

CARIBBEAN ISLAND EXPLORER

The Lesser Antilles

21 days

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Day 1 St Kitts & Nevis Arrival

Today we arrive into the Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis (airport SKB), the smallest sovereign state in the Americas. These islands, like no other in the Caribbean, seem to embody a kind of lush tropical paradise usually associated with the South Pacific. St. Kitts and Nevis were among the first islands in the Caribbean to be settled by Europeans after being 'discovered' via a Spanish expedition under Columbus in 1493. Five thousand years prior to European arrival, Native Americans settled the island of St. Kitts. The last wave of Native American arrivals came approximately three centuries before the Europeans.

This vibrant island state has somehow remained under the radar of mass tourism, and has carved out a niche as an alternative destination for those looking to avoid more mainstream Caribbean islands. St Kitts and Nevis are compact and easy to navigate, which is just as well because the pace of life here is slow -- and proudly so.

The landscape here is volcanic origin, with large central peaks covered in tropical rainforest; the steeper slopes leading to these peaks are mostly uninhabited. The majority of the populations on both islands live closer to the sea where the terrain flattens out. Because of its reconstructed and very formidable defenses, Saint Kitts became known as the 'Gibraltar of the Caribbean'. These idyllic sister islands are situated only 2 miles (3 km) apart at their closest point, and offer us an authentic island experience. Both have historic ruins; towering, long-dormant volcanoes; charming Georgian capitals; intact cultural heritage; and restored, 18th-century sugar plantation inns. Remnants of the sugarcane industry, once the beating heart of the Kitts economy, remain to this day. Old sugar plantations have found new lives as boutique hotels and restaurants.

At the center of St. Kitts stands the spectacular, cloud-fringed peak of Mount Liamuiga, a dormant volcano covered by dense tropical forest. Long ago, St. Kitts and Nevis were the pearls of the British Caribbean, rich and enormously important islands that were celebrated throughout Europe. Nevis, the "Queen of the Caribbees," possessed unimaginable wealth from its super-productive sugar industry, while on St. Kitts the impregnable fortress of Brimstone Hill stood as the Gibraltar of the West Indies.

NOTE: Some itinerary modifications may occur closer to the departure date due to flight routing and schedule changes. Flight schedule changes or adjustments may of course impact the itinerary. The order of islands visited may change, and the number of nights on each island may have to be adjusted. We may lose one night on one island and gain a night on another. Please pack light as the flights within this tour have a strict 18kg per person weight limit for checked luggage.

Overnight in St Kitts.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 St. Kitts Island Exploration / UNESCO - Brimstone Hill Fortress

St. Kitts is the larger and more developed of the two islands, and is home to the laidback capital, Basseterre. This former colonial outpost was the first Caribbean island to be permanently settled by both the English and the French, and is renowned for its historical monuments. Known as the 'Mother Island', it provided the model and springboard for English and French colonization in the Caribbean. African slaves were brought in from the earliest years of European settlement, and it was on Saint Kitts and the other early colonies that the plantation system, based on sugar production and slavery, had its roots.

Today we tour St Kitts, the larger of the two islands. Our touring will provide us with an understanding and appreciation of the people, culture, history and natural beauty of St. Kitts. Basseterre, the capital, has a long history of colonial struggle that is reflected in its architecture and cultural monuments. This picturesque capital retains the flavour of both French and British occupation.

We will admire the colonial architecture and city landmarks such as the Clock Tower and the stately Berkeley Memorial in the town center. Surrounded by beautiful Georgian buildings is Independence Square, where slaves were once sold. We will see the Co-Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception and St. George Anglican Church. The Old Treasury Building, dating from 1894, now houses the National Museum and offers an overview of the culture and heritage of St Kitts and Nevis. This building was once also known as the gateway to the island because its archway was the point of entry from the pier for passengers arriving by ship.

We will step back in time at the 17th century Romney Manor, a former sugar estate. Here we will learn about the sugar and rum production

process, and find out more about the estate's previous owners, which include Sam Jefferson II (a relative of American Founding Father, Thomas Jefferson). We will take a walk through part of the 25 acres of lush tropical gardens, which include a massive collection of exotic palms. We will also visit the French colonial Fairview Great House and Gardens dating back to 1701 and set in two lush acres. We make a stop at the Amazing Grace Experience at Sandy Point, where we visit the setting which changed the life of a foul-mouthed slave trader named John Newton. This is where Newton penned one of the most famous songs of all time - "Amazing Grace".

On the northeast side of the island we find a place known as Black Rocks. Here one finds dramatic cliffs formed by the erupting volcano many years ago. Near the south of the island is Frigate Bay. The name Frigate Bay actually applies to two bays located close together at the northern end of the isthmus joining the Southeast Peninsula with the rest of the island.

This afternoon we visit Brimstone Hill, one of the best-preserved citadels in the Americas. This defunct British fort is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Built by African slaves during the 17th century, this was the scene of a number of Anglo-French maritime battles. Surrounded by former sugar plantations, the fort commands splendid views across the Caribbean waters. This is an exceptionally well-preserved example of 17th- and 18th-century military architecture, and is testimony to European colonial expansion, the African slave trade and the emergence of new societies in the Caribbean.

