



LASOURCE GRENADA

Luxury Sandals Escape on the Island of Spice

by Lavanya Sunkara

With scenic cliffs stretching towards tranquil, turquoise Caribbean waters, lush mountains in the distance, and bright hillside villas overlooking pristine, horseshoe shaped Pink Gin Beach, Sandals LaSource Grenada Resort & Spa is simply divine. This brand new, all-inclusive resort offers luxurious accommodations, nine culinary experiences, a spa, and butler service that earn the property accolades as one of the top-five resorts in the Caribbean. Just minutes from the airport, Sandals LaSource is the perfect origin to experience the wonders of the Spice Isle.

My getaway began on an early Thursday morning when I boarded JetBlue's inaugural, direct flight to Grenada. Upon arrival, I was immediately taken by the people's pride in their country, culture, and their vibrant dancing. I was impressed by the genuine smiles of everyone I met, from the Grenadians onboard the flight to the tourism board officials who greeted us at the airport. The resort managers and staff were no less generous and attentive. From the caring woman who served hot breakfast at Spices Restaurant and the doting concierge who ensured that my luggage arrived safely in my suite, to the receptionist who set up the Wi-Fi, I felt well taken care of.

Accommodations at this adults-only resort are located in three distinct villages. The Italian Village features Sandals' signature Skypool Suites with infinity edge plunge pools, offering impressive views of the Caribbean. Ultra-luxurious Rondovals with private pools are situated in the South Seas

Village atop rolling hills, perfect for honeymooners and couples seeking privacy. The steps from the ocean view suites in Pink Gin Village lead directly to hammocks swaying under palm trees and the cool Caribbean waters.

With five pools and extensive water sports, I had a hard time determining the best way to relax; I eventually settled on the swim-up bar where I sipped daiquiris and made friends. Couples snuggled poolside by the romance of the fire pits. As the day wound down, a bridal party from the Southwestern United States was getting down at the poolside party to live music as traditional dancers got the crowd moving and men on stilts prepped for their act.

During my short stay, I developed a routine of visiting the tiny thatched roof Cat Café to check on the lounging resident felines as I made my way to the Spices Caribbean Cuisine restaurant for a delicious buffet breakfast. There was never any shortage of places to dine, from Japanese cuisine at Kimonos to Italian fare at Cucina Romana, which serves the best pizza (and I'm a New Yorker!). After a mouthwatering meal of savory artichoke-filled crêpes and Gâteau au Chocolat Sans Farine for dessert at the garden themed French restaurant, Le Jardinier, I headed to the open-air Living Room lounge area to burn off the calories dancing to the latest beats. Surprisingly, when I returned to my suite, I heard nothing but crashing waves.



Although there are many ways to stay occupied on property, Grenada has numerous natural and manmade attractions that deserve exploring. My first stop was Fort Frederick, a relic built by the French in the 18th Century. Perched atop Richmond Hill, the fort affords breathtaking, panoramic views of the Capital, Grand Anse Beach, Point Salines, and the mountains of central Grenada. With blossoming Flamboyant trees beckoning me at its entrance, a couple of adorable dogs running up the stairs of the fort, and the trade winds blowing, it was well worth the uphill trip to reach this pinnacle.

Grenada offers myriad opportunities for nature lovers and thrill seekers. From river tubing down the Balthazar and hiking in the rainforest to swimming in the refreshing pools of the Seven Sisters waterfalls in the island's central highlands, I was in awe of the serene beauty. When I arrived at Adventure Tours Grenada, I had no idea about the fun that awaited. Within minutes, I was bouncing down the river, turning corners over gushing whitewater, shrieking with joy every time I made a successful turn without flipping over – which I never really feared, given the amount of attention with which the guides showered us. The refreshingly strong rum punch served afterwards heightened the adrenaline rush and brought a smile to everyone's faces.

Speaking of rum, I was glad I wasn't the one driving when we made the trek up winding roads along the rugged northeastern coast to visit the oldest water-propelled rum facility in the Caribbean: the River Antoine Rum Distillery. This rum producer dates back to 1785 and has used the same process for

more than a century. Devoted employees crush bundles of sugarcane in antiquated machines, place them on the island's only railway truck, on the only railway line, for the short trip where the cane is dried under the sun. Cane juice is filtered and delivered to the main building, where it is ladled in massive metal basins, until it is brought to a boil and sent to ferment and then be distilled. Though the strong scent of fermenting juice can be a bit intoxicating, I left the tour with a new appreciation for the process; I also earned bragging rights for trying some seriously strong rum, produced in strengths of 138 and 150-proof that can't be brought on the plane. (Don't worry, a less potent version is sold for your drinking pleasure at home.)

Rum and river tubing aside, a trip to Grenada isn't complete without snorkeling or diving to see the world's first marine sculpture garden at Molinere Sculpture Park. Just a half hour boat ride from LaSource Sandals ushered me to a collection of ecological, subaqueous art that sits on the sandy bottom of Molinere Bay. Dipping my head underwater to witness these cement sculptures, including the famous ring of children holding hands, was a memory I'll always cherish. With coral reefs making the structures their home, schools of fish circling around us, and the bright tropical fish weaving their way through the individual sculptures inspired by the island's colorful history, culture, and folklore, it's a scene one could only witness in Grenada.

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