

St. Kitts (St. Christopher) (Special Southern Caribbean Itineraries)

This **peaceful little paradise** in the Caribbean's chain of Leeward Islands is a respite from some of the more frenetic islands. The island is dominated by the 3,792-foot-tall Mount Liamuiga (say "Lee-a-mweega"), a dormant volcano carpeted by dense tropical forests.



North and South Friars Bays, St. Kitts

St. Kitts' volcanic origins give the island its **distinctive geography** and abundant vegetation. The jungle-covered central peaks of the island are mostly uninhabited, with most people living in the flatter areas near the coasts. Fascinating features include lava formations, tropical forests, and numerous lagoons. Its sister island, Nevis, is a single peak slightly more than two miles away. Nevis comes from the Spanish word for snow and it is named so because of the crown of white clouds that often covers its peak. The old sugar plantation homes are now more often grand hotels, and quaint Colonial architecture is evident throughout the towns.

Christopher Columbus first spotted St. Kitts in 1493 on his second voyage. There's been speculation that he even named the island after himself (**St. Kitts is a shortened form of St. Christopher**, Columbus' patron saint). The British arrived in 1623 to establish its first colony in the West Indies among its lush forests and fertile soil. The island's strategic location and vigorous sugar trade played a large role in the formation of the new world, and St. Kitts became known as the "Mother Colony" of the Caribbean. At one time, 68 sugar plantations operated on St. Kitts alone. In 1983, St. Kitts and Nevis gained independence from the United Kingdom, and they are now collectively an independent country. Hurricane Georges tore through the islands in 1998, but they've rebounded well and damages have been repaired.

Size: 18 miles (29 km.) long by 5 miles (8 km.) wide

Climate: Subtropical

Temperatures: 79°F (26°C) to 87°F (30°C)

Population: 39,000

Busy Season: November to May

Language: English

Money: E. Carib. dollar (\$1 = \$0.37 U.S.)

Time Zone: Atlantic (no DST)

Transportation: Walking, taxis, cars

Phones: Dial 1- from U.S., dial 911 for emergencies

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Making the Most of St. Kitts

GETTING THERE

The Disney Wonder docks in Basseterre, capital of St. Kitts. The new **Port Zante** dock is a deep-water, 27-acre cruise ship facility that allows large cruise ships to pull right up for debarkation—no tendering is necessary in most cases. The facility offers a welcome center as well as some shopping and dining. The city is within walking distance, as is more shopping at the Pelican Mall (see map on next page). Taxis are available right at the port if you want to venture outside Basseterre. You should be able to disembark by 7:30 am (check your *Personal Navigator* for going ashore details). “All Aboard” time is expected to be 4:30 pm.