Overnight in St Kitts.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Nevis Island Excursion & Sightseeing

This morning we travel by private catamaran across the sparkling waters of St. Kitt's southeast peninsula to the island of Nevis. Here we experience the charm and tranquility of the "Queen of the Caribbees." Fanned by trade winds and dominated by an active volcano, this island is the quieter of the two, and the undulating landscape is punctuated by plantation-style properties. Nevis features a 3,232-foot (985-meter) extinct volcano -- Nevis Peak, surrounded by tropical rainforests and sandy beaches.

After docking at Charlestown we spend the day taking in the scenic, historic and cultural highlights of Nevis. Charlestown, the charming capital of Nevis, is peppered with historical monuments and attractions. Here there are numerous 18th and 19th century Georgian-style buildings, and the lack of modernization has kept much of Charlestown in its original state. Local efforts are underway to preserve many of the original buildings. From the 19th century ruins of sugar cane mills to Alexander Hamilton's childhood home, Nevis is dotted with sites for curious travellers and history buffs.

4000-years of human history are detailed in the small Museum of Nevis History. Housed in a Georgian style home, the museum's exhibits include pre-European artifacts, information about local conservation efforts, a timeline of the island's political history, as well as architectural and cultural information. We will visit Montpelier Plantation and Estate, where esteemed British admiral Horatio Nelson was married in 1787.

The road which circles the island forms part of the official 'Heritage Trail' which takes us to abandoned citadels, forts, heritage estates and churches. At the Golden Rock Plantation Hotel we can stroll the grounds of this former plantation located on the edge of a tropical rainforest. Flowering orchids and flamboyant bushes are among the visual highlights at The Botanical Gardens of Nevis These gardens incorporate a rainforest conservatory, modeled on Palm House at Kew Gardens in London.

We later return by ferry back to St. Kitts where you may have some free time this afternoon.

Overnight in St. Kitts.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 St Kitts & Nevis to Antigua / St Johns Touring

This morning we fly from St. Kitts to Antigua, a truly quintessential Caribbean island. Here, away from the glamour, one finds that island life is simple and relaxed. Antigua and Barbuda* is a twin-island country consisting of two major inhabited islands, and a number of smaller islands. Antigua has warm and steady winds, a complex coastline of safe harbours, and a protective unbroken wall of coral reef. In 1784 the legendary Admiral Horatio Nelson sailed to Antigua and established one of Great Britain's most important Caribbean bases. Today this is the largest of the English-speaking Leeward Islands. Antigua's little sister is Barbuda, a flat low-lying coral island that lays 43km (27 miles) to the north. (*We do not visit the island of Barbuda on this tour).

Canada/USA
1-800-665-3998

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sales@adventures-abroad.com

Antigua was born out of the sea by a volcano about 30 million years ago. First settled by hunter-gatherer Amerindians, carbon dating has established that the earliest settlements here started around 3100 BC. Antigua and Barbuda was settled specifically as a mercantile resource for the production of sugar. No serious attempts at colonization took place until 1632 when a party of Englishmen set out from nearby St. Kitts, landed on the southern side of Antigua and claimed it for the English Crown. Early settlers cultivated cash crops such as tobacco, indigo, cotton and ginger for export and subsistence crops for themselves. In succeeding years sugar came into prominence, and its production shaped Antigua's landscape. Today the island's rolling hills are dotted with stone sugar mills, relics from the bygone era when sugar was king. Historic Nelson's Dockyard, where Admiral Horatio Nelson quartered his fleet in 1784, attests to Antigua's long and colourful nautical history during colonial times.

This morning, upon arrival, we will enjoy a sightseeing tour of St. Johns, the capital. Each day the nearby villages nearly drain of their population as islanders make their way towards "Town" as it is commonly known.

The Museum of Antigua and Barbuda is Antigua's oldest building; housed in the old Court House built in 1750. Exhibits here explore Antigua's geological origins as well as more modern exhibits. The small yet informative displays give a brief historical overview of the island. The present day St John's Cathedral with its dramatic white towers is an imposing landmark built in 1845. This building has been rebuilt three times because of hurricane damage, and today it contains some items from the churches that previously stood on the same spot. Looming over the capital for which it takes its name, St. John's Cathedral is an impressive sight. During our time here we will also visit one of the local markets and enjoy a break for lunch before continuing to the hotel.

This afternoon we will visit one of Antigua's most famous landmarks, Nelson's Dockyard in English Harbour, which dates from 1745. This was home to Admiral Horatio Nelson until 1787. This landmark has been lovingly restored, and today these historic buildings house a museum, restaurant, hotels and marina. The surrounding national park includes the whole of English Harbour and Shirley Heights. At Nelson's Dockyard will visit the museum and explore the finest example of a British naval yard in the Caribbean. This harbour served as the British Naval Base of the Leeward Islands in the late 18th century, and this prized possession is now the only working Georgian dockyard in the region, and one of the last in the world.

