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Favourite Caribbean beaches

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The beach at Meads Bay in Anguilla. (Courtesy Anguilla Tourist Board)

The Caribbean likely has as many beaches as Canada has hockey rinks -- so many great ones, in fact, it's next to impossible to narrow it down to just three.

But here are our personal picks of our favourite three beaches in the Caribbean.

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Crane Beach, Barbados

One lovely law in Barbados states that all of the island's beaches are public and every person has a right walk on them.

As a result, no matter where you're vacationing on Barbados you should take an afternoon to wander freely along Crane Beach. Its assets have been recognized as far back as 1867, when the Crane Hotel first opened on the breezy cliffs overlooking the beach, becoming the Caribbean's first resort.

Crane Beach may have been chosen as an ideal locale all those years ago for its gentle descent into the Atlantic -- no rocks, no coral, not even the odd sea urchin spoils a swim. Still, the spot for this legendary hotel was more likely chosen for its view: sand dunes, a coconut grove, a kilometre of pale pink sand and a sea that constantly shifts in colour from lapis blue to azure to a peaceful pale turquoise.

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Mead's Bay and Barnes Bay, Anguilla

Set up side-by-side, the beaches of Barnes Bay and Mead's Bay on Anguilla pack a one-two punch when it comes to spectacular Caribbean beaches.

The entire island of Anguilla is notoriously secluded -- perhaps nowhere more so than along these two lovely stretches of sand. Anchored by two hotels at either end, the crescent of sand that is Mead's Bay is most often described as "majestic."

Families flock to a spot along the beach that's particularly calm -- the locals call it simply "the swimming hole."

Barnes Bay next door, home to the new Viceroy Anguilla, is equally idyllic: low waves, soft sugar-white sand and mesmerizingly blue, warm Caribbean water.

Sandy Island Beach, Carriacou

Carry-a-what? Carriacou (Carry-a-coo) is a tiny, southern island in the pretty Grenadine chain, a favourite stop for sailors touring the Caribbean, and a little-sister island to much larger Grenada.

Sandy Island is a Gilligan-like isle off Carriacou's coast consisting of little else but a white sand beach with lapping azure-coloured water.

Reaching the beach takes a bit of work, but whiling away an afternoon on Sandy Island beach is about as relaxing as a good whiling can get, so it's worth the effort. If you're vacationing on Grenada, hop on a morning ferryboat (The Osprey), which sails daily roundtrip to Carriacou. The hour's ride whips by about as quickly as the Pirates-of-the-Caribbean scenery.

Tour Carriacou's 11-km-long island, dine at a restaurant with an Caribbean view, then hire a boat-taxi for the five-minute ride out to Sandy Island -- snorkelling equipment included! Chances are good you'll be the only one there.

What is there to do on Sandy Island? Swim with Nemos. Gaze at underwater coral. Or a simple favourite: sit on the soft white sand and do -- or say -- absolutely nothing.

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