



Trinidad & Tobago

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Why Go?

Trinidad and Tobago are an exercise in beautiful contradiction. In Trinidad, pristine mangrove swamps and rainforested hills sit side by side with smoke-belching oil refineries and ugly industrial estates. Tobago has everything you'd expect from a Caribbean island, with palm trees and white sand aplenty, yet it's relatively unchanged by the tourist industry. Combined, this twin-island republic offers unparalleled bird-watching, first-class diving, luxuriant rainforests prime for hiking, waterfall swimming and cycling, and electric nightlife, with the fabulous Carnival easily the biggest and best of the region's annual blowouts.

But don't expect anyone to hold your hand. The oil and gas industry leaves tourism low on the priority list, so it's up to you to take a deep breath, jump in and enjoy the mix.

Best Beaches

- » Maracas Bay (p779)
- » Las Cuevas (p780)
- » Castara (p794)
- » Englishman's Bay (p794)
- » Pirate's Bay (p798)
- » Pigeon Point (p786)

Best Places to Stay

- » Kariwak Village Holistic Haven (p788)
- » Mt Plaisir Estate (p784)
- » Castara Retreats (p794)
- » Carlton Savannah (p772)

When to Go

Trinidad and Tobago's southerly location keeps temperatures consistent year-round, with a daily average of 27°C (80°F). The rainy season (June to November) and the dry season (December to May) are the major weather variations. Average humidity hovers around 75%. The high season (roughly February to March) sees hordes of visitors arrive for Carnival. The shoulder seasons (October to mid-December and April to June) mean fewer crowds and cheaper accommodations, but a good chance of some rain. As the islands sit outside the hurricane belt, severe storms are very uncommon.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** TT dollar (TT\$)
- » **Language** English
- » **Money** ATMs in all sizable towns, dispensing TT dollars
- » **Visas** Not required for citizens of the US, Canada and most European and Commonwealth countries

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 5128 sq km
- » **Population** 1.3 million
- » **Capital** Port of Spain, Trinidad
- » **Telephone country code**
☎868
- » **Emergency** Police ☎999, fire ☎990, ambulance ☎811

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room**
TT\$300
- » **Two-course evening meal** TT\$180
- » **Museum entrance**
TT\$10
- » **Beer** TT\$10
- » **City transport ticket**
TT\$3

Resources

- » **Tourism Development Company** (www.gotrinidadandtobago.com) Official visitor site, with general info and an events calendar
- » **Discover Trinidad and Tobago** (www.discovertrnt.com) Regularly updated, with lots of info from local writers

Itineraries

FOUR DAYS

Stay in Trinidad, checking out downtown Port of Spain and the Savannah, then hitting the Ariapita Ave nightlife after dark. In the morning, head up to Maracas Bay to eat bake and shark and ride the waves, then back to the capital for more partying. Follow up with bird-watching and lunch at Asa Wright Nature Centre, then an afternoon boat tour of the Caroni Bird Sanctuary to see scarlet ibis. The next day, head south to the Waterloo Temple, then grab a roti lunch and a sulfur bath at the Pitch Lake.

SEVEN DAYS

Complete the four-day itinerary, then head into the northern range for a rainforest hike or a swim in Rio Seco falls. Hop on an early ferry to Tobago and spend the day relaxing on the sand at Pigeon Point, and the night dancing at the Shade. Head up the Caribbean coast and spend the day on the beach in Castara, then hole up in a Charlotteville guest-house, eating fresh fish, drinking Carib and taking in the rays on Pirate's Bay.

TEN DAYS

With more time to spare in Trinidad, you should cycle around rainforest-enveloped military relics in Chaguaramas, see the Nariva Swamp by kayak or base yourself in Grande Riviere for a day and night of hiking, surfing and turtle-watching. In Tobago, take a walk through the ancient Forest Reserve, learn to windsurf at Pigeon Point, snorkel or dive at the Speyside reefs, and take to the dance floor at Sunday School.

GETTING TO NEIGHBORING ISLANDS

There are no ferries between Trinidad and Tobago and other neighboring islands, though there is a weekly boat between Chaguaramas, Trinidad, and Guiria, Venezuela. There are direct flights (and onward connections) from Trinidad to Antigua, St Lucia, Barbados, St Vincent, Grenada and Curaçao, and from Tobago to Grenada and Barbados.

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Roti** A split-pea-infused flatbread wrapped around curried meat and vegetables.
- » **Doubles** Curried *channa* (chickpeas) in a soft fried *bara* bread.
- » **Bake and shark** Seasoned shark steaks, topped with salad and local sauces and served in a floaty fried bake.
- » **Callaloo** The leaves of the dasheen tuber cooked up with pumpkin, okra and plenty of seasoning.
- » **Carib and Stag** The national beers – always served beastly cold.