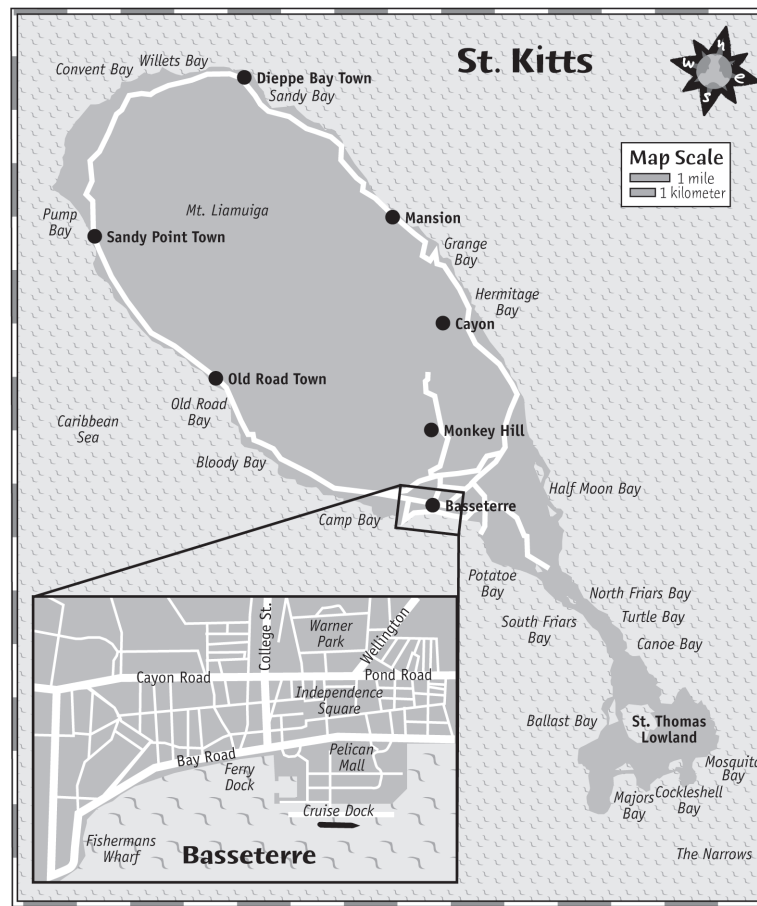
GETTING AROUND

If you’re not on a shore excursion, you’ll probably just want to **hoof it around Basseterre**—we suggest a stroll to Independence Square (once the site of the largest slave market in the Caribbean) and the “Circus” (a roundabout modeled after London’s famous Piccadilly Circus). If you want to go further afield, take a taxi—rates are fixed and posted. Expect to pay about \$30–40 U.S. to reach most destinations. A four-hour taxi tour is about \$60 U.S. Plenty of rental car agencies (including Avis and Thrifty) are located in Basseterre within walking distance of the ship, but you’ll need a local driving permit (about \$10 from the rental car agency) and driving is on the left side of the road. If you do rent a car, drive slowly—many animals (cows, goats, donkeys) use the roads, and they have the right of way. The road that circumnavigates St. Kitts is well maintained and marked. A ferry (\$6–\$8 U.S.) is available to Nevis (and the ferry dock is near Port Zante), but the passage takes 45 minutes each way. With the 4:30 pm port departure, we don’t recommend you risk the ferry. If you must visit Nevis, look for a shore excursion offered by Disney instead.

STAYING SAFE

Your health and safety when exploring a foreign land should be your number one priority. Tourists everywhere are targets for robbery—St. Kitts is no exception, but don’t let that discourage you from exploring. Just exercise caution and leave extra cash and valuable items behind on the ship in your in-room safe. Remember that traffic in St. Kitts drives on the left-hand side, so be sure to look in both directions before crossing the road. Water is generally safe to drink here—it comes from volcanic springs.

Touring St. Kitts



St. Kitts' highest point is Mt. Liamuiga and is noted on the map above. The dormant volcano offers amazing views of the caldera and the entire island (on a clear day). It is a difficult hike, however, and we don't recommend it to any but those who are physically fit. This is a full day's activity as it takes about 2.5 hours to hike each way. If you want to try it, check to see if any of the shore excursions Disney offers goes up. If not, check with Greg's Safaris at 869-465-4121 or <http://www.gregssafaris.com> (this tour operator also offers rainforest hikes and sugar plantation tours).

Playing in St. Kitts

ACTIVITIES

From walking on sugar-fine sand to playing in gray volcanic sand, St. Kitts offers some of the most **beautiful beaches** in the Caribbean. The beautiful white sand beaches of the Southeast Peninsula are accentuated by the panoramic views of sister island Nevis. With the emphasis on preserving the environment, the minimally developed beaches of Turtle Beach and Sand Bank Bay are exceptionally clean and relaxing. Years of erosion have made the black volcanic rock that is abundant throughout the island into an intriguing, gray sand. Found at numerous beaches at the northern end of the island, the gray sand is certainly worth a look, especially if you are looking for an alternative to the white sandy beaches usually found on St. Kitts. Travel to Frigate Bay for two beaches: on the western side, the Caribbean Sea offers calm waters to play and relax in; on the eastern, the Atlantic Ocean offers large waves that are ideal for body surfing.

While St. Kitts is not a major **dive destination**, some interesting sites do exist. Both shallow inshore and offshore shoals provide good diving, as does the coral reef between St. Kitts and Nevis. If you are certified and want to try a dive, contact Kenneth's Dive Center (see page 214 for contact information).

Brimstone Hill Fortress, a stop on several shore excursions, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a fascinating place for those who enjoy history and architecture. It's quite large and has both a visitor center and a museum. It also provides stunning views—on a clear day, you can see several neighboring islands. If you want to visit on your own, you can get a taxi at the port for about \$30 U.S. Admission is \$8 U.S. (Kids are \$4 U.S.) Hours are 9:30 am–5:30 pm. For more information, visit <http://www.brimstonehillfortress.org>.

Another must-see attraction in St. Kitts is **Romney Manor**, which was once owned by Thomas Jefferson's great-great-great-grandfather. The manor has 10 acres of majestic grounds—look for the 350-year-old saman tree that covers half an acre! This is also the site of Caribelle Batik—you can watch artists create batik items as well as purchase them (there's also a store in downtown Basseterre if you can't make it there). For more information, phone 869-465-6253 or visit <http://www.caribellebatikstkitts.com>. Admission is free.

