

Dear Jacqui,

Thank you for your email, which I received on my return from my honeymoon. I am sorry for not coming back to you sooner – I feel like my feet haven't touched the ground since I came back – I've had another wedding, a christening and, not to mention Christmas to contend with!!

So here is my chance to sit down for five minutes before something else drags me off!

Our wedding and week in Tobago was wonderful. Words can not describe it.

From the moment I stepped off the plane, I felt completely at ease. - My suitcase holding my wedding dress and Adam's suit had made it in one piece (which is more than can be said for the best man's wife – someone else's suitcase exploded by the looks of things during the flight and set her suitcase on fire!! (Fortunately the damage inside the bag was limited but the bag completely destroyed) and more importantly, the moment I met Nigel I knew nothing would go wrong. He really is the Mirage's secret weapon!

The entire time we were in Tobago Nigel went out of his way to make us feel comfortable and to make our week and wedding as stress-free as possible. Obviously he had all our names before we landed but within minutes he went out of his way to learn which face went with each name and also to learn all of our sense of humours – but all without us really realising! He knew exactly who to tease and joke with about a particular subject whilst never causing offence.

The transfer was stress free and the people Nigel arranged to help transfer us to the villa were so friendly. Whilst Karen was trying to sort out her smouldering suitcase everyone else was obviously held up. Trinidad and Tobago were playing Bahrain in the world cup qualifiers and although all the men who came to help all wanted to see the game, they missed most of it to help us – and if they helped us only begrudgingly, then you would never have known it. They joked with us and didn't hurry us at all (but I guess it is 'Tobago time' after all!)

When we got to the villa we were dumbstruck at what we found. None of the pictures I have seen go anywhere near to describing it. It was so beautiful. And what made it all the more magnificent was hearing the sound of the sea lapping outside whatever room you were standing in. Even the next morning we were all trying to come up with words to describe it the magnitude and magnificence of the place but couldn't! One of the guests is a bit picky to say the least and whilst I was waiting for them to find some criticism, even they said it was the best place they have ever stayed!

When we first got the villa, we were all a bit peckish and so Nigel and one of the guys who helped during the transfer went off and got us Pizzas!

Going back to the villa, I don't think there was any one of the six rooms that I wouldn't have happily slept in. All the rooms were spacious, the bathrooms big and most importantly, very effective air-conditioning! The beds were comfy and if you needed an extra pillow or a spare blanket - ping! – Nigel was there to provide it! The silly thing is that although the villa was so expansive, and I wanted everyone to come and go as they pleased, we all spent the majority of the time on the veranda – I could live out the rest of my days there. The chairs were comfy and the scenery to die for. The thing was, even when it rained you enjoyed sitting there! All of us did!

I think it is only fair to mention that Donna and Althea were also equally wonderful. They made sure the villa was always spotless and they did a wonderful job of cooking us a Tobagan meal on our last night. They also always made a point of saying hello when they arrived and goodbye when they left and checked that we were enjoying ourselves each and every day (As if the smiles on our faces weren't enough!!).

Every member of staff or contractor who set foot on the villa during the week were nothing short of courteous, friendly and warm. I have never felt so much like royalty before! Why can't English hospitality be so good?!

Then came the Wedding Day – Nigel was concerned that we would be ripped off and so made sure he obtained the best price on everything, including the photographer and even the hairdresser! He was so concerned about everything looking right that he had this bizarre compulsion about him – We joked that he must have been gay in a former life which, rather than upsetting him, he actually played the part to the hilt! (He'll probably kill me for re-iterating this!)

We were a bit concerned about the weather as it had rained every day leading up to the big day so we changed the location for the ceremony at the last minute to be on the veranda – Nigel sorted this out effortlessly and did a wonderful job of creating a makeshift altar etc.

So whilst I sat in an air conditioned hairdressers with my Mum and Bridesmaids, it felt like a whole load of pixies created this wonderful setting for my big day (hard to believe but even more wonderful that what was already there every other day!)

The wedding went off with out a hitch and the photos we have to remember the day are brilliant. The photographer Nigel arranged did a cracking job of being right in the thick of it all but none of us knew he was there! I have made a second disk of the photos taken and I will put it in the post for you. Obviously, if there are any brides who want to see what another wedding was like, you are more than welcome to show them whichever pictures you see fit.

The food for the wedding was wonderful and varied. We have some fussy eaters in the group but everyone all had plenty to eat and if one didn't like something then there was an alternative dish to have.

Nigel did have a fear that as the second leg of the world cup qualifiers were played on the morning of the wedding and that T&T qualified for the world cup for the first time, that the steel band man would be too busy celebrating to turn up so Nigel arranged a replacement – We ended up with two steel drummers for the price of one!

It was nice to meet Mr Bartella and I was very surprised to have him come over to the hairdressers in the Coco Reef resort to meet me. It was a pleasant surprise and I felt very touched to be shown such courtesy. Mr Bartella even popped in later on during the reception part of the day to give his congratulations. He is a very warm and friendly man.

The only downside of the whole week was leaving the villa. In hindsight, both Adam and I wished we had spent our second week there. Ever since we left, we keep saying "I wish we were back there" and it really does feel that way. We're still saying it now!

I feel like I have not said enough about the benefit of Nigel. He is very friendly without being 'in your face' and was always around to help. We could be sitting around thinking "Ooh – when I next see Nigel I will ask him about such-and-such" and then he would appear, as if by magic. So he was there when you needed him but didn't linger around or try to harass you. His knowledge of the island is such that he knew just the places to recommend going to see and those that weren't so great and could be avoided.

We would love to go back for our first wedding anniversary and would be grateful if you could let us know a cost for that week/fortnight.

Going back to your email and asking if there are ways Heritage Leisure could improve, I think the only improvement that could be made is the website/brochure. Once you are in Tobago, everything is perfect and not one complaint was made by anyone as I recall. Certainly as a bride, she will always panic that the day goes perfectly right and one of the most important things is the setting. If you were to get married in England, you would be able to go and have a look at the venue in advance and put your mind at ease about whether it was good enough for your wedding. Please don't get me wrong, the villa was beyond my wildest dreams but I had to search Google for additional pictures and information so that I could gauge a better overview of what it would look like.

I even went to see one of the smaller villas next door and I don't think the pictures for that do it justice either.

Mirage, Bougainvillea and Hibiscus are wonderful places and with the additional apartments that Mr Bartella is looking to build, that little seafront area is a gold mine for Heritage Leisure and heaven on earth for whoever goes to stay there. We found out about the place purely by chance and so I can only think that a number of other people are choosing somewhere second-rate compared to the Mirage as they don't know about this wonderful place.

I hope that you don't think me rude for being honest in this way? I certainly mean no offence.

Before I sign off, can I also say a special thank you to you Jacqui – You were extremely helpful in the months leading up to the wedding. Bearing in mind that I didn't know what the place was actually going to look like or what to expect by having someone else arrange my wedding, you made me feel so completely comfortable and (seemingly) effortlessly helped me to trust you to make sure everything was going to be alright.

Adam and I had such a wonderful wedding day, and a great weeks' holiday, and we have come away from it with such great memories – We can only thank Heritage Leisure for that.

Kind regards and best wishes for the new year

Elaine Ambrose!!