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FEBRUARY 2024



A love letter to...

Interior designer Clare Gaskin explains why Barbados is her home away from home

I FEEL a deep connection to Barbados, where my father was born and where we spent a couple of years in my childhood. The island's people and culture, the sea and the earth itself resonate with me in a profound way. These days, I try to visit annually, waking with the sunrise and listening to the waves crashing, crickets chirping and the familiar clack of domino games. This slower pace of life is always a wonderful escape.

■ The island is small (just 21 by 14 miles) so I recommend hiring a car and taking a tour. It's hard to get lost.

Drive along the east coast, stopping to see some of its historic buildings. St Nicholas Abbey is one of only three surviving examples of Jacobean architecture in the western hemisphere – now with rum distillery and railway. There are some wonderful beaches, too, like Harrismith on the southeast coast, which is perfect for a beachside picnic, complete with dramatic crashing waves.

■ You'll eat well on the island. Head to Caboose in Speightstown for a fish cutter, which is a bit like a sandwich, made with a salt roll, filled with the catch of the day. It's a wonderfully casual but atmospheric spot for lunch. Nearby, Local & Co offers an upmarket take

on simple classics. Beach restaurant Sea Shed is great for sundowner cocktails and a smart early dinner – I enjoy their take on nachos and their tuna tartare.

■ I'm lucky enough to stay in my parents' cliff side home when I visit, but I do have my eye on a couple of design hotels. One is the sustainable ECO Lifestyle & Lodge, tucked away on the east coast hills. Another is a villa, Fustic House, which is a beautiful example of a historical coral stone property, designed by Oliver Messel.

■ Brighton Farmers' Market is a regular Saturday morning stop for local produce and crafts over breakfast and a good coffee. I always browse the ceramic jewellery by Something Samarah. At Limegrove, Always Summer offers great coffee and fashion under one roof and On the Wall art gallery is dedicated to the work of local artists and craftspeople.

■ Hunte's Gardens is a must-visit. Conceived by horticulturalist Anthony Hunte, these beautiful gardens have been crafted out of a regular gully. It's wonderful to stroll through the palms and spend time unwinding among exotic planting and wildlife. 🌿

■ claregaskin.com