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40 REASONS TO VISIT ST. LUCIA

The following list is just the beginning of some of the many reasons to visit St Lucia, Simply Beautiful (in no particular order)

It's the Next "It" Island...

St. Lucia was recognized on the coveted "53 Places To Go in 2008" list by *The New York Times*, the "It List" of the 10 Must-Visit Destinations" by Concierge.com and ranked as one of the "Top Destinations for 2008" by Frommers.com. Oprah even named it one of the five places to see in a lifetime.

The Pitons

St. Lucia's dramatic twin peaks are the signature icon of the island. Formed of lava and rock, these unique volcanic mountains rise from the Caribbean Sea and are covered in green vegetation. Hiking the Pitons' challenging trails ends with a breathtaking view of the island and the Caribbean Sea. The Pitons were named a World Heritage Site in 2004 by UNESCO.

You Can Visit One of the World's Only Drive-In Volcanoes...

Visitors can now drive through Mount Soufrière, a once active, millions-of-years-old volcano. It is a rocky lunar landscape of bubbling mud and craters seething with sulfur. Guests can literally drive their cars into the crater and can walk between the sulfur springs and pools of hissing steam, along a safe, constructed concrete path.

It's a Yachting Paradise...

With ample marinas and pristine seas, yachting serves as an easy and enjoyable means of transportation when getting around the island. The two most popular marinas on the island are Marigot Bay Marina and Rodney Bay Marina; however many of the new resorts opening through 2010 will feature marinas large enough to accommodate megayachts as well. Those who enjoy the sport of boating are invited to watch the annual ARC Yacht Race, as St. Lucia hosts the event every year.

Soft Adventure

With over 19,000 acres of rainforest, St Lucia is an eco-tourist's dream. St. Lucia is quickly becoming one of the leading soft adventure destinations in the Caribbean. From energetic travelers who can't sit still on the beach to adventurers aspiring to climb the Caribbean's highest peaks, active visitors are drawn to St. Lucia's rugged terrain, protected dive sites and scenic trails. Some additional activities include kayaking, wind surfing, water skiing, parasailing, riding ATVs and horseback riding.

It's Only a Plane Ride Away...

St. Lucia is served by several international airlines with direct, nonstop, and daily service; making it easy for travelers to visit.

The Annual St. Lucia Jazz Festival

St. Lucia's Annual Jazz Festival takes place every May and is known as the premiere jazz festival of the Caribbean. St. Lucia Jazz encompasses multiple shows of acoustical/straight ahead jazz, new age jazz, fusion and rhythm and blues with acts originating from the United States, Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America and Europe. Past performances have included those of Wyclef Jean, Angie Stone, Dionne Warwick and Ledisi, to name a few.

The Annual Food and Rum Festival

St. Lucia's Food & Rum Festival is a gastronomic event which aims to teach participants about the diversity of Caribbean food and the excellence of Caribbean rum. Every year, the event attracts some of the best chefs, rum connoisseurs, food critiques and gourmards from around the world. Past participating chefs and bartenders include Chef Art Smith, once the private chef to Oprah Winfrey; Tony

Abou Ganim, mixologist formerly of the Bellagio Resort; and Dr. Jessica B. Harris, author of nine critically acclaimed cookbooks documenting the foods and foodways of the African Diaspora.

It's a Celebrity Destination

St. Lucia is a hot spot for the rich and famous. Celebrities who have visited the island to relax and bask in the sun include Nicolas Cage, Morgan Freeman, Oprah, John Malkovich, Eddie Murphy, Prince Charles and Camilla, Harrison Ford, Whitney Houston, Bobby Brown, Matt Dillon, Kim Cattrall and many more.

Stunning Architecture

World-class resorts like Jade Mountain, Anse Chastanet, and Ladera Resort feature unique guestrooms with only three walls; providing guests with breathtaking views of the Piton Mountains and Caribbean Sea. The architecture has earned these resorts many accolades in prominent travel publications such as *Condé Nast Traveler*.

Sensational Spas

St. Lucia is home to some of the best spas in the Caribbean. Treatments are inspired by many of the island's natural resources and indigenous ingredients such as banana leaves, volcanic minerals, papaya and rainforest plants.

St. Lucia's Annual Carnival

St. Lucia is home to one of the most enjoyable Carnival celebrations in the Caribbean. St. Lucia's Carnival celebrates the island's rich heritage by incorporating theatre, music, dance and drama into all of the festivities. The celebration closes with The Parade of the Bands, where local bands parade the streets in colorful costumes, each competing for the title of "Band of the Year". The parade also includes the Carnival Queen, Calypso Monarch, Panorama Champions and Party Monarch. It's a fun-filled experience for all!

Beautiful Weather...

When visiting St. Lucia, travelers will most likely find clear skies, calm seas, and pleasurable temperatures for the duration of their trip. St. Lucia has year-round temperatures of 70°F to 90°F with refreshing trade winds coming from the northeast.