Overnight in Antigua.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Antigua - Full Day Island Tour / Nelsons Dockyard & Shirley Heights

Today we tour the island of Antigua, starting with a visit to Half Moon Bay. Almost a mile long, this bay rests on Antigua's southeastern coast, facing the Atlantic. The wild side of Antigua can be seen at Devil's Bridge, a limestone arch on the shore of Indian Town Point on the eastern side of the island where at high tide the Atlantic waves come crashing through boreholes in the rocks near the bridge.

The islands' colonial history is brought home at the partially-restored Betty's Hope, Antigua's pioneer sugar plantation. Betty's Hope was the first large sugar plantation on Antigua, and its success led to the island's rapid development of large-scale sugar production. Although the only surviving structures are two stone sugar mills and the remains of the stillhouse, the site's importance in Antiguan history has prompted the government to begin developing it as an open-air museum. About a hundred stone windmill towers dot the Antiguan landscape, and the two restored examples at Betty's Hope provide a dramatic sense of the way these mills must have dominated the island during the hundreds of years that sugar production was the dominant industry.

Later we will journey to the south along one of Antigua's most picturesque drives -- the scenic 'Fig Tree Drive'. This winding road takes us through the lush tropical hills and rainforest, and rises to the steep farmland around Fig Tree Hill before descending to the coast at Falmouth Harbour. Fig is the Antiguan name for banana, and along the way you'll see not just bananas but also mangoes and coconut groves. Pigeon Point, a great stretch of sand at the mouth of Falmouth Harbour, is the perfect place for a beach stroll.

The view from Shirley Heights extends across the harbour and to the neighbouring Caribbean islands of Montserrat and Guadeloupe. This collection of gun emplacements and military buildings provides an atmospheric setting. The function of Shirley Heights was to protect the naval yard, as well as to serve as a holding area for military units destined for the British colonies in the Leeward Islands.

Overnight in Antigua.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Antigua - Dominica / Roseau City Sightseeing

Early today we fly to Dominica, a medley of brooding volcanic peaks, dense forests, gushing mountain streams, spouting geysers and quiet lakes. This is a truly diverse and beautiful land. Given its natural assets and warm and welcoming locals, Dominica should be a bustling tourism hotspot. But, this destination remains off the radar for many travellers and has been spared mass tourism! Much of volcanic Dominica is blanketed by untamed rainforest, and here we find large tropical forests, including one that is on the UNESCO list of World Heritage sites.

First discovered by the Spanish, Dominica was later colonized by the French and British before finally obtaining independence in 1978. The island has been nicknamed the "Nature Isle of the Caribbean" for its unspoiled natural beauty. It is the youngest island in the Lesser Antilles, still being formed by geothermal-volcanic activity. The highest point in the country is Morne Diablotins, which has an elevation of 1,447 metres (4,747 ft).

Christopher Columbus named the island after the day of the week on which he spotted it, a Sunday (dies Dominica in Latin), 3 November 1493. It was the sheer mountains that protected the islands and led the European powers to build ports and agricultural settlements on other nearby islands. More recently, the citizens of this island have sought to preserve its spectacular natural beauty by discouraging high-impact tourism. The vast majority of Dominicans are of African descent, and today there is a growing mixed population. Dominica is also the only Eastern Caribbean island that still has a population of pre-Columbian native Caribs, who were exterminated or driven from neighbouring islands.

Upon arrival we will enjoy a walking tour of historic Roseau, Dominica's capital. Here we can appreciate the rich local architectural heritage as the capital is home to one of the best-preserved collections of 18th century Creole architecture in the Caribbean. We will see the old market, Fort Young, the Victoria Memorial, Parliament, State House, the Anglican Church and the Old Armory. At the end of our sightseeing we will also drive up to Morne Bruce, a lookout point that offers panoramic views of Roseau, the port and the coastline.

This afternoon we will head to Soufriere and Scotts Head in the south. Soufriere is a small fishing village that is both beautiful and unspoiled. Scotts Head is a small point of land on the other side of a narrow isthmus that separates the Atlantic and the Caribbean. Here there is a short trail that offers fantastic views of the bay and Soufriere - a photographer's dream location.

Overnight on Dominica.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Dominica Island Exploration

Our destination this morning is Cabrits Historical Park. Our route takes us up the west coast of the island, through fishing villages and across the Layou River. We will pass by Portsmouth, Dominica's second-largest town set on the attractive Prince Rupert Bay. On the Cabrits Peninsula we find the ruins of Fort Shirley and Fort George dating back to the 18th century. The British built the former garrison of Fort Shirley for defensive purposes, and here we will visit the small museum, which features a collection of artifacts discovered on the site. We will also explore the jungle-lined trails around the area. Cabrits National Park sits on a small peninsula jutting into the Caribbean Sea. While learning about the fort's history, we also enjoy its lovely views of Prince Rupert Bay and the town of Portsmouth.

