

# WALKING TOUR OF BRIDGETOWN

Obtain a map in the terminal and then take a taxi from the Cruise Dock to the Waterfront Café and start this tour from there.

The English first settled in Barbados in the 1600's and Bridgetown was founded by a small group of English settlers in 1628 who named it Indian River Bridge because of the bridge that goes over the Constitution River built by the very first inhabitants, believed to be the Amerindians.

Bridgetown was not an ideal location for the country's capital city as it sat on a mosquito-infested swamp and over 20,000 people died from cholera in 1654. However, it looks out over the beautiful Carlisle Bay and its geography was perfect at the time to develop the port with a safe harbor (what is now known as the Careenage). Bridgetown became one of the main ports in the world during its heyday of the 17th century along with Boston and London.

In the 17th & 18th century, merchants used the Careenage's calm water as a place to dock their ships and load/unload merchandise. The name comes from the word "Careen" where the old sailing ships were tilted over—careened—so their bottoms could be scraped free of barnacles. In those days Bridgetown was a bustle with men and women carrying heavy bunches of bananas, boxes of mangoes and avocados, barrels of rum, etc.

Today, the Careenage appears much quieter, though Fishing Charter boats and Pleasure Sailing Catamarans still harbor their boats here. Sailors also bring their boats here to scrub the barnacles from the bottom, and re-paint the wood. Along the waterfront on the south side of the Careenage lie several old warehouses that have been converted into a variety of commercial businesses including the Waterfront Cafe and a number of small shops.

Starting at the Waterfront Cafe you can walk across the Chamberlain Bridge erected in 1872 and was a swing bridge operated by two persons, allowing entry into the inner basin of the Careenage. In 2006 the Chamberlain Bridge was replaced with a modern lift bridge with the Independence Arch (marking the island's 21st year of independence). It is closed to traffic and is a pleasant pedestrian walkway over Constitution River, with vendors setting up stalls selling jewellery and handicrafts. The bridge was named at the beginning of the 20th century in honor of Joseph Chamberlain, British Colonial Secretary, who gave the island a considerable amount of money in grants and loans to keep the economy afloat. As you cross the bridge you can turn left and continue west along the boardwalk (the Wharf Roar) running alongside the Careenage passing the National Heroes Square on your right and further on, The Old Spirit Bond – one of my favorite watering holes – until Wharf Road veers right past the Jolly Roger/Black Pearl and then turns left again to become Hicks Street passing the Agapey Chocolate Factory and the Cloister Book Store to become the Princess Alice Highway. During your stroll you will notice the HMBS Wiloughby Fort, on the left at the mouth of the careenage. You will then come to the Deep Water Harbor with the Pelican Village on your right. This is the main arts and crafts center established by the government. This shopping village includes the design and working studios of local craftsmen selling original and authentic goods of Barbados handicrafts and art work.

Continue on Princess Alice Hwy to turn right on Prescod Blvd and right again on Redman Dr to Fontabelle Rd. Turn left on Fontabelle and walk to the Kensington Oval, this historical Cricket ground was originally built in 1871 and has hosted international matches since 1895. Many of the original structures were demolished and rebuilt 2005-07 to host the final game of the 2007 International Cricket Council World Cup.

From Kensington Oval you can walk south on Fontabelle to Cheapside Rd, where you will find the Cheapside Market for home-grown fruit and vegetables, across from one of the mini-bus terminals, adjacent to the Main Post Office. Continuing along Cheapside heading towards lower Broad Street you will come to St. Mary's Anglican Church. The current Georgian building was constructed in 1827 but there has been a church here since 1630. At the end of Cheapside, turn left in front of the Jubilee Gardens, right at the next intersection – Harts St/Cowell St – and then left into Lower Broad Street which becomes simply Broad Street in a couple blocks. Broad Street is the main shopping street, with a variety of department stores, duty free shops and banks. Other streets in Bridgetown such as Swan Street, Roebuck Street and Tudor Street consist mainly of smaller shops and businesses, together with wayside vendors.

Continuing east, you will arrive at National Heroes Square again on your right, officially renamed in April 1999, in honor of the national heroes of Barbados (originally called Trafalgar Square). It has its very own statue of Lord Nelson erected in 1813. The statue is not an imitation of London's. Native Bajans had a strong affection for Nelson, who visited

Barbados, in command of the British fleet, just six months before his death at Trafalgar in 1805. Following the Admiral's demise, an existing square was renamed Trafalgar and his statue erected in 1813, about 36 years ahead of England's more famous one. Dolphin Fountain/The Fountain Gardens shares the square with the statue of Nelson. The Dolphin Fountain with its water-spewing dolphins was built in 1861 to commemorate piped water in to Bridgetown. There is also a Cenotaph to remember the dead from both world wars.

