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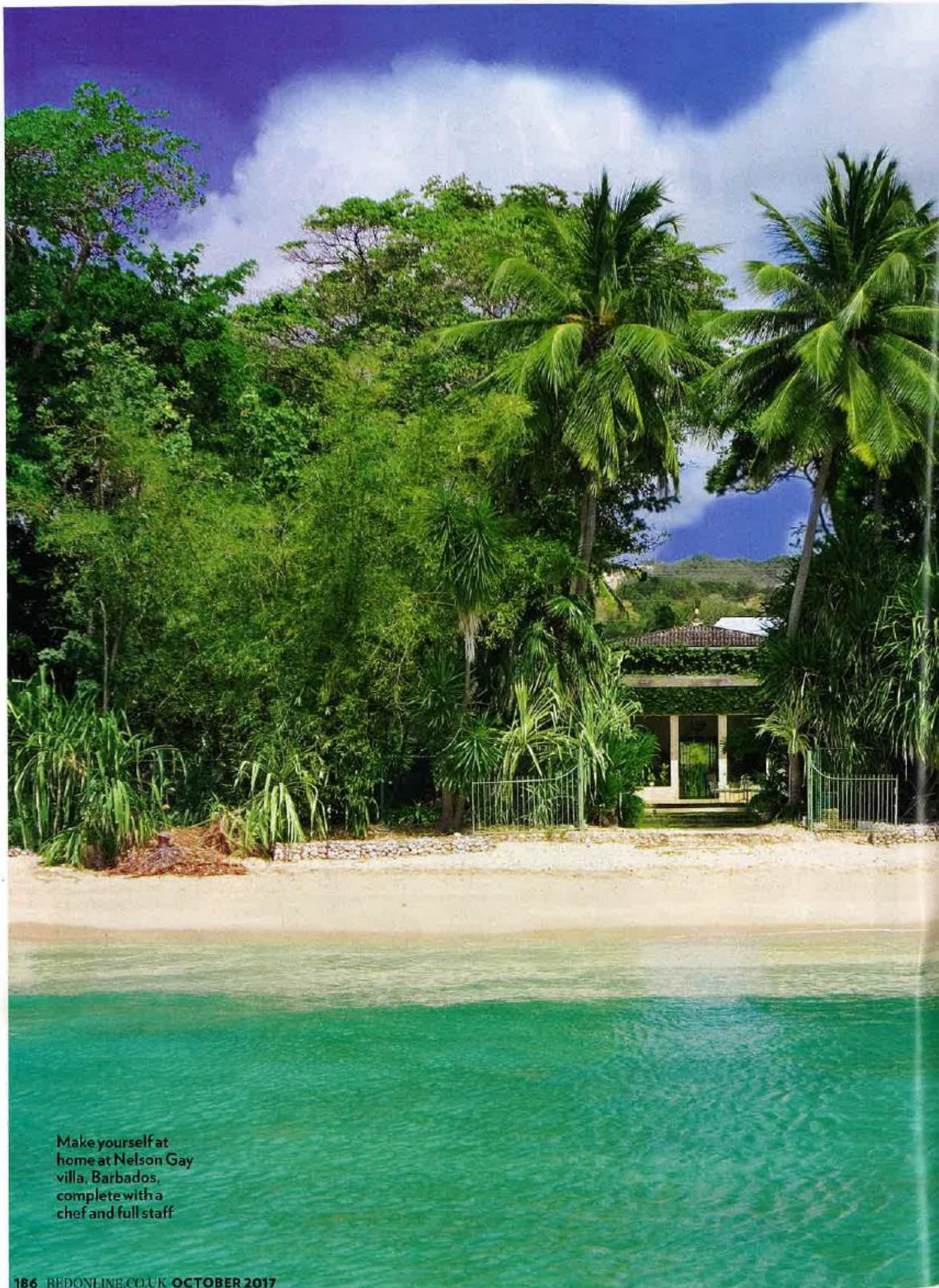
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Make yourself at home at Nelson Gay villa, Barbados, complete with a chef and full staff



Beverley with her twins Tom and Kitty; the house has five double bedrooms



Housed in two acres of lush gardens, you can choose between your own pool or the sea right in front



### NELSON GAY VILLA, BARBADOS SLEEPS 10

White powdery beaches, sparkling aquamarine seas, rum punch and a general feeling of relaxation – these are my memories of Barbados, from my trip five years ago, when my twins were just two years old. So with the opportunity to visit again, all three of us jump at the chance to make new memories.

This time we decide to do the home away from home thing – if your home is a cool, vine-covered 1960s villa and comes with staff, that is. The villa at Nelson Gay, made out of local coral stone without windows or doors, but walls and pillars where the sea breeze can blow in, has the air of a bygone era. The house sits in a perfectly overgrown, lush two-acre tropical garden that leads down to the turquoise sea, with a glowing outdoor pool lined with mosaic tiles.

Here, everything feels loose and natural: tiny birds fly through the living area, the occasional gecko will scurry up the walls, and the

resident family of monkeys troupe across the lawn. The house has five double bedrooms with the biggest beds I've ever seen (handy, as I end up sharing one bed with both my children – all dreams of starfishing by myself erased), and in the main house all come with en suites (there is a self-contained cottage in the garden and two wooden chattel houses in the grounds), making it the ideal option for extended families or holidaying with friends.

The lofty lounge is adorned with faded whites and greens and eclectic objets d'art, African carvings, and a bronze Burmese temple gong, used to call guests for dinner (or cocktails). The decadent dining room full of Murano Crystal Baccarat glass seats 12 for a sparkly occasion, but what is really charming is the feeling of inside outside and the air of informality. We eat all our meals on the terrace, serenaded by frog song at dinner and chirping birds at breakfast.

Nelson Gay also comes with staff: chef, butler, housekeeper, gardener and night watchman. I am unsure about this initially, with two seven-year-olds I worry about making a mess/ bickering/fussy eating/general chaos but the staff are super laid-back and it's a joy to return to tidy bedrooms and clean clothes each day and to be cooked for but feel totally at home. Our chef, Tyrone, is endlessly accommodating,

whipping up his signature grilled mahi mahi, shrimp salad, flying fish, but also buying in snacks and making banana bread for the kids.

Conveniently the villa has an off-site concierge service who will book taxis, restaurants, offer trip advice and even arrange for me to have a massage under the gazebo in the garden (relaxing except for the two fascinated seven-year-olds watching), but mainly we just venture as far as the end of the garden, where the gates open onto a perfect soft sandy beach, coconuts washing up on the shore and calm clear water that's ideal for children. Even with a small hotel next door, we have the beach to ourselves. Holidays abroad with two kids – and just you – can feel vaguely daunting, but then there's sunshine and Caribbean rum and friendly faces and a fish on the grill and suddenly *everything* seems easy. BEVERLEY CROUCHER >>

#### Trip notes

From £1,360 per night for four bedrooms, sleeping eight; Blueskyluxury.com\*. Flights from London to Barbados from £495 with Virginatlantic.com. Visitbarbados.com

\*FOR EVERY SIX NIGHTS BOOKED, RED READERS CAN ENJOY A COMPLIMENTARY NIGHT AT NELSON GAY VILLA. TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS OFFER CALL 0800 0885574 QUOTING REDNELSONGAY. OFFER AVAILABLE UNTIL 30TH JUNE 2018, SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY AND EXCLUDES 15TH DECEMBER TO 15TH APRIL AS WELL AS US THANKSGIVING, AND EASTER. BLUESKYLLUXURY.COM

A cottage in the villa's garden

