

Places of Interest

Barbados has quite a few landmarks that are steeped with historic significance. Settled in 1627, the island can boast of some of the oldest architecture in the "new world"; as well as new, ultra-modern infrastructure. Here are some places you won't want to miss on your visit.

Animal Flower Cave

At the northernmost tip of the island in St. Lucy is the Animal Flower Cave, so named for the sea anemones or "animal flowers" that are found underground. These flowers fascinate visitors when they put up their defence mechanism and "disappear" into their stalk on the approach of any foreign object.

The coral steps leading down to the caves were built around 1912 and they lead to a spectacular view of the pounding surf of the Atlantic Ocean. Within the cave are a number of limpid pools, some of which are deep enough to swim in on a calm day.

The cave was featured in one of singer Billy Ocean's music videos and in the Bold and Beautiful soap opera.

Barbados Museum & Historical Society

The Barbados Museum, located in the former British Military Prison in the environs of the Garrison Savannah, is the ideal place to house the island's treasures.

Built between 1817 and 1853, the prison became the headquarters of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society in 1930, which this year is celebrating its 75th anniversary.

The culture and heritage of the island come alive in seven permanent galleries and changing exhibitions in this fortress. A journey through the museum provides visitors with fascinating images and stories — sometimes disturbing, sometimes unbelievable, but always memorable.

You will experience the lavish 19th Century planter lifestyle, learn about the African legacy to Barbados, uncover the development of the second oldest regiment in the Commonwealth from the 17th century to the end of World War II, as well as have fun interacting with some of the toys and household displays in the Children's Gallery.

Barbados Wildlife Reserve

Located in a natural mahogany-wooded area is the Barbados Wildlife Reserve where monkeys frolic among the trees as deer roam the pathways and turtles, tortoises and agouti bask in the sun.

There are over 100 mammals, more than 10 different species of reptiles, and over 470 birds at the reserve, which has been created as a natural habitat for these creatures. The reserve is enclosed to allow them to move around freely. Very few cages can be found on site and visitors can observe the faunae as they eat, play and interact with each other.

Visitors to the reserve can stroll leisurely along the trails and wend their way to the nearby Grenade Hall Forest and Signal Station which is included in the admission price to the reserve.

The station, constructed in 1819, was one of a group of signal stations that were used for communication across the island in the early days of settlement. Strategically placed around the island, these towers were ideal lookout points for sighting approaching ships.

Now they offer exceptional panoramic vistas of the island. Grenade Hall provides a perfect vantage point as its windows look out in every direction. Breathtaking!

Farley Hill National Park

One of the most breathtaking and picturesque sites in Barbados is Farley Hill National Park, an ideal spot for family picnics, a romantic rendezvous, a nature lover's hotspot or a quiet place to meditate.

In recent years it has also become a favourite location for weddings as the ruins of this once stately estate set amidst lush vegetation and a forest of mahogany trees, offers an idyllic backdrop for such a romantic occasion.

It was back in 1818 that the foundation of this stately home was laid and the original structure was built. Over the next 50 years additional rooms were added to create the impressive mansion it was known to be.

In 1965, this regal edifice was featured in the film, *Island in the Sun*, starring Harry Belafonte, but was subsequently destroyed by fire. Farley Hill National Park was officially opened by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 1966, the same year Barbados gained independence.

Garrison Savannah

Soldiers on parade, rugby players going through their paces, joggers working up a sweat, a group of children flying kites, horses pounding the turf – you can catch anyone of these at sometime during year at the Garrison Savannah, the 50-acre recreational and ceremonial ground situated on the outskirts of the capital, Bridgetown.

Home to military parades since 1705, this historic landmark is the place where the Barbados National Flag was raised to signal the attainment of Independence on November 30, 1966.

Generally recognised as the finest military parade ground in the West Indies, the Garrison Savannah is surrounded by some of the island's most impressive and historic buildings, dating back to the 17th Century.

Many of these edifices, built along traditional British colonial lines, were constructed from brick brought as ballast on ships that set sail from England.

George Washington House

Barbados has the distinction of being the only country outside of colonial America that George Washington, who became the first President of the United States, ever visited. At the age of 19, he visited the island in 1751 for two months, accompanying his brother, Lawrence, who was stricken with tuberculosis. At that time Barbados had a more developed society than that of America with better health care facilities.

While on the island, the young George was entertained at the theatre and banquets, where he met leading scientists, engineers and military strategists of the day, as he searched for a cure for his brother. He contracted smallpox but the skill of an English doctor saved him and, as a result, he acquired immunity to the virus which enabled him to survive an outbreak of the disease during the American War of Independence which killed many of his men.

And as a lasting memorial of this visit, the house where he stayed has been restored and is the site of a museum. This fact alone should make a tour of George Washington House, the place where he stayed while in Barbados, a must-do activity for all visitors from the USA.

Gun Hill Signal Station

The military Signal Station at Gun Hill in the parish of St. George provides a magnificent and captivating view of the island! Built in 1818, this station, along with others around the island, were used to sight approaching ships and signal a warning to each other, alerting the troops to action. They were also used to warn of slave rebellions on the island.

Looking down from the Signal Station you will see a lion carved out of the limestone cliff. This historic landmark was sculpted in 1868 by Henry Wilkinson, the Adjutant General of the Imperial Forces that were stationed on the island.

Two inscriptions are carved into the rock at the base of the lion. One includes the name of the sculptor, his rank and the date he completed the sculpture. The other reads: "It (referring to the 'British lion') shall rule from the rivers to the sea and from the sea to the ends of the earth."

Harrison's Cave

This magnificent, crystallized limestone cavern is one of the wonders of Barbados. This natural phenomenon offers a breathtaking view of coral formations that have taken centuries, even millennia, to develop.

Stalactites and stalagmites abound, some of them joining to form pillars, in this well-developed and cleverly designed cave. So too are pools, streams and waterfalls that add to the spectacular underground vista. It is definitely a sight to behold.

The cave was explored in the early 1970s when Ole Sorensen, a Danish speleologist commissioned by the Barbados National Trust, surveyed and mapped the cave. He realised the vast potential of the cave and recommended that it be

developed.

In the early 1980s, the cave was opened offering visitors a journey through an underground wonderland that few ever thought existed. Electrically-operated trams take visitors along the meandering pathway into the depth of the cave where they can disembark and watch the awesome waterfall in the Great Hall.

St. Nicholas Abbey

Built around 1658, St. Nicholas Abbey – not of the religious kind – is one of only three genuine Jacobean mansions in the Western Hemisphere that are still standing. One other – Drax Hall – is also in Barbados.

This property, which is set in about 200 acres of land in the parish of St. Peter, has been beautifully restored by architect Larry Warren, who bottles rum and other sugar cane products in the steam-driven sugar factory.

Its curved Dutch gables, chimney stacks, coral stone finials and the Chippendale staircase are some of the remarkable features found in this magnificent structure. Among the fine antique furnishings, intricate paintings and delicate china, is a rare 1930s film of sugar plantation life that can be viewed by visitors.

Welchman Hall Gully

Located in the central parish of St. Thomas is a three-quarter-mile long gully which is home to a number of tropical floras such as palms, bamboo, clove, and nutmeg grove. The gully was formed by the collapsed roofs of caves eons ago, the evidence of which can be found in the stalagmitic formations around the grounds.

Strolling through the gully you may be met by some sprightly green monkeys, which are indigenous to Barbados, and who make their home in the many gullies around the island.