Embarking on Shore Excursions in St. Kitts

Below are descriptions of common shore excursions in St. Kitts intended to acquaint you with the possibilities, based on typical offerings by other cruise lines.

<p>■ Basseterre Walking Tour</p> <p><i>Stroll the charming capital of St. Kitts with a knowledgeable tour guide. Your leisurely walk will likely take you by the Treasure Building, the Circus, Pretoria Gardens, Berkeley Memorial, Independence Square, and St. George's Anglican Church. A light refreshment will probably be served on your tour. Afterward, you may opt to go shopping or get transportation back to the dock.</i></p>	   <table border="1"> <tr><td>Tour</td></tr> <tr><td>Active</td></tr> <tr><td>All ages</td></tr> <tr><td>\$49-\$42</td></tr> <tr><td>2 hours</td></tr> </table>	Tour	Active	All ages	\$49-\$42	2 hours
Tour						
Active						
All ages						
\$49-\$42						
2 hours						
<p>■ Catamaran Sail</p> <p><i>Board a catamaran and sail to the island of Nevis. You'll stop at a protected cove for snorkeling (equipment and orientation provided). Back onboard, you'll sail to the 3-mile-long Pinneys Beach, where a barbecue awaits you. Complimentary beverages are served throughout the cruise (alcoholic beverages served after snorkeling). You must remain barefoot while on the catamaran.</i></p>	   <table border="1"> <tr><td>Sports</td></tr> <tr><td>Active</td></tr> <tr><td>Ages 6 & up</td></tr> <tr><td>\$95-\$119</td></tr> <tr><td>6 hours</td></tr> </table>	Sports	Active	Ages 6 & up	\$95-\$119	6 hours
Sports						
Active						
Ages 6 & up						
\$95-\$119						
6 hours						
<p>■ Highlights Tour</p> <p><i>Board an air-conditioned bus and take a scenic 30-minute coastal drive to the 300-year-old Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park, Romney Gardens, and Caribelle Batik Studio. Time to tour each of these sites is provided. You'll even get a view of Mt. Liamuiga as you return to the cruise dock. Some stair climbing is involved, as is walking at each of the tour stop locations.</i></p>	   <table border="1"> <tr><td>Tour</td></tr> <tr><td>Leisurely</td></tr> <tr><td>All ages</td></tr> <tr><td>\$40-\$52</td></tr> <tr><td>3-4 hours</td></tr> </table>	Tour	Leisurely	All ages	\$40-\$52	3-4 hours
Tour						
Leisurely						
All ages						
\$40-\$52						
3-4 hours						
<p>■ Mountain Biking Tour & Beach Time</p> <p><i>Set off from Basseterre to Timothy Hill and the Frigate Bay resort area on a mountain bike. Time for a rewarding swim at Frigate Bay Beach is provided, along with refreshments. This excursion is for experienced mountain bikers in very good physical shape. Closed-toe shoes are required. Safety equipment is provided (and required). Minimum height is 60"/153 cm.</i></p>	   <table border="1"> <tr><td>Sports</td></tr> <tr><td>Very active</td></tr> <tr><td>Ages 12 & up</td></tr> <tr><td>\$78-\$89</td></tr> <tr><td>4 hours</td></tr> </table>	Sports	Very active	Ages 12 & up	\$78-\$89	4 hours
Sports						
Very active						
Ages 12 & up						
\$78-\$89						
4 hours						
<p>■ Nature Kayak and Snorkel Adventure</p> <p><i>Your adventure begins with a scenic drive to White House Cove in the southern peninsula, where you receive a safety briefing and kayak orientation. Then you board your two-person ocean kayak and paddle along the beautiful coastline to Friars Bay (about a 90-minute trip, or one-and-a-half miles). An opportunity to snorkel and snorkel equipment are provided, as are soft drinks and snacks after your paddle. You return to the ship by minivan. This excursion is for guests in good physical condition. Wear your swimsuit under your clothing.</i></p>	   <table border="1"> <tr><td>Sports</td></tr> <tr><td>Very active</td></tr> <tr><td>Ages 10 & up</td></tr> <tr><td>\$65-\$79</td></tr> <tr><td>3 hours</td></tr> </table>	Sports	Very active	Ages 10 & up	\$65-\$79	3 hours
Sports						
Very active						
Ages 10 & up						
\$65-\$79						
3 hours						
<p>■ Nevis Highlights and Botanical Gardens</p> <p><i>Take a 45-minute ferry to the island of Nevis, enjoying the scenic coast along the way. Once on Nevis, drive through Charlestown, stopping at Alexander Hamilton's Museum and finally arriving at the eight-acre botanical gardens with a glass conservatory, re-created temple, and a variety of gardens. Fruit punch is provided at Martha's West Indian Tea House before your return.</i></p>	   <table border="1"> <tr><td>Tour</td></tr> <tr><td>Leisurely</td></tr> <tr><td>All ages</td></tr> <tr><td>\$109-\$129</td></tr> <tr><td>3.5 hours</td></tr> </table>	Tour	Leisurely	All ages	\$109-\$129	3.5 hours
Tour						
Leisurely						
All ages						
\$109-\$129						
3.5 hours						

See page 158 for a key to the shore excursion description charts and their icons.

