

**W**hether going for a month

(we're jealous) or a day's cruise stop, this island's options will charm you.

Read and take this Inside Scoop with your travel documents—it's packed with tips.

**travel:** delighting in the spirit of adventure • a vacation from home to explore places that are not your home • knowing life is different, knowing this is a joy of travel • enjoying the journey, not just the destination • a privilege best used with patience, humour and curiosity • fun • coming home with great tales •

#### Dress Up or Down

Island dress codes are not as casual as some other warm-weather islands and in towns. On Sundays, be respectful, cover up bikinis and keep hats off in restaurants. With sub-tropical temperatures and cooling breezes, pack a shawl or jacket; June to November there's an occasional tropical shower.

#### Your Counsellor

Our knowledge and experience help turn dreams into first-rate vacations. Ask your counsellor about any details, including:

- advance seats & upgrades
- cancellation/interruption and medical insurance
- Jaunts to other islands
- sites and specialties.

**Maritime Travel**

We Know Travel Best.™

# Maritime Travel

## Inside Scoop: **St. Lucia**

**Know before you go: travel isn't just your destination, it's also the journey**

**A**pproximately one tenth the land mass of Banff National Park, this 616sqkm island packs in pretty much everything you might want to do (except snow activities). And those beach and ocean photos you see in travel brochures? That's here. Some helpful tips:

- No matter what your budget is, aim to relax and enjoy. Special requests are requests only, such as for room location and bed type. Unless you've paid for an oceanview room, be aware these are premium (why upgrade fees apply).
- The island doesn't observe Daylight Saving Time; between April and October, the island follows Eastern Standard Time.
- Electric service is 240 volts, a few hotels 110 volts; take an adaptor and voltage converter. Most hotels provide hair dryers.
- You must have a passport [www.cic.gc.ca/english/passport/index.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/passport/index.asp) that's valid for at least three months past your stay.
- The currency is the Eastern Caribbean Dollar, linked to the US dollar, (approximately US\$1 = EC\$2.70). US bills are widely accepted but unless you have US cash already, don't bother changing funds twice: banks and hotels change money and generally accept Canadian debit cards. Banks generally close at 2pm (Fridays 5pm) and are closed Saturdays. Some merchants ask for a 5% or so fee if you use credit cards.
- For cell phone use, check with your provider (beware of roaming charges!). Internet access is available, at hotels, cafés and malls.
- While English is the official language, locals speak a French Creole patois. Terrific gifts (and trip reminders) to take home include spices, spiced rum and sauces.
- Take a high SPF sunscreen, bug spray, wear a hat and carry a bottle of water.
- We strongly recommend Maritime Travel cancellation/interruption and medical insurance, an investment in your peace of mind—if declined, you're responsible for costs.

Above all, travel with a positive attitude—having patience and a spirit of adventure will carry you through any experience!

#### Pack Strategically

The world is overrun with black bags so put coloured tape or ribbon on your luggage to spot it quickly. Put your name outside and inside and remove old tags. In your carry-on, pack valuables such as jewellery; over-the-counter and prescription drugs in original containers and documents on medical conditions.

Pack most liquids/lotions/gels in checked bags (inside plastic bags)—due to carry-on restrictions, the maximum size container is 100ml (3.4oz). All must fit in 1 clear/resealable plastic bag of no more than 1 litre (often available before airport security), then place the bag in the tray. You may take formula, food or milk for a child under 2 years old (0-24 months).

In carry-on, pack pens/notebook, hand wipes, munchies (no fruit, meat or veg over borders). Items permitted in carry-on include: cell phones, laptops, canes, disposable razors and nail clippers. Items you can't take on include knives, corkscrews and sports gear such as golf clubs, baseball bats, racquets and pool cues. Check with your airline for their restrictions and [www.catsa.gc.ca/home](http://www.catsa.gc.ca/home).

**Tip:** If you love to snorkel, bring your own gear as some resorts might limit time (or gear might not be as new or clean as you like).

#### Not as Quiet as you Might Think

Whether getting married, solo or on a family vacation, this island has enough variations for all travellers—including music, and Friday Night Jump Ups street parties in **Gros Islet**, a not-so-subtle rum punch, prawn curries, bbq meat and yummy pumpkin soup. Kids (and adults) adore Splash Island Waterpark at Bay Gardens and the Tet Paul Nature Trail. Ride the coast on horseback, go kayaking, rent bikes and wander around Diamond Falls and Botanical Gardens.

Then there's the delighted screams from ziplines at the Treetop Adventure Park that also has an obstacle course that's great fun for the entire family (in **Dennery**). Gondolas over the rainforest (Rain Forest Sky Rides in **Chassin**) and mountain slopes are calming—until you zip down those lines. For a different kind of calm, take a cleansing mud bath in Sulphur Springs.

## Your Airline

Sign up online for your airline(s) email or text flight notifications as your flight could be delayed (the plane might be flying in). CATSA notes "Travellers should arrive at the airport earlier than usual, exercise patience and contact their airline for further information on their flight(s)." Airline staff are on duty some 3 hrs prior: due to staffing and security, check-in closes 1hr before departure. If late, you're not entitled to board (or a refund). Unless booked ahead, seats are first-come first-served. **Baggage allowances;** check with your airline. Keep a separate photocopy or cell photo of the ID page of your passport. The departure tax is included in airline tickets (all passengers over 12 years old). Leaving by sea, the tax is EC\$33 or US\$13 on departure.



### Get Packing Checklist and General Planning & Packing Tips

at [www.maritimetravel.ca/inside-scoops](http://www.maritimetravel.ca/inside-scoops)

□ Your sense of adventure & humour!

## The Pitons

The Pitons is the most famous landmark of two mountainous volcanic spires: Gros Piton at 2,530ft high, Petit Piton at 2,438ft (Toronto's CN Tower is 1,815ft). On the southwest coast near the lovely Soufrière town, the Gros is a popular climbing spot even for amateurs (watch for glorious birds). Coral reefs cover almost 60% in the area beneath. For a memorable tour, take a boat around.

## Before Leaving For Home

Do a room sweep for belongings. A noon check-out is usual; your hotel might offer late checkout for a fee. Don't buy or accept anything suspect or that may be taken from you at customs: plants, meat/animal products, drugs or endangered species parts. Know your limits and exemptions, [www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/travel-voyage/bgb-rmf-eng.html](http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/travel-voyage/bgb-rmf-eng.html) such as on duty free alcohol.



### Websites and emails in blue are hyperlinked; just click!

**Canadians:** Emergency? There's no Canadian government office on the island. Contact Global Affairs 613-996-8885 (collect if needed), [sos@international.gc.ca](mailto:sos@international.gc.ca), <http://travel.gc.ca/assistance/emergency-info>

## Wherever I Hang My Hat (take one) That's Home...

After clearing customs, if on a charter (your counsellor will confirm), meet your rep outside the baggage area for the bus for your hotel. Others might say they'll drive you and you'll be reimbursed—this is not true! Before you get on the bus, check your luggage to ensure it's secure and loaded. Your bus may drop travellers at other resorts (a great way to see other properties). On an off-chance your room isn't ready when you arrive, start on the fun. If you've packed a swimsuit in carry-on or can shed clothes, head to the pool or beach: your hotel's front desk will hold your luggage.

## Getting Around

Take a minibus—the main form of transportation all over the island (and a terrific way to take a tour); look for a green licence plate with an "M". From luxurious apartments and villas to all-inclusives, apartments, boutique hotels and guest houses, there's a variety of accommodations: as you go around the island note some favourites for your next visit. Taxis are also available—use an authorized one, denoted by a light blue plate with "TX:" before you hire one, confirm the fare. You can rent cars, a souped-up 4-wheeler and/or scooter; book these in advance with your counsellor to ensure you get exactly what you want and when. All drivers must have their provincial driver's license and either show it at the airport, car rental office or the police station in **Castries** (the capital) to get a temporary driving license. Like Canada, St. Lucia is in the British Commonwealth, but unlike Canada, they drive on the left (so practice). Some gas stations only take cash. If booking a scooter, don't worry about helmet hair! If you haven't driven them before, note they are not bicycles—if you must react quickly, you may not have as much control. Keep the keys so others can't drive off. **Tip:** Celebrating a special occasion? Ask your counsellor about the fantastic helicopter tours—a once in a lifetime experience—let the beauty dominate your sightline (and memories).

## When There

- Water from the taps is safe, with bottled and mineral water widely available.
- As with anywhere you go, don't flash wads of cash around and consider leaving expensive jewellery at home. **Vieux Fort** is a popular site to buy local crafts.
- There's NOTHING like having a massage by the ocean with your sweetheart.
- Travelling solo? Then have two massages...and don't fret; you don't have to feel guilty or compromise if you want to wander a market or not. Book special-interest activities such as walking tours, birdwatching or yoga sessions. All about wellness? Focused on anything food-related? Can't get enough of fitness, sailing, swimathons or dancing the salsa or tango? Ask your counsellor about special theme months at an all-inclusive that celebrates solo travellers.
- A golfer? Prepare for challenging World Championship Golfing with great views.
- If you crave a beer, visit the brewery in **Rodney Bay** and try a seasonal beer such as passionfruit (why yes, you can buy a litre or three to take away). Rodney Bay is tourist area with a popular marina; head to **Pigeon Island** (you can rent bicycles).

## Why Not Go Off Island?

St. Lucia's closet neighbours are Martinique to the north and St. Vincent to the south—while you can see both on a clear day, ask your counsellor about visiting (take your passport). With numerous airlines at St. Lucia's two airports and daily ferries you have a few options such as a day trip to Dominica or Guadeloupe or Martinique.

## The International Language of Courtesy

Delays and cancellations are all part of travelling. Indeed, a slower pace is guaranteed in the islands: enjoy it! Most staff work long hours—a smile, patience and a kind word are always welcome. The value added tax is 10%. Some restaurants add a 10% service charge or it can be included in the prices, so ask first to clarify the exact charge. Tipping is customarily 10% to 12%: tip more if you've enjoyed the service.

### Our 24/7 Emergency Service

We constantly survey airlines, local tour companies and hotels to ensure they meet our customer service standards, so don't let a problem ruin your holiday. Nearly all issues can be handled quickly on site—first seek help from the venue's local staff. Otherwise, call our Emergency Travel Service at **1-888-551-1181**. Deposits are non-refundable and non-transferrable. Schedule changes can occur and airlines and tour operators have the right to change flight and/or tour times, alter, combine services or substitute accommodations. Your counsellor will work with you to ensure you receive information as soon as possible and ensure satisfaction. See your brochure and ticket terms and conditions.

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