

The Caribbean island of St Kitts is perfect for a few days anchorage during a cruise of the Leeward chain. SEA+I has the inside track on the best the island has to offer.

St Kitts

What to do

St Kitts' laid-back charm and welcoming locals attracts visitors from far and wide. The island has a turbulent history and an abundance of historical sites - remnants of colonial days when both the French and British were based on St Kitts. One such site is the British slave-built fort at Brimstone Hill. Dating back to the 17th century, this UNESCO World Heritage site sits perched high on a hill and commands spectacular views over the neighbouring islands. During the 17th and 18th centuries this gentle-paced island was one of the West Indies' leading sugar-cane producers. The sugar-cane wagon tracks are now used for a tourist train that winds its way past the ruins of some of the private sugar plantations and their estate houses that thrived before the abolition of slavery.

For the active guests on board, the south-west coast offers spectacular diving. From snorkelling in the shallows to scuba diving through challenging 30-metre long underwater

Right, clockwise from top left

— The southwest coast offers spectacular diving; lobster is often the catch of the day on St Kitts; Basse Terre is home to reggae bars; several sites offer spectacular views over St Kitts and neighbouring islands

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By Miriam Cain

Sample St Kitts during a charter through the Leeward Islands. Contact your nearest Camper & Nicholsons charter broker for more information. See page 6.

canyons, there is something for all standards. Those wishing to step ashore for an afternoon's activity will also find a challenging hike up the island's extinct volcano, Mount Liamuiga, and those slightly less energetic can take to the network of trails that winds its way through the lush rainforest.

Back on the coast, if you're looking to rest from that big hike, take it easy and lounge around on any one of a number of white sand beaches, the best of which includes Turtle Beach, Banana Beach and Half Moon Bay.

Where to stay

St Kitts is not the place to go for all-inclusive resorts and the island has only recently switched its primary

economic focus from exporting sugar to increasing the numbers of visiting tourists. However there is one new development spread over 300-acres of the southeast peninsula that is attracting the attention of the superyacht community; Christophe Harbour has a large marina, two five star hotels, private villas, a golf course and a private members club. For those looking to spend a few days ashore in greater seclusion there are also a number of old plantation houses that have been converted into boutique hotels. Ottley's Plantation Inn, for example, sits beneath Mount Liamuiga and has accommodation in both the original great house and in the cottages dotted around the estate's manicured lawns.

Where to eat + drink

Quaint clapboard and colonial buildings in the capital Basse Terre are now home to boutiques and reggae bars, the latter providing an authentic way to enjoy an evening with the locals. For

something slightly livelier head to The Strip, a row of beach bars on Frigate Bay. Mr X's Shiggidy Shack is an island institution that serves flame-grilled lobster and often has evening entertainment including fire-eating displays. Friday nights at the Ocean Terrace Inn is where locals recommend for hanging out (known as "liming" in the local vernacular), whilst Ziggy's Bar and Dolce Cabana both have a carnival atmosphere as they boom out reggae-beats.

Set on the north-eastern shore with views over to St Eustatius, the Rawlins Plantation restaurant has an old-world charm and a terrace for early evening cocktails. If you are on the island on a Sunday, Champagne Sunday Brunch at the Ottley Plantation's Royal Palm restaurant is rumoured to be legendary.

Where to shop

Basse Terre has a number of boutiques selling basic fashions, but for local batik crafts and clothing head to Cairbelle Batik in the grounds of the Romney Manor Estate.