Embarking on Shore Excursions in St. Kitts (continued)

■ Panoramic Island Drive	  					
<p>Journey from Basseterre in an air-conditioned bus for an informative overview of St. Kitts' history and heritage. The narrated tour takes you through the city, into the "sugar country," and down the island's southern peninsula for views of Frigate Bay. You may even spot the island of Nevis in the distance. Some roads are unpaved, and you may experience bumps.</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Tour</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Leisurely</td> </tr> <tr> <td>All ages</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$28-\$44</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2 hours</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Tour	Leisurely	All ages	\$28-\$44	2 hours
Tour						
Leisurely						
All ages						
\$28-\$44						
2 hours						
■ Peninsular 4x4 Safari	  					
<p>Travel to St. Kitts' southern peninsula in 4x4 troop trucks. Your adventure will likely take you past Frigate Bay, Timothy Hill, and an old Overseer's House, where you can get out and explore the ruins. You'll continue to the extreme southern point of St. Kitts (Cockleshell Bay) to relax on the beach, enjoy fruit and juice, and catch a glimpse of Nevis. You return via the same route.</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Tour</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Leisurely</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ages 6 & up</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$54-\$62</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3.5 hours</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Tour	Leisurely	Ages 6 & up	\$54-\$62	3.5 hours
Tour						
Leisurely						
Ages 6 & up						
\$54-\$62						
3.5 hours						
■ Rainforest Tour	  					
<p>After a 30-minute scenic drive, you arrive at Romney Gardens, where you'll have an opportunity to tour the manicured gardens and batik studio. Then you're off on a two-hour nature walk through the cool rainforest with a tour guide who provides commentary on the local flora and fauna. Enjoy fruit and juice at the end of your walk. Wear closed-toe shoes and bring raingear.</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Tour</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Active</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ages 4 & up</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$38-\$69</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4 hours</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Tour	Active	Ages 4 & up	\$38-\$69	4 hours
Tour						
Active						
Ages 4 & up						
\$38-\$69						
4 hours						
■ Sail and Snorkel	  					
<p>Board a catamaran for a 45-minute cruise along St. Kitts' pristine coast as you head to the southern peninsula. After dropping anchor at the special site, you can explore the underwater world with the provided snorkel equipment or just swim. You may see parrotfish, trumpetfish, angelfish, and sand sharks. Soft drinks will be provided onboard.</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Sports</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Active</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ages 4 & up</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$59</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3 hours</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Sports	Active	Ages 4 & up	\$59	3 hours
Sports						
Active						
Ages 4 & up						
\$59						
3 hours						
■ Scenic Rail Tour	  					
<p>Enjoy a circuit of the entire island of St. Kitts on a one-of-a-kind narrow gauge railroad built nearly a century ago. The double-deck railcars feature an upper level with an open-air observation deck as well as a lower level with air conditioning (and you will have a seat available on both levels). Complimentary drinks, island music, and island narrative are provided during your journey. You'll cross steel bridges, spot neighboring islands, and pass small villages, towns, and popular tourist attractions. Seating is first-come, first-serve.</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Tour</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Leisurely</td> </tr> <tr> <td>All ages</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$80-\$100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3.5 hours</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Tour	Leisurely	All ages	\$80-\$100	3.5 hours
Tour						
Leisurely						
All ages						
\$80-\$100						
3.5 hours						

See page 158 for a key to the shore excursion description charts and their icons.

St. Kitts On Your Own

For those who want to get a head start on their excursion plans or just want to do it on their own, here is some information on tour operators in St. Kitts. Please note that we have not used these operators, nor is any mention here an endorsement of their services. Many visitors love the "private taxi tours" which you can get right near the dock—expect to pay \$40 for a peninsular tour and \$60 for an island tour. Catamaran and snorkeling cruises are offered by **Blue Water Safaris** (869-466-4833, <http://www.bluewatersafaris.com>). Dives are available through **Kenneth's Dive Center** (869-465-2670, <http://www.kennethsdivecenter.com>) and **Dive St. Kitts** (800-621-1270, <http://www.divestkitts.com>).