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OCTOBER 01, 2013

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(pg. 14)



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:**  
The Crane Residential Resort overlooking scenic Crane Beach; wooden rum barrels at the Mount Gay Rum distillery; the George Washington House

BRIEF: GO



A WEEKEND IN ...

# George Washington's Barbados

Follow in the footsteps of one of America's forefathers on this **ALLURING ISLAND NATION.**

**I**N 1751, a young man by the name of George Washington sailed from rural Virginia to the Caribbean island of Barbados with his half brother, Lawrence, who was seeking a cure for his tuberculosis. The trip would prove fortuitous for the 19-year-old future U.S. president, who was wowed instantly by the island's tropical draw. At the time, Barbados' capital of Bridgetown was the largest English-speaking city outside of Great Britain and served as a powerful international port. After a two-month stay, Washington left with new military strategies, advanced agricultural methods, an immunity to smallpox, a love for theater, and social connections and skills, all of which helped shape the man he was to become.


Today, tourists flock to Barbados for great surfing and sandy beaches, but remnants of

Washington's time here remain. Here's how visitors can take a walk in Washington's shoes.

**DO:** The house where Washington slept, wrote and entertained, which is now known as the **George Washington House**, was painstakingly restored from 2004 to 2007 and welcomes visitors to tour the rooms, enjoy interactive exhibits and stroll the grounds. From December to March, the venue will also offer "Dinner With George," which incorporates 18th-century-style dining and live theater — an artistic treat that historians believe Washington experienced for the first time while visiting the island. The expert horseman enjoyed many an evening ride across the island, noting in his journal that he was "enraptured with the beautiful scenery." Visitors today can

ride horseback with similar delight thanks to the family-run **Ocean Echo Stables**, which offers a variety of ride options.

**SEE:** During his stay, Washington is said to have attended church at **St. Michael's Cathedral**. Though the church was damaged by a hurricane in 1831, it was rebuilt and is open to the public. Even before he became commander of the American Revolutionary troops, Washington was

 Find contact information for all of the places mentioned in this story on [aa.com/americanway](http://aa.com/americanway); search keyword **Barbados**.

avidly interested in the military fortifications of the **Barbados Garrison**, the largest in the British colonies in the 18th and 19th centuries and now a UNESCO World Heritage site. Washington paid visits to Charles Fort, erected in 1650 to protect Carlisle Bay, and St. Ann's Fort, a chief depot of military supplies.

**EAT:** Washington was impressed with what he called "the greatest collection of fruits I have yet seen." To enjoy the tropical flavors he did, head to the open-air **Cheapside Market**. Saturday is peak time for bargaining, people-watching and sampling Washington's favorite, the pineapple. **The Waterfront Café**, a Bridgetown favorite, serves fruit drinks, rum punch and Bajan flying fish with plantain and cou-cou. Sidewalk seating affords front-row views of the fishing boats hauling fresh fish into Careenage Marina, just as in Washington's era. The marina is also close to the Parliament buildings — they date back more than 300 years — and to good shopping today.

**DRINK:** Washington sipped rum punch while paying social calls and visiting plantations, and today, the island offers more than 1,600 rum shops on its 166 square miles. For the oldest-style — and many say the best — rum, visit the **Mount Gay Rum** distillery, which has churned out rum made from Barbados sugarcane and coral-filtered water since 1703. The on-site visitors center offers tours to give guests a peek at the distilling and bottling processes and lets them enjoy several samples. Or head to **St. Nicholas Abbey**, a still-operating plantation and Jacobean mansion built in 1660 that now produces distinctively flavored rum.

**SLEEP:** Because guests can't stay overnight where Washington once did, spend the night at **The Crane Residential Resort**, a historic property on the quieter southeastern portion of the island. Though it opened in 1887, the Bajan resort features modern conveniences such as a clifftop lap pool and elevator access to its world-renowned white-and-pink-sand beach.