

Batting for the home team

Cricketing legend Sir Garfield Sobers tells **Tom Chesshyre** of his love for the island . . . and golf

Sir Garfield Sobers is one of cricket's towering talents so it is perhaps appropriate that we meet in the Shard, London's tallest skyscraper. The former holder of the highest score in Test cricket — 365 not out (eventually exceeded by Trinidadian Brian Lara) — is sitting in a hotel lobby being passed by guests oblivious to being in the presence of one of the game's greats.

Not that this bothers Sir Garfield. He is in town to talk about his home island, Barbados, which gained independence from Britain 50 years ago on November 30, 1966. He has for many years acted as a consultant to Visit Barbados, batting for tourism rather than the Windies.

But I don't want to know about the latest attractions or hotels. I want to know about Sir Garfield's Barbados, his favourite spots and secret places. He leans forward with a twinkle in his eye — he is 79 years old but could pass for a decade younger — and his first answer helps explain his good health.

Sir Garfield is a golf fiend. "I play nearly every day," he says. "At Sandy Lane, Royal

Westmoreland Golf Course, Apes Hill Golf Club and the Barbados Golf Club. They're all good golf courses." Golf is, he says, one of the island's big international appeals.

He once played a round with Sir Viv Richards (the former West Indies captain), Sir Richard Hadlee (the New Zealand all-rounder), and Sir Ian Botham. "It was a four-ball with all the sirs. Botham is very good, hits the ball a long way."

Golf talk over, Sir Garfield discusses the places he likes most on Barbados. "Bathsheba," he says, referring to the quiet east coast fishing village. "I used to go down to Bathsheba to have lunch on Sundays, then visit the beach at the Crane." The Crane Resort is a popular hotel on the southeast coast.

So does he have a tip on where to stay? "There's a new hotel on the south coast, the SoCo Hotel. I go there. A friend of mine runs it. It's small but doing well; on the beach."

What about somewhere to eat? Sir Garfield is a fan of Champers Restaurant and Wine Bar, also on the south coast. "The service is very good. It's reasonable. They do most food there. I'm a flying fish man. Fish and chicken, I like." He also speaks highly of Oistins, a south coast fishing village with street stalls.

One of his favourite bars is Daphne's, on the west coast, although "from most west coast hotels you can see the sunset."

Does he have a favourite beach? Without hesitation Sir Garfield names the sandy beach by the Hilton Barbados Resort on the edge of Bridgetown, the island's capital. He also recommends



A statue of Sir Garfield Sobers in typical stance at the entrance to Kensington Oval

Brandons beach, not far from the Mount Gay rum distillery.

He believes the compact size of Barbados (21 miles by 14 miles) gives it a tourist advantage over other bigger and more mountainous West Indian islands such as Jamaica and St Lucia.

"You can see it in one day," he says. "It

takes about three hours [to drive round]. If you go to Barbados you can come back and say you've seen Barbados."

Sir Garfield is hoping many tourists will travel to the island to celebrate its big Five-O in November. While you are there, head for a golf course. You never know, you may well bump into the legend.

Gathering for Garry

On July 28, 2016, Sir Garfield Sobers turns 80 and cricket lovers the world over have been invited to join the celebration.

As a tribute to the national hero, fellow West Indian cricket greats and peers of the realm, Viv Richards and Clive Lloyd, will take charge of opposing teams in the Sir Garry 80 Not Out: T20 Legends to Legacy cricket match at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown.

The Barbados Iconic XI v Sir Garfield Sobers XI match will pit island legends Collis King, Sherwin Campbell and Philo Wallace against the likes of Windies Test stars Brian Lara, Carl Hooper, Courtney Walsh and Curtly Ambrose.

England all-rounder Freddie Flintoff, Pakistan wicketkeeper Rashid Latif, Sri Lankan captain Arjuna Ranatunga and Indian all-rounder Ravi Shastri, one of four cricketers to have equalled Sir

Garry's feat of hitting six sixes in an over, are also due to appear. Video messages from cricketing legends from around the world will precede the game.

Great for driving but be wary of a dodgy service

Golf may be king, but road tennis is the first love for many Bajans, writes **James Henderson**

The protected west coast is a picturesque, balmy stretch of Caribbean sea, with palms and lazy waves. It is perfect for wallowing, or for a quick dip from your sun lounger. But you can also swim with turtles, or don scuba gear and explore the corals and colourful fish of the deep. You might also want to take a day or sunset sail; the slight breeze is enough to catch the sails of a yacht or catamaran and carve through the calm water. If you are feeling more energetic you can hire a jetski.

The farther south and east you go, the livelier the water and sports become. Carlisle Bay in Bridgetown has small-boat

sailing, kayaks and pedalos. By the time you reach the island's southern point the Atlantic wind is whistling offshore. At Silver Sands beach you will see windsurfers and now kitesurfers racing back and forth under their fluorescent sails, jumping the waves.

In the pretty coves of the south east, Crane Beach, Foul Bay and Bottom Bay, where the water is a spectacular turquoise, the waves are big enough for boogie-boarding. But for full-on, stand-up surfing head for the Atlantic coast, where the ocean rollers arrive after a 4,000 mile run-up. The island's most famous wave, the Soup Bowl, barrels and crashes into the shallows off Bathsheba.

There are also plenty of sports on dry land to keep you occupied, both as a participant and spectator. In fact, whole villa complexes are designed around them — tennis at Sugar Hill, golf at Royal Westmoreland and Sandy Lane. Polo can be found at Waterhall/Apes Hill.

There are six main golf courses on the island. The Old Nine at Sandy Lane, whose fairways weave among stands of ancient mahoganies, is one of the prettiest in the Caribbean. Others range the



uplands, with views carrying all along the Caribbean coast. You can explore the canefields and forests overlooking the wild east coast on horseback.

And finally, look out for a home grown Bajan sport. If some lads move aside a

A grass effigy of a native green monkey awaits visitors to a bunker at Sandy Lane Golf Resort

plank to let your car past on a remote stretch of road, stop and watch. Road tennis is played on an outside table tennis court painted on the tarmac, to similar rules, and with a tennis ball hit by bat. It is fast and furious. Until a car interrupts play.