

St. Lucia-aahhhh!

The beautiful lush island of St. Lucia. Magnificent rain forests where wild orchids, giant ferns, and birds of paradise flourish amongst cascading waterfalls. Beaches of white, golden and brown sands with towering palms entice sun lovers. Crystal clear warm water beckons snorkelers & divers to enjoy the National Reef Preserve that teams with the bounty of the Caribbean ocean.

Not enough to entice you? How about if we add in beautiful harbors and world class sailing, awe inspiring twin mountain peaks of the Pitons, duty free shopping, golf courses, zip-lining through the rainforest, horseback riding and the world's only drive-in volcanic crater complete with mineral baths to soothe the soul?

Still not enough? Ok, I'll throw in incredibly warm locals who speak English, average temperatures ranging from mid 70's to mid 80's, some great Caribbean food, and a Friday night street party at Gros Islet where the BBQ grills are rolled out and live Caribbean music energizes the tropical trade winds. Or, travel to the small village of Anse La Raye for the Friday night Seafood Feast where once a month a live band provides the entertainment.

Located in the southern Caribbean, nestled between Martinique (an easy day trip away) and St. Vincent, St. Lucia is frequently referred to as the Hawaii of the Caribbean. Exotic yet familiar, St Lucia offers warm hospitality, unmatched beauty and activities to satisfy even the most restless among us!

On my all too short visit to St. Lucia this fall I was able to visit 3 of Sandals Luxury All Inclusive resorts. Each offered such a unique experience it was hard to imagine that all three properties were owned and managed by the same company. The cohesive element that ties the three Sandals properties together was the focus on service, friendly smiles, beautiful facilities, incredible spa's and great eats! All were in abundance at all three resorts!

Sandal resorts has been working hard throughout the Caribbean updating properties, renovating rooms (flat screen televisions, new soft goods & toning down the color schemes, adding a luxury touch to even the lowest categories in each of the properties) and public spaces. Sandals even went as far as adding these fantastic private bungalows they call Rondavals and a British pub-but more about that later.

After extensively touring each of the properties which would I choose to stay at? A great question but one I would find very hard to answer! I thoroughly enjoyed each of the properties but for completely different reasons. I'll provide my impressions of the resorts and what I liked best about each!

Sandals Halcyon - Just stepping onto the resort one can feel themselves instantly relaxing. This is the smallest of the three sandals properties in St. Lucia and the resort has a boutique feel to it and exudes old Caribbean charm. The buildings are only two stories tall and are covered with lush flowering foliage. The entire grounds were at one time a botanical garden and it shows. There are flowering shrubs, well manicured lawns and mature trees everywhere you turn! You literally feel like you have arrived at the Garden of Eden it is so beautiful. The hammocks for two scattered and tucked away throughout the property are inviting. Personally, this is the resort I would choose for utter relaxation thrown in with a bit of games by the pool and a touch of nightlife. If I was getting married I would also chose this resort for the sheer beauty having the photo's taken in the gardens!

Favorite room categories- I would stay in one of the Honeymoon Beachfront Concierge rooms. The rooms are one story beachfront units, although some are partially blocked by lush foliage but you can hear the waves and are literally steps from the beach. Request a unit near the water sports center as the other Honeymoon Beachfront Suites are located near the activity pool and

during the day the activities can get a little loud.

Sandals Halcyon Facts-

169 rooms

4 restaurants/ 7 bars

2 pools- one quiet and the other active, both with a swim up bar

Beach is not very wide but extremely long and very quiet and remote

Waterskiing & wakeboarding are included

Most rooms have been renovated but at this time (fall 2007) not all ocean view rooms & honeymoon beachfront concierge suites have been completed.

Resort is great for those who like intimate, boutique style hotels while enjoying the comforts of putting away their wallets.

Sandals Grande- The newest addition to the Sandals line up in St. Lucia. This is the resort for beach and water lovers! This resort sits on a peninsula between the beautiful bay and the ocean and offers water views from all of its rooms.

Boasting a stunning white sand beach that is both long and wide that invites lovers to find their own private stretch of sand. The bay here is calm and the water crystal clear. This resort offers a comprehensive collection of complimentary water sport activities ranging from tubing, water trykes, kayaks, snorkeling, water skiing, knee boarding, wake boarding, windsurfing and the pier where the dive boats will whisk you away to explore the equally lush underwater environment! The other side of the resort offers views of the charming island of Martinique across the Atlantic. Not to be outdone, the landscape is very beautiful and lush with meandering pathways, lush palms and flowering bushes located throughout the manicured grounds.