At the northeast corner of the island we will visit the Carib Indian Territory where we discover the indigenous lands of the only remaining Carib community in the Caribbean. Here we will visit the traditional village of Kalinago Barana Aute. For more than two centuries the colonial forces attempted to gain control of the island but the Kalinagos (Caribs) met them with fierce resistance. Before the arrival of Christopher Columbus the Kalinagos were a self-reliant people who survived mainly by fishing, hunting, and farming. These skilled people made their own dugout canoes, which were used to travel to and from the neighboring islands. The Caribs spoke their own language, worshipped the spirits of their ancestors, and were famous for their herbal medicine.

After lunch we will head to the beautiful Central Forest Reserve, the first of its kind in Dominica, established back in 1952. This reserve is home to a vast population of gommier trees whose wood has provided building and craft material to the Carib peoples for hundreds of years. We will drive through the reserve and enjoy the surrounding greenery as well as both Spanny Falls and Jack Falls along the way.

Overnight on Dominica.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 8 Dominica Sightseeing: UNESCO - Morne Trois Pitons National Park Exploration

Today we head to Morne Trois Pitons National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Encompassing 17,000 acres (6,880 hectares) in the southeast corner of the island, the park is mountainous and jungle-clad, and boasts waterfalls, lakes and gorges. Here the luxuriant natural tropical forest blends with scenic volcanic features of great scientific interest, centred on the 1,342-m-high volcano known as Morne Trois Pitons. With its precipitous slopes and deeply incised valleys, hot springs, freshwater lakes, and volcanoes, together with the richest biodiversity in the Lesser Antilles, Morne Trois Pitons National Park presents a rare combination of natural features of World Heritage value. We stretch our legs amid the lush greenery, towering trees and exotic foliage found along the National Park's hiking trails.

Six natural vegetation zones are identified within the park. Elfin Woodland grows at the highest elevation, and is almost constantly covered by mist. Montane Thicket is transitional and dominated by spindly trees with small canopies. Montane Rainforest grows above 2,000 ft. and is often in cloud cover or mist. Most trees here are also to be found in mature rainforest, though much reduced in stature. Mature Rainforest grows below 1,500 ft, and contains the most luxuriant growth. Secondary Rainforest grows in areas once cultivated but now abandoned, or in areas which have suffered landslides or other natural disasters. Most common here are tree ferns. Seasonal Formations occur at lower elevations and contain trees which blossom spectacularly in the dryer season. At least half of Dominica's 175 bird species can be observed in the park, including the Jacquot Parrot, Broad Winged Hawk, Trembler, doves, flycatchers, hummingbirds, and that elusive bird which is so often heard but seldom seen -- the Mountain Whistler.

Once inside the park we head to Freshwater Lake where we can enjoy a walk around the often-misty lake. A short drive brings us to Trafalgar Falls, Dominica's most popular. The setting here is incredibly beautiful.

Overnight on Dominica.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 9 Dominica - St Lucia

This afternoon we travel to St. Lucia! This island stands apart from the rest of the Caribbean islands thanks to its varied landscape and diverse culture, which is distinguished by African, Indian, Caribbean, British, Spanish and French influences.

The French, who were the island's first European settlers, named this Windward Isle after Saint Lucy of Syracuse. The French signed a treaty with the native Carib Indians in 1660, and later England took control of the island from 1663 to 1667. Rule of the island changed frequently (it was ruled seven times by both the French and British), and in 1814 the British took definitive control of the island. The British maintained control until 1979, when St Lucia became independent. Because it switched so often between British and French control, Saint Lucia was also known as the "Helen of the West Indies". One of the secondary languages is Saint Lucian Creole French, spoken by almost all of the population.

With a lush interior featuring towering mountains, dense rain forest, fertile valleys, and acres of banana plantations, St. Lucia is mostly distinguished by the UNESCO heritage site of the Pitons. These twin volcanic peaks soar high above the ocean floor on the southwest coast. Dominating the mountainous landscape of St Lucia, the steep-sided Pitons rise side by side from the sea. Gros Piton - 2,619 ft (770 m) is 3 km in diameter at its base, and Petit Piton - 2,461ft (743 m) is 1 km in diameter and linked to the former by the Piton Miton ridge.

During part of our time here we will venture into the island's interior where we explore the lush mountains and rainforest canopy. We will absorb the island's unique cultural heritage and diversity, from the colonial-style plantations dotted about the island to the French influence felt in the patois spoken throughout. This island is truly beautiful, with its gorgeous landscape and relatively low-key vibe. On our drive to the hotel we will pass by Roseau Plantation, an area famous for its large banana plantations, St. Lucia's main crop.

Overnight on St Lucia.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 St Lucia Sightseeing: Soufriere, the Pitons & Morne Coubaril Estate

This morning we will start with some magnificent views of the Pitons as we walk along the Tet Paul Nature Trail. The Pitons are a most

spectacular sight and a respected symbol of St. Lucia. Gros Piton and the Petit Piton are old volcanic forest covered plugs rising high out of the sea. The Pitons were considered sacred to the island's first inhabitants, and today they are not only treasured by St. Lucian's, but are also a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The views from the Tet Paul Scenic Trail have been described as absolutely heavenly. From the majestic Pitons to the far away islands of Martinique and St. Vincent, you can see it all from points along the trail. The gorgeous southern side of St. Lucia including Jalousie Bay is easily visible along the way. On a clear day you can even see Fond Gens Libre, Choiseul, and Maria Island. From here we head to the outskirts of town where we will find the breathtaking Toraille waterfall set amidst a botanical garden.

