

travel

Travel Talk with Roger Doris

An English ship returning to England in 1625 came ashore at what is now Hometown Barbados. They set up a cross and inscribed on a tree, "James K of E and this island", claiming their discovery for England.

I discovered Barbados 350 years later, arriving in luxury aboard an Air Canada DC-8 stretch aircraft, and claimed the island as an excellent vacation spot for all Canadians.

It seems I was a little late with my proclamation, as I understand that 43 per cent of all the tourists visiting Barbados in 1974 came from Canada. In comparison 39 per cent of the tourists came from the United States. Having toured Barbados it isn't hard to understand why so many Canadians visit there.

I will give you some of the reasons later in this column, but first let me explain why I was there. Air Canada and Fairway Tours were hosting an in-house familiarization flight for 16 P Lawson travel consultants, and I was invited along. This I thought would be a great chance to do a critical report on the "three biggies" of the travel industry.

Air Canada is Canada's national air carrier, flying to all parts of Canada and the world, and already had displeased me, when they issued the latest stewardess uniforms.

Fairway Tours are the exclusive operators of Air Canada's Sun Living Program. They put together all the land arrangements for the program in the Caribbean, including cruises. What could they offer better than the charter packages?

P Lawson Travel, is Canada's largest travel agency, with offices throughout Canada. I had met some of their travel consultants and dealt with their offices in the Skyline Hotel and in the Square One Shopping Centre, but I wasn't convinced that this was a working trip.

There they were, the "three biggies", all set up in my mind to be humbled by one swoop of my critical pen. But times have a way of sometimes not turning out as I plan them.

The Air Canada flights, both to and from Barbados, turned out to be most enjoyable. The service was excellent, the stewards most personable and friendly, and the food was good. The pilots set those big jets down on the runways like they were landing on eggs. Everything went so well that I even forgot my dislike for the uniforms.

I discovered that the Sun Living program would certainly appeal to many people. The most appealing factor is the freedom of return on the day of your choice, and you can stay in the hotel or apartment of your choice. In fact if you get there and find you are not satisfied with your accommodation, you can ask to be transferred to another hotel of your liking. There are over 70 hotels in Barbados belonging to the Barbados Hotel Association, which in turn is a member of the Caribbean Hotel Association. These member hotels which participate in this program, are governed by rules and regulations that favour the tourist. There is splendid selection of hotels available in Barbados that would appeal to both the most critical, and to the budget minded vacationer.

As for the P Lawson travel consultants, they definitely went there to work. They inspected 14 hotels one day, and 10 another day. They really impressed me with their thirst for knowledge as to what was available for their customers.

Bob Rathwell of Air Canada, and Grant McGregor of Fairway Tours, were perfect tour escorts, leading us from one spot to another.

So as you can see, I can't find anything to be critical about. As for Barbados, one of the main attractions is the climate. The temperature is very consistent from day to day and from month to month. The main daily temperature varies less than 4 degrees F. between February and June, which are the coolest and hottest months respectively. The temperature rarely falls below 62 degrees F., or rises above 89 degrees F. They claim to have over 3100 hours of sunshine each year.

Barbados is 21 miles long, running from north to south, and is 14 miles wide. The west coast faces the Caribbean, while the Atlantic Ocean pounds the East coast.

Unlike most of the other Caribbean islands, Barbados always remained under the British flag, until November 30 1966 when it became a sovereign state.

Very few people are illiterate in Barbados and there is hardly any poverty. What seems to us to be poverty, is only their way of life. You don't see the begging as you would on some other islands of the Caribbean.

These are some of the sights to be seen in Barbados as far as I am concerned. The best value and most enjoyable attraction has to be a cruise on the 'Jolly Roger', a replica of an old pirate schooner. Lovely lunch, and plenty of fun and beverages are all included in this cruise.

Welchman Hall Gully is a property of the Barbados National Trust. It is truly tropical, with lush vegetation, nutmeg, coffee and cocoa trees. Of interest are stalactite and stalagmite formations.

Chalky Mount, St. Andrews, over looks the East Coast Road and is famous for its potteries, where local potters for generations have made various clay dishes, vases and 'monkeys' — which were used in the days before fridges for keeping the water cool.

While on the East Coast road, plan to visit the Edgewater Inn, in the Bathsheba area. This nice little hotel with fine dining offers a breathtaking view with warm hospitality.

St. John's Church rises 825 feet above sea level and is the resting place of a descendant of the last Christian Imperial family to rule in Constantinople. The pulpit contains many fine varieties of local wood. The view from here is magnificent.

The people of Barbados are exceptionally friendly and there are fine hotels on all sides of the island. I stayed at the Paradise Beach Hotel, which I think has everything going for them. I personally favour the West coast because of the beaches and the fine hotels such as the Paradise Beach, Colony Club, Discovery Bay Inn, Tamarind Cove, Sandridge and Coconut Creek Hotel. There are many other good spots on the island, including the big chain hotels



The east coast of Barbados offers some breathtaking scenery. This magnificent view is from St. John's Church which rises 825 feet above sea level. The Atlantic Ocean rolls onto the east coast shores, while the Caribbean splashes bathers on the west coast.

Sam Lord's Castle is now a hotel on the south east coast and was once the home of the notorious pirate Sam Hall Lord, who, tradition claims, plundered passing ships for luxuries with which he furnished his castle.

Farley Hill National Park was once a 19th century mansion visited by royalty, is now in ruins. It was used in the setting of 'Island in the Sun'.

The Lion at Gun Hill is sculptured from a rock which formed part of the face of the limestone cliff, by Col. Henry John Wilkinson in 1868. It stands 10 feet high and 16 feet long.

A couple of fine night spots to take in are Alexandra's and the Pepper Pot, where the Merry-men frequently appear.

In Barbados, your dollar is exchanged for a \$1.95 of their money, which isn't hard to take.

Buses run from the hotel districts to almost every part of the island, and are really cheap. I found that most fares ranged from 15 cents to 35 cents from any hotel on the island into Bridgetown. You can also rent cars, mini-mikes, scooters and bicycles. You can also ride

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