Headline: Time stands still during trip to Barbados

Deckhead: Caribbean isle hits on all cylinders in every tropical category

Barbados might have you wondering if you found paradise. The climate is tropical and the surroundings are magical. This might be nirvana.

The pare-shaped island lies about 300 miles off the coast of Venezuela. It shares British Colonial traditions and mixes them perfectly with its modern appeal.

The island is small, but it makes the most out of each parcel. It’s 21 miles long and 14 miles wide – or just big enough.

It’s encircled by coral reefs that are teeming with marine life. Crystal-blue waters soothe your senses and calm your soul. Are you sure this isn’t paradise?

Bridgetown is the hub of Barbados. The capital city, once known as the “London of the West Indies,” is a UNESCO World Heritage site. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the British Colonial Garrison ranked among the largest in the Colonies.

Bridgetown often is the first landfall for ships that are making the Atlantic crossing. It remains a popular port. Carnival, Princess, Royal Caribbean and Celebrity are among the cruise lines that call.

Beach bums can savor more than 70 miles of pristine shoreline sand, ranging from mild to wild. The west coast stretches from Bridgetown to Holetown. It’s powdery-white beaches populated by luxury resorts and earned it the nickname “Platinum Coast”.

Tranquility reigns on the south coast. Crane Beach steals the spotlight. Ranked among the best beaches in the world, its alluring backdrop of cliffs and smiling crescent of pink sand make it a perfect romantic getaway.

East Coast Road overlooks the robust northeast coast and is one of the island’s most scenic drives. Surfers are drawn to Bathsheba Beach. It’s cradled by hills, with enormous, mushroom-shaped boulders rising from the sea. The “Soup Bowl”, where Atlantic rollers batter the shore, can be seen spectacularly from the cliffs.

Andromeda Botanic Gardens cascades off an elfin hillside that is strewn with large coral-rock formations. Peaceful trails meander through gentle gullies that are filled with an array of orchids, ginger lilies, heliconia and palms. Green Monkeys chatter from the trees.

The island earned its named because of its extravagant tropical foliage. In 1536, Portuguese explorer Pedro Campos called it Los Barbados – “the bearded ones” – after witnessing the long-hanging aerial roots of the island’s bearded fig trees.

Barbados maintains a certain sense of decorum. Topless sunbathing and wearing camouflage clothing is illegal.

The lush green hills are sparked by remnants of old sugar plantations and mills. Tour restored Bajan Great Houses like St. Nicholas Abbey. Completed in 1660, it’s one of the few remaining authentic Jacobean homes in the world.

Locals first distilled Barbados’ famous Mount Gay rum in 1703. Learn about the oldest brand of rum and the essential ingredient in Planter’s Punch by taking a tour-and-tasting session at the Mount Gay Distillery.

Journey deep into the ground at Harrison’s Cave, where you’ll find hundreds of icicle-shaped stalactites and stalagmites creating an underground cathedral. The crystalized-limestone cavern was discovered in 1795 and highlights include a subterranean waterfall that plunges 25 feet into a deep emerald pool.

Perfection isn’t easy to achieve, but Barbados comes pretty, darn close.

Cutline: PICTURE PERFECT – Puffy clouds populate a blue sky over the beautiful, pristine beaches of Barbados. Image: Richard Semik. Adobe Stock.