We will later marvel at the Diamond Waterfalls in the Diamond Botanical Gardens before heading to the extinct St. Lucia Volcano called the Sulphur Springs. Here there are more than 20 belching pools of muddy water, multicolor sulfur deposits, and other assorted minerals boiling and steaming on the surface. Next we will spend some time in Soufrière, St. Lucia's first capital and the most scenic town on the island. This deep-water port, with its brightly colored boats, stands at the foot of the two extinct volcanoes known as the Pitons - St Lucia's most famous landmarks. Soufrière is typically 'West Indian', with a cluster of brightly painted arcaded buildings set against the jungle vista.

Our last visit today will be to Morne Coubaril Estate, St Lucia's oldest French Creole Estate. This lush working estate grow cocoa, coconuts and manioc. Whilst here we will see a small village of reconstructed huts, similar to those used by the locals over 200 years ago. Not to be missed is the breathtaking view from the Estate's highest point.

Overnight on St Lucia.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 11 St Lucia: Adventure by Land and Sea

Today we will start by visiting the picturesque little villages of Choiseul and Laborie, both of which are surrounded by splendid vegetation. We will reach the most southern point of the island at Vieux Fort, with its long stretch of white sand beaches. This is one of the island's oldest settlements, and here we find some examples of French colonial architecture. The nearby lighthouse at Moule à Chique is 730 ft above sea level and looks across the water to St.Vincent, just 21 miles away. From this vantage point we may be able to see where the Caribbean's distinct blue-green waters mix with the darker-hued currents of the Atlantic.

We will explore the rugged and beautiful east coast with its breathtaking scenery. The Atlantic Ocean pounds against rocky cliffs, and acres and acres of bananas and coconut palms blanket the hillsides. On the east coast of St. Lucia is Dennery, set in a sheltered bay with Dennery Island guarding its entrance and dominated by the Roman Catholic Church. Here we can see the distinctive St. Lucia fishing boats pulled up onto the beach. Between Dennery and Praslin, just off the coast, lie the Fregate Islands. These small islands, hardly larger than protruding rocks, are the nesting spots of the majestic frigate bird. Praslin is where local boat builders still create fishing canoes from gommier trees. The Gommier tree grows in the forests of Dominica and St. Lucia, and it secretes a resin that protects it from the seawater. We travel through plantations and unspoiled villages to reach the Barre de L'Isle, the mountain barrier that divides the island. This is the central mountain road that is fringed with rainforest vegetation.

The bustling city of Castries is located in one of the most beautiful spots in the Caribbean. Surrounded by hills, the large Castries harbour at the head of a wide bay is a constant hive of activity. The spacious Derek Walcott Square features a 19th-century Catholic Cathedral, which stands in the shade of a large 400-year-old Saman tree (locally known as "Massav"). Nearby is the colourful and busy central market. We will see the Central Library and the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. The St. Lucian Government House is one of the most important pieces of historical architecture in St. Lucia, dating from 1865. The aged walls with white trimmings of this old Victorian based architecture, presents a lovely view even from a distance. This is also the official residence of St. Lucia's Governor General.

We next move onwards to Greenwood Terrace where we explore the mini-museum as well as the grounds of this lovely setting, which boasts over 260 varieties of tropical plants. The indigenous fruit trees include several varieties of mangoes, as well as guava, bananas, avocados, and cassava. The area is also a natural habitat for more than 20 species of tropical birds, a number of which can only be found on St. Lucia

A true highlight at the end of our day will be a boat cruise along the west coast of the island. Here we will marvel at the beauty of the coastline, and cruise through Marigot Bay, which was once a haven to pirates. Upon our return to Soufriere we will drive the short distance back to our hotel.

Overnight on St Lucia.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 12 St Lucia - Barbados / Bridgetown Touring

This morning we fly to Barbados, the easternmost island in the Lesser Antilles. During our time here we will explore Barbados's interior and discover crumbling sugar mills, historic plantation houses, traditional churches, and colonial Bridgetown -- the nation's capital. Amerindian settlement of Barbados dates to about the 4th to 7th centuries AD. Barbados was visited by Spanish navigators in the late 15th century and then was claimed for the Spanish Crown. The island first appears on a Spanish map from 1511, and the Portuguese visited the island in 1536, but left it unclaimed. An English ship, the Olive Blossom, arrived in Barbados in 1625; its men took possession of it in the name of King James I. In 1627 the first permanent settlers arrived from England, and it became an English and later British colony. Apart from possibly displacing the Caribs, the Spanish and Portuguese made little impact and left the island uninhabited.

