

welcome to the Caribbean



One Region, 7000 Islands

Rocked by music, rolled by change, lapped by turquoise water, blown by hurricanes – the Caribbean is not a place anyone could call static. It's a lively and intoxicating profusion of people and places spread over 7000 islands (fewer than 10% are inhabited). But, for all they share, there's also much that makes them different. Forming a huge swath around the Caribbean Sea, the namesake islands contradict in ways big and small. Can there be a greater contrast than between socialist Cuba and its neighbor, the bank-packed Cayman Islands? Or between booming British-oriented St Kitts and its

sleepy, Dutch-affiliated neighbor Sint Eustatius, just across a narrow channel?

Travel long enough in this region and you'll soon discover there is no typical Caribbean.

Every Color Everywhere

Azure seas, white beaches, green forests so vivid they actually hurt the eyes – there is nothing subtle about the bold colors of the Caribbean. Swim below the waters for a color chart of darting fish and corals. Wander along the sand and stop at the paint-factory explosion that is a beach bar, from the garish decor to the rum punch in your glass. Hike into emerald wilderness and

With amazing culture, beaches, activities and weather – not to mention the rum – the Caribbean is a joyous riot of islands offering the ultimate escape.



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(left) Island in the Tobago Cays (p754), St Vincent & the Grenadines
(below) The striking Caribbean flamingo



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spot the accents of red orchids and yellow parrots.

Even the food is colorful, with rainbows of produce brightening up the local markets. You'll also see every color but dull at intense, costume-filled festivities like Carnival, celebrated throughout the region.

And all this color is infectious. Like birds shedding dull adolescent plumage, visitors leave their wardrobes of gray and black behind when they step off the plane and don the Caribbean palette.

Your Kind of Trip

No matter what you're looking for in an island adventure, you'll find it here. Zero in

on one perfect place or mix and match from a banquet of islands.

With so many islands, beaches, cultures, flavors and waves to choose from you are bound to have a fabulous time. Doing nothing on the sand, partying at a resort, exploring a new port of call, hopping between islands, discovering wonders under the water or catching a perfect wave above, reveling in a centuries-old culture, and finding your inner pirate are all possible.

Go on, take the plunge.