

English settlers came ashore (actually abandoned by a British ship's captain) in 1605. They endured less than a month before the welcoming committee of Carib warriors forced the few remaining survivors to flee by rowing out to sea. The English tried again in 1639. They too came under continual attack by the Caribs who were simply defending an island they had captured from the harmless Arawaks. A few lucky and hard-paddling Englishmen who were not killed outright escaped to sea.

Realizing the fate and wisely applying the lesson of the English, the French got clever. On orders from his government in 1651 a young French officer, his pretty new wife and a few terrified and trembling settlers arrived on St. Lucia. The officer greeted the Caribs (here taking a bit of historic and literary license) with the following salutation: "Ne me mangez pas s'il vous plaît. Je suis marié à une de vos femmes." This basically translates as: "Please don't eat me, I'm married to one of your women." Laugh perhaps if you will, but it was true. The ingenious French officer had come with his Carib bride and it worked. The tribal leaders, who by now had become rather fond of Europeans, to their everlasting regret and repentance, allowed the French to settle on St. Lucia. The Caribs were soon outnumbered by French and English and their days, their very survival as a people on St. Lucia and throughout all the islands of the Caribbean, shortly came to an end.

With the elimination of the Caribs, the French and English proceeded to spend the next century and a half fighting for control of St. Lucia. Despite the turmoil, sugarcane plantations flourished on the back of African slave labor. Eventually, in 1814 England won final control of the island and it remained an English possession until granted independence in 1979. There is no little irony in the fact that today, following the Caribs, French, Dutch and English, this free and sovereign state has a population the vast majority of whom are proud, direct descendents of the island's African slaves... the only people who had no desire to come to St. Lucia in the first place.



CASTRIES AREA PLACES OF INTEREST

1 Derek Walcott Square is in the heart of Castries. Named in honor of the city's 1992 Nobel Laureate for literature, the square is surrounded by some of Castries' few remaining colonial era buildings. The wonderful open market is nearby.

2 The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception looks out over Derek Walcott Square. It was built by the Catholic parish in the late 1800s. Pope John Paul II visited the cathedral when he came to St. Lucia in 1995.

3 Fort Charlotte is now the Governor General's House and government building. Visitors can tour some of the original battery and structures. Over 800 feet up on Morne Fortune hill, with great views of Castries, this is the location of many battles between the English and French. A monument raised in honor of Britain's 27th Iniskilling Regiment graces this site. The nearby cemetery is the final resting place for soldiers from both sides of the conflict. It is a bit ironic the mountain's name means "The Hill of Good Luck".

Beyond Castries

4 Pigeon Island National Historic Park is a protected reserve. Within the park is the historic Fort Rodney. Located near the northern tip of St. Lucia, this fort and the waters surrounding it were the site of numerous land and sea battles between the English and French. Ruins of some of the old fortifications, cannons and war related items can still be found on the islet. The park has two quaint beaches and a couple of snack bars.

5 The Diamond Botanical Garden is an absolute jewel. Within the beautiful tropical setting there are numerous waterfalls, nature trails and hot, spring fed mineral baths all set among a large variety of exotic plants and flowers.

6 Petit and Gros Pitons are undoubtedly the most widely recognized landmarks on St. Lucia. The twin volcanic lava domes rise over 2,500 feet out of the sea. The peaks are home to a wide variety of plant and animal life, and at their base the water of the Caribbean is filled with sea life.

7 The St. Lucia Rainforest is a nature preserve that covers nearly 20,000 acres. There are close to 30 miles of well maintained hiking trails winding throughout the mountains and valleys with degrees of difficulty that range from easy to challenging. The rainforest is home to a wide variety of tropical plants and birds including the Amazona Versicolor, St. Lucia's National bird and found only on this island. The panoramic views of the lush green island set against the surrounding blue waters of the Caribbean are spectacular.

St. Lucia has some of the most beautiful beaches in the Caribbean. Among the most popular are **Reduit, Ans Becune, Anse Chastanet** and **Anse Cochon**.

SHORE EXCURSIONS To make the most of your visit to Castries and the surrounding island of St. Lucia we suggest you take one of our organized Shore Excursions. For information concerning tour content and pricing, consult your Shore Excursion Brochure or contact the Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, be advised to take only necessary items and secure any valuables onboard.

LOCAL CUSTOMS Bargaining: Prices are generally fixed. Local vendors may bargain.

Tipping: Some restaurants may add a 10-15% service charge. The same percentage is appropriate for taxis.

Local Cuisine: The cuisine of St. Lucia is a combination of traditional West Indian, French, English and West African. Staples of local "home cooking" include plantain, breadfruit, dasheen (taro root) and yams. Fish is abundant and fresh. Some favorite local dishes include: Salt Fish and Green Fig combines boiled green figs (bananas), sautéed garlic peppers, parsley, celery, and boiled salt fish. Petit Piton is a cooked mixture of chopped meat with potatoes, vegetables, onions, garlic and lime juice. It is served over a steaming bed of rice. Banana Chicken is flattened chicken breasts covered with thinly sliced ham and bananas then rolled like a tortilla or egg roll. The roll is then dipped in an egg wash and covered in flour and shredded coconut and baked.

Drink Specialties: In local markets visitors can find vendors offering coconut water right from the shell. Ti Tasse and La Belle Creole Black are locally popular coffee rum liqueurs that are little known outside the islands. Piton is the national beer and Bounty is the national rum. A special drink known as "ah bar kontwer" is a mixture of spices and white rum.

SHOPPING FACILITIES La Place Carenage, in town, and Pointe Seraphine, across the bay, are Castries' duty-free waterfront shopping areas. Jewelry, perfumes and locally made arts and crafts are just some of the items available

LOCAL CURRENCY The official currency on St. Lucia is the Eastern Caribbean dollar (EC\$). U.S. dollars and major credit cards are widely accepted. ATMs are widely available.

POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE FACILITIES The Post Office is located on Bridge Street.

Dial the following access numbers to use a personal calling card from a public phone:

AT&T: 1.800.225.5288

MCI: 1.800.888.8000

TOURIST INFORMATION A Visitor's Center is located at Point Seraphine.

TRANSPORTATION Taxis have standard fares set by the St. Lucian Taxi Association. Establish the fare prior to departure. Car rentals are available. Privately owned minivans operate