



Sandy Lane



Sandy Lane
DEYNA





IN THE LAP OF LUXURY

On the western shores of Barbados, sitting on 1,000 feet of white, coral-sand beach beside the sparkling waters of the Caribbean Sea, you'll find the idyllic world class resort known as Sandy Lane. The picturesque hotel has served as a luxurious getaway for more than 50 years, leaving an indelible memory in the mind of guests with its classic ambiance and first class service.

Mario Bevilacqua Von Gunderode, Resident Manager at Sandy Lane since 2012, gives a brief recap on the history of the resort and how it has evolved over the years. "Originally built in 1961 on the site of an old sugar plantation by Ronald Tree, Sandy Lane firmly established itself as the premier address in the Caribbean and has hosted many celebrities, business personalities and royalty."



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In 1996, the original resort was purchased by a new ownership group and a change of ownership meant that it was time for an upgrade; so began a three year, rebuild and renovation. To preserve the classic ambience well known to guests around the world, the hotel was rebuilt in its predecessor's image but also increased the size of guest rooms, upgraded the pool and introduced stunning spa facilities, as well as adding two golf courses.

"The resort features 112 rooms and suites,

most of which face the ocean," explains Mario of the hotel's facilities. "The accommodations are incredibly spacious, averaging 900 square feet and each room and suite features a private patio. We can host up to 250 guests," he continues. "And we operate with 700 employees, so our ratio is about three employees per guest when we're at capacity."

Sandy Lane welcomes families to join them with plenty of activities for children to enjoy. Over the years, they have made upgrades

to the Tree House Club, where kids can have fun and take part in a wide range of games, activities and excursions.

"With a fabulous staff, we entertain children three years up to sixteen, from 10am until 8pm and sometimes even longer," Mario explains of the Tree House Club. "We have all sorts of activities, from horseback riding, waterskiing and movie night on the beach. And just this year, we started a Summer Sports Camp. For three weeks of the year, we offer complimentary lessons for children including golf, tennis and football."

THE SANDY LANE EXPERIENCE

Sandy Lane prides itself on providing their guests with more than luxurious accommodation, they offer an experience through their attentive service and an impressive roster of amenities for all ages to enjoy. To stay up to date and advance their reputation, Sandy Lane is committed to upgrading their technologies, as well as their services.

When Mario was brought on board the team in 2012, his main goal was to raise the bar for guest service and encourage the staff to



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learn and grow, and in turn, become more confident in the finer aspects of hospitality. "My first objective when joining the company was trying to help the staff become more confident," explains Mario. "I think they were just afraid of making a mistake, or not making the right choice."

An integral part of building their confidence involved an increased pallet of continued training in an effort to meet and exceed the expectations of guests from around the world. "We have implemented an array of trainings," he says. "On a daily basis we have training for our staff to expose them to, and Sandy Lane

teach them what international guests expect from us."

Mario notes that increased training proved to be a valuable tool, seeing a marked difference in the way that staff handled themselves, which shone through to guests. "We started seeing a big shift in our guests' comments, the staff is much friendlier and confident and they're really getting it across."

In addition to training their staff to the highest level, the hotel is always looking for ways to improve technologies used by guests during their stay. From remotely controlling the

temperature and curtains within their room, to a new application being designed to add even more convenience, guests can expect nothing but the absolute best while at Sandy Lane.

“We have been implementing an array new software in the hotel in the past year,” says Mario. “We’re going to have a concierge application that guests can install on their iPad, so that when they’re out on the beach, they can make requests; mobile applications for staff’s smart phones to receive and action guest requests; we are one of the first Hotels to pilot and test in real life a completely wireless check-in in the guest rooms”

The next phase, as Mario details, involves consolidating all these services to simplify the process. He says “Our biggest concern right now is to streamline all of the systems, to ensure all proper interfaces and explore the possibility of cloud solutions where possible”.

AWARD RECOGNITION

Sandy Lane has an impeccable track record of providing the highest quality guest service, and their efforts have been recognized over the years with such accolades as: Trip



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Advisor's 2015 Travelers' Choice Winner in the categories of Top Luxury Hotels in the Caribbean and Top Hotels in the Caribbean along with the Certificate of Excellence Award and the number one Luxury Hotel in the Caribbean, as well as earning a spot on Condé Nast Traveler's "Gold List" recognizing the best luxury resorts. In addition to the critical acclaim, Sandy Lane has also stocked their trophy case with honours from the World Travel Awards over the years. The annual award ceremony highlights the best in all aspects of the tourism industry, and winners are voted on by travel professionals and guests from around the globe. Since Sandy Lane

2002, the resort has earned 20 World Travel Awards, including Barbados' Leading Spa Resort and Barbados' Leading Golf Resort. Perhaps most impressively, Sandy Lane have been recognized for being Barbados' Leading Resort eight times, most recently at the 2014 World Travel Awards.

Mario explains what winning the award means to Sandy Lane, focusing on the great benefit to their employees by recognizing their hard work and dedication. "Anytime we receive an award of this kind," he says, "it's very important to share it internally with our team. It's a business of people; hospitality. To



run a hotel like Sandy Lane, you need 700 very motivated people and sharing achievements like this adds some motivation. "

Already highly motivated to treat guests of the resort to the highest standard of luxury hospitality, the staff are delighted to hear praise of any kind, from the World Travel Awards to individual guest experiences. "We celebrate even the single Trip Advisor review we receive," Mario explains. "We share that with the team on a daily basis, and sometimes employees even see their names mentioned and they're happy to hear it."

With their previously mentioned dedication

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to improvements, Sandy Lane have been increasing their marketing efforts, and winning prestigious honors such as those from the World Travel Awards is a benefit to that process. "Our projects for the next two years, we're going to be focusing on improving our online marketing," he says. "Awards of this kind will only help in strengthening our brand, and these are things we're going to be featuring and we'll be using to continue promoting Sandy Lane."

A key aspect of promotion now involves a heavy interest in social media, particularly within the hospitality industry, as guests fre-



quently use sites such as Trip Advisor to help inform their decision on where to vacation. Sandy Lane is well aware of this, and they will be more and more active online moving forward.

“We're going to be focusing all of our marketing efforts, and thanks to a newly appointed consulting company they will be helping us merge our revenue efforts together with our social marketing efforts under one umbrella which we call Online Social Marketing and Revenue Management. “ says Mario.

“I'm sure that this will bring great results,” he continues “our presence online has been

increasing tremendously, and using the synergies between social media, marketing and revenue management techniques we are hoping to reach half a million visitors on our website this year”.

THE FUTURE OF SANDY LANE

Looking into the future, Sandy Lane hope to implement a brand new green initiative which will save on energy usage, and create an opportunity to preserve the environment of Barbados. It involves encouraging guests to re-use linens, instead of having them

changed daily. Mario says that, “We're trying to find a creative way to encourage only the guests that are interested in such initiative. We're trying to find a local company that can produce miniature wooden turtles, which will be left in the rooms with a note saying: 'Please leave the turtle on the bed before go-



ing to the beach and we won't change your linen for another day.' and also encourage them to purchase the little local souvenir so that the profits could be donated locally to

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assist with the efforts that Barbados has been trying to put in place to preserve this wonder".

As for their main goal, continuing expanding the already strong Sandy Lane brand is a top priority, as well as remaining true to the spirit of the resort itself. "Sandy Lane has been here for the past 53 years, almost 54," says Mario. "It's a very powerful brand and we want to continue what we're doing, reach out to new areas of the world and we definitely want to start to be more present in the US, North America and South America, increasing brand recognition in the Americas."



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