

Welcome to the Caribbean Islands

From high mountain peaks to shimmering reefs, spicy salsa rhythms to deep rolling reggae, pirate hideouts to sugar-sand beaches, the Caribbean is dizzyingly diverse.

Delicious Diversity

The Caribbean is a joyous mosaic of islands beckoning paradise-hunters, an explosion of color, fringed by beaches and soaked in rum. 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. Can there be a greater contrast than between bustling Barbados and its neighbor, the seemingly unchanged-since-colonial-times St Vincent? Revolutionary Cuba and its next-door banking capital, the Cayman Islands? Or between booming British-oriented St Kitts and its sleepy, Dutch-affiliated neighbor Sint Eustatius, just across a narrow channel?

Island Colors

Azure seas, white beaches, green forests so vivid they actually hurt the eyes – there is nothing subtle about the landscapes of the Caribbean. Swim below the waters for a color chart of darting fish and corals. Hike into emerald wilderness and spot the accents of red orchids and yellow parrots. Outdoor-adventure enthusiasts make a beeline for unspoilt islands such as nature-lovers' Dominica and St Lucia's iconic lush Piton mountains, which send out a siren call to climbers.

Sunlit Culture

The tropical sunlight 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. Even the food is colorful, with rainbows of produce brightening up the local markets. You'll also see every hue at intense, costume-filled festivities such as Carnival, celebrated throughout the region but particularly in Trinidad. Glorious crumbling Cuba, reggae-rolling Jamaica and Vodou-loving Haiti top the wish lists for travelers seeking unique cultural experiences and Unesco heritage havens.

Tropical Adventures

You can find any kind of island adventure here. With so many islands, beaches, cultures, flavors and waves to choose from, how could this not be vacation paradise? You can do nothing on the sand, party at a resort, explore a new community, hop between islands, discover wonders under the water or catch a perfect wave above, revel in a centuries-old culture (and sway to some of the world's greatest music while you're at it), and then run off to find your inner pirate... Just about anything is possible in the Caribbean.



Why I Love the Caribbean Islands

By Paul Clammer, Writer

I was on a beach, taking a break from research. Had I been out to the island on the edge of the bay? the fisherman asked. There was a ruin there, stories of pirates. Did I want to see? His boat was beaten up and its sail made from old plastic sheets, but in we got and dipped over the waves, then waded ashore to a tumble of buildings overgrown with roots and lianas. It felt like Treasure Island and I wondered if all guidebooks came with maps telling you 'X marks the spot.' This could only be the Caribbean...

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