Across the street to the north of National Heroes Square are the Neo-Gothic Public (Parliament) Buildings. Barbados has the third-oldest parliamentary body in the English-speaking world, dating from 1639, second only to Britain and Bermuda. The earliest building was built in 1640 but burned in the Bridgetown fire of 1668. For the next 30 years, the officials met in homes and public taverns. The west wing of this building was completed in 1871, the east in 1874. Both the Senate and House of Assembly meet here. The clock tower on the west wing dates from 1886, the original having been demolished, and now houses public offices. The East Building, housing the Senate and the House of Assembly, has stained glass windows depicting British kings and queens from James I to Queen Victoria and even includes Oliver Cromwell. In 2006 the West Wing of Parliament was refurbished and now houses the National Heroes Gallery (tracing the lives of the ten national heroes of Barbados through a series of sculptures, artefacts and murals by local artists, open Mon. – Sat. From 9am to 4pm. Parliament consists of the House of Assembly and the Senate. Visitors are welcome to watch the proceedings in the House of Assembly, which take place every Tuesday.

If you go north from the Parliament Buildings, along Rickett St which becomes Palmetto Street and then Magazine Lane, you will come to The Nidhe Israel Synagogue & Montefiore Fountain. Claiming to be the oldest synagogue in the Western Hemisphere, it was built in 1654, destroyed in the hurricane of 1831 and was re-constructed in 1833. The adjoining Jewish Cemetery, still in use, has tombstones dating to the 1630s. The Jews who came to Barbados from Brazil in the 1620s introduced sugar cane to the Caribbean. The Synagogue has undergone numerous changes and is owned by the Barbados National Trust. In 2008, an American architect, Michael Stoner while excavating, discovered a 17th century Jewish ritual bath or Mikvah. After much restoration, the synagogue is now used for religious services again and is open to visitors Mon-Fri, 0900-1200, 1300-1600. The tomb of Benjamin Massiah, the famous circumciser of 1782, lies on the left side of the graveyard, just inside the entrance. Worth noting is the gorgeous architecture of the library and the unique drinking Montefiore Fountain (originally a gift to the city from John Montefiore, a leading Jewish trader, back in 1865). There is also a museum depicting the passage of the Jewish migration from Europe to the New World.

Walking back to Roebuck St., you can turn left and continue to the Central Bank Building on your right. At 11 stories, the tallest building on Barbados, it also contains a 500-seat modern concert hall. The entire structure cost \$60 million. This venue holds the Tom Adams Financial Centre, which houses the central bank and the Frank Collymore Concert Hall where a number of shows and exhibits can be enjoyed.

From the Central Bank Building you can continue east to turn right on Crumpton St to pass Queen's Park at Constitution Rd. This was the residence of the General commanding the British Troops in the West Indies. Prior to the succession of Queen Victoria, it was known as King's House. On the withdrawal of the British Regiment from Barbados in the early 1900's, it was taken over by Government and controlled by the Vestry of St. Michael, and turned into a park. It was opened on the 10th June 1909. It now falls under the National Conservation Commission. Located in the Queen's Park is a massive Baobab Tree with a 61.5-foot circumference (It takes 15 adults with outstretched arms to encircle the trunk) is perhaps the largest tree in Barbados. The tree, a native of Africa, is said to have been brought to the island from Guinea, Africa around 1738.

Turning right here towards Broad Street along St. Michael's Row is St. Michael's Cathedral built in 1789 as a replacement to its predecessor which was destroyed by hurricane in 1780 and became a cathedral in 1825. The site has been used for religious buildings since the first wooden structure was built between 1660 and 1665. Its arched roof was at one time the widest in the world. St Michael's Anglican Cathedral cemetery has some magnificent headstones. It is also the burial ground for Sir Grantley Herbert Adams (only Prime Minister of the West Indies Federation), as well as his son J. M. G. M. "Tom" Adams (2nd Prime Minister of Barbados). The cathedral is open Monday to Friday from 9:00am to 5:00pm. Admission is by donation.

As you come to the end of St. Michael row you can turn left and head across the Charles Duncan O'Neale Bridge (named after one of the founding fathers of democracy in Barbados (1879-1936) and a national hero) which spans the river to the city's main bus terminal on Fairchild Street was built in 1987. There is also the Fairchild Market for fruit and vegetables located next to the main bus terminal.

As you cross over from The Duncan O'Neale Bridge heading back towards the Waterfront Cafe, you pass through Independence Square. This area has been completely rebuilt and transformed into a recreational square and garden for the benefit of locals and visitors. The Square features seating areas, an amphitheater, two fountains and a nine foot statue of National Hero, the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, the first Prime Minister and Father of Independence. In the newly refurbished Independence Square, Diana Ross and the Supremes sang in celebration to Barbados on its second night of self-government. Many concerts have been held at this location, including a tribute to Rihanna the popular Barbadian musical artist.

From anywhere around here, you can catch a taxi back to the dock. As always, ask the cost before you enter the vehicle.

Enjoy