Ocean not your cup of tea- try one of the 5 pools on the property. In the center of the property is a fantastic Romanesque pool with inset 30-person spa tub, features a 350-degree swim-up bar; an activity pool complete with a sunset-view 16-person spa tub, and a heart-shape lovers pool features a deck with two person, cushioned, teak lounge chairs and a 10-person spa tub.

The Sandals Grande St. Lucian is a contemporary luxury resort. From the moment you step into the luxurious open air lobby to check into the resort. Instead of queuing up in long lines guest are directed to make themselves comfortable at one of the sitting areas in the expansive lobby. All of the paperwork is completed while you sip champagne. The goal at Sandals Grande is to have every guest checked in within 12 minutes. Butler category guests are whisked away to their suites for check in.

Each room category from entry level on is fairly large, has modern bath facilities and all of the rooms have recently been outfitted with plasma screen TV's making the good sized rooms feel even bigger.

A very unique feature to this tropical paradise is the Olde London Pub, an English Pub on the property. Not just any replica of an English pub- this is the real deal! Mr. Stewart purchased and dismantled an actual Pub in England, brought it to St. Lucia and reassembled it piece by piece at Sandals Grande St. Lucia! Serving thick slices of Prime Rib or Fish & Chips you can indulge yourself till 2am.

That's not the only unique restaurant feature to this resort- Josephine's- the French Creperie located poolside is fantastic for a mid afternoon or after dinner snack. I was treated to a mouth watering chocolate crepe- fantastic! Or, stop in for a thick creamy milkshake.

Favorite room Categories - Sandals Grande St. Lucian takes Romance to a new level with its

unique room categories. The Swim up suites are located in a quiet portion of the property and number only 25- so grab yours before they sell out! Just imagine stepping out of bed, into your swim suit and taking an early morning swim with your lover and returning just in time for room service to deliver breakfast for your enjoyment on your private patio.

My absolute favorite room category in all of the Caribbean- the Oceanfront Rondaval with Private Plunge pool! These individual bungalows are brand new, private and the ultimate in romance! Definitely worth the splurge, this room is located just steps from the beach. The private plunge pool with the trickling waterfall, whirlpool and hammock (imagine laying on the hammock entwined, enjoying a glass of wine, watching the stars, listening to the ocean roll against the shoreline and whispering of your future together...) are there to ensure your time spent outdoors with your loved one will create memories that will last forever. Add to that the ultra sexy outdoor grotto shower- how can a couple go wrong? The interior of the Rondaval isn't shabby either - a large living area with a sofa, chair, coffee table and plasma TV, king size mahogany bed, an enormous private bathroom with a Roman tub, separate showers & two sinks! Now add a butler to assist with your every whim....ahhhh paradise!

Sandals Grande St. Lucian Facts-300 rooms - 14 categories
6 restaurants- Gordon's is reserved exclusively for Butler suite guests; Toscanini's is the recipient of the 5 Star Diamond Award / 6 bars
5 pools- including the scuba pool/4 whirlpools
Beach very wide with over 400' of beachfront
State of the Art- Air Conditioned Fitness room

Resort is great for active couples that enjoy modern facilities, lots of choices in daily activities & amenities. And of course the water & beach lovers will find themselves very content.

Next installment will include the third Sandals property on St. Lucia- Sandals Regency La Toc Golf Resort & Spa plus information on St. Lucia's marriage requirements, Sandals WeddingMoons and Wedding groups! If you can't wait and have specific questions please feel free to email me at <<mailto:Jennifer@SandnSunVacations.com>>Jennifer@SandnSunVacations.com

Copyright 2007

About the author: Jennifer Prymula, is certified as a Honeymoon & Destination Wedding Specialist& Certified Sandals Specialist. She is a member of the West Michigan Wedding Association and Kalamazoo Bridal Association. You can contact Jennifer at 877-208-6639; <<mailto:Jennifer@SandnSunVacations.com>>Jennifer@SandnSunVacations.com or visit her website at <<http://www.SandnSunVacations.com>>www.SandnSunVacations.com