small notes.

Swim on the calmer west and south coasts; the Atlantic-facing east coast has strong currents and is best admired from the shore or the rock pools at Bathsheba.

For Crop Over in late July and early August, book flights and accommodation months ahead — prices rise and the best-located guesthouses fill early.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.