

ISLAND FLING

MATT WATSON enjoys a taste of paradise on the laidback island of St Lucia

PARADISE, tranquility and beauty are all words that come to mind when you think of the Caribbean. And the island of St Lucia certainly lives up to expectations.

However, there is so much more on offer than just the obvious white sandy beaches and crystal clear ocean. You really can make it whatever you want it to be.

After a comfortable nine-hour flight, my trip began in the north of the Island at the Cap Maison resort. An isolated gem that is set on a cliff that leads down to its own private beach. When driving to the resort it is very easy to notice the "Lucian" way of living.

The island and its residents are extremely easy-going and laidback. It's very obvious that the St Lucians seem content

with their lives; no need for fancy cars and big imposing buildings that us Brits seem to crave. Cap Maison continued the Island's simple ethos, but with a twist of luxury, resulting in a winning combination.

The cold towels on arrival along with a tot of local rum punch were a great welcome. Privacy is a key factor in the layout of the resort. There are plenty of hidden corners you can tuck yourself away in if you just want to lap up the glorious Caribbean sunshine.

All of the resort's rooms are

out of view from neighbouring residents, and a private roof terrace with its own pool, sun loungers and bar are just one of the many highlights. Apart from soaking up the rays, the resort has plenty to offer guests, including wine-tasting from its own well stocked wine

cellar – we had an education into many of the famous local rums too. When it comes to food, the Lucians definitely know their stuff. For dinner I enjoyed an exquisite Kobe beef dish, which I can honestly say was one of the best meals of my life.

On the subject of food, one thing that is in abundance in St Lucia is plenty of fabulous fresh fruit – whether it be in the resorts or restaurants, local shops or street markets, it's hard to find something that isn't freshly picked and mouth wateringly flavoursome.

If you venture out into the street markets, there are some wonderful things to be found such as arts, crafts, spices, rums and clothing.

We experienced a number of different resorts and points of interest on the island including a Sandals resort, which again had incredible beaches.

Many couples choose to get married in St Lucia and Sandals offers all the elements needed to ensure the big day

goes without a hitch. However

the resort is not all about gowns and grooms, Sandals also offers a vast array of activities. We were treated to a traditional St Lucian massage at the in-house spa. Relaxation and luxury all in one place, the massage featured hot stones, sand and water, taking you to the white sands of the nearby beach while laying in the comfort of the spa – a great experience.

Travelling down to the south of the island we found the same high levels of luxury, exclusivity and the epitome of that popular word, "paradise".

The south of the island is home of the world-famous Pitons – two large mountain formations that sit proudly on the coast looking out to sea.

We stayed at the Ladera resort, which is perched on a cliff top overlooking the dramatic coast. The hotel prides itself on its "View with a Room" accommodation featuring three walls, looking out between the two Pitons, which give an incredible sense of being on the doorstep of the rainforest. To wake up and soak up this view is truly surreal.

Almost a stone's throw from the Ladera Resort, located directly on the beach is Jalousie. This resort had everything to offer a honeymooning couple, or anyone looking to find peace

and tranquility for that matter. The resort comprises small

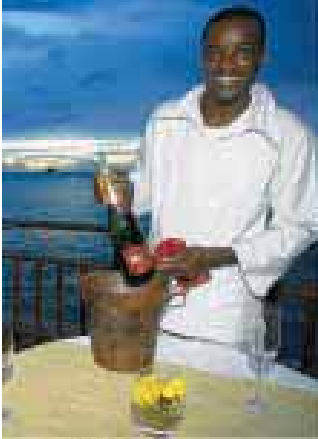
huts built into the forest around winding rivers within the grounds of the hotel and there is even a treetop spa, making you feel at one with the sounds of the rainforest while indulging in a variety of pampering treats. The resort's private beach is ideal for those seeking complete privacy and was one of the best that I experienced on the island.

With constant refreshments and local cocktails available within an arm's reach at the bar, dozens of comfy sunloungers and a large pool, why would you ever need to move?

When travelling to St Lucia I had to keep in mind that the island is a mecca for honeymooning couples. Not a prospect I've considered as yet, but I know that when I do take the plunge I have the perfect place in mind!

□ For more information about holidays in St Lucia visit the island's tourist board at stlucianow.co.uk





The private dining experience at Cap Maison

Cap Maison

The view from one of the bedrooms at Ladera Resort

