



The Caribbean dream

Villa Casablanca in prestigious Sandy Lane, Barbados, offers every amenity to make it the ideal home away from home

The exclusive Sandy Lane resort in Barbados is synonymous with luxury – but what Evlyn Mondo wanted to create with Casablanca was a place where guests feel comfortable. “As soon as the gates open, the reaction is always the same. People say they already feel at home. It is so pretty, serene and secure.”

The Canadian-born director has run this little corner of paradise for the past six years. Casablanca is a handsome 7,000-square-foot villa on a two-acre estate that can host up to 14 guests. There are five bedrooms, each with an en-suite bathroom and patio access. A separate 2,500-square-foot cottage contains two further bedrooms with en-suites. “We offer two options when guests rent the villa,” says Evlyn. “Sometimes they want the villa but not the cottage, so we adjust the rate.”

Tucked away on a cul-de-sac with no passing traffic, Casablanca offers total privacy. The villa has its own fully equipped gym, a 58ft infinity pool, gazebo and private tennis courts that accommodate paddle tennis as well as the conventional game. A short walk away is The Old Nine golf course, which includes a club house, bar and tennis courts. The elegant Sandy Lane Estate Beach Club is also nearby, where Casablanca visitors have exclusive access to a private cabana. Casablanca’s concierge service can help guests book beach activities, such as catamaran cruises, kayaking, windsurfing and more.

“There is also an area inside the house with a bar and a TV, where you can gather and have fun,” says Evlyn. “Anyone can easily occupy themselves just staying at the villa and visiting the beach club.” The smart television is connected to Apple TV streaming, offering more than 300 channels. There is also a substantial private library and access to thousands of international newspapers and magazines through digital subscription. The villa is stocked with board games, and it even has an electric piano. Golf is available on request, as is yoga instruction and massages for those who want to relax.

The housekeepers at Casablanca take care of all laundry while guests are staying at the villa, so visitors can minimise the luggage they bring and enjoy a stress-free vacation. Housekeeping services are included, and guests also have a butler, concierge and private chef on hand. The villa’s team of expert staff are well-practised

in ensuring that guests have “the perfect holiday,” says Evlyn. Casablanca’s chef certainly conjures that perfect holiday magic when he whips up gourmet meals. Guests can sample anything from fresh pastries and hand-cooked omelettes at breakfast, to a barbecue or the catch of the day for lunch and three-course world-class cuisine for dinner. Evlyn recommends the fresh fish caught on the island and the Bajan macaroni pie, but anyone staying at Casablanca can eat whatever they wish. “The chef will prepare it and families can relax knowing everything is taken care of,” says Evlyn. “Most people cancel their restaurant reservations after two nights at the villa.”

Sunset cocktails and canapés can also be provided, and the team stocks the fridge in advance with any snacks, treats and drinks that guests request. Those who do venture out can enjoy quality shopping and fine dining in Holetown, a five-minute drive away, or arrange excursions further afield through the villa’s management and concierge service.

Although most guests choose to relax and get away from it all at Casablanca, the cottage has facilities to enable remote working. This includes a desk, WiFi,



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printer and video-conferencing camera for those who need it, while the five-metre table under the gazebo is perfect for a corporate meeting. The two lounges, bar and media room make ideal locations for brainstorming sessions or for extending discussions over drinks and snacks.

Parties and weddings are accommodated with advance planning, with the team organising the decor and entertainment. “We make bespoke vacations,” says Evlyn. “People tell us what they want and we do our best to meet their requirements.” This includes a VIP arrival service from the island’s Grantley Adams International Airport. Guests who book this are met right from the plane and go through customs separately, before being taken to a

waiting taxi with their luggage without having to queue. Evlyn estimates that guests who take advantage of this service can often be in the villa within 45 minutes of landing – an impressive feat, considering that the taxi ride itself takes 25 minutes.

Evlyn brings her guests some of the best experiences to be found anywhere in the world. “I travel a lot, and every time I see something we think our clients would enjoy, or that would make a difference to their holiday, I learn from it and apply it at Casablanca,” she says. The latest addition is access to luxury rare wines from one of the best wine cellars in the world. These can be flown in specially at the guest’s request. For a true taste of Barbados, the chef at Casablanca has worked with a renowned mixologist to devise a tasting menu of local rums – another offering available on request.

Popular times to visit Casablanca include Christmas, especially for British and Canadian visitors, but Barbados enjoys 30C temperatures all year round, even in the rainy season. “There is a period when it rains more than usual, but it is very pretty then, so guests often say they don’t mind if it rains for an hour a day,” says Evlyn.

Casablanca has guests who rebook immediately after their stay, while some have gone there for four years in a row. Evlyn puts such success down to one thing: Casablanca makes guests feel special. The villa has a “family-style management”. This means that every member of staff has a role in the success of Casablanca, and they all work together as a team to ensure that guests have the best experience possible.

“It helps that people feel at home when they are away from home,” says Evlyn, “and we work very hard to make guests feel that they are on the best vacation of their lives.”

www.casablancabarbados.com