This afternoon we will tour UNESCO protected Bridgetown and its Garrison. As one of the earliest established towns with a fortified port in the Caribbean network of military and maritime-mercantile outposts of the British Atlantic, historic Bridgetown and its Garrison was the focus of trade-based English expansion in the Americas. By the 17th century, the fortified port town was able to establish its importance in the British Atlantic trade and became an entrepôt for goods, especially sugar, and enslaved persons destined for Barbados and the rest of the Americas.

In town we will visit the National Heroes Square, which boasts a statue of Lord Nelson, which was erected in 1813, well before Nelson's Column was put up in London. Nearby are the Parliament Buildings.

Overnight Barbados.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Barbados Sightseeing: Central Island Exploration

Today's touring begins with a drive towards the St. George Valley. Nestled in lush vegetation, and built in 1818, Gun Hill Signal Station is one of a chain of signal stations established across the country for the security of Barbados, and for dissemination of information mainly relating to shipping. Today it is fully restored and landscaped. At 700 feet above sea level, this spot affords one of the most characteristic views of the Island.

We then drive to the heart of the island a visit Anthony Hunte's masterpiece garden. The placement of these gardens is really most unusual, as they are located in a sinkhole in the center of Barbados' rain forest. Thanks to such an interesting location, the gardens offers a 'multidimensional' experience, with vigorous plants densely growing on many levels -- from sunny and open spaces, down to a mysterious, dark heart of real Caribbean jungle. This is one of the most beautiful spots on the island.

We will make our way to the aged and charming Morgan Lewis Mill, one of only two of the Caribbean's intact sugar mills. Although the old plantation house has seen better days, its crumbling exteriors are very evocative and an important legacy of the island's history. Near the northern tip of the island we will see the Jacobean St Nicholas Abbey, graced with ornate Persian arches. This Plantation House is likely the last remaining authentic house of the 17th Century existing anywhere in the "New World". When this residence was built of brick and limestone, many of the structures in North America were constructed of timber. The British built the residence only 30 years after Barbados' settlement in 1627. Today the Plantation produces award-winning rum.

Our journey continues to the northern tip of the island stopping at North Point where the landscape differs drastically from the rest of Barbados, as here you will find waves crashing into limestone cliffs.

Overnight Barbados.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 14 Barbados Full Day Tour: Codrington College & Andromeda Botanic Gardens

Our tour today takes us to many of the places that make Barbados a 'gem of the Caribbean'. As we travel along the south coast we pass through the popular fishing village of Oistins before stopping at the beautiful Miami Beach, a favorite with visitors and locals alike. From here we continue to Foul Bay. Nothing can truly prepare you for the turquoise waters that wash this long and wide beach. Here the lush white sands are a perfect place for a stroll, and this idyllic spot is one of the most beautiful beaches on the island.

The unique Andromeda Botanic Gardens are located in the parish of St Joseph. Here we will walk through the winding pathways and journey through this horticultural delight. You will be amazed at the variety of unique trees and six acres of tropical gardens. On the southeast side of the island is Codrington College, built in 1715. This is the oldest Theological College in the western hemisphere. Just up the hill from Codrington College is St John's Church, one of the oldest churches on the island. Set on a cliff, this location captures spectacular views of the east coast of Barbados. This historic church is an excellent example of a classic Gothic Church with all the essentials of "the true church architecture".

We continue through the rolling countryside, accented by the rugged Atlantic Coast, to Bathsheba. This location used to hold the old railroad that took people from Bridgetown to the East Coast. Now it is the home of world-class surfing and holiday homes. Barbados's East Coast Road, hemmed by crashing Atlantic waves, is one of the island's most exciting drives. Our rugged coastal route overlooks treacherous reefs while an inland road weaves through rolling sugarcane to quaint plantation towns topped by church steeples. Bathsheba is one of the most popular destinations on the east coast, where giant coral boulders, which have broken away from ancient coral reefs over thousands of years, offer striking photograph opportunities.

We later return back to Bridgetown where we visit the George Washington House and Museum, a beautifully restored plantation house. We then continue to our final destination for the day - the Mount Gay Rum tour and tasting. Mount Gay Rum can trace its heritage back to 1703, making it the world's oldest rum producer.

Overnight Barbados.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast

Day 15 Barbados - St Vincent & the Grenadines

Today we fly from Barbados to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Scattered across the Caribbean, the 32 islands and cays St Vincent & the Grenadines make for a glorious-looking archipelago. There is something truly timeless about this destination, with it's lush mountain peaks, secluded coves, and volcanic landscapes. Just the name St Vincent and the Grenadines evokes visions of exotic, idyllic island life.

While the English were the first to lay claim to Saint Vincent, the French would be the first European settlers on the island when they established their colony at Barrouallie shortly before 1700. Carib Indians aggressively prevented European settlement on St. Vincent until the 18th century. African slaves, whether shipwrecked or escaped from Saint Lucia or Grenada and seeking refuge in St. Vincent, intermarried with the Caribs. Saint Vincent was ceded to Britain by the Treaty of Paris in 1763, restored to French rule in 1779 and regained by the British under the Treaty of Versailles in 1783.

