

A TROPICAL PARADISE

A grand villa, Casablanca Sandy Lane Barbados comes complete with modern amenities and the guarantee of an authentic island experience

WHEN EVLYN MONDO and her husband bought a property called Casablanca on the prestigious Sandy Lane in Barbados in 2017, it was meant to be only for themselves. However, they soon changed their minds, realising that such a magnificent villa and its spectacular grounds simply had to be shared with others.

While it had always been a dream of Evlyn's to run a small bed and breakfast somewhere, once she and her husband acquired the property, they realised it made sense to offer the use of the entire property – and with it, the full experience of living there – to guests. “It’s a beautiful villa,” says Evlyn, “and that’s the thing – once you’ve been there, you realise it cannot be only for yourself; it needs to be shared because the gardens and the proximity to the pristine blue water are just amazing. But also, a house that is not used all the time loses its spirit a bit. So, having people experience Casablanca will allow us to give it more love.”

Set on an idyllic, luxury two-acre estate on the west coast of the island, Casablanca is a world unto itself. It comprises two buildings – the villa itself and a guest cottage. The main villa covers 7,000 square feet and there are seven bedrooms in total – five in the main house (four of the five bedrooms have patio access) and two in the property's separate 2,500-square-foot cottage. All rooms have ensuite bathrooms and air conditioning. There are wide, covered terraces, lounging areas and – for those who wish to cook or prepare their own food – a fully equipped kitchen. A personal chef is also available to cater



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for special meals, such as a barbecue lunch or dinner under the stars, that can feature fresh ingredients grown by Casablanca’s personal gardener.

The villa – which is exclusively rented out to single parties of guests to maximise privacy – includes plenty of communal living space, its own bar lounge, an air-conditioned gym, and a private tennis and padel court, as well as a 58-foot infinity lap pool replete with sun deck, loungers and a gazebo and barbecue area. There is also a media room for guests who wish to stay connected, and massages and yoga classes are available upon request.

The lush, tropical gardens are popular with guests, and both the villa and its environs are large enough that even if there are 14 people – the villa’s maximum capacity – there is still plenty of room to have what Evlyn calls “me time”.

If a guest is outside, though, they might end up sharing that time with some of the island’s animal inhabitants – green monkeys – explains Evlyn. “They come onto the property because they’re curious. They want to see who’s there. And if there are mangoes in the trees, they’ll sometimes steal the mangoes and eat them on the roof while they’re watching you. The garden naturally draws in the monkeys almost every day. Sometimes it’s just the adults, but sometimes you’ll see the babies, too.”

The presence of the monkeys is very much part of the authentic island experience that staying at Casablanca offers. Another Casablanca offering is exclusive access to the amenities of the prestigious Sandy Lane Estate Beach Club, a private member’s club that is just a five-minute walk away, where guests can enjoy the pristine sandy beach and use of a private cabana.

The Old Nine golf course – complete with a walking trail – is also situated nearby and, for those keen to explore the local area there are plenty of restaurants to try and quality shopping. Indeed, the surrounding parish of St James is considered to be one of the island’s most beautiful regions. Furthermore, Bridgetown, the island nation’s capital, with an array of charming cultural and historical sites, is just a 15-minute drive away.

To help with any planning that may be required, there is a personal concierge on hand, as well as a team of friendly staff. “We have a great and very dynamic team,” says Evlyn, “where the needs of the people at the villa come first. Our staff are here to help you have an amazing vacation and are keen to share all the wonderful things about the island they call home. Our main objective is to make the vacation a truly memorable one, and our concierge will make sure that whatever you want to do when you’re in Barbados will be the best experience possible, whether that’s

snorkelling, sailing, yoga or any of the other activities available.”

That dedication to such a personalised, perfect experience in the most luxurious of surroundings is complemented by the majestic and elegant decor of the villa itself. To keep its character as close to its original style as possible, Evlyn brought in a designer within a year of buying the house. The brief was to use what was already in the house and to then add to it with carefully selected pieces, which included importing many unique items. It all serves to make Casablanca feel as much like a home as it does an exclusive holiday destination.

Evlyn is adamant that Casablanca is always going to be evolving and changing to offer the best possible experience, both in terms of the villa and the experiences one can have staying there. “We both travel a lot for business,” explains Evlyn, “and every time we go away and see a good idea, or feel inspired, we try to learn from it and bring it to Casablanca. But I really wanted to keep the spirit of the house intact. It has a very Barbadian vibe, but also offers guests the most modern amenities. It’s hard to explain, but I just couldn’t keep Casablanca for myself. When you walk through the gate, you suddenly feel that you belong to that space. And it’s a very special feeling – truly a home away from home.”

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