

Key Points to Know

Weather

Yes it does rain in Barbados. The rainy season in our lovely isle is from June 1 until November 1 and during that time (Hurricane season) we can be subjected to fierce thunderstorms. If you see the clouds coming don't leave home without your umbrella.

Looking for that lovely tan? Even on overcast days it is still possible to get sunburnt so please don't forget your sun protection even on days when the sun is hidden from view. The average daily temperature hovers around 30 degrees Celsius so pack lightweight clothing when you come to visit!

Driving

We drive on the left! While your instincts may want to lead you astray please remember that in Barbados we drive on the left. If you notice a local waving frantically at you as you merrily drive down a narrow street please check to see that you are on the correct side of the road and that you haven't inadvertently turned the wrong way onto a one way street. A rule of thumb, the passenger side is to the curb, unless you are driving a left-hand drive vehicle.

Appropriate wear

While we appreciate that you are on holiday and that it is hot outside please don't wear inappropriate clothing when you are conducting business with us. Beach wear is not considered appropriate for banking or shopping or even for cruising the streets of our main city, Bridgetown. Most restaurants allow casual and relaxed shorts and T-shirts during the day. However, there are some that expect more elegant attire during the evening.

Business hours

Many offices open at 8 a.m. and close at 4:30 p.m. Most stores and other places of business open from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Financial institutions are open Monday to Thursday from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m. and on Fridays from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. A few financial institutions are open on Saturdays from 8 a.m. until Noon. Please call ahead to confirm opening hours.

Supermarkets are usually open from 8 a.m. until 10 p.m., Monday to Saturday. A few of them are open on Sundays.

Currency

Barbados has its own currency which is issued by the Central Bank of Barbados and which is pegged to the United States dollar. The exchange rate is US\$1 to BDS \$1.98. Major foreign currencies including the British Pound, the Canadian dollar and the Euro are accepted at most stores and restaurants around the island. The major credit cards such as American Express, MasterCard and Visa as well as travelers cheques are also accepted in the banks and by most businesses.

Electricity

There is a reliable electricity supply on the island 110 volts/50 cycles. Plugs in Barbados are two flat blades with or without the grounding pin.

Emergency services

Accidents can happen even while you are on holiday but don't worry. Barbados has excellent emergency services to serve you and ease your fear. Here are a few numbers that should always be in reach.

- Queen Elizabeth Hospital, St. Michael: 436-6450
- FMH Emergency Medical Centre, Belleville, St. Michael: 228-6120
- Sandy Crest Medical Centre, Sunset Crest, St. James: 419-4911
- Barbados Red Cross Ambulance Service: 417-2727
- Police: 211 or 430-7100
- Fire Service: 311
- Ambulance Service: 511
- Telephone information: 41

Safety

As beautiful as any destination may be it is not wise to be so distracted by the beauty that you forget to take necessary precaution such as locking your valuable away. People here are friendly but that does not mean it is OK to forget to be careful. Lock your car when you leave it; do not venture into dark secluded areas alone, and do not be careless with your valuables. The same rules that apply in a big city apply to a small island even if the scenery is different.

Taxes

There is a Value Added Tax (VAT) of 15% that is applied to most goods and services in stores and restaurants, and a 7.5% in hotels.

Telecommunications

Calling home from Barbados is easy. You can call direct to almost any place in the world on fixed lines. If you travel with you cell phone, ensure your roaming features have been activated. However, to reduce cost, you may want to rent a cell phone locally.

Internet service is widely available either through dial-up or broadband. Most hotels offer this service to their guests. If you prefer to leave your laptop at want but feel the need to go online, there are a few internet cafes that would be very happy to serve you.

Water

Yes you can drink it straight out of the tap. Geologists even say that Barbados' tap water is some of the best in the world because of the filtration it receives from the island's coral stone makeup. Drink it by the gallon if you wish, bottle it and take it home if you can. It is one of our most treasured resources.