



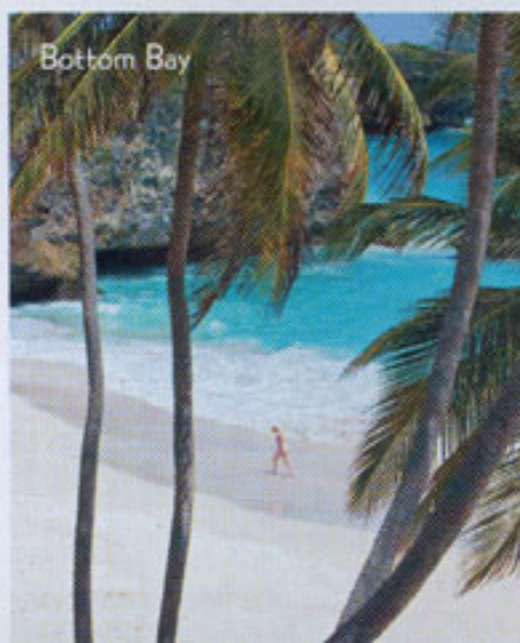
Crane Beach

Barbados has beaches for every one of your moods: calm turquoise crescents fringed by white powder; miles of pink sand caressed by rolling surf; broad shell-strewn bays spiraling with surfers; sandy coves bobbing with snorkelers and turtles. And Barbados doesn't have just one of each — it has many.

Sixty miles of coastline circle the 166-square-mile island, the easternmost in the Caribbean. Inland, there are lush rolling hills, sugar-cane fields, breathtaking cliffs, black-belly sheep and a few thousand green monkeys. It's the limestone island's beaches, however, that rightly garner the most attention. The former British colony is divided into 11 parishes, nine of which lie on the coast. There are four main regions for beach-goers: a touristy south that keeps humming at all hours; the "Platinum" west coast with its tranquil beaches, posh hotels and villas; the surfer's east coast with crashing waves; and a rugged southeast that somehow combines elements of them all.

SOUTHEAST COAST

On the southeast coast where the calm Caribbean waters meet the Atlantic, there are a half-dozen beaches, all rocked by surf that runs the gamut from light to heavy, ideal for bodysurfing and boogie boarding. Frosted with pink and white sands, these are the prettiest beaches in Barbados — and since they're away from the main tourist centers, chances are you'll have them to yourself.



Bottom Bay

BOTTOM BAY

Quarter-mile-long Bottom Bay is Barbados' best beach — combining porcelain-white sand, black-coral cliffs, towering coconut palms and rolling waves — but it's never crowded. Come to swim, sun and smooch: You'll feel like Barbados is your private playground. Follow signs on the H5 Highway from Six Cross Roads, then carry your picnic lunch down the winding staircase to the

secluded crescent. The azure water sometimes has a few swells, but you'll immediately feel a primal urge to dive in.

CRANE BEACH

Crane Beach is probably Barbados' most famous: Its pink sand and the Doric columns at the Crane Resort pool, perched 50 feet above, are a frequent backdrop for ad campaigns. Order a few sandwiches to go from the Crane's L'Azure restaurant, and head north on the footpath past the sign that reads "Caution: Walk at Your Own Risk." You'll soon reach the half-mile-long, white-sand stretch called Ginger Bay and then the smaller Beachy Head, set between limestone coral boulders and a cave. They're both tantalizingly deserted.

■ **Where to Stay and Play:** The Crane Resort (from \$150 in low season,

\$350 high*; 800-223-9815; thecrane.com) is the oldest hotel on Barbados, dating back to the late 1800s. It's also the only hotel on the south-east coast, and it's expanding, with construction expected to conclude in 2009. The ground-floor suites have infinity-edge pools and the two-bedroom residences have outdoor plunge pools. At the new Japanese-Thai restaurant Zen, you can dine on sushi or duckling while gazing down at the beach (\$\$**).

■ **Hot Stuff:** The Crane wasn't named after the bird — the beach was once a cargo port.

FOUL BEACH

Don't be fooled by the name. It's a corruption of the word "fowl," after the migrating birds that used to alight here. Today, you'll find sea grapes that

disappear into a mile of flat powdery white sand, and you might even spot a hawksbill turtle in the surf. This is an ideal beach for swimming and sunbathing, both wider and longer than Bottom Bay. To reach it, follow signs from Six Cross Roads or drive three minutes south from the Crane; it's on the southern side of Cobbler's Rock.

SOUTH COAST

The south coast is the heart of the island's most visited district, with nearly two dozen white-sand beaches fringed by hotels, restaurants, beach bars and condos. These beaches sometimes grow crowded, but the following are worthy places even if you have to share the sand.

* Room rates for double occupancy
** Average main course; each \$=\$10



Foul Beach