First-Class Golf Courses

St. Lucia is a golfer's dream with a host of superior, pristine courses. Over the next few years, two more luxury golf courses, a Jack Nicklaus Golf Club and a Greg Norman signature golf course, will open.

A New Level of Luxury...

The island of St. Lucia is adding to its extensive list of world-class resorts with a host of new luxury properties scheduled to debut through 2010. New developments include The Landings, a five-star RockResort on Rodney Bay; Villas on the Green, St. Lucia's first golf community; Cap Maison, a luxury residence-style boutique hotel; Westin's Le Paradis Beach, Golf & Marina Resort; The Ritz-Carlton and The Residences at The Ritz-Carlton; and a Raffles Resort.

Romance

St. Lucia's natural beauty, quiet beaches, secluded resorts and wide range of activities are just some of the reasons couples are attracted to this lush Caribbean oasis. The island is repeatedly named one of the top honeymoon destinations by *Brides* and *Modern Brides* and has been awarded World's Leading Honeymoon Destination for eight years running at the World Travel Awards. St. Lucia is also the ideal venue for a wedding, as the island's breathtaking views are the perfect backdrop for a couple's special day.

Zip Through the Rainforest

Travelers can enjoy a bird's eye view of St. Lucia's vibrant Rainforest on an exhilarating canopy adventure. Adventurers will zip along suspended cables, pausing briefly along nine different platforms where trained guides provide tourists with information about the forest. It is a thrilling experience for the whole family!

Good Enough to Eat...

St. Lucian spas offer guests a variety of unique treatments to enjoy; some of which feature natural ingredients and are good enough to eat! For example, Discovery at Marigot Bay's Lapli Spa and Jade Mountain's Kai En Ciel Boutique Spa offer guests three signature chocolate spa treatments including The Chocolate Immersion, The Chocolate Escape, and The Chocolate Hug. Each treatment includes chocolate scrubs, wraps and oils. The Kai En Ciel Boutique Spa at Anse Chastanet offers The Chocolate Delight, which starts with an application of a combination of warm and cooled chocolate spread on the body before a wrap to stimulate endorphins, add minerals, and absorb anti-oxidants.

Family Friendly

Endless exciting activities coupled with kid-friendly properties make St. Lucia the ideal family vacation destination. This lush Caribbean island is the perfect setting for families to rest, relax and rejuvenate. Several island properties offer kids' programs that keep the little ones entertained during the day, allowing parents to indulge in round of golf or a spa treatment.

Beaches

St. Lucia promises beach lovers clean, gorgeous beaches with crystal blue waters. Travelers can relax and enjoy the "Simply Beautiful" coast or partake in one of the many water activities available.

Ride the Rainforest Aerial Tram

The Aerial Tram, one of St. Lucia's many eco-tourism activities, allows adventurers to glide through St. Lucia's lush rainforest canopy in an eight-passenger, open-air gondola. An expert naturalist guide conducts a brief orientation and safety presentation at the beginning of each fully wheelchair accessible tour and escorts guests through this unique experience.

The Gros Islet Jump Up

Every Friday evening, the sleepy fishing village of Gros Islet hosts a bustling street party. A sound system faces the central intersection and pumps out Caribbean and world rhythms while vendors sell seafood, barbecued chicken and local beverages. St. Lucians and tourists mingle and dance until the wee hours. "Jump Up", which is St. Lucian for "Dancing in the street", is one of the most enjoyable and authentic Caribbean experiences.

ARC Yacht Race

Every winter, St. Lucia hosts the annual ARC Yacht race, the largest trans-ocean yacht race in the world. Starting at the Grand Canaries, hundreds of super yachts from around the world race 2700 miles and end in St. Lucia's Rodney Bay Marina. It is a must see for boat lovers!

Caribbean Cuisine

St. Lucia's cuisine consists primarily of international and Creole dishes using fresh local fish and produce. Many of the island's finest restaurants feature exquisite views of the lush Caribbean landscape. With a wide range of upscale specialty restaurants featuring French, Italian, Indian, Chinese and traditional American cuisine, the food is sure to please any palate.

Accommodations for Every Budget...

St. Lucia has an abundance of accommodation choices to suit individual tastes and budgets. Accommodations range from all-inclusive resorts, luxury villas and conventional hotels to charming small hotels, intimate inns and simple guesthouses. Locations vary from beachfront to more rustic areas inland.

Whale and Turtle Watching

St. Lucia is recognized as one of the leading whale watching sites in the area. More than 20 species are regularly spotted throughout the year, including humpbacks, pilot whales, sperm whales and spinning and spotted dolphins. Turtles can also be found in abundance, as local environmental activists have ensured a permanent suspension on turtle hunting. From March to August, guests can enjoy turtle watching as the giant leatherback turtles heave their bodies up on the beach at Grand Anse to lay their eggs.

Hike and Bike St. Lucia...

