



St Lucia

Includes »

Castries.....	699
Rodney Bay & Gros Islet	702
Pigeon Island National Landmark .	705
The Northern Tip... .	705
Western St Lucia... .	706
The South Coast	712
Understand St Lucia .	713
Survival Guide	714
Getting There & Away.....	716
Getting Around.....	717

Why Go?

Rising like an emerald tooth from the Caribbean Sea, St Lucia definitely grabs your attention. While it fits the image of a glam honeymoon spot, this mountainous island has more to offer than sensuous beaches flanked by sybaritic lodgings.

Diving, snorkeling, sailing and kitesurfing are fabulous. On land there's no better ecofriendly way to experience the rainforest-choked interior than on foot, on horseback or suspended from a zip line. Wildlife lovers will get a buzz, too. Whales, dolphins, turtles and endemic birds can easily be approached, with the added thrill of a grandiose setting. Near Soufrière, the awesomely photogenic Pitons rise from the waves like pyramids of volcanic stone.

Bar the island's northeast, where most tourist facilities are concentrated, the rest of St Lucia is definitely a back-to-nature haven, making it possible to find a deserted bay, secluded waterfall, character-filled fishing community or odd colonial-style plantation.

Best Beaches

- » Anse Chastanet (p708)
- » Anse Mamin (p709)
- » Sandy Beach (p712)
- » La Toc Beach (p701)
- » Smugglers Cove (p705)

Best Places to Stay

- » Crystals (p710)
- » Anse Chastanet Resort (p710)
- » Fond Doux Holiday Plantation (p710)
- » Ladera (p711)
- » Balenbouche Estate (p712)

When to Go

As with most Caribbean destinations the winter season is the most popular time to visit St Lucia. The very unwintery weather brings the crowds and jacks up the prices, especially during the driest period from December to March. Winter weather is sublime with average temperatures around 81°F (27°C). Summer is quiet and hot with the July temperatures averaging 85°F (29°C). Hurricane season falls between June and October – expect more rain this time of year and maybe the odd storm.

Itineraries

ONE WEEK

Basing yourself in Soufrière, spend a day exploring the town and the surrounding beaches. Allow two to three days for some adventure options, including diving, cycling, hiking and zip-lining. Travel north to the lively city of Castries. Spend a couple of days exploring the area around Gros Islet, Pigeon Island and Rodney Bay before returning south to unwind for a day in the thermal pools in Soufrière.

TEN DAYS

After the one-week tour, head south for a day of kitesurfing on the south coast. Next, sample the delights of the Atlantic-battered east coast. Be sure to spare some cash for your last day – with its great shopping options, Castries will torment the weak-willed.

GETTING TO NEIGHBORING ISLANDS

There are frequent direct flights to Martinique, Barbados, St Vincent, Trinidad, Puerto Rico and Antigua. For other Caribbean destinations, you'll have to connect through one of these islands.

There's a regular high-speed catamaran service between St Lucia and Martinique. At certain times of the year it also operates between St Lucia and Guadeloupe.

Essential Food & Drink

» **Seafood** Dorado (also known as mahi mahi), kingfish, marlin, snapper, lobster, crab and shellfish feature high on the menu.

» **Meat dishes** Chicken and pork dishes are commonly found.

» **Local specialties** Try callaloo soup, *lambi* (conch) and saltfish with green fig (seasoned salt cod and boiled green banana).

» **Piton** The beer of St Lucia; crisp and sweet, it's perfectly light and refreshing.

» **St Lucian rum** The island's sole distillery produces white rums, gold rums and flavored rums.

AT A GLANCE

» **Currency** Eastern Caribbean dollar (EC\$); US dollar (US\$) widely accepted

» **Language** English, Creole

» **Money** ATMs all over; dispense only Eastern Caribbean dollars

» **Visas** Not required for US, EU or most Commonwealth citizens for stays under 28 days; see p716

Fast Facts

» **Area** 238 sq miles

» **Population** 170,000

» **Capital** Castries

» **Telephone country code** 2758

» **Emergency** 999

Set Your Budget

» **Budget hotel room** EC\$170

» **Two-course evening meal** EC\$110

» **Museum entrance** EC\$25

» **Beer** EC\$5

» **City Transport Ticket** EC\$1.75

Resources

» **Intimate Inns** (www.intimatestlucia.org) A list of affordable accommodation options

» **St Lucia Star** (www.stluciarstar.com) A weekly online newspaper

» **Tourist office** (www.stlucianow.com) The official tourist-board site with great general information; a good place to start