Overnight St Vincent.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 16 Kingstown Sightseeing & St Vincent Island Touring

This morning we will tour the capital Kingstown, with its lively harbour, narrow cobblestone streets, market and pristine Georgian buildings. Wrapped around the bay on the southwestern coast of St.Vincent, this is a small capital with big appeal. In the town center we find St Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral. Built of grey stone, it is a graceful combination of several European architectural styles displaying Romanesque arches, Gothic spires and Moorish ornamentation. Such architecture has led Kingstown to become known as the City of Arches. Fort Charlotte is a former British garrison; which was completed in 1806 and was named Fort Charlotte in honour of Queen Charlotte, wife of King George III, the reigning monarch of England at that time. Standing over 600 feet above sea level the fort is now being used as a signal station and offers some great panoramic views.

We later head up the west coast and explore the villages of Questelles, Layou, Barrouallie and Châteaubelair, all of which have charming pastel-coloured cottages and excellent black-sand beaches from which fishermen set out daily in small brightly painted boats. Carving along the clifftops, the scenic Leeward Highway runs from Kingstown to Richmond Beach along St Vincent's sheltered west coast. The road passes by local villages, beaches and coconut plantations. When we stop at the black sands near Richmond Beach we will see La Soufrière in the distance... an active volcano and the island's highest peak.

During our time along the coast we will visit the Layou Petroglyph Park, a cultural landmark and pre-Columbian site. Here petroglyphs (rock carvings) were carved into a giant boulder by pre-Columbian inhabitants sometime between AD 300 and 600.

Before returning to our hotel we will visit the St. Vincent Botanical Gardens, the oldest in the West Indies and the western hemisphere. These gardens are home to a wealth of tropical plants, flowers, trees and birds. The gardens were created in 1765 by the governor of the British Caribbean islands. The plan was to develop a plant breeding center, provide medicinal plants for the military, and improve the life and economy of the colony. Famous for being the destination of Captain Bligh's second visit to the Caribbean in 1798 (his first ended in the infamous mutiny on the Bounty) when he introduced breadfruit to the island, the gardens celebrated their 250th anniversary in 2015.

Overnight in St Vincent.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 17 St Vincent Island Touring

Today we head east from Kingston and enjoy a scenic drive into the countryside. We will pass through the village of Mesopotamia Valley, commonly known as the 'bread basket' or 'food basket' of the island because of its rich and fertile soil. Root crops and fruit trees are grown here, including bananas, which are part of the mainstay of St. Vincent's economy. The panoramic view offered by the Mesopotamia Valley is probably unsurpassed in the Caribbean. This richly fertile valley is also thickly planted with nutmeg, cocoa, coconut, breadfruit and many root crops.

The scenic coastal drive takes us away from the lush interior of the Mesopotamia Valley. Our route north along the rugged Atlantic coast provides magnificent views across ridges and valleys. At the north end of St. Vincent, near the small fishing town of Owia, is one of the island's most unique and hidden natural features: Owia Salt Pond. The "pond" itself was formed when lava from the erupting Soufriere volcano met the sea and rapidly cooled, forming a small bowl at the water's edge.

St. Vincent has a long history of arrowroot production. Arrowroot cultivation is now concentrated on farms located north of the Rabacca River, particularly in the area. This is also the area where the population of Carib descent is concentrated.

Overnight St Vincent.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 18 St Vincent - Grenada

Today we fly from St. Vincent to Grenada, one of the loveliest environments in the Caribbean. Grenada offers a mountainous and volcanic landscape where we find crater lakes, rainforests and coastal mangrove plantations giving way to white sand beaches. Grenada is known as the 'Spice Island', and with good reason. Nutmeg, cloves, cinnamon, ginger and vanilla are just a few of the scented gems found here. This is a true island country, consisting of Grenada itself and six smaller islands at the southern end of the Grenadines in the southeastern Caribbean Sea. Grenada's physical beauty is complemented by its rich history and vibrant, living cultural heritage. The centuries-old spice plantations and rum distilleries still use traditional methods, emphasizing quality rather than quantity.

Christopher Columbus discovered Grenada in 1498. At that time the island was already inhabited by the Carib Indians, who had migrated from the South American mainland, killing or enslaving the peaceful Arawaks who were already inhabitants there. The Amerindians called their island Camerhogue, but Columbus renamed it Concepción. However, passing Spanish sailors found its lush green hills so evocative of Andalusia that they rejected this name in favor of Granada. Over the centuries, although control of the island passed from France to Britain (and briefly back to France again), the name endured with just the slightest of alterations, changing from 'Granada' to 'La Grenade' to 'Grenada'. Today this is a rolling, mountainous island that is bordered by stunning beaches, and dotted with picturesque towns. In the interior of this volcanic island are cascading rivers and waterfalls, lush rainforests, and one of the most breathtakingly beautiful mountain lakes imaginable.