Exploring the island of St. Lucia by foot or bike is a great, healthy way to relax and appreciate the island's natural beauty. A variety of trails can be found through the rainforest, through old plantation grounds, along beaches, to Cactus Valley, and around Pigeon Island. Adventurers will see spectacular waterfalls, indigenous flowers and local birds like the Amazona Versicolor, also known as Jacquot or the St. Lucian parrot. For a more challenging course, visitors can hike the Pitons.

Perfect for a Vacation Home...

With new properties currently being built in St. Lucia, an abundance of luxury residences will soon be introduced to the island. These extravagant residences will make for a perfect vacation home.

Diving and Snorkeling

St. Lucia offers excellent diving and snorkeling adventures. Located at the tip of an underwater volcano, the island provides both beginner and experienced divers with the opportunity to enjoy the stunning marine life. Spectacular reefs have developed around a number of sunken ships, which are home to large gorgonians, black coral trees, gigantic barrel sponges, purple vase sponges and black lace corals. Divers will be rewarded with a dazzling cross section of Caribbean marine life such as turtles, nurse sharks, seahorses, angelfish, and golden spotted eels.

Diamond Waterfall and Mineral Baths

Located in the southwest region of St. Lucia, the Diamond Waterfalls come down in six stages through sulfur springs that change the water's color – purple, green and yellow. Adjacent are mineral baths built among the ruins of an original 18th-century structure commissioned by Louis XIV. The water is thought to have healing powers similar to Aix-les-Bains, so Louis XIV ordered in 1784 the construction of the baths for his soldiers. The baths' healing powers can be sampled for a nominal fee.

Heritage Tourism Programs

Guests can discover the cultural and historical elements of the island and the natives' fascinating Creole history by touring small fishing villages, plantations, waterfalls, centuries-old estates and historic gardens through Heritage Tours.

Perfect Location...

St. Lucia, one of the Windward Islands of the West Indies' Lesser Antilles, is situated between Martinique and St. Vincent and to the northwest of Barbados. There's a high speed catamaran service between St. Lucia and the islands of Martinique, Dominica, and Guadeloupe that provides transportation for day trips and makes it easy for travelers to experience more of the beautiful Caribbean during their vacation.

Shopping

Duty-free shopping is available at La Place Carenage and Pointe Seraphine in Castries, J.Q. Mall in Rodney Bay and at Hewanorra Airport. The 100-year-old Castries market is a must-see, especially on Saturdays when it is particularly vibrant. Other recommended shopping experiences include the Choiseul Arts & Crafts Center, the Eudovic studios in Goodlands, Rodney Bay Marina and Gablewoods shopping center.

Maybe You'll See "The Thing"...

According to those who have seen it, "The Thing" is said to be St. Lucia's own "Loch Ness Monster on Vacation." It is seen regularly (but only at night) during dives at Anse Chastanet reef.

Deep Sea Fishing

Described as "An angler's dream come true," the waters around St. Lucia are home to several species of big game fish. The legendary white marlin dwells off the coast of St. Lucia, where deep-sea fishing is a popular recreational activity. Numerous charter operations on the island offer whole- and half-day fishing excursions on 30-foot boats with modern fishing equipment. Depending on the time of year, anglers will land a variety of fish including mackerel, king mackerel, white marlin, barracuda, kingfish and sailfish. St. Lucia is also home to the Annual Billfish Tournament.

Annual Billfish Tournament

Each fall the St. Lucia Game Fishing Association (SLGFA) hosts the annual Billfish Tournament in Marigot Bay. More than 40 boats and 150 anglers from the Caribbean, the U.S., and Europe take part in the event. The fishermen take to the waters fishing for blue marlin, wahoo, and skipjack tuna. Prizes are rewarded for the biggest catches of the day.

Experience a Cricket Match...

Visitors are invited to watch a thrilling cricket match at the Beausejour state-of-the-art cricket grounds, located in Gros Islet. Cricket is St. Lucia's leading spectator sport and the cricket season lasts from March to August.

The Brig Unicorn Pirate Sail

Especially appealing to younger visitors, St. Lucia is home to The Brig Unicorn Pirate Sail, the setting for the acclaimed movie "Pirates of the Caribbean". Visitors are invited to spend the day touring the island of St. Lucia on the pirate ship. The tour begins at Vigie Cover and includes a tour of the drive-in volcano, a ride through notorious pirate's coves and a traditional Caribbean lunch. Passengers have the opportunity to snorkel, swing into the sea from the ship's ropes and even walk the plank.

Bird Watching Heaven

A recent report published by *Liberty Times* indicates that 170 different birds have been discovered on the island thus far; making it the ideal location for bird watching. Additionally, a team of Taiwanese and Canadian birders recently visited St. Lucia to help the island catalogue its birdlife, train guides and establish relevant Web sites.

Plantation Tours

There are many historic plantations throughout St. Lucia open for guests to tour. Some of the best include Fond d'Or Nature Historic Park, Fond Doux Estate and Mourné Coubaril & Marquis Estates.