One of the first things we will do upon arrival is drive to Quarantine Point for the great views of Grand Anse & Morne Rouge Bay. Just a short distance south from St. George, and fringed by sea grapes and coconut palms, Grand Anse is undoubtedly Grenada's most famous beach. One bay south of Grand Anse, near the southern tip of Grenada, we find Morne Rouge Bay. Here the calm jade-green seas slosh upon the crescent of white sand. The lush foliage fringing the beach provides plenty of shady areas to sit and relax.

We will then continue our touring in one of the prettiest port towns in the Caribbean, the colorful capital city of St George. The popular market in the heart of Grenada's commercial center was once used as a place for public executions, trading slaves, and political speeches! Today it is a place for farmers and spice vendors to sell their produce! This location is widely held to be the loveliest city in the Caribbean. Grenada's National Museum is one of the oldest structures in town, and houses artifacts from Carib times up until today, and presents a rich

collection of Grenada's history. Built by the French in 1704, the museum was originally part of the foundations of Fort George complex, and for a while served as a women's prison. Today the collections include, but are not limited to slavery, the region's first inhabitants, plantation economics, whaling, fishing and archaeology. On Church Street stands the Roman Catholic Cathedral, dating back to 1884. On the opposite side are the remains of the Parliament Buildings standing together with the Law Courts. Lower down are the Anglican Church and the remains of the Presbyterian Church – battered by Hurricane Ivan in 2004.

Atop Richmond Hill we discover Fort Frederick with its stunning views. The French began construction of the fort in 1779 and the British then completed it in 1791. It is nicknamed the "backwards facing fort" because its cannons face inland instead of out to sea thanks to the French who feared a surprise land attack after they used this successful strategy with the British. In 1850, the fort was abandoned completely until it was later occupied by the Grenadian military. On a promontory to the west of the harbor we find Fort George, Grenada's oldest fort.

Overnight on Grenada.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 19 Grenada South Island Touring

This morning we will start with a visit to De La Grenade Industries where we will sample nutmeg jams and jellies as well as other products made with Grenada's fruits and spices. The Nutmeg Garden is located adjacent to De La Grenade Industries, in the lush, verdant hills of St. Paul's at the eastern edge of the parish of St. George's.

Our route then continues towards the east coast via Corinth and St Davids, and we will travel up the east coast to the Grenville Nutmeg processing station where we will enjoy a tour. From Grenville, the second largest town in Grenada we cross the island and come to the Grand Etang National Park and Forest Reserve. Here we will enjoy a walk to explore this park, which is home to a rich diversity of plants, and beautiful rainforest scenery. One of the focal points of the park is the beautiful crater-formed Grand Etang Lake. From the Grand Etang visitor center we can walk along one of the self-guided trails beneath the towering rainforest trees.

We then continue to Annandale falls. These 15m (50ft) waterfalls are one of the most spectacular in Grenada's - enclosed in a garden of green and a wall of rocks covered in soft ferns and other vegetation. We return to St George in the late afternoon.

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Overnight on Grenada.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 20 Grenada North Island Touring

This morning we travel up the west coast of the island, heading towards the rustic Dougaldston Spice Estate – one of Grenada's oldest and largest plantations. This traditional plantation is in the centre of the nutmeg and cocoa-growing region. Nearby are the fishing villages of Victoria and Gouyave. The Gouyava Nutmeg Processing Station is the largest facility on the island.

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We will stop at Carib's Leap in Sauters in order to view the beginning of the Grenadine chain. It was at this location that the last remaining Carib Natives in Grenada jumped to their deaths from a 40-meter high cliff 1651 rather than face domination by the conquering French. Thus the town was named Sauters, which is French for "jumpers". We then visit Levera National Park situated on the northeastern shore of the island. This 450-acre park holds a strong reputation as Grenada's most scenic and spectacular coastal area, and offers some dramatic scenery where the Caribbean Sea meets the Atlantic. Within the park we find Levera Pond where we make a short stop. Here we find a water-filled ancient volcanic crater, and a bird-watch bridge that extends into a mangrove area. The lagoon is one of the most important wildlife habitats on the island and a haven for an abundance of bird species, including many herons, black-necked stilts, common snipes, and other waterfowl. Backed by cliff walls, Bathway Beach boasts views of Sugar Loaf (Levera Island) and other islands in the distance.

Set in 400 acres of lush rolling hills in the north of Grenada we find the Belmont Estate. Here we gain a real 'eco-friendly' taste of Grenada, its history, culture, flavours and traditions. This 300-year-old working estate is home to a plantation, museum and beautiful gardens. In the museum we will see displays that document Grenada's ancestry, traditions, lifestyle, social history and plantation history. We will also learn about the history of the estate. Belmont Estate makes the perfect stop for lunch on our journey today!

We will make a photo stop at the River Antoine Rum Distillery, a privately owned distillery and the oldest functioning water-propelled distillery in the Caribbean. Here the processes have changed little since 1875.

At the end of our day we return to St George's via Grand Etang.

Overnight on Grenada.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 21 Departure

Departure from Grenada.

BON VOYAGE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast