

Caribbean Islands Directory

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This chapter gives you a broad overview on all things practical in the Caribbean islands. This book covers hundreds of islands, so the information given here is based on collective generalizations to give you a sense of the region as a whole and to help you plan your trip. Start your search here (subjects are listed alphabetically) then turn to the Directory sections in individual chapters for more specific details.

ACCOMMODATIONS

A wide range of accommodations awaits travelers in the Caribbean, from inexpensive guesthouses and good-value efficiency apartments – which have refrigerators and partial kitchens – to elaborate villas and luxury beachside resorts. The bulk of our listings fall somewhere in between.

In this book the phrase ‘in summer’ refers to the low season (mid-April to December) and ‘in winter’ to the high season (December to mid-April). Throughout the book we’ve listed high-season rates unless otherwise noted. Keep in mind that hotel rates can be up to 30% cheaper in the low season and in most places they’ll fluctuate with tourist traffic.

The price structure we have followed applies to most of the islands. However, not all islands have rooms in all price categories – many have no budget accommodations at all, while other islands are less expensive across the board. The individual chapters outline any deviations but, in general, ‘budget’ means US\$75 or less, ‘midrange’ means US\$76 to US\$200 and ‘top end’ means US\$201 and up.

Some hotels close for a month or so in late summer, usually around September. If business doesn’t look promising, some of the smaller hotels and guesthouses might even close down June to September.

‘Private bath’ in this book means the room has its own toilet and shower – it does not necessarily mean that it has a bathtub and in most cases it will not. If having a TV or telephone is important to you, check, although satellite/cable TV is pretty common.

Camping

Camping is limited in the Caribbean and on some islands freelance camping is either illegal or discouraged – usually to protect nature or because of crime. This is certainly not the rule everywhere, however, and it’s best to check with the local tourist office for rules and regulations.

There are a number of camping possibilities throughout the US Virgin Islands and on Puerto Rico.

Guesthouses

The closest thing the Caribbean has to hostels, guesthouses are usually great value. Often in the middle of a town or village and rarely alongside a beach, they offer good opportunities for cultural immersion. Rooms usually have a bed and private bath and some have communal kitchens and living

PRACTICALITIES

- **Newspapers** Most Caribbean islands have their own newspapers and these are well worth reading to gain insight into local politics and culture. International newspapers, such as the *International Herald Tribune* and *USA Today*, are available on only a few islands. International glossy magazines are more common.
- **Radio & TV** Most islands have their own radio stations, which are a great way to tune in to the latest calypso, reggae, soca and steel-pan music. Local TV stations offer mostly soap operas. The prevalence of satellite TVs means that CNN, BBC World, HBO and others are common.
- **Video Systems** The local system is NTSC, but videotapes are sold in various formats.
- **Electricity** The electric current varies in the islands. On many the current is 110V, 60 cycles (as in the US), but others have 220V, 50 cycles (as in Europe). Adapters are widely available at shops and hotels. Check the Practicalities boxes in the individual chapters.
- **Weights & Measures** Some Caribbean countries use the metric system, while others use the imperial system and a few use a confusing combo of both; check the individual chapters. Each chapter uses the system of measurement followed in that country..

rooms. In some areas you can arrange private homestays, where you stay in the home of a local family. These are most readily available in Cuba, where they are known as *casas particulares*.

Hotels

Looking at the Caribbean as a whole, you'll see that hotel rooms can range from flea-ridden hovels to massive 1000-room resorts, to glorious villas hovering over the sea. Prices run the gamut as well. Look a little closer and you realize that on the islands themselves the hotel options seem in short supply. On one island, for example, there will be a lot of budget accommodations but few 'nicer' hotels; elsewhere, you'll see dozens of top-end resorts but not a budget hotel in sight. If you're trying to plan a trip, it's a good idea to read through the Accommodations listings in each chapter to find out the range of hotels available on each island.

The **Caribbean Hotel Association** (www.caribbeanhotels.com) has helpful links that connect to the individual islands' hotel associations.

ALL-INCLUSIVE RESORTS

Born in Jamaica and now prevalent across the Caribbean, all-inclusive resorts allow you to pay a set price and then nothing more once you set foot inside the resort. You usually get a wristband that allows you free access to the hotel or resort's restaurants, bars and water-sports equipment. Many properties have jumped onto the 'all-inclusive' bandwagon, but don't necessarily supply the goods. Be

sure to find out exactly what 'all-inclusive' includes, the variety and quality of food available, whether or not all drinks are included and if there are any hidden charges. At some places the food is produced by the ton for mass consumption: think all-you-can-eat chicken McNuggets.

Rental Accommodations

If you're traveling with your family or a large group, you might want to look into renting a villa. Villas are great because you have room to stretch out, do your own cooking and enjoy plenty of privacy. Rentals cost anywhere from US\$600 per week for a basic villa with bedrooms, kitchen and living space, to US\$15,000 per night for a beachside estate with staff. For even more, you can rent an island. Agencies on the individual islands rent properties; the following rent villas throughout the region:

At Home Abroad (☎ in the USA 212-421-9165; www.athomeabroadinc.com)

Caribbean Way (☎ in the USA 514-393-3003, 877-953-7400; www.caribbeanway.com)

BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels. You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

Heart of the Caribbean (☎ in the USA 262-783-5303, 800-231-5303; www.hotcarib.com)

Island Hideaways (☎ in the USA 703-378-7840, 800-832-2302; www.islandhideaways.com)

Owners Syndicate (☎ in the UK 020-7401-1088; www.ownersyndicate.com)

West Indies Management Company (Wimco; www.wimcovillas.com)

ACTIVITIES

For anyone tired of lazing around (imagine that!), the islands have plenty to offer and, with water everywhere, it's no wonder that aquatic sports dominate the activity roster for most vacationers.

Cycling

Cycling and mountain biking are becoming popular in the Caribbean islands as the bike culture takes hold. Hotels often rent bikes and there are shops that both rent and repair bikes on most of the major islands. Note that road conditions can often be a bit dubious, with narrow, rough conditions posing challenges.

Diving & Snorkeling

Undoubtedly graced with several of the world's best diving spots, the Caribbean offers plenty of underwater fun for everyone, from first-time snorkelers and novice divers to salt-crusted pros. Check out the Diving & Snorkeling chapter (p52) for more information.

Fishing

Ask Hemingway – there's good deep-sea fishing in the Caribbean, with marlin, tuna, wahoo and barracuda among the prime catches. Charter fishing-boat rentals are available on most islands. Expect a half-day of fishing for four to six people to run to about US\$400. Charter boats are usually individually owned and consequently the list of available skippers tends to fluctuate; local tourist offices and activity desks can provide the latest information.

Golf

The Caribbean has some of the world's most beautiful and challenging golf courses, where both major and local tournaments are held throughout the year. Green fees vary greatly, from around US\$30 at smaller courses to US\$150 and more, plus caddy and cart, at the renowned courses. Most places offer club rentals, but serious golfers tend to bring their own. Some of the best golf courses are found on Jamaica, Nevis, Barbados, and in the Bahamas, Dominican Republic and the Cayman Islands.

While it's lovely to swing away at your favorite course, be aware that the building of golf courses often comes at a huge environmental cost, including habitat destruction and massive water waste. But just as kiddies expect a water-slide with their pool, many adults expect a golf course with their holiday.

AUTHOR FAVORITES

Here's some of the favorite accommodation options the authors of this book found during their research:

- St-Martin is very expensive. Les Balcons d'Oyster Pond (p448) is the standout hotel of the century – the nicest property I saw on the island. (Brandon Presser, St-Martin/Sint Maarten)
- St Joseph's Home for Boys Guest House (p268), Port-au-Prince. I reckon this is probably the best budget place I have stayed on any trip in any country. More like a home than a hostel, it's a 'family' of ex-street boys and you're welcomed into the family too. Communal meals, lovely building. (Paul Clammer, Haiti)
- Momma Chastante, the owner of quirky Cascara (p641) in St Lucia, is one of those characters you never forget. On top of all this it's so cheap; you won't believe your eyes when you see the bill. (Scott Kennedy, St Lucia)
- Tiamo Resort (p102); I love its sustainable-tourism philosophy. (Amy C Balfour, the Bahamas)
- Paraíso Caño Hondo (p317) is one of the more special places to stay anywhere in the Dominican Republic, even though a stay here couldn't be further from the typical beach resort experience. (Michael Grosberg, Dominican Republic)

HIKING PRECAUTIONS

Some rainforest hiking trails take you into steep, narrow valleys with gullies that require stream crossings. The capital rule here is that if the water begins to rise it is not safe to cross, as a flash flood may be imminent. Instead, head for higher ground and wait it out.

On island hikes, long pants will protect your legs from sharp saw grass on overgrown sections of trails. Sturdy footwear with good traction is advisable on most hikes. Mosquitoes can get downright aggressive, so be sure to have good bug repellent with you.

Most experienced hikers know what to bring, but here's a quick reminder:

- a flashlight (island trails are not a good place to be caught unprepared in the dark)
- lots of fresh drinking water
- a snack
- a trail map or a compass
- rain gear (especially on long hikes)
- strong bug repellent with plenty of DEET

Hiking

Verdant peaks rise high above dramatic valleys, volcanoes simmer and waterfalls rumble in the distance. Rainforests resonate to a chorus of birdsong and reveal more green than you've ever imagined. Most people come to the Caribbean for the beaches, but many islands draw hikers seeking rugged terrain and stunning mountain vistas.

If you're looking to get your legs moving on mountain trails, you'll want to head to the higher, rainforested islands. On lofty Dominica you can hike to a variety of waterfalls, take an easy rainforest loop trail through a parrot sanctuary or hire a guide for an arduous trek. Or explore smoldering volcanoes on Guadeloupe and Martinique. St Lucia's trails lead to the world-famous Pitons and trek-filled national parks surround the Dominican Republic's impressive Pico Duarte. The Parc National la Visite offers excellent hiking on Haiti. In the US Virgin Islands the forested island of St John is mostly protected parkland, filled with hiking trails that lead to sand-swept beaches. The small but steep island of Saba has some good easy-access hiking, including a lightly trodden network of footpaths that once connected Saba's villages, before the introduction of paved roads and cars just a few decades ago. Jamaica, Grenada, Bonaire and Nevis also have good hiking trails.

On many of the smaller low-lying islands there are few, if any, established trails, but, as cars are also scarce, the dirt roads that connect villages can make for good walking. On several islands, especially in the Bahamas, and

Turks and Caicos, the only hiking you'll do is walking along a sandy beach. For more detailed information on hiking see the individual island chapters.

Horseback Riding

Horseback riding can be a fun way to explore a place. On many islands outfitters offer guided rides along mountain trails and quiet valleys, or trips along remote beaches. A few combine both in a single outing. Specific information on horseback riding can be found in the individual island chapters.

Sailing

The Caribbean is a first-rate sailing destination and boats and rum-sipping, salty-skinned sailors are everywhere. On many public beaches and at resorts, water-sports huts rent out Hobie Cats or other small sailboats for near-shore exploring. Many sailboat charter companies run day excursions to other islands and offer party trips aboard tall ships or sunset cruises on catamarans (usually complete with champagne or rum cocktails). Boat rentals abound for experienced sailors and there are plenty of crewed charters for those just finding their sea legs.

Due to island proximity, calmer waters and plenty of protected bays, Antigua, the US Virgin Islands and British Virgin Islands offer some of the best sailing and charter opportunities in the Caribbean. For information on renting your own bareboat sailboat or chartering a crewed yacht, check out p835.

ISLAND TIME

It's important to remember that this is the Caribbean and life moves at a slow, loosely regimented pace. You'll often see signs in front of shops, bars and restaurants that say 'open all day, every day' and this can mean several things; the place could truly be open all day every day of the week, but don't count on it. If business is slow, a restaurant, shop or attraction might simply close. If a bar is hopping and the owner's having fun, it could stay open until the wee hours of morning. If the rainy season is lasting too long, a hotel or restaurant might simply close for a month. If a shop owner has a hangover, doctor's appointment or date, or simply needs a day off – hey mon, store's closed. In other words, be aware that hard and fast rules about opening times are hard to come by. The only consistent rule is that Sundays are sacred and 'open every day' generally translates to 'open every day except Sunday.'

Once you get in sync with local rhythms you'll see the concept of 'island time' as a blessing, not a curse.

Surfing

Except for Barbados, which is further out into the open Atlantic, the islands of the Eastern Caribbean aren't really great for surfing. Once you head north and west, however, you can find particularly surfable swells on Puerto Rico's west coast; Jamaica's north and east coasts; the north coasts of the US Virgin Islands and British Virgin Islands; and the north and south coasts of the Dominican Republic. Even Curaçao has a nascent scene.

In late summer swells made by tropical storms off the African coast begin to race toward Barbados, creating the Caribbean's highest waves and finest surfing conditions. The most reliable time for catching good, high, surfable waves is September to November. Bathsheba, on Barbados' east coast, is the center of activity. See p693 for an interview with a local surfing expert.

Surfing is also possible at times in Guadeloupe, Trinidad and Tobago, and St-Martin/Sint Maarten.

Windsurfing

Favorable winds and good water conditions throughout the area have boosted the popularity of windsurfing, or sailboarding, in recent years. Public beach facilities rent out equipment and offer lessons to first-timers, and some resorts offer the use of windsurfing gear free to guests. Aruba and Bonaire have regular championships. St Thomas in the US Virgin Islands is another good spot.

BOOKS

A discussion of any pertinent books from or about each destination is included in its Directory section.

BUSINESS HOURS

Business hours vary from island to island, but there are a few general rules. On most islands, business offices are open 8am or 9am to 4pm or 5pm weekdays. Most tourist information centers are open 8am to 4pm weekdays and 9am to noon on Saturday.

Shops are open 9am to 5pm Monday to Saturday (malls stay open later). Post offices are generally open 8am to 3pm weekdays; and banking hours are normally 8am to 3pm Monday to Thursday, or 8am to 5pm on Friday.

Restaurants are usually open from 11am to 10pm daily, though many also serve breakfast and open earlier. In general, think 7am to 10am for breakfast, noon to 2pm for lunch and 6pm to 10pm for dinner.

Bars are often open from noon to midnight, although in some party zones, bars stay open until the last person leaves.

Throughout the Caribbean, Sundays can be very quiet, with only businesses aimed at tourists open. In many towns everything is closed on Sunday unless there's a cruise ship in port.

Specific business hours for each island are listed in the individual chapter directories; exceptions to the hours listed in the chapter directories are noted in reviews.

CHILDREN

Children in the Caribbean are encouraged to talk, sing, dance, think, dream and play. They are integrated into all parts of society: you see them at concerts, restaurants, churches and parties. Most families can't afford baby-sitters, so parents bring their

kids everywhere. As a result children are a vibrant part of the cultural fabric and if you travel with children you'll find this embracing attitude extends to your kids too.

Children often seem more independent in the islands. You'll notice that kids playing in the streets are rarely supervised. By culture and imperative, children are taught to look

KIDS IN THE CARIBBEAN *Carolyn B Heller*

'Boat, go fast! Boat, go fast!'

My two-year-old daughter is shrieking excitedly as the water taxi zips us across the bay from Tortola to Virgin Gorda. Her twin sister is more apprehensive about this boat journey, but soon she, too, is squealing with delight. Our first Caribbean adventure with our kids is off to a good start.

Taking the kids on their first-ever boat ride. Digging on a sandy beach. Wandering rainforest trails. Meeting local children. It's simple adventures like these that make the Caribbean such a great region for travel with kids.

Where to Stay

Resorts offer scores of kid-friendly amenities, but our family's favorite Caribbean stays have been at alternative lodgings where we felt more like part of the community. At a family-run gîte in Guadeloupe, the owner's young son taught our daughters to play '*cache cache*' – the game they knew as 'hide and seek.' In Grenada we rented an apartment from a grandmotherly lady who offered advice on everything from where to eat to navigating the local bus system and she introduced our girls to her neighbors – twins the same age. Our hosts at a Marie-Galante B&B shared their supper of breadfruit and pigs' tails and (after we tucked the kids into bed upstairs) swapped stories over freshly-made ti-punch.

Before booking any lodging, ask for details to assess its child-friendliness. Do they welcome kids or accept them grudgingly? Is there a kitchen or at least a refrigerator, so you can shop at local markets and avoid the expense of always eating out? Are there safe places where kids can play? Even if the beach is nearby, is it across a heavily-trafficked street?

What to Bring

Pack light! Kids can live in T-shirts, shorts and a bathing suit, but bring long-sleeved shirts and lightweight long pants to protect them from mosquitoes and the sun. A quick-drying shirt they can swim in will help guard against sunburn, too. Bring sandals they can wear in the water, as well as comfortable sneakers or walking shoes. Zip-top plastic bags are handy for holding everything from snacks to wet swimsuits.

Don't expect to find high-quality car seats – if you're going to be driving, bring your own. We found it easier to carry toddlers in a backpack than to navigate a stroller down sand-covered lanes.

Keeping Safe

To help kids acclimate to the Caribbean heat, take it easy at first and make sure they drink plenty of water. For sun protection, children should wear sunscreen and lightweight clothing, including a hat, whenever they're outside. In the evening be sure kids cover up to keep mosquitoes at bay. Bring insect repellent formulated for children and whatever medication you normally use to treat insect bites.

What to Do

Many activities that adults enjoy – swimming, hiking, going to the market, joining in local festivals – are fun for kids, too. Try to meet local children and sample new foods. Just adapt your adventures to your kids' ages and abilities. When a hike to the Baths on Virgin Gorda proved too challenging for our toddlers, we discovered a cave-like 'room' in a shallow pool nearby where the kids could splash and play.

Remember to allow plenty of rest time, too. After all, even when you're having an exciting 'Boat, go fast' day, you're still on vacation.

out for each other. The concept of 'it takes a village to raise a child' is alive and well in the Caribbean; there's an unspoken cultural understanding that adults look out for kids, whether they are family or not.

For complete details about traveling with children in the Caribbean, see opposite.

CLIMATE CHARTS

For more information on the climate of the Caribbean islands, see individual chapters.

CUSTOMS

All the Caribbean islands allow a reasonable amount of personal items to be brought in duty free, as well as an allowance of liquor and tobacco. Determining what you can take home depends on where you're vacationing and your country of origin. Check with your country's customs agency for clarification.

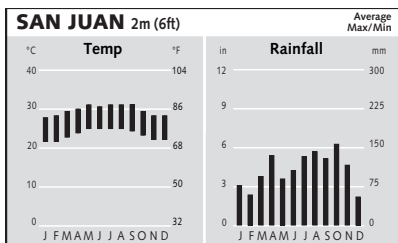
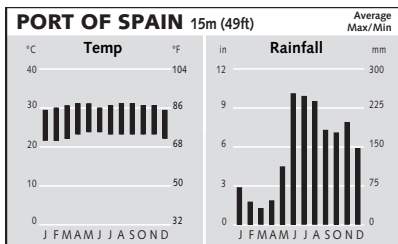
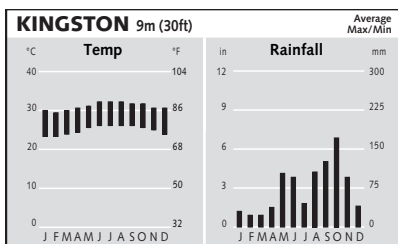
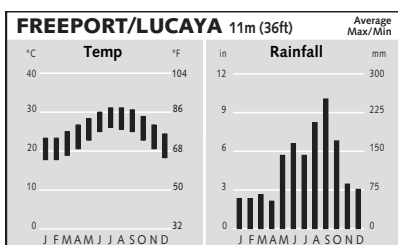
Spear guns are prohibited in the waters around many islands, so divers interested in spear fishing should make advance inquiries. Most islands prohibit unregistered firearms; travelers arriving by boat who have guns on board should declare them on entry. Some islands are free of rabies and have strict rules on the importation of animals; this is mainly of interest to sailors, who might not be allowed to bring their pets onto land.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

One of the most common hazards in the Caribbean are the roads. Although your beater rental can perish in a killer pothole, you may perish from the maniacal driving of others. Roads are often narrow, which doesn't slow others down in the slightest. And pedestrians may be at just as much risk as they have nowhere to walk away from traffic. All you can do is please your mom by being careful.

Crime

In terms of individual safety and crime, the situation is quite varied in the Caribbean. It's hard to imagine more tranquil areas than Saba and Statia, where most people don't even have locks on their doors, whereas walking the streets of Port of Spain (Trinidad) or Fort-de-France (Martinique) after dark can certainly be a risky venture, especially for women (see p828 for more information specific to female travelers).



In most areas there is a huge disparity between the income of locals and the (real or perceived) wealth of visitors. If you venture beyond the borders of your resort or tourist area, you may observe populations devastated by poverty, a lack of medical supplies and no clean water in places like Jamaica and Haiti. Add to this drug production and trafficking and you can see why crime is a problem in some areas.

Theft can occur, so it's best to keep your valuables close to you at all times and it's a good idea to never flaunt wealth. If you've got a car, you'll want to lock belongings in the trunk, but be mindful that car theft is also a problem (especially St-Martin/Sint Maarten where goods and cars disappear in seconds). Many resorts and hotels have gated security or guards to keep nonguests out. Still, where possible, lock your valuables in the hotel safe.

There is no need for paranoia and most visitors will enjoy their Caribbean trip without incident, but being aware of your surroundings can go a long way. Of course, the precautions you should take depend on which island you're visiting. For a better grasp of the situation, see the individual island chapters.

Manchineel Trees

Manchineel trees grow on beaches throughout the Caribbean. The fruit of the manchineel, which looks like a small green apple, is poisonous. The milky sap given off by the fruit and leaves can cause severe skin blisters, similar to the reaction caused by poison oak. If the sap gets in your eyes, it can result in temporary blindness. Never take shelter under the trees during a rainstorm, as the sap can be washed off the tree and onto anyone sitting below.

Manchineel trees can grow as high as 40ft (12m) with branches that spread widely. The leaves are green, shiny and elliptical in shape. On some of the more visited beaches, trees will be marked with warning signs or bands of red paint. Manchineel is called *mancenillier* on the French islands and *anjenelle* on Trinidad & Tobago.

Pesky Creatures

Although some people groove to the music of nature, others do not. Squawking roosters and croaking frogs often begin their chorus in the pre-dawn hours, so light sleepers may want to bring along earplugs. You can expect to find mosquitoes and sandflies throughout the region, both of which can be quite voracious. In addition, a few of the islands have chiggers, no-see-ums and centipedes.

Bring along strong insect repellent that is at least 25% DEET. Kinder, gentler solutions seem to only discourage the kinder, gentler bugs, leaving your skin open to the most voracious predators.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

It's important to realize what your own embassy – the embassy of the country of which you are a citizen – can and can't do to help you if you get into trouble. Generally speaking, it won't be much help in emergencies if the trouble you're in is remotely your own fault. Remember that you are bound by the laws of the country you are visiting. Your embassy will not be sympathetic if you end up in jail after committing a crime locally, even if such actions are legal in your own country.

In genuine emergencies you might get some assistance, but only if other channels have been exhausted. For example, if you need to get home urgently, a free ticket is exceedingly unlikely – the embassy would expect you to have insurance. If you have all your money and documents stolen, it might assist with getting a new passport, but a loan for onward travel is out of the question.

Not all Caribbean nations have diplomatic representation. See the individual chapter directories for a list of foreign embassies in each region and island representation abroad.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Specific information on festivals and special events, which vary throughout the region, is found in the Directory sections of the individual island chapters. Carnival is a huge party throughout the Caribbean. See opposite for some of our favorite festivals.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELERS

Parts of the Caribbean are not particularly gay-friendly destinations and on many of the islands an element of overt homophobia and machismo is prevalent. See the Directory sections of the individual chapters for details.

The situation for gay men and lesbians is a low-profile one and public hand-holding, kissing and other outward signs of affection are not commonplace. Still, there are several niches for gay travelers. Particularly friendly islands include Cuba, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. The tolerant Dutch attitude makes Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao and Sint Maarten friendly to gay travelers and the French influence on St-Martin, Guadeloupe and Martinique makes them reasonably tolerant. Saba is a gay-friendly little island, although there's not a lot happening, but neighboring St-Barthélemy offers a welcome attitude and nightlife aplenty.

FAVORITE FESTIVALS & EVENTS

No matter what Caribbean island you land on, you'll quickly discover one thing: everybody loves to party! No matter what time of year, come rain or shine, you'll find plenty of live music, dancing in the streets and countless reasons to celebrate. Here are a few of our favorites:

- **Carnival, Port of Spain** (p738) Trinidad spends all year gearing up for its legendary street party, with steel-pan bands, blasting soca and calypso music and outrageous costumes.
- **Junkanoo** (p73) The Bahamas national festival takes over Nassau, starting in the twilight hours on Boxing Day (December 26). It's a frenzied party with marching 'shacks,' colorful costumes and music.
- **Carnaval, Santiago de Cuba** (p185) Cuba's oldest, biggest and wildest celebration is held in the last week of July.
- **Fiesta de Santiago Apostol** (p353) Puerto Ricans celebrate their mixed African and European ancestry during the last five days of July by donning colorful *vejigante* masks (colorful papier-mâché masks depicting often scary characters from African and European mythology) and parading through the streets of Aldea Loíza.
- **Crop-Over Festival** (p697) Barbados' big three-week festival marks the end of the sugarcane harvest. Festivities start in mid-July with calypso competitions and end with a big parade.
- **Carnival, Antigua** (p536) Antigua's annual carnival takes place at the end of July and culminates in a grand parade, with plenty of music and mayhem to get you in the festive mood.
- **Reggae Sumfest** (p242) Die-hard Rastafarians and Marley followers come from all over the world to jam with the masses at Jamaica's top reggae festival, held every July in Montego Bay.

Jamaica unfortunately is a special case in terms of harassment (and worse) of gay people. Violent crimes happen and the police generally do nothing. The country should be considered unsafe for gay and lesbian people.

Outward affection on most of the former British islands is also not recommended. The comments here are general and each region of each island is different. For a better idea on the gay climate of each island, turn to the chapter directories. See also p833 for information on gay and lesbian cruises.

Good websites with information on gay and lesbian travel to the Caribbean as well as links to tour operators:

- gaytravel.com
- gaytravel.co.uk
- www.outtraveler.com
- www.outandabout.com

HOLIDAYS

A useful list of public holidays, which vary throughout the region, is found in the Directory sections of the individual island chapters.

INSURANCE

Travel insurance covering theft, loss and medical problems is a wise idea. At the very

least it will bring you piece of mind and at best it could save you thousands of dollars. Before opting for a policy think about the coverage you require. There are a wide variety of policies and you'll want one to suit your itinerary. Check the fine print as some policies exclude 'dangerous activities' such as diving which would be a major problem for many Caribbean travelers. Check to see whether you have coverage through your credit-card company and find out about any penalties involved if you need to cancel flights or rebook hotels. Finally, as with all travel documents, make a couple of extra copies – one to leave at home and one to pack in your bag.

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet access is generally easy throughout the Caribbean. Only on more remote islands or in cheaper homestays or guesthouses will you be unlikely to find at least a computer you can use for internet access. For those who carry their own laptop, iPhone or other wi-fi-enabled device there's good news: wi-fi is becoming common, especially at midrange and top-end hotels on the more visited islands. Even if a place doesn't have wi-fi in every room it often has it in the lobby or pool area.

(Some have it in bars so you can get liquored up and send intemperate emails.) Note that some resorts may charge as much US\$15 per day for internet access.

Internet access shops and cafés are common anywhere tourists gather or in large towns. Locals are online as much as you are. Libraries are also good sources. When in doubt, just ask.

LEGAL MATTERS

Due to the widespread stereotype that everyone in the Caribbean is a pot-smoking Rasta, some visitors take a casual attitude about sampling island drugs. When in Rome, er Kingston, right? Well, be forewarned that drug-trafficking is a serious problem throughout the Caribbean and most officials have little to no tolerance of visitors who come in and assume it's OK to partake. Penalties vary throughout the islands, but getting caught smoking or possessing marijuana (or any illegal drug for that matter) can send you to jail in a hurry.

While it's not strictly enforced, the legal drinking age is mostly 18 on the islands with the odd exception (Antigua: 16). And you wonder why the Caribbean has become the spring-break destination of choice for college students? In many places you must be at least 25 years to rent a car.

MAPS

Island tourist offices typically provide free tourist maps that will suffice for most visitor

needs. Travelers who intend to explore an island thoroughly, however, may want something more detailed.

Blue Water Books & Charts (☎ 800-942-2583; www.bluewaterweb.com) A Florida-based company and one of the world's best resources for nautical charts, electronic charts and books.

IGN (☎ in Paris 01-43-98-80-00; www.ign.fr) A Paris-based map seller with maps of the French West Indies.

International Travel Maps & Books (☎ 604-879-3621; www.itmb.com) A Vancouver-based company that publishes maps for both popular and obscure destinations.

Map Link (☎ 805-692-6777, 800-962-1394; www.maplink.com) A California-based distributor that sells maps from hundreds of different publishers.

Stanfords (☎ 020-7836 1321; www.stanfords.co.uk) A UK-based map specialty store, with outlets in London, Manchester and Bristol, which sells British Ordnance Surveys, maps and nautical charts.

MONEY

There are 13 official currencies in the Caribbean, which can make things a bit confusing if you're jumping back and forth between islands. Fortunately, the US dollar (US\$) is accepted on virtually all of the islands (Cuba being the obvious exception). Many places quote prices and car rentals in US dollars. Banks can usually exchange British pounds (UK£), euros (€) and Canadian dollars (C\$), which are not commonly accepted anywhere. On islands like Aruba and Anguilla, ATMs give you the option of withdrawing cash in US currency. Note that the euro has replaced the US dollar as the tourist currency of choice on

EXCHANGE RATES

Local Currency	US\$1	C\$1	€1	UK£1
Aruban florin (Afl)	1.79	1.79	2.78	3.53
Bahamian dollar (BSS)	1.00	1.01	1.56	1.97
Barbadian dollar (B\$)	1.99	2.00	3.10	3.94
Cayman Islands dollar (CIS)	0.82	0.82	1.27	1.62
Cuban convertible peso (CUC\$)	0.95	0.96	1.48	1.88
Dominican Republic peso (RD\$)	33.80	33.98	52.58	66.74
Eastern Caribbean dollar (EC\$)	2.65	2.66	4.12	5.23
Euro (€)	0.64	0.65	1.00	1.27
Haitian gourde (HTG)	38.13	38.33	59.31	75.26
Jamaican dollar (J\$)	71.12	71.48	110.63	140.35
Netherlands Antillean guilder (ANG)	1.77	1.78	2.76	3.50
Trinidad & Tobago dollar (TT\$)	6.25	6.28	9.73	12.34
US dollar (US\$)	1.00	1.01	1.56	1.97

For current exchange rates see www.xe.com.

French-influenced islands like Guadeloupe, Martinique and St-Barthélemy.

Countries whose official currency is the US dollar include Turks and Caicos, Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands and British Virgin Islands. Countries with their own dollars include the Bahamas (B\$), Cayman Islands (CI\$), Barbados (B\$), Jamaica (J\$), and Trinidad and Tobago (TT\$). Cuba has the Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC\$) and the Dominican Republic uses Dominican Pesos (RD\$). Haiti uses the gourde (HTG), though US dollars are widely used.

The Eastern Caribbean dollar (EC\$) is the official currency of Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, and St Vincent and the Grenadines.

The soon-to-be former Netherlands Antilles islands of Saba, Sint Eustatius, Sint Maarten, Bonaire and Curaçao still use the Netherlands Antillean guilder (written 'NAF', ANG or 'Fls', and also known as the 'guilder'); and Aruba uses the Aruba florin (Afl). The French West Indies islands of St-Martin, Guadeloupe, Martinique and St-Barthélemy use the euro.

ATMs & Credit Cards

ATMs are found on most islands throughout the region. Major credit cards are widely accepted, most commonly Visa and MasterCard. American Express may only work at resorts, high end resorts and pricey gem and watch stores. Note that on some islands, hotels may add a surcharge for credit-card payments, so you might want to inquire in advance.

Cash

As the US dollar is accepted almost everywhere, it's handy to carry some for when you first arrive. Many airports have banks or currency exchange booths where you can pick up local cash, so it's not necessary to have local currency before you arrive. Generally, it's best to carry smaller denominations to pay for taxis, street snacks or tips.

Tipping

The tipping situation varies. On some islands it's automatically added to your restaurant bill as a service charge (typically 10-15%), while on other islands you're expected to add a tip of about 15% to the bill.

Traveler's Checks

Traveler's checks in US dollars are accepted but becoming rather uncommon as people switch to using ATMs for their cash needs.

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

The Caribbean islands create the perfect backdrop for any photographer's dream shots. Succulent sunsets give color a whole new meaning; tropical flowers burst with pink and orange and yellow; green peaks sit at impossible angles; turquoise water seems to dance along the white-sand beaches; your family and friends have tans and sun-kissed hair; the local people wear colorful clothing and eat marvelously strange delights. Incredible photos are just a click away.

Film & Equipment

For those using film, basic print rolls can be found but check expiration dates; you are best off bringing it from home. If you shoot slide film, either bring what you need or leave your camera at home.

Travelers with digital cameras will want to bring along enough memory capacity to last the trip. Although at most internet places where tourists go you can download your photos to the internet and make friends jealous worldwide in nearly real time, saving you the need to carry lots of memory cards.

Only try to buy camera gear if you lose something critical. Prices are high and selection is low.

Photographing People

It's common courtesy to ask permission before taking photos of people. Occasionally those who have their pictures taken without permission will become quite upset and may demand money. In some places, kids have realized the income potential in this and will offer to pose for you and then expect payment. As a general rule, adults are much more reluctant to have their pictures taken unless there's been some social interaction.

Technical Tips

Beware that the high air temperatures in the tropics, coupled with high humidity, greatly accelerate the deterioration of film; store exposed film in a dark, cool place. Don't leave your film or digital camera in direct

sunshine any longer than necessary. Bring along extra Ziploc bags for storing your camera in when you're at the beach or on a boat trip.

Remember that sand and water are intense reflectors and in bright light they'll often leave foreground subjects shadowy. You can try attaching a polarizing filter, but the most effective technique is to take photos in the gentler light of early morning and late afternoon.

POST

Postal systems vary greatly in the Caribbean. Specific information on island post offices is given in the individual island directories.

SOLO TRAVELERS

Though traditionally a destination for lovers, honeymooners, families and groups, the Caribbean is a terrific place to travel alone. Solo travelers find that they can mosey up to any beach bar and find a cold Carib and good conversation. Single sojourners will also get closer to the local population. Whether out of necessity or curiosity, you're more apt to chat with a local fisherman or make friends with a taxi driver when you're going it alone. Many hotels, however, assume double occupancy and charge rates per room. Women traveling alone will want to be careful and aware that they'll get lots of extra attention (see p828).

TELEPHONE

Overall, the telephone systems work relatively well throughout the Caribbean. You can make both local and long-distance calls from virtually all public phones; most use phone cards that often have very good rates. Coin phones are rare.

Avoid the credit-card phones found in airports, hotels and rather strategically outside some tourist bars, as they charge a steep US\$2 per minute for local calls, US\$4 to other Caribbean islands or the US and as much as US\$8 per minute to elsewhere. Many bear monikers like 'Global Phone' or 'Phone Home'. View the phone in your hotel room with the same suspicion you'd have of a person with a knife in a dark alley: rates can be extortionate.

Internet calling is popular. Use your own laptop if you find a wi-fi or a high speed connection that will allow Skype or iChat to work.

Or use the internet phones at an internet place – international rates are usually under US\$0.50 per minute.

Cell Phones

The use of cell phones is quite widespread throughout the Caribbean and most islands have their own network. You'll be able to use your cell on most islands if it is a GSM phone but be prepared to pay extortionate roaming fees. Check rates and whether your phone will work before you go.

One good alternative if you will be on an island for more than two weeks is to buy a SIM card for your GSM phone locally. This gives you local rates which are often quite cheap calling anywhere in the world. Digicel (www.digicel.com), for one, operates on many islands and will sell a SIM card for US\$20 that includes US\$6 of calling credit.

Phone Cards

If you're going to be doing much calling in the Caribbean, you'd be wise to purchase a public phone card, as these are widely used throughout the Caribbean.

Phone cards, the size of a credit card, are either inserted into the phone or have a private code that you dial before each call. Each card has an original value and the cost of each call is deducted automatically as you talk. You discard it when the initial value of the card runs out.

It's a good idea to buy cards in smaller denominations, as the per-unit cost is virtually the same on all cards and you won't get a refund for unused minutes. Each island has its own system, shared only by other islands with the same national affiliation. If you're island hopping, the card you buy in St Thomas will work on the other US Virgin Islands, but it won't, for example, work on St-Barthélemy.

Phone Codes

For Caribbean Island country codes, see inside the front cover as well as the Fast Facts box at the beginning of each individual island's chapter.

In this book we have included only the local number in the listings in each regional chapter, unless the country code needs to be dialed for local calls or for inter-island calls, in which case we have included the country code in the listings.

Check the Telephone section of the Directory in destination chapters to find out how to dial to and from that country.

TIME

The Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic are on Eastern Standard Time (EST), five hours behind Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). All the other islands are on Atlantic Standard Time (AST), four hours behind GMT. Only the Bahamas, and Turks and Caicos observe Daylight Savings Time. To check the time in relation to your city of origin, check www.timeanddate.com.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourism makes the world go round in most of the Caribbean. As a result, travel information is often available by the kilo. Most islands have a tourist information center in the main town and several have satellite offices at the airport.

But not all national tourism bureaus are created equal. Some seem to be the dumping ground for the unemployable uncles of the

ruling party in power; others are smart, sharp operations that do much to make it easier for people to visit and enjoy the island (what a concept!). A few real heroes include Anguilla, Nevis and St-Barthélemy.

See the Directory section in the individual island chapters for contact details of national tourism offices and other useful information sources.

TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

Unfortunately, travel in the Caribbean is not particularly easy for those with physical disabilities. Overall there is little or no consciousness of the need for easier access onto planes, buses or rental vehicles. One exception is Puerto Rico, where good compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act means many sights and hotels have wheelchair accessibility.

Visitors with special needs should inquire directly to prospective hotels for information on their facilities. The larger, more modern resorts are most likely to have the greatest accessibility, with elevators, wider doorways and wheelchair-accessible baths.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CARIBBEAN

Many programs in the Caribbean have a large element of holiday fun mixed in with good intentions. 'Volunteer' programs (you often pay hefty fees for the honor) include ones with themes like 'learn to dive while saving the reef'. If only it was that easy. The following organizations have programs whose actual value to the places 'served' varies greatly. Generally the greater the time commitment, the greater opportunity you'll have to actually do something useful.

Caribbean Volunteer Expeditions (www.cvexp.org) A US-based organization that sends volunteers to work on archaeology projects, artifact restoration and environmental preservation projects throughout the Caribbean. Fees typically cost about US\$800 per week, including accommodations, food and land transportation, but not airfare.

Earthwatch (www.earthwatch.org) As it says on the homepage, 'Leonardo DiCaprio and Earthwatch want you to be a hero for the planet.' Projects include hanging out in rainforests in Puerto Rico and swimming with tropical fish in US Virgin Islands. Rates for two-week courses range from US\$700 to US\$4000, including meals, accommodations and airfare.

Global Volunteers (www.globalvolunteers.org) Longtime organizer of volunteer projects. Many last up to 24 weeks or more. In Jamaica, a program rehabilitates houses in the Blue Mountains. Fees for a two-week stint are US\$2000.

Greenforce Conservation Expeditions (www.greenforce.org) A UK-based organization that specializes in wildlife conservation expeditions for gap-year and university students who work with scientists to study the Andros reef system in the Bahamas. Cost is around £2300 for 10 weeks.

Habitat for Humanity (www.habitat.org) An international nonprofit, ecumenical Christian housing organization where volunteers build simple, affordable housing for people in need. Costs vary, depending on the size and scope of the project.

Healing Hands for Haiti (www.healinghandsforhaiti.org) A foundation dedicated to bringing rehabilitation medicine to Haiti. You don't need a medical background to join a 10-day medical mission, which costs about US\$1500, not including airfare.

While land travel may present some obstacles, cruises are often a good option for travelers with disabilities in the Caribbean. Many cruise lines can coordinate shore-based excursions in wheelchair-accessible tour buses.

Travelers with disabilities might want to get in touch with national support organizations in their home country. These groups commonly have general information and tips on travel and are able to supply a list of travel agents specializing in tours for the visitors with special needs. Here are some resources:

Access-Able Travel Source (☎ 303-232-2979; www.access-able.com) A US-based organization with an excellent website that has links to international disability sites, travel newsletters, guidebooks, travel tips and information on cruise operators.

Radar (www.radar.org.uk) A UK-based advocacy organization providing general information on overseas travel.

Society for Accessible Travel and Hospitality (☎ 212-447-7284; www.sath.org) This advocacy group and resource has much information on travel for travelers with disabilities.

VISAS

Passport and visa requirements vary from island to island; specific information is given in the individual island directories. There are revised passport regulations for US citizens traveling from the Caribbean; see p830.

WOMEN TRAVELERS

Although the situation varies between islands, machismo is alive and well, and women need to take precautions. Men can get aggressive, especially with women traveling alone. On many islands they have few qualms about cat-calling, hissing, whistling, sucking their teeth or making kissy sounds to get your attention. While much of this is simply annoying, it can make women feel unsafe and vulnerable.

Like it or not, you'll feel so much safer traveling with a male companion. For women who love traveling alone, just be sensible and careful. Avoid walking alone after dark, heading off into the wilderness on your own, hitchhiking or picking up male hitchhikers. Generally try to avoid any situation where you're isolated and vulnerable. Don't wear skimpy clothing when you're not on the beach – it will just garner you a lot of unwanted attention. Also note that 'harmless flirtation' at home can be misconstrued as a serious come-on in the Caribbean.

It's also worth singling out Cuba as being a good place for solo women travelers. See the Directory sections of the island chapters for specific details.

WORK

The Caribbean has high unemployment rates and low wages, as well as strict immigration policies aimed at preventing foreign visitors from taking up work.

Generally the best bet for working is to crew with a boat or yacht. As boat-hands aren't usually working on any one island in particular, the work situation is more flexible and it's easier to avoid hassles with immigration. Marinas are a good place to look for jobs on yachts; check the bulletin-board notices, strike up conversations with skippers or ask around at the nearest bar. Marinas in Miami and Fort Lauderdale are considered good places to find crew jobs as people sailing their boats down for the season stop here looking for crew.

You can also look for jobs with a crew placement agency like Florida-based www.crewfinders.com or UK-based www.crewseekers.co.uk. Note, however, that many other people will have the same idea.

Caribbean Islands Transportation

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GETTING THERE & AWAY

This chapter gives a broad overview about the many options for travel to the Caribbean and ways you might get around once you are there. See the Transportation sections in the relevant destination chapters for details specific to each island.

Flights and tours can be booked online at www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Generally your passport is all that's required to enter most Caribbean islands (the exception is always Cuba). Fill out your entry form in black ink (some places such as Antigua are notoriously fussy) and have in mind the name of a hotel in case you are asked where you plan to stay, even if you plan to sort it out later.

THINGS CHANGE...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

Only occasionally will you be asked to show an onward air ticket or prove sufficient funds and then only if you look like a bum. On islands that ask for your length of stay, always pad the figure substantially so as to avoid having to extend the length of your stay, should the sun-kissed beaches and azure waters keep you there longer than you had planned.

Visa and document requirements vary throughout the Caribbean. For specific information, turn to the Directory sections at the end of each regional chapter.

AIR Airports & Airlines

It doesn't matter which island you fly into, touching down on Caribbean land is always a thrilling experience. Some islands, like Saba, Montserrat or Sint Eustatius, have tiny runways, where small regional planes miraculously land on airstrips that don't look much longer than Band-Aids. When you fly into the Bahamas you feel like you're surely going to land in the ocean. Other islands, like Dominica, look like vague colonial outposts, surrounded by cane fields, dusty roads or mountains. Conversely, there's airports like those in Barbados, Aruba and Sint Maarten which are as big and modern as anywhere in the world.

Most major airlines in North America fly direct to the more popular islands in the Caribbean. In fact such service is so widespread that even places as tiny as Bonaire have nonstop service to major US cities. Generally however, getting to the Caribbean from US cities without hub airports will involve changing planes somewhere. American Airlines has major hubs for its extensive Caribbean service in Miami and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

You can reach the Caribbean nonstop from Europe. Proving that old colonial ties linger, airlines from the UK serve former British colonies like Barbados and Antigua; French airlines serve the French-speaking

US TRAVEL LAW

As part of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, which aims to tighten US border controls, the US has announced that, effective June 1, 2009, all US citizens traveling to the Caribbean will need a passport to re-enter the US if traveling by air. If traveling by sea (eg on a cruise ship), you will need a passport or a passport card to re-enter the US. The latter is essentially a wallet-sized US passport that is only good for land and sea travel between the US and Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean.

The law does not affect the US state territories of Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands, which will continue to be allowed established forms of identification like valid drivers' licenses.

islands; and Dutch carriers fly to Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao. There are no direct flights to the Caribbean from Australia, New Zealand or Asia – travelers fly via Europe or the US.

Also note that service to the Caribbean is seasonal. An island that has, say, weekly nonstop flights from Chicago in January may have none at all in June.

Each destination chapter in this book lists all the airlines flying to each island and the cities they serve.

CHARTERS

Charter flights from the US, Canada, UK and Europe offer another option for getting to the islands. Fares are often cheaper than on regularly scheduled commercial airlines, but you usually have to depart and return on specific flights and you'll probably have no flexibility to extend your stay. Such flights also often come as part of packages that include stays in resorts.

Browse the sites below and check with a travel agent as they are usually the frontline sales force for these travel companies and their many competitors.

Apple Vacations (www.applevacations.com) From the US.

Air Transat (www.airtransat.ca) From Canada.

Funjet Vacations (www.funjet.com) From the US.

XL UK (www.xl.com) From the UK.

Tickets

The cost of plane tickets to the Caribbean varies widely, with the peak winter season (December to April) having the highest prices (but also the most flights). Try some of the following websites to compare schedules and prices. Take careful note of itineraries. One airline may offer a route that requires you to change planes twice while another has non-stop service. Is it really worth saving US\$50 to spend eight more hours in traveling and

run all the risks that come with trying to make connections?

- www.cheaptickets.com
- www.expedia.com
- www.farecast.com
- www.kayak.com
- www.orbitz.com
- www.sta.com
- www.travelocity.com

The above sites will search a myriad of possible connections across dozens of airlines. Try at least three and once you have an idea of which airlines have the best fares and service for the route you want, go to their websites as often there are bargains only available from an airline's website.

SEA Cruises

More than two million cruise-ship passengers sail the Caribbean annually, making it the world's largest cruise-ship destination. While the ships get bigger (new ships carry over 5000 passengers) the amenities also grow, and today your ship can have everything from climbing walls and an in-line skating rink to nightclubs and waterfalls. Most ships hit four or five ports of call, sometimes spending a night, other times only a few hours.

The typical cruise-ship holiday is the ultimate package tour. Other than the effort involved in selecting a cruise, it requires minimal planning – just pay and show up – and for many people this is a large part of the appeal.

For the most part, the smaller, 'nontraditional' ships put greater emphasis on the local aspects of their cruises, both in terms of the time spent on land and the degree of interaction with islanders and their environment. While the majority of mainstream cruises take in fine scenery along the way, the time on the islands is generally quite limited, and the

opportunities to experience a sense of island life are more restricted.

Because travel in the Caribbean can be expensive and because cruises cover rooms, meals, entertainment and transportation in one all-inclusive price, cruises can also be comparatively economical.

But it is also important to understand the effects that cruises have on the Caribbean. Many port towns have been transformed into one big shopping area for gems and watches – all at supposedly cheap prices. Local culture is turned into sort of a generic ‘happy islander’ cliché. Then there are the social consequences of having 5000 people or more suddenly descend upon a port: daily life is effectively smothered. The cruise lines also wield immense political power. While independent travelers to an island may be barraged with taxes and fees that go for improving local lives (and at times lining politicians’ wallets), cruise-ship passengers generally pay less. Islands that try to impose higher port fees to cover the costs of the cruise ships find mysteriously that less boats are scheduled to turn up.

Environmental concerns are also well-documented. One need only see the black smoke belching forth from a cruise ship’s smokestack as it leaves port to understand that these boats aren’t green. Dumping waste

at sea is a problem that has been documented countless times.

Good sources for getting a well-rounded picture of the industry include:

Bluewater Network (www.bluewaternetwork.org) An international environmental group that monitors cruise ship pollution.

Cruise Critic (www.cruise critic.com) An in-depth site for people who like to cruise. The message boards are excellent, with detailed critical opinions and information on ships, islands and more.

Cruise Junkie (www.cruisejunkie.com) An excellent site that provides a well-rounded view of the industry, including safety and environmental issues.

Flying Wheels Travel (www.flyingwheelstravel.com) Specializes in disabled-accessible Caribbean cruises.

US Centers for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov) Follow the travel links to the well-regarded sanitation ratings for ships calling in US ports.

COST

The cost of a cruise can vary widely, depending on the season and vacancies. While it will save you money to book early, keep in mind that cruise lines want to sail full, so many will offer excellent last-minute discounts, sometimes up to 50% off the full fare.

You’ll pay less for a smaller room, but beware that the really cheap rooms are often claustrophobic and poorly located (be sure to

CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

Flying & Climate Change

Pretty much every form of motor travel generates CO₂ (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household’s gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

Carbon Offset Schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use ‘carbon calculators’ that allow jetsetters to offset the greenhouse gases they are responsible for with contributions to energy-saving projects and other climate-friendly initiatives in the developing world – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, supports the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: lonelyplanet.com.

INDEPENDENT TRAVEL BY CRUISE SHIP?

It may seem a contradiction in terms, but you can be an independent traveler on a cruise ship. If you view the boats as floating hotel rooms that simply transport you each night to a new island, than you are halfway there. The key is what you do in port.

Excursions sold by the cruise lines tend to focus on either cattle-like tours of the island that leave you mooing by the end of the well-trodden trail or focus on generic activities or experiences that have no real context to the island. Instead, be your own tour director. Freelance guides and drivers are available in every port. So too are rental cars and – if you have enough time – ports are often close to bus terminals which allow you to travel the island with locals for next to nothing. Basically your only constraint on doing and seeing the things outlined in this book is time. One imaginative couple rented snorkeling gear when their boat docked in Bonaire. They then got a taxi to a point a few miles up the coast and spent the afternoon snorkeling their way back to the port viewing the island's legendary shoreline reefs.

Another important consideration about independent travel by cruise ship is the opportunity it provides to put money into local economies. By charting your own course on land and purposely patronizing local businesses, you have a much greater direct impact with your money than if it is funneled through large operators.

Unfortunately cruise companies refuse any request for one-way trips, point-to-point travel or stop-offs during voyages. They don't want the hassle.

ask before booking). Some cruise lines provide free or discounted airfares to and from the port of embarkation (or will provide a rebate if you make your own transportation arrangements), while others do not.

Meals, which are typically frequent and abundant, are included in the cruise price. Alcoholic drinks are usually not included and are an important profit-center for the lines. A new trend that many cruise companies are enthusiastically promoting involves extra-cost dining venues that give passengers the opportunity to spend money for meals in more exclusive restaurants. Note that tipping is usually expected and can add 20% or more to your shipboard account. Many lines have gotten around the discretionary nature of tips (which are the primary wages for the crew) by automatically putting them on your bill.

A myriad of guided land tours and activities are offered at each port of call, each generally costing US\$35 to US\$100 or more. These tours are also a major profit centre for the cruise lines so there is great sales pressure before and during your trip.

Most cruises end up costing US\$200 to US\$400 per person, per day, including airfare from a major US gateway city.

Port charges and government taxes typically add on another US\$150 per cruise. Be sure to check the fine print about deposits, cancellation and refund policies, and travel insurance.

BOOKING A CRUISE

Most cities have travel agents that specialize in cruises. Read weekend newspaper travel sections and check the Yellow Pages.

The internet is an excellent place to make arrangements. Large travel-booking sites like Expedia, Orbitz and Travelocity have oodles of options. The cruise line's own sites will offer deals or upgrades not found elsewhere. Then there are specialist websites for cruising. Some have spectacular deals as lines dump trips at the last moment that otherwise would go unsold.

Recommended sites include the following:

Cruise411 (☎ 800-553-7090; www.cruise411.com)

Cruise.com (☎ 888-333-3116; www.cruise.com)

Cruise Outlet (☎ 800-775-1884; www.thecruiseoutlet.com)

Cruise Web (☎ 800-377-9383; www.cruiseweb.com)

Vacations To Go (☎ 800-419-5104; www.vacationstogo.com) Especially good last-minute deals.

TRADITIONAL CRUISES

The following cruise lines sail large vessels on numerous itineraries to many Caribbean islands. Note that through their various brands, Carnival and Royal Caribbean control 90% of the market in the Caribbean.

Carnival Cruise Lines (☎ 800-227-6482; www.carnival.com) The largest cruise line in the world. Its enormous boats offer cruising to the masses on myriad Caribbean itineraries.

Celebrity Cruises (☎ 800-437-3111; www.celebritycruises.com) An important brand of Royal Caribbean, it

has huge boats that offer a more upscale experience than Carnival and RCI. It is a major Caribbean player.

Costa Cruises (☎ 800-462-6782; www.costacruises.com) Owned by Carnival, Costa is aimed at European travelers, which means bigger spas, smaller cabins and better coffee. Boats are huge, and are based on those sailing for its parent company.

Cunard Line (☎ 800-728-6273; www.cunard.com) Owned by Carnival, Cunard Line operates the huge *Queen Mary II* and *Queen Victoria*. The focus is on 'classic luxury' and the boats have limited Caribbean sailings.

Disney Cruise Line (☎ 888-325-2500; www.disneycruise.com) Disney's ships are like floating theme parks, with features like movie theaters, children's programs and large staterooms that appeal to families. Disney sails from Florida through the Bahamas.

Holland America (☎ 800-577-1728; www.hollandamerica.com) Owned by Carnival. Holland America offers a traditional cruising experience to generally older passengers. It has limited sailings in the Caribbean during the Alaska winter (its summer market).

Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) (☎ 800-327-7030; www.ncl.com) Offers 'freestyle cruising' on large cruise ships which means that dress codes are relaxed and dining options more flexible than other lines.

Princess Cruises (☎ 800-568-3262; www.princess.com) Owned by Carnival, Princess has huge boats that ply the Caribbean and offer a slightly older crowd a huge range of activities and even classes while aboard.

Regent Seven Seas Cruises (☎ 877-505-5370; www.rssc.com) Smaller ships (maximum 700 passengers) focus on luxury cabins and excellent food.

Royal Caribbean International (RCI) (☎ 800-398-9819; www.royalcaribbean.com) The arch-rival to Carnival has a huge fleet of mega-ships (some carry over 5600 people) that is aimed right at the middle of the market. It has itineraries everywhere in the Caribbean all the time.

NONTRADITIONAL CRUISES

Sea Cloud Cruises (☎ 888-732-2568; www.seacloud.com) The fleet includes a four-masted, 360ft-long (110m) ship dating to 1931 and a modern sibling. On both, sails are set by hand. This German-American company operates luxury cruises in the Eastern Caribbean.

Star Clippers (☎ 800-442-0551; www.starclippers.com) These modern four-masted clipper ships have tall-ship designs and carry 180 passengers. Itineraries take in smaller islands of the Eastern Caribbean.

Windjammer Barefoot Cruises (☎ 800-327-2601; www.windjammer.com) Boats are all true-sailing vessels and the passengers – like the crew – tend to be young. Good choices for the budget and active-minded, the boats get into parts not visited by larger vessels.

Windstar Cruises (☎ 800-258-7245; www.windstarcruises.com) These luxury four-mast, 440ft (134m) boats

have high-tech, computer-operated sails and carry under 400 passengers. Note that the sails aren't the main means of propulsion most of the time. Trips travel throughout the Windward and Leeward Islands.

GAY & LESBIAN CRUISES

The following US-based companies organize gay-friendly cruises on major cruise lines to the Eastern Caribbean:

Gay Cruise Vacations (☎ 888-367-9398; www.gaycruisevacations.com) These popular all-gay vacations on giant cruise ships travel throughout the Caribbean on mostly seven-day trips.

RSVP Vacations (☎ 800-328-7787; www.rsvpvacations.com) Good for active travelers, RSVP has trips on both large cruise ships and smaller yachts.

Ferry

Once a week, a passenger ferry travels between Chaguaramas, Trinidad, and Guiria, Venezuela, offering an alternative for people traveling to/from South America. See p774 for details.

GETTING AROUND

AIR

Airlines in the Caribbean

Regional airlines, from large to small, travel around the Caribbean. A certain level of patience and understanding is required when you island-hop. Schedules can change at a moment's notice or there may be delays without explanation. For the number of flights that happen daily in the Caribbean, there are very few accidents, so your best bet is to relax and enjoy the ride.

Regional planes are sometimes like old buses, seemingly stopping at every possible corner to pick up passengers. You'll sometimes get stuck on what you could call the 'LIAT shuffle' – where your plane touches down and takes off again from several different airports. For example, if you're flying from St Thomas to Trinidad, you might stop in Antigua, St Lucia and St Vincent before making it to Trinidad. This can easily turn a short flight into half a day. Again, it's best just to enjoy the ride.

There are myriad airlines operating within the Caribbean. You'll find full details in the individual chapters for each island. However there are some large carriers with dozens of connections, which will give you ideas for itinerary building:

THREE FLYING RECOMMENDATIONS

The authors of this book learned from experience three things you should remember:

- Try not to arrive on a regional flight in the afternoon when most of the North American and European flights arrive, swamping immigration and customs. We flew from Montserrat to Antigua: the flight was 15 minutes, the wait in immigration lines was 2½ hours.
- Keep anything essential you might need for a few days with you. Luggage often somehow misses your flight – even if you see it waiting next to the plane as you board. It may take days – if ever – to catch up with you.
- Check in early. Bring a book and snack and hang out. We saw people with confirmed seats repeatedly bumped after flights checked in full and their alternative was days later. Two hours is not bad if you're prepared for the wait. In many airports, you could check in early and then go do someplace else like the incredibly fun beach bars near the Sint Maarten airport.

Air Jamaica (☎ 800-523-5585; www.airjamaica.com) Provides links across the region from its hubs in Kingston and Montego Bay.

American Airlines/American Eagle (☎ 800-433-7300; www.aa.com) Provides a huge network of service from its hubs in Miami and San Puerto Rico.

Caribbean Airlines (☎ 800-744-2225; www.caribbean-airlines.com) Links to major islands from its hubs in Barbados and Trinidad.

LIAT (☎ 268-480-5601; www.liat.com) The major local carrier of the Eastern Caribbean, you're bound to fly it. Locals love to zing it with phrases like Leaves Island Any Time but it is pretty reliable. Based in Antigua, it flies medium-sized prop planes and serves almost every island with an airport.

Air Passes

Air passes are a thing of the past in the Caribbean, at least for now. But with advance planning you can get fares that offer similar savings.

BICYCLE

The popularity of cycling in the Caribbean depends on where you go. Several islands are prohibitively hilly, with narrow roads that make cycling difficult. On others, such as Cuba, cycling is a great way to get around. Many of the islands have bicycles for rent; for details see the island chapters. Bike shops are becoming more common. Most ferries will let you bring bikes on board at no extra charge; regional airlines will likely charge you a hefty fee, so it's best to check ahead if you're going to island-hop with your bike.

BOAT

Ferry

For a place surrounded by water, the Caribbean islands don't have as many ferries

as you'd think. However, regional ferries travel between several island groups. These can be a nice change of pace after cramped airplanes, smelly buses and dodgy rental cars.

An extensive and inexpensive ferry network connects the US Virgin Islands and British Virgin Islands. Other ferry services that are available include Anguilla and St-Martin/Sint Maarten; St-Martin/Sint Maarten, Saba and St-Barthélemy; St Kitts and Nevis; St Vincent and Bequia; Grenada and Carriacou; and Trinidad and Tobago. Ferries also run between Guadeloupe, Martinique and the outlying islands of Terre-de-Haut, Marie-Galante and La Désirade. Popular and successful fast catamaran ferries connect the islands of Guadeloupe, Dominica, Martinique and St Lucia. Catamarans also sail between St-Martin/Sint Maarten and St-Barthélemy for day trips. In the Bahamas, a high-speed ferry links Nassau to outlying islands.

Details on regional ferry service are in the relevant individual island chapters.

Yacht

The Caribbean is one of the world's prime yachting locales, offering diversity, warm weather and fine scenery. The many small islands grouped closely together are not only fun to explore but also form a barrier, providing relatively calm sailing waters.

The major yachting bases are in the British Virgin Islands, St-Martin/Sint Maarten, Antigua, Guadeloupe, Martinique, St Lucia, St Vincent and Grenada.

It's easiest to sail down-island, from north to south, as on the reverse trip boats must beat back into the wind. Because of this,

several yacht-charter companies only allow sailors to take the boats in one direction, arranging for their own crews to bring the boats back to home base later.

Information on ports and marinas can be found in the individual island chapters.

For information on signing on to crew on a boat or a yacht to reach the Caribbean or to get around once there, see p828.

YACHT CHARTERS

You can choose from two basic types of yacht charter: bareboat (sail it yourself) and crewed (you relax, someone else sails). Some yacht-charter companies offer everything from live-aboard sailing courses to full luxury living.

With a bareboat charter you rent just the boat. You are the captain and you sail where you want, when you want. You must be an experienced sailor to charter the boat. Bareboat yachts generally come stocked with linen, kitchen supplies, fuel, water, a dinghy, an outboard, charts, cruising guides, a cellular phone and other gear. Provisioning (stocking the boat with food) is not included, although sometimes it is provided for an additional fee.

With a crewed charter the yacht comes with a captain, crew, cook and provisions. You don't have to know how to sail, or anything else about boats. You can either make your own detailed itinerary or provide a vague idea of the kind of places you'd like to visit and let the captain decide where to anchor.

Costs vary greatly. The more established companies generally charge more than small, little-known operators, and large ritzy yachts of course cost more than smaller, less luxurious boats. For more details on yacht charters, see the boxed text, p416.

The following charter companies offer both bareboat and crewed yacht charters in the Caribbean:

Catamaran Company (☎ 800-262-0308; www.catamarans.com)

Horizon Yacht Charters (☎ 877-494-8787; www.horizonyachtcharters.com)

Moorings (☎ 888-952-8420; www.moorings.com)

Sunsail (☎ 888-350-3568; www.sunsail.com)

TMM Yacht Charters (☎ 800-633-0155; www.sailtmm.com)

CHARTER BROKERS

For those who don't want to be bothered shopping around, charter-yacht brokers can help. Brokers work on commission, like travel agents, with no charge to the customer – you tell them your budget and requirements and they help make a match.

A few of the better-known charter-yacht brokers are:

Ed Hamilton & Co (☎ 800-621-7855; www.ed-hamilton.com)

Lynn Jachney Charters (☎ 800-223-2050; www.lynnjachneycharters.com)

Nicholson Yacht Charters (☎ 800-662-6066; www.yachtvacations.com)

BUS

Inexpensive bus service is available on most islands, although the word 'bus' has different meanings in different places. Some islands have full-size buses, while on others a 'bus' is simply a pickup truck with wooden benches in the back. Whatever the vehicle, buses are a good environmental choice compared to rental cars and they are excellent ways to meet locals. People are generally quite

WHICH SIDE?

What side of the road to drive on depends on the island, and this can prove particularly confusing if you're island-hopping and renting cars on each island. Adding to the confusion, some cars have steering columns on the opposite side of the car. As a rule, drivers stick to the following:

Left Side of the Road (Like the UK)

Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos, US Virgin Islands.

Right Side of the Road (Like the US)

Aruba, Bonaire, Cuba, Curaçao, Dominican Republic, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Martinique, Puerto Rico, Saba, St-Barthélemy, Sint Eustatius, St-Martin/Sint Maarten.

friendly and happy to talk to you about their island. Buses are also often the best way to hear the most popular local music tracks, often at an amazingly loud volume.

Buses are often the primary means of commuting to work or school and thus are most frequent in the early mornings and from mid-to late afternoon. There's generally a good bus service on Saturday mornings, but Sunday service is often nonexistent.

Buses can get crowded. As more and more people get on, children move onto their parents' laps, kids share seats, people squeeze together and everyone generally accepts the cramped conditions with good humor. Whenever someone gets off the back of a crowded minivan, it takes on the element of a human Rubik's Cube, with seats folding up and everyone shuffling; on some buses there's actually a conductor to direct the seating.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Driving in the Caribbean islands can rock your world, rattle your brains and fray your nerves. At first. Soon, you'll get used to the chickens, goats, stray dogs and cows wandering the roadways. You'll get the hang of swerving like a maniac, of slowing for no reason, of using your horn to communicate everything from 'Hey, I'm turning right!' to 'Hey, you're cute!' to 'Hey, [expletive] you!'

It often seems like the only time island residents rush is when they get in their cars. For no apparent reason, many islanders like to haul ass through traffic, roar around twisting roads and use highways to test just how fast their cars will go. Truly, you will get used to all this.

Driver's License

You'll need your driver's license in order to rent a car. On most of the former British islands, you'll also need to purchase a local driver's license (US\$12 to US\$20) when you rent a car, but you can do that simply by showing your home license and dishing out the appropriate fee.

Rental

Car rentals are available on nearly all of the islands, with a few exceptions (usually because they lack roads). On most islands there are affiliates of the international chains, but local rental agencies may have better rates. Or they may simply be more hassle. Always understand what rental insurance coverage your credit card or personal auto insurance provide – if any. Purchasing insurance from the rental company can add over US\$10 a day to your bill and you may already be covered.

During the busy winter high season, some islands simply run out of rental cars, so it's a good idea to book one in advance, especially if you want an economy car. On many islands you need to be 25 years old to rent a car. Cars may be in good shape or they may be beaters, cast-offs from another land sent to die an island death. Check the Transportation section of each chapter for specific details.

HITCHHIKING

Hitchhiking is an essential mode of travel on most islands, though the practice among foreign visitors isn't as common.

If you want to hitch a ride, stand by the side of the road and put your hand out. Be aware that this is also how locals flag taxis and since many private cars look like taxis, this can be confusing (note that most taxis have the letter 'H' – for Hire – on their front license plate). Foreign women traveling alone should not hitchhike – your want for a ride could be misconstrued as a want for something else. Men traveling alone should also be cautious. Though most drivers will happily give you a ride, others might see you as a target, especially if you're carrying around expensive luggage or camera equipment.

If you're driving a rental car, giving locals a lift can be a great form of cultural interaction and much appreciated by those trudging along the side of the road while – comparatively – rich foreigners whiz past. Again, be cautious and obey your instincts.

Health

David Goldberg MD

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Prevention is the key to remaining healthy while abroad. Travelers who receive the recommended vaccinations and follow common-sense precautions usually come away with nothing more than a little diarrhea.

From a medical point of view, the Caribbean is generally safe as long as you're reasonably careful about what you eat and drink. The most common travel-related diseases, such as dysentery and hepatitis, are acquired by consumption of contaminated food and water. Mosquito-borne illnesses aren't a significant concern on most of the islands, except during outbreaks of dengue fever.

BEFORE YOU GO

Bring medications in their original containers, clearly labeled. A signed, dated letter from your physician describing all medical conditions and medications, including generic names, is also a good idea. If carrying syringes or needles, be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity.

INSURANCE

If your health insurance does not cover you for medical expenses while abroad, consider supplemental insurance; travel agents and the internet are good places to start looking. Find out in advance if your insurance

plan will make payments directly to providers or reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures.

RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

Since most vaccines don't produce immunity until at least two weeks after they're given, visit a physician four to eight weeks before departure. Ask your doctor for an International Certificate of Vaccination, which will list all the vaccinations you've received. This is mandatory for countries that require proof of yellow-fever vaccination upon entry, but it's a good idea to carry it wherever you travel. See p838 for recommended vaccinations.

MEDICAL CHECKLIST

Recommended items for a personal medical kit:

- acetaminophen/paracetamol (eg Tylenol) or aspirin
- adhesive or paper tape
- antibacterial ointment (eg Bactroban) for cuts and abrasions
- antibiotics
- antidiarrheal drugs (eg loperamide)
- antihistamines (for hay fever and allergic reactions)
- anti-inflammatory drugs (eg ibuprofen)
- bandages, gauze and gauze rolls
- DEET-containing insect repellent for the skin
- iodine tablets (for water purification)
- oral-rehydration salts
- permethrin-containing insect spray for clothing, tents and bed nets
- pocketknife
- scissors, safety pins and tweezers
- steroid cream or cortisone (for allergic rashes)
- sunblock
- syringes and sterile needles
- thermometer

INTERNET RESOURCES

There is a wealth of online travel-health advice. A good place to start is lonelyplanet.com. The **World Health Organization** (www.who.int/ith/) publishes a superb book called *International Travel & Health*, which is revised

REQUIRED & RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

Vaccine	Recommended for	Dosage	Side effects
chickenpox	travelers who've never had chickenpox	2 doses, 1 month apart	fever; mild case of chickenpox
hepatitis A	all travelers	1 dose before trip; booster 6-12 months later;	soreness at injection site; headaches; body aches
hepatitis B	long-term travelers in close contact with local population	3 doses over 6 months	soreness at injection site; low-grade fever
measles	travelers born after 1956 who've only had 1 measles vaccination	1 dose	fever; rash; joint pains; allergic reactions
rabies	travelers who may have contact with animals and may not have access to medical care	3 doses over 3-4 weeks	soreness at injection site; headaches; body aches
tetanus-diphtheria	all travelers who haven't had a booster within 10 years	1 dose lasts 10 years	soreness at injection site
typhoid	all travelers to Haiti, and for extended stays in rural areas on other islands	4 capsules by mouth, 1 taken every other day	abdominal pain; nausea; rash
yellow fever	travelers to rural areas in Trinidad & Tobago	1 dose lasts 10 years	headaches; body aches; severe reactions rare

annually and is available on its website at no cost. Another website of general interest is **MD Travel Health** (www.mdtravelhealth.com), which provides complete travel-health recommendations for every country, updated daily, at no cost.

It's usually a good idea to consult your government's travel-health website before departure, if one is available:

Australia (www.smarttraveller.gov.au)

Canada (www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english)

UK (www.doh.gov.uk)

USA (www.cdc.gov)

FURTHER READING

If you're traveling with children, Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children*, by Cathy Lanigan, is useful. *ABC of Healthy Travel*, by E Walker et al, and *Medicine for the Outdoors*, by Paul S Auerbach, are other valuable resources.

IN TRANSIT**DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)**

Blood clots may form in the legs during plane flights, chiefly because of prolonged immobility. Note that the longer the flight, the greater the risk. Though most blood clots are reabsorbed uneventfully, some may break off and travel through the blood

vessels to the lungs, where they could cause life-threatening complications.

The chief symptom of DVT is swelling or pain in the foot, ankle or calf, usually but not always on just one side. When a blood clot travels to the lungs, it may cause chest pain and difficulty in breathing. Travelers with any of these symptoms should immediately seek medical attention.

To prevent the development of DVT on long flights, you should walk about the cabin, perform isometric compressions of the leg muscles (ie contract the leg muscles while sitting), drink plenty of fluids, and avoid alcohol and tobacco.

JET LAG & MOTION SICKNESS

Jet lag is common when crossing more than five time zones, and is characterized by insomnia, fatigue, malaise or nausea. To avoid jet lag, try drinking plenty of (nonalcoholic) fluids and eating light meals. Upon arrival, get exposure to natural sunlight and readjust your schedule (for meals, sleep etc) as soon as possible.

Antihistamines such as dimenhydrinate (Dramamine) and meclizine (Antivert, Bonine) are usually the first choice for treating motion sickness. Their main side effect is drowsiness. A herbal alternative is ginger, which works like a charm for some people.

IN THE CARIBBEAN ISLANDS

AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

Acceptable health care is available in most major cities throughout the Caribbean, but may be hard to locate in rural areas. In general, the quality of health care will not be comparable to that in your home country. To find a good local doctor, your best bet is to ask the management of the hotel where you are staying or contact your local embassy. In many countries, the US embassy posts a list of English-speaking physicians on its website.

Many doctors and hospitals expect payment in cash, regardless of whether you have travel-health insurance. If you develop a life-threatening medical problem, you'll probably want to be evacuated to a country with state-of-the-art medical care. Since this may cost tens of thousands of dollars, be sure you have insurance to cover this before you depart (see p837).

Many pharmacies are well supplied, but important medications may not be consistently available. Be sure to bring along adequate supplies of all prescription drugs.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Bancroftian Filariasis

Otherwise known as elephantiasis, bancroftian filariasis occurs in Haiti, the Dominican Republic and some other islands. The disease is carried from person to person by mosquitoes. In severe cases, filariasis may cause enlargement of the entire leg or arm, as well as the genitals and breasts. Most cases occur in longtime residents, but travelers should be aware of the risks and should follow insect protection measures, as outlined on p842.

Dengue Fever

Dengue fever is a viral infection common throughout the Caribbean. Dengue is transmitted by *Aedes* mosquitoes, which bite mostly during the daytime and are usually found close to human habitations, often indoors. They breed primarily in artificial water containers, such as jars, barrels, cans, cisterns, metal drums, plastic containers and discarded tires. As a result, dengue is especially common in densely populated, urban environments.

Dengue usually causes flulike symptoms, including fever, muscle aches, joint pains, headaches, nausea and vomiting, often followed by a rash. The body aches may be quite uncomfortable, but most cases resolve uneventfully in a few days. Severe cases usually occur in children under age 15 who are experiencing their second dengue infection.

There is no treatment for dengue fever except to take analgesics such as acetaminophen or paracetamol (Tylenol) and drink plenty of fluids. Severe cases may require hospitalization for intravenous fluids and supportive care.

There is no vaccine. The cornerstone of prevention is protection against insect bites; see p842.

Fascioliasis

This is a parasitic infection that is typically acquired by eating contaminated watercress grown in sheep-raising areas, especially in Cuba. Early symptoms of fascioliasis include fever, nausea, vomiting and painful enlargement of the liver.

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is the second-most common travel-related infection (after traveler's diarrhea). The illness occurs throughout the world, but the incidence is higher in developing nations. It occurs throughout the Caribbean, particularly in the northern islands.

Hepatitis A is a viral infection of the liver that is usually acquired by ingestion of contaminated water, food or ice, though it may also be acquired by direct contact with infected persons. Symptoms may include fever, malaise, jaundice, nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain. Most cases resolve without complications, though hepatitis A occasionally causes severe liver damage. There is no treatment.

The vaccine for hepatitis A is extremely safe and highly effective. If you get a booster six to 12 months later, it lasts for at least 10 years. You should get it before you go to any developing nation. Because the safety of hepatitis A vaccine has not been established for pregnant women or children under the age of two, they should instead be given a gammaglobulin injection.

Hepatitis B

Like hepatitis A, hepatitis B is a liver infection that occurs worldwide but is more common

in developing nations. The disease is usually acquired by sexual contact or by exposure to infected blood, generally through blood transfusions or contaminated needles. In the Caribbean the risk is greatest in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The vaccine is recommended only for long-term travelers (on the road more than six months) who expect to live in rural areas or have close physical contact with locals. Additionally, the vaccine is recommended for anyone who anticipates sexual contact with the local inhabitants or a possible need for medical, dental or other treatments (especially if transfusions or injections are involved) while abroad.

Hepatitis B vaccine is safe and highly effective. However, a total of three injections are necessary to establish full immunity. Several countries added hepatitis B vaccine to the list of routine childhood immunizations in the 1980s, so many young adults are already protected.

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS has been reported in all Caribbean countries. More than 2% of all adults in the Caribbean carry HIV, which makes it the second-worst-affected region in the world, after sub-Saharan Africa. The highest prevalence is reported in the Bahamas, Haiti, and Trinidad and Tobago. In the Caribbean most cases are related to heterosexual contacts, especially with sex workers. The exception is Puerto Rico, where the most common cause of infection is intravenous drug use. Be sure to use condoms for all sexual encounters. If you think you might visit a piercing or tattoo parlor, or if you have a medical condition that might require an injection, bring along your own sterile needles.

Leishmaniasis

Reported in the eastern part of the Dominican Republic, leishmaniasis is transmitted by sand flies, which are about one-third of the size of mosquitoes. The most common form of the disease is manifested in skin ulcers on exposed parts of the body, developing over weeks or months. Leishmaniasis may be particularly severe in those with HIV.

There is no vaccine. To protect yourself from sandflies, follow the same precautions as for mosquitoes (see p842), except that netting must be a finer mesh: at least 18

holes to the linear inch (or seven holes to the linear centimeter).

Malaria

In the Caribbean malaria occurs only in Haiti, and in certain parts of the Dominican Republic such as Bávaro and Punta Cana. For those areas, the first-choice malaria pill is chloroquine, taken once weekly in a dosage of 500mg, starting one to two weeks before arrival, continuing through the trip and for four weeks after departure. Chloroquine is safe, inexpensive and highly effective. Side effects are typically mild and may include nausea, abdominal discomfort, headache, dizziness, blurred vision or itching. Severe reactions are uncommon.

Protecting yourself against mosquito bites (see p842) is just as important as taking malaria pills, since pills are never 100% effective.

If you think you may not have access to medical care while traveling, you should bring along additional pills for emergency self-treatment, which you should undergo if you can't reach a doctor and you develop symptoms that suggest malaria, such as high-spiking fevers. One option is to take four tablets of Malarone once daily for three days. If you self-treat for malaria, it may also be appropriate to start a broad-spectrum antibiotic to cover typhoid fever and other bacterial infections. The drug of choice is usually a quinolone antibiotic such as ciprofloxacin (Cipro) or levofloxacin (Levaquin). If you start self-medication, you should try to see a doctor at the earliest possible opportunity.

If you end up with a fever after returning home, see a physician, as malaria symptoms may not occur for months.

Rabies

Rabies is a viral infection of the brain and spinal cord that is almost always fatal. The rabies virus is carried in the saliva of infected animals and is typically transmitted through an animal bite, though contamination of any break in the skin with infected saliva may result in rabies. Animal rabies occurs on several of the Caribbean islands, particularly in the small Indian mongoose.

Rabies vaccine is safe, but a full series requires three injections and is quite expensive. Most travelers don't need rabies vaccine, but those at high risk for rabies, such as animal

handlers and spelunkers, should certainly get the vaccine. In addition, those at lower risk for animal bites should consider asking for the vaccine if they are traveling to remote areas and might not have access to appropriate medical care if needed. The treatment for a possibly rabid bite consists of rabies vaccine with rabies-immune globulin. It's effective, but must be given promptly.

All animal bites and scratches must be promptly and thoroughly cleansed with large amounts of soap and water, and local health authorities should be contacted to determine whether or not further treatment is necessary.

Schistosomiasis

A parasitic infection that is carried by snails and acquired by exposure of skin to contaminated freshwater, schistosomiasis has been reported in parts of the Dominican Republic, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Puerto Rico, Antigua and Barbuda, Montserrat and St Lucia. To find out whether or not schistosomiasis is present in the areas you'll be visiting, go to the World Health Organization's **Global Schistosomiasis Atlas** (www.who.int/wormcontrol/documents/maps/country/en/).

Early symptoms may include fever, loss of appetite, weight loss, abdominal pain, weakness, headaches, joint and muscle pains, diarrhea, nausea and a cough, but most infections are asymptomatic at first. Long-term complications may include kidney failure, enlargement of the liver and spleen, engorgement of the esophageal blood vessels and accumulation of fluid in the abdominal cavity. Occasionally, eggs may be deposited in the brain or spinal cord, leading to seizures or paralysis.

When traveling in areas where schistosomiasis occurs, you should avoid swimming, wading, bathing or washing in bodies of freshwater, including lakes, ponds, streams and rivers. Toweling yourself dry after exposure to contaminated water may reduce your chance of getting infected, but does not eliminate it. Saltwater and chlorinated pools carry no risk of schistosomiasis.

Typhoid

Typhoid is uncommon on most of the Caribbean islands, except Haiti, which has reported a number of typhoid outbreaks.

Typhoid fever is caused by ingestion of food or water contaminated by a species of salmonella known as *Salmonella typhi*. Fever

occurs in virtually all cases. Other symptoms may include headache, malaise, muscle aches, dizziness, loss of appetite, nausea and abdominal pain, diarrhea or constipation. Possible complications include intestinal perforation, intestinal bleeding, confusion, delirium and (rarely) coma.

Typhoid vaccine is recommended for all travelers to Haiti, and for travelers to the other islands who expect to stay in rural areas for an extended period or who may consume potentially contaminated food or water. Typhoid vaccine is usually given orally, but is also available as an injection. Neither vaccine is approved for use in children under the age of two. If you get typhoid fever, the drug of choice is usually a quinolone antibiotic such as ciprofloxacin (Cipro) or levofloxacin (Levaquin), which many travelers carry for treatment of traveler's diarrhea.

Yellow Fever

Yellow fever occurs among animals on Trinidad and Tobago, but has not been reported among humans there in recent years. However, the yellow-fever vaccine is strongly recommended for travelers going outside urban areas in Trinidad and Tobago.

There's no yellow fever on the other Caribbean islands, but the following require proof of yellow-fever vaccination if you're arriving from a yellow-fever-infected country in Africa or the Americas: Aruba, Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Bonaire, Curaçao, Dominica, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saba, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Sint Eustatius, Sint Maarten, Trinidad and Tobago.

Yellow-fever vaccine is given only in approved yellow-fever vaccination centers, which provide validated International Certificates of Vaccination (yellow booklets). The vaccine should be given at least 10 days before any potential exposure to yellow fever and remains effective for approximately 10 years. Reactions to the vaccine are generally mild, and may include headaches, muscle aches, low-grade fevers or discomfort at the injection site. Severe, life-threatening reactions have been experienced but are extremely rare. In general, the risk of becoming ill from the vaccine is far less than the risk of becoming ill from yellow fever, and you're strongly encouraged to get the vaccine.

The yellow-fever vaccine is not recommended for pregnant women or children less than nine months old. These travelers, if arriving from a country with yellow fever, should obtain a waiver letter, preferably written on letterhead stationary and bearing the stamp used by official immunization centers to validate the International Certificate of Vaccination.

TRAVELER'S DIARRHEA

To prevent diarrhea, avoid tap water unless it has been boiled, filtered or chemically disinfected (with iodine tablets); eat fresh fruits or vegetables only if cooked or peeled; be wary of dairy products that might contain unpasteurized milk; and be highly selective when eating food from street vendors.

If you develop diarrhea, be sure to drink plenty of fluid, preferably an oral rehydration solution containing lots of salt and sugar. A few loose stools don't require treatment, but if you start having more than four or five stools a day, you should start taking an antibiotic (usually a quinolone drug) and an antidiarrheal agent (such as loperamide). If diarrhea is bloody, persists for more than 72 hours or is accompanied by fever, shaking chills or severe abdominal pain, you should seek medical attention.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Bites & Stings

Do not attempt to pet, handle or feed any animal, with the exception of domestic animals known to be free of any infectious disease. Most injuries from animals are directly related to a person's attempt to touch or feed the animal.

Any bite or scratch by a mammal, including bats, should be promptly and thoroughly cleansed with large amounts of soap and water, then an antiseptic such as iodine or alcohol should be applied. The local health authorities should be contacted immediately regarding possible postexposure rabies treatment, whether or not you've been immunized against rabies. It may also be advisable to start an antibiotic, since wounds caused by animal bites and scratches frequently become infected. One of the newer quinolones, such as levofloxacin (Levaquin), which many travelers carry in case of diarrhea, would be an appropriate choice.

MOSQUITO BITES

To prevent mosquito bites, wear long sleeves, long pants, a hat and closed-in shoes. Bring

along a good insect repellent, preferably one containing DEET, and apply to exposed skin and clothing, but not to eyes, mouth, cuts, wounds or irritated skin. In general, adults and children over 12 should use preparations containing 25% to 35% DEET, which usually lasts about six hours. Children between two and 12 years of age should use preparations containing no more than 10% DEET, applied sparingly, which will usually last about three hours. Products containing lower concentrations of DEET are as effective, but for shorter periods of time. Neurological toxicity has been reported from DEET, especially in children, but appears to be extremely uncommon and generally related to overuse. Compounds containing DEET should not be used on children under the age of two.

Insect repellents containing certain botanical products, including eucalyptus oil and soybean oil, are effective but last only 1½ to two hours. Repellents containing DEET are preferable for areas where there is a high risk of malaria or yellow fever. Products based on citronella are not effective.

For additional protection you can apply permethrin to clothing, shoes, tents and bed nets. Permethrin treatments are safe and remain effective for at least two weeks, even when items are laundered. Permethrin should not be applied directly to skin.

Don't sleep with the window open unless there is a screen. If sleeping outdoors or in accommodations that allow entry of mosquitoes, use a bed net, preferably treated with permethrin, with edges tucked in under the mattress. The mesh size should be less than 0.06in (1.5mm). If the sleeping area is not otherwise protected, use a mosquito coil, which will fill the room with insecticide through the night. Wristbands impregnated with repellent are not effective.

SEA STINGERS

Spiny sea urchins and coelenterates (coral and jellyfish) are a hazard in some areas. If stung by a coelenterate, apply diluted vinegar or baking soda. Remove tentacles carefully, but not with bare hands. If stung by a stinging fish, such as a stingray, immerse the limb in water at about 115°F (45°C).

SNAKEBITES

Snakes are a hazard on some of the Caribbean islands. The fer-de-lance, which is the most

lethal, has been spotted on Martinique and St Lucia. It generally doesn't attack without provocation, but may bite humans who accidentally come too close as it lies camouflaged on the forest floor. The fer-de-lance is usually 5ft to 6ft long, but may reach up to 9ft. Its coloration is gray or brown, with light stripes, dark diamond markings and a yellow throat.

The bushmaster, which is the world's largest pit viper, may be found on Trinidad. Like other pit vipers, the bushmaster has a heat-sensing pit between the eye and nostril on each side of its head, which it uses to detect the presence of warm-blooded prey.

Coral snakes, which are retiring and tend not to bite humans, are reported in Trinidad as well as other islands.

If a venomous snakebite occurs, place the victim at rest, keep the bitten area immobilized and move the victim immediately to the nearest medical centre. Avoid tourniquets, which are no longer recommended.

Heatstroke

To protect yourself from excessive sun exposure, stay out of the midday sun, wear sunglasses and a wide-brimmed sun hat, and apply sunblock with SPF15 or higher. Sunblock should be generously applied to all exposed parts of the body about 30 minutes before sun exposure, and reapplied after swimming or vigorous activity. Travelers should also drink plenty of fluids and avoid strenuous exercise when the temperature is high.

Water

Tap water is safe to drink on some of the islands, but not on others. Unless you're certain that the local water is not contaminated, you shouldn't drink it.

Vigorous boiling for one minute is the most effective means of water purification. At altitudes greater than 6500ft, boil for three minutes.

Another option is disinfecting water with iodine pills. Instructions are usually enclosed and should be carefully followed. Or you can add 2% tincture of iodine to 4½ cups of water (five drops to clear water, 10 drops to cloudy water) and let it stand for 30 minutes. If the water is cold, longer times may be required. The taste of iodinated water may be improved by adding vitamin C (ascorbic acid). Iodinated water should not be consumed for more than a few weeks. Pregnant women, those with a history of thyroid disease and those allergic to iodine should not drink iodinated water.

A good number of water filters are on the market. Those with smaller pores (reverse osmosis filters) provide the broadest protection, but they are relatively large and are readily plugged by debris. Those with somewhat larger pores (microstrainer filters) are ineffective against viruses, although they remove other organisms. Manufacturers' instructions must be carefully followed.

TRAVELING WITH CHILDREN

In general, it's safe to take children to the Caribbean. However, because some of the vaccines listed in this chapter are not approved for use in children, you should be particularly careful to avoid giving kids tap water or any questionable foods or beverages. Make sure children are up to date on all routine immunizations. It's sometimes appropriate to give children some of their vaccines a little early before visiting a developing nation. You should discuss this with your pediatrician.

Language

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The rich and colorful language environment of the greater Caribbean is testament to the diverse array of people that have come to call its many shores home. From a colonial past that saw the annihilation of virtually all traces of indigenous culture (and language) there is the legacy of Dutch, English, French, Portuguese and Spanish. Stir in a blend of elements from a veritable Babylon of other tongues and you begin to understand why almost every part of every island has its own peculiar linguistic offering.

Outside the predominant colonial languages, perhaps the most notable influences can be traced back to the slaves brought to the islands from West Africa to be exploited by the colonial masters. European tongues, creoles, patois (*pa-twa*), local accents and pidgins all go into the melting pot to create a linguistic symphony as rich and diverse as the region's enchanting musical offerings.

WHO SPEAKS WHAT WHERE?

Bahamas

English is the official language of the Bahamas and it is used in all facets of daily life. It's spoken by everyone but a handful of Haitian immigrants, who speak their own creole.

'True-true' Bahamianians, mostly black, usually speak both Bahamian Standard English (BSE) and their own distinct island patois, a musical Caribbean dialect with its own rhythm and cadence. Though there are variances among the islands, and between blacks and whites, all sectors of Bahamian society understand patois, the language of the street. Even educated Bahamians, who tend to speak in a lilting Queen's or Oxford English, will sometimes lapse into patois at unguarded moments.

Cuba

Spanish is the official language of Cuba. Away from the hotels and tourist centers, few people speak English and then only very poorly. Despite this, many Cubans have some knowledge of English, since it's taught in primary school from grade six.

Cuban Spanish is rich, varied and astoundingly distinct. Slang and *dichos* (sayings) so dominate daily conversation that even native Spanish speakers sometimes get lost in the mix. Borrowing words from African languages, bastardizing English terms (Spanglish), and adopting language from movies, marketing and sports, Spanish in Cuba is constantly evolving, with newly invented words surfacing all the time.

Eastern Caribbean

English is the main language spoken on all the islands except the French West Indies (Guadeloupe, Martinique, St-Barthélemy and French St-Martin), where French is the primary language.

English speakers can travel throughout the Eastern Caribbean without problems, and the difficulty of getting around the French West Indies for people who don't speak French is generally exaggerated. Although many people outside the hotel and tourism industry don't speak English, as

A LITTLE HAITIAN CREOLE

Here are a few basics to get you started in the predominant lingo of Haiti.

Good day.	<i>Bonjou.</i> (before noon)
Good evening.	<i>Bonswa.</i> (after 11am)
See you later.	<i>Na wè pita.</i>
Yes.	<i>Wi.</i>
No.	<i>Non.</i>
Please	<i>Silvouple.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Mèsi anpil.</i>
Sorry/Excuse me.	<i>Pàdon</i>
How are you?	<i>Ki jan ou ye?</i>
Not bad.	<i>M pal pi mal.</i>
I'm going OK.	<i>M-ap kenbe.</i>
What's your name?	<i>Ki jan ou rele?</i>
My name is ...	<i>M rele ...</i>
May I take your photograph?	<i>Eske m ka fè foto ou?</i>
Do you speak English?	<i>Eske ou ka pale angle?</i>
I don't understand.	<i>M pa konprann.</i>
I'm looking for ...	<i>M'ap chache ...</i>
Where does the bus leave from?	<i>Kote tap tap pati?</i>
I'd like to change money.	<i>Mwen ta vle chanje lajan.</i>
How much is it?	<i>Konbyen?</i>
I'm lost.	<i>M pèdi.</i>
Where is/are ... ?	<i>Kote ... ?</i>
the toilets	<i>twalet yo</i>
the hospital	<i>lopital la</i>

long as you have a phrasebook and a reasonable English-French dictionary – and a measure of patience and a sense of humor – you should be able to get by.

Dutch is spoken on the islands of Saba, Sint Eustatius and Dutch Sint Maarten. While it remains the official language of government and is taught in schools, for most practical purposes it is a secondary language after English. See the boxed text (p846) for some basic Dutch words and phrases.

On many Eastern Caribbean islands the local language is Creole, a complex patois of French, English, and West African languages with remnants of Carib, the language of the indigenous people of the same name who once thrived in the region. In addition, Hindi is spoken among family members on islands with sizable Indian populations, most notably on Trinidad.

Dominican Republic & Haiti

Spanish is Dominican Republic's official language and the language of everyday communication. Some English and German is also spoken within the tourist business.

Any traveler who doesn't already speak some Spanish and is intending to do some independent travel in the Dominican Republic outside Santo Domingo or Puerto Plata is well advised to learn a little Spanish and carry a Spanish-English dictionary. See p849 for some useful Spanish words and phrases.

While for many years French has been considered the official language of Haiti, only 15% of the population can speak it, mainly the educated elite. The majority of the population speaks only Haitian Creole, and beyond the major centres it's the only sure means of communication. Language in Haitian society deepens the already massive divisions between social classes, as the government and the judicial system operate in French, and most schools also teach in French, further disadvantaging those who only speak Creole. Since the 1980s there has been a movement among reformists toward the increased use of Creole in civil society. Politicians have begun to make more speeches in Creole, musicians sing in it, more radio stations broadcast in it and there is now a weekly Creole-language paper, *Libète* (Liberty).

The vocabulary of Creole is predominantly French, peppered with a little English and Spanish, but the structure is considered to be closer to that of West African languages. It is worth learning a few phrases to use in smaller restaurants and for greetings (see the boxed text above for some basic words and phrases).

The number of English-speaking Haitians is on the rise, and in the larger cities, a combination of English and pidgin French will generally get you from A to B and enable you to order a beer when you get there.

Jamaica

Officially, English is the spoken language. In reality, Jamaica is a bilingual country, and English is far more widely understood than spoken. The unofficial lingo, the main spoken language of poor Jamaicans, is called patois, a musical dialect with a staccato rhythm and cadence, laced with salty

A FEW DUTCH WORDS & PHRASES

While it isn't necessary to speak Dutch to survive on the islands of Saba, Sint Eustatius and Dutch Sint Maarten, these Dutch basics might help you make some new friends in the East Caribbean. In the pronunciation guides, the 'backwards e' (ə) is a neutral vowel sound, like the 'a' in 'ago'; **kh** is like a raspy hiss produced in the throat.

Hello.

Dag/Hallo. dakh/ha-loa

Goodbye.

Dag. dakh

Yes.

Ja. yaa

No.

Nee. nay

Please.

Alstublieft. (pol) als-tu-bleeft

Alsjebliëft. (inf) a-shə-bleeft

Thanks.

Bedankt. (pol or inf) bə-dangt

That's fine/You're welcome.

Graag gedaan. khraakh khə-daan

Excuse me.

Pardon. par-don

Excuseer mij. eks-ku-zayr may

I'm sorry.

Sorry/Excuses. so-ree/eks-ku-zas

How are you?

Hoe gaat het met hoo khaat hət met u/yow

u/you? (pol/inf)

I'm fine, thanks.

Goed, bedankt. khoot, bə-dangt

What's your name?

Hoe heet u? (pol) hoo hayt u

Hoe heet je? (inf) hoo hayt yə

My name is ...

Ik heet ... ik hayt ...

patois at unguarded moments. Most Jamaicans will vary the degree of their patois according to whom they're speaking.

Puerto Rico

Every Puerto Rican learns to speak Standard Modern Spanish in school, and this is the language you'll hear from hotel and restaurant staff if you address them in Spanish. However, many seasoned Spanish speakers find themselves a little off balance when they first hear Spanish in Puerto Rico. The Spanish you hear on the streets is Antillian Spanish or, as it's known locally, Boricua (the language of Borinquen). For a number of reasons, an ear accustomed to Castillian, Mexican or South American dialects of Spanish can take a little time to get used to the rhythm and sound of spoken Boricua.

Travelers hoping to submerge themselves in the island's rich culture need to have some command of basic Spanish, as well as some sense of the distinctions between Puerto Rican and other kinds of Spanish. However, even if you speak Spanish well, you can expect Puerto Ricans, proud of their hard-earned English skills, to address you in English. One of the great rewards for many travelers to Puerto Rico is remaining long enough at a destination to hear the locals address them in Spanish.

Turks & Caicos

The official language of Turks and Caicos is English. The local islanders' distinct dialect bears much resemblance to the dialect of the Bahamas. The Haitians speak their own French-based creole patois, which foreigners may find difficult to follow. However, rarely is it as incomprehensible as it can be in Jamaica, for example.

Virgin Islands

English is the main language spoken throughout the Virgin Islands, although you'll hear quite a bit of Spanish if you visit St Croix (see p849 for Spanish words and phrases). For the most part, islanders speak Standard English, but color it with an accent that is lyrical and euphonious. This distinctive accent derives from the traditional dialect of the islands, the so-called Creole, Calypso or West Indian, which blends West African grammar and speech patterns with colonial English, Danish, French and Dutch. Creole

idioms, and wonderfully and wittily compressed proverbs.

Patois evolved from Creole English and a twisted alchemy of the mother tongue peppered with African, Portuguese, and Spanish terms and, in this century, Rastafarian slang.

Patois is deepest in rural areas, where many people don't know much standard English. Although it's mostly the lingua franca (linking language) of the poor, all sectors of Jamaica understand patois, and even polite, educated Jamaicans lapse into

varies significantly from island to island, each displaying its own particular brand of local slang. It is easy to understand when spoken slowly, but sometimes islanders use their language as code when they speak to each other quickly and sprinkle in a strong dose of slang; *Doan worry. Dem jus' limin' and fowl bus'ness no cockroacy.* (Don't worry. They are just relaxing, and it's best to mind your own business.)

PHRASEBOOKS & DICTIONARIES

An excellent resource to facilitate your hopping around the French-speaking islands is Lonely Planet's *French Phrasebook*. It's lightweight and compact, and it'll provide you with all the basics you need to get around and make new friends. There are also a number of good French-English/English-French pocket dictionaries, such as those published by Langenscheidt, Larousse and Oxford Hachette.

On the Spanish-speaking islands, Lonely Planet's *Latin-American Spanish Phrasebook* is the perfect companion. Another recommended resource is the compact and surprisingly comprehensive University of Chicago *Spanish-English, English-Spanish Dictionary*.

FRENCH

The French used in the Caribbean reflects hundreds of years of intermingling with English as well as West African languages. In addition to borrowing words freely from these other tongues, it's flatter in intonation, with less of the traditional French lilting cadence. Also, speakers of Creole pay less attention to gender; anything or anyone can be *il*. Nevertheless, in the following phrases both masculine and feminine forms have been indicated where necessary. The masculine form comes first and is separated from the feminine by a slash.

ACCOMMODATIONS

I'm looking for	<i>Je cherche ...</i>	zher shersh ...
a ...		
campground	<i>un camping</i>	un kom-peeng
guesthouse	<i>une pension (de famille)</i>	ewn pon-syon (der fa-mee-ler)
hotel	<i>un hôtel</i>	un o-tel
youth hostel	<i>une auberge de jeunesse</i>	ewn o-berzh der zher-nes

Do you have any rooms available?

Est-ce que vous avez des chambres libres?

e-sker voo-za-vay day shom-brer lee-brer

May I see it?

Est-ce que je peux voir la chambre?

es-ker zher per vwa la shom-brer

I'd like ...	<i>Je voudrais ...</i>	zher voo-dray ...
a single room	<i>une chambre à un lit</i>	ewn shom-brer a un lee
a double-bed room	<i>une chambre avec un grand lit</i>	ewn shom-brer a-vek un gron lee
a twin room with two beds	<i>une chambre avec des lits jumeaux</i>	ewn shom-brer a-vek day lee zhe-w-mo

How much is it ...? *Quel est le prix ...?*

kel e ler pree ...

per night *par nuit* par nwee

per person *par personne* par per-son

CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS

Hello.	<i>Bonjour.</i>	bon-zhoor
Goodbye.	<i>Au revoir.</i>	o-rer-vwa
Yes.	<i>Oui.</i>	wee
No.	<i>Non.</i>	no
Please.	<i>S'il vous plaît.</i>	seel voo play
Thank you.	<i>Merci.</i>	mair-see
You're welcome.	<i>Je vous en prie.</i>	zher voo-zon pree
	<i>De rien. (inf)</i>	der dee-en
Excuse me.	<i>Excuse-moi.</i>	ek-skew-zay-mwa
I'm sorry.	<i>Pardon.</i>	par-don

What's your name?

Comment vous appelez-vous? (pol) ko-mon voo-za-pay-lay voo

Comment tu t'appelles? (inf) ko-mon tew ta-pel

My name is ...

Je m'appelle ... zher ma-pel ...

Where are you from?

De quel pays êtes-vous? der kel pay-ee et-voo

De quel pays es-tu? (inf) der kel pay-ee e-tew

I'm from ...

Je viens de ... zher vyen der ...

I like ...

J'aime ... zhem ...

I don't like ...

Je n'aime pas ... zher nem pa ...

DIRECTIONS

Where is ...?

Où est ...? oo e ...

Go straight ahead.

Continuez tout droit. kon-teen-way too dwa

SIGNS

Entrée	Entrance
Sortie	Exit
Ouvert	Open
Fermé	Closed
Interdit	Prohibited
Toilettes/WC	Toilets
Hommes	Men
Femmes	Women

Turn left.

Tournez à gauche. toor-nay a gosh

Turn right.

Tournez à droite. toor-nay a drwat

at the corner

au coin o kwun

at the traffic lights

aux feux o fer

far (from)

loin (de) lwun (der)

near (to)

près (de) pray (der)

HEALTH

I'm ill.

Je suis malade. zher swee ma-lad

It hurts here.

J'ai une douleur ici. zhay ewn doo-ler ee-see

I'm ...

Je suis ... zher swee ...

asthmatic

asthmatique (z)as-ma-teek

diabetic

diabétique dee-a-bay-teek

epileptic

épileptique (z)ay-pee-lep-teek

I'm allergic

Je suis zher swee

to ...

allergique ... za-lair-zheek ...

antibiotics

aux antibiotiques o zon-tee-byo-teek

nuts

aux noix o nwa

peanuts

aux cacahuètes o ka-ka-wet

penicillin

à la pénicilline a la pay-nee-see-leen

diarrhea

la diarrhée la dya-ray

nausea

la nausée la no-zay

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

Do you speak (English)?

Parlez-vous (anglais)? par-lay-voo (zong-lay)

Does anyone here speak English?

Y a-t-il quelqu'un qui ya-teel kel-kung kee

parle anglais? par long-glay

I understand.

Je comprends. zher kom-pron

I don't understand.

Je ne comprends pas. zher ner kom-pron pa

EMERGENCIES

Help!

Au secours! o skoor

There's been an accident!

Il y a eu un accident! eel ya ew un ak-see-don

I'm lost.

Je me suis égaré/e. (m/f) zhe me swee-zay-ga-ray

Leave me alone!

Fichez-moi la paix! fee-shay-mwa la pay

Call ...!

Appelez ...!

a-play ...

a doctor

un médecin

un mayd-sun

the police

la police

la po-lees

NUMBERS

0

zero

zay-ro

1

un

un

2

deux

der

3

trois

trwa

4

quatre

ka-trer

5

cinq

sungk

6

six

sees

7

sept

set

8

huit

weet

9

neuf

nerf

10

dix

dees

11

onze

onz

12

douze

dooz

13

treize

trez

14

quatorze

ka-torz

15

quinze

kunz

16

seize

sez

17

dix-sept

dee-set

18

dix-huit

dee-zweet

19

dix-neuf

deez-nerf

20

vingt

vung

21

vingt et un

vung tay un

22

vingt-deux

vung-der

30

trente

tront

40

quarante

ka-ront

50

cinquante

sung-kont

60

soixante

swa-son

70

soixante-dix

swa-son-dees

80

quatre-vingts

ka-trer-vung

90

quatre-vingt-dix

ka-trer-vung-dees

100

cent

son

1000

mille

meel

SHOPPING & SERVICES

I'd like to buy ...

Je voudrais acheter ... zher voo-dray ash-tay ...

How much is it?

C'est combien? say kom-byun

Can I pay by ...?*Est-ce que je peux payer avec ...?*

es-ker zher per pay-yay a-vek ...

credit card*ma carte de crédit* ma kart der kray-dee**traveler's checks***des chèques de voyage* day shek der vva-yazh

more	<i>plus</i>	plew
less	<i>moins</i>	mwa
smaller	<i>plus petit</i>	plew per-tee
bigger	<i>plus grand</i>	plew gron

I'm looking for ... *Je cherche ...* zhe shersh ...

a bank	<i>une banque</i>	ewn bonk
the hospital	<i>l'hôpital</i>	lo-pee-tal
the market	<i>le marché</i>	ler mar-shay
the police	<i>la police</i>	la po-lees
the post office	<i>le bureau de poste</i>	ler bew-ro der post

a public phone	<i>une cabine téléphonique</i>	ewn ka-been tay-lay-fo-neek
a public toilet	<i>les toilettes</i>	lay twa-let
the telephone centre	<i>la centrale téléphonique</i>	la son-tral tay-lay-fo-neek

TIME & DATES

What time is it?	<i>Quelle heure est-il?</i>	kel er e til
It's (8) o'clock.	<i>Il est (huit) heures.</i>	il e (weet) er
It's half past ...	<i>Il est (...) heures et demie.</i>	il e (...) er e day-mee

today	<i>aujourd'hui</i>	o-zhoor-dwee
tomorrow	<i>demain</i>	der-mun
yesterday	<i>hier</i>	yair

Monday	<i>lundi</i>	lun-dee
Tuesday	<i>mardi</i>	mar-dee
Wednesday	<i>mercredi</i>	mair-krer-dee
Thursday	<i>jeudi</i>	zher-dee
Friday	<i>vendredi</i>	von-drer-dee
Saturday	<i>samedi</i>	sam-dee
Sunday	<i>dimanche</i>	dee-monsh

January	<i>janvier</i>	zhon-vyay
February	<i>février</i>	fayv-ryay
March	<i>mars</i>	mars
April	<i>avril</i>	a-vreel
May	<i>mai</i>	may
June	<i>juin</i>	zhwun
July	<i>juillet</i>	zhwee-yay
August	<i>août</i>	oot
September	<i>septembre</i>	sep-tom-brer
October	<i>octobre</i>	ok-to-brer
November	<i>novembre</i>	no-vom-brer
December	<i>décembre</i>	day-som-brer

TRANSPORTATION
Public Transportation

What time does ... leave/arrive?	<i>À quelle heure part/arrive ...?</i>	a kel er par/a-reev ...
boat	<i>le bateau</i>	ler ba-to
bus	<i>le bus</i>	ler bews
plane	<i>l'avion</i>	la-vyon
train	<i>le train</i>	ler trun

I'd like a ... ticket.	<i>Je voudrais un billet ...</i>	zher voo-dray un bee-yay ...
one-way round trip	<i>simple aller et retour</i>	sum-pler a-lay ay rer-toor

I want to go to ... *Je voudrais aller à ...* zher voo-dray a-lay a ...

ticket office	<i>le guichet</i>	ler gee-shay
timetable	<i>l'horaire</i>	lo-rair

Private Transportation

I'd like to hire ...		
<i>Je voudrais louer ...</i>	zher voo-dray loo-way ...	
a car		
<i>une voiture</i>	ewn vva-tewr	
a bicycle		
<i>un vélo</i>	un vay-lo	

Is this the road to ...?*C'est la route pour ...?* say la root poor ...**Where's a gas/petrol station?***Où est-ce qu'il y a une station-service?* oo es-keel ya ewn sta-syon-ser-vees**Please fill it up.***Le plein, s'il vous plaît.* ler plun seel voo play**I'd like ... liters.***Je voudrais ... litres.* zher voo-dray ... lee-trer**SPANISH**

In Spanish, nouns are either masculine or feminine, and there are rules to help determine gender (with exceptions, of course!). Where both masculine and feminine forms are included in this language guide, they are separated by a slash, with the masculine form first, eg *perdido/a* (lost).

ACCOMMODATIONS**I'm looking for ...***Estoy buscando ...* e-stoy boos-kan-do ...**Where is ...?***¿Dónde hay ...?* don-de ai ...

a guesthouse	<i>una pensión</i>	oo-na pen-syon
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EMERGENCIES

Help!	<i>¡Socorro!</i>	so-ko-ro
Go away!	<i>¡Déjeme!</i>	de-khe-me
Call ...!	<i>¡Llame a ...!</i>	ya-me a
an ambulance	<i>una ambulancia</i>	oo-na am-boo-lan-sya
a doctor	<i>un médico</i>	oon me-dee-ko
the police	<i>la policía</i>	la po-lee-see-a

It's an emergency.

Es una emergencia. es oo-na e-mer-khen-sya

Could you help me, please?

¿Me puede ayudar, por favor? me pwe-de a-yoo-dar por fa-vor

I'm lost.

Estoy perdido/a. (m/f) es-toy per-dee-do/a

a hotel	<i>un hotel</i>	oon o-tel
a youth hostel	<i>un albergue juvenil</i>	oon al-ber-ge khoo-ve-neel

Are there any rooms available?

¿Hay habitaciones libres?
ay a-bee-ta-syon-es lee-bres

May I see the room?

¿Puedo ver la habitación?
pwe-do ver la a-bee-ta-syon

I'd like a ... room.	<i>Quisiera una habitación ...</i>	kee-sye-ra oo-na a-bee-ta-syon ...
single	<i>individual</i>	een-dee-bee-dwal
double	<i>doble</i>	do-ble
twinn	<i>con dos camas</i>	kon dos ka-mas

How much is it per ...?	<i>¿Cuánto cuesta por ...?</i>	kwan-to kwes-ta por ...
night	<i>noche</i>	no-che
person	<i>persona</i>	per-so-na

CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS

Hello.	<i>Hola.</i>	o-la
	<i>Saludos.</i>	sa-loo-dos
Good morning.	<i>Buenos días.</i>	bwe-nos dee-as
Good afternoon.	<i>Buenas tardes.</i>	bwe-nas tar-des
Good evening/night.	<i>Buenas noches.</i>	bwe-nas no-ches
Bye.	<i>Hasta luego.</i>	as-ta lwe-go
Yes.	<i>Sí.</i>	see
No.	<i>No.</i>	no
Please.	<i>Por favor.</i>	por fa-vor
Thank you.	<i>Gracias.</i>	gra-syas
Many thanks.	<i>Muchas gracias.</i>	moo-chas gra-syas
You're welcome.	<i>De nada.</i>	de na-da

Pardon me.	<i>Perdón.</i>	per-don
Excuse me.	<i>Permiso.</i>	per-mee-so
	(used when asking permission)	
Forgive me.	<i>Disculpe.</i>	dees-kool-pe
	(used when apologizing)	

How are you?

¿Cómo está usted? (pol) ko-mo es-ta oos-ted
¿Cómo estás? (inf) ko-mo es-tas

What's your name?

¿Cómo se llama? (pol) ko-mo se ya-ma
¿Cómo te llamas? (inf) ko-mo te ya-mas

My name is ...

Me llamo ... me ya-mo ...

Where are you from?

¿De dónde es? (pol) de don-de es
¿De dónde eres? (inf) de don-de e-res

I'm from ...

Soy de ... soy de ...

DIRECTIONS**How do I get to ...?**

¿Cómo puedo llegar a ...? ko-mo pwe-do ye-gar a ...

Is it far?

¿Está lejos? es-ta le-khos

Go straight ahead.

Siga derecho. see-ga de-re-cho

Turn left.

Voltée a la izquierda. vol-te-e a la ees-kyer-da

Turn right.

Voltée a la derecha. vol-te-e a la de-re-cha

Can you show me (on the map)?

¿Me lo podría indicar (en el mapa)? me lo po-dree-a een-dee-ka (en el ma-pa)

SIGNS

Entrada	Entrance
Salida	Exit
Información	Information
Abierto	Open
Cerrado	Closed
Prohibido	Prohibited
Servicios/Baños	Toilets
Hombres/Varones	Men
Mujeres/Damas	Women

HEALTH**I'm sick.**

Estoy enfermo/a. es-toy en-fer-mo/a

Where's the hospital?

¿Dónde está el hospital? don-de es-ta el os-pee-tal

I'm allergic *Soy alérgico/a* soy a-ler-khee-ko/a

to ...	<i>a ...</i>	<i>a ...</i>
antibiotics	<i>los antibióticos</i>	los an-tee-byo-tee-kos
nuts	<i>las fruta secas</i>	las froo-tas se-kas
penicillin	<i>la penicilina</i>	la pe-nee-see-lee-na

I'm ...	<i>Soy ...</i>	<i>soy ...</i>
asthmatic	<i>asmático/a</i>	as-ma-tee-ko/a
diabetic	<i>diabético/a</i>	dee-ya-be-tee-ko/a
epileptic	<i>epiléptico/a</i>	e-pee-lep-tee-ko/a

I have ...	<i>Tengo ...</i>	<i>ten-go ...</i>
diarrhea	<i>diarrea</i>	dya-re-a
nausea	<i>náusea</i>	now-se-a

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

Do you speak (English)?

¿Habla (inglés)? a-bla (een-gles)

Does anyone here speak English?

¿Hay alguien que hable inglés? ai al-gyen ke a-ble een-gles

I (don't) understand.

(No) Entiendo. (no) en-tyen-do

What does ... mean?

¿Qué quiere decir ...? ke kye-re de-seer ...

NUMBERS

0	<i>ceró</i>	ce-ro
1	<i>uno/a (m/f)</i>	oo-no/a
2	<i>dos</i>	dos
3	<i>tres</i>	tres
4	<i>cuatro</i>	kwa-tro
5	<i>cinco</i>	seen-ko
6	<i>seis</i>	seys
7	<i>siete</i>	sy-e-te
8	<i>ocho</i>	o-cho
9	<i>nueve</i>	nwe-ve
10	<i>diez</i>	dyes
11	<i>once</i>	on-se
12	<i>doce</i>	do-se
13	<i>trece</i>	tre-se
14	<i>catorce</i>	ka-tor-se
15	<i>quince</i>	keen-se
16	<i>dieciséis</i>	dye-see-seys
17	<i>diecisiete</i>	dye-see-sye-te
18	<i>dieciocho</i>	dye-see-o-cho
19	<i>diecinueve</i>	dye-see-nwe-ve
20	<i>veinte</i>	vayn-te
21	<i>veintiuno</i>	vayn-tee-oo-no
30	<i>treinta</i>	trayn-ta
31	<i>treinta y uno</i>	trayn-tai oo-no
40	<i>cuarenta</i>	kwa-ren-ta
50	<i>cincuenta</i>	seen-kwen-ta
60	<i>sesenta</i>	se-sen-ta

70	<i>setenta</i>	se-ten-ta
80	<i>ochenta</i>	o-chen-ta
90	<i>noventa</i>	no-ven-ta
100	<i>cient</i>	sy-en
200	<i>doscientos</i>	do-syen-tos
1000	<i>mil</i>	meel

SHOPPING & SERVICES

I'd like to buy ...

¿Quisiera comprar ... kee-sye-ra kom-prar ...

How much is it?

¿Cuánto cuesta? kwan-to kwes-ta

What time does it open/close?

¿A qué hora abre/cierra? a ke o-ra a-bre/sye-ra

Do you accept ...?

¿Aceptan ...? a-sep-tan ...

credit cards

tarjetas de crédito tar-khe-tas de kre-dee-to

traveler's checks

cheques de viajero che-kes de vya-khe-ro

I'm looking for ...

Estoy buscando ... es-toy boos-kan-do ...

the ATM

el cajero automático el ka-khe-ro ow-to-ma-tee-ko

the bank

el banco el ban-ko

the exchange office

la casa de cambio la ka-sa de kam-byo

the market

el mercado el mer-ka-do

the pharmacy

la farmacia la far-ma-sya

the post office

los correos los ko-re-os

the telephone

el teléfono el sen-tro

centre

telefónico te-le-fo-nee-ko

the tourist office

la oficina de turismo la o-fee-see-na de too-rees-mo

TIME & DATES

When?

¿Cuándo? kwan-do

What time is it?

¿Qué hora es? ke o-ra es

It's (one) o'clock.

Es la (una). es la (oo-na)

It's (seven) o'clock.

Son las (siete). son las (sy-e-te)

half past (two)

(dos) y media (dos) ee me-dya

today

hoy oy

tonight

esta noche es-ta no-che

tomorrow

mañana ma-nya-na

yesterday

ayer a-yer

Monday

lunes loo-nes

Tuesday

martes mar-tes

Wednesday

miércoles myer-ko-les

Thursday

jueves khwe-ves

Friday

viernes vyer-nes

Saturday	<i>sábado</i>	sa-ba-do
Sunday	<i>domingo</i>	do-meen-go

January	<i>enero</i>	e-ne-ro
February	<i>febrero</i>	fe-bre-ro
March	<i>marzo</i>	mar-so
April	<i>abril</i>	a-breel
May	<i>mayo</i>	ma-yo
June	<i>junio</i>	khoo-nyo
July	<i>julio</i>	khoo-lyo
August	<i>agosto</i>	a-gos-to
September	<i>septiembre</i>	sep-tyem-bre
October	<i>octubre</i>	ok-too-bre
November	<i>noviembre</i>	no-vyem-bre
December	<i>diciembre</i>	dee-syem-bre

TRANSPORTATION

Public Transportation

What time does ... leave/arrive?	<i>¿A qué hora ... sale/llega?</i>	a ke o-ra ... sa-le/ye-ga
the boat/ship	<i>el barco</i>	el bar-ko
the bus	<i>el autobús</i>	el ow-to-boos
the plane	<i>el avión</i>	el a-vyon
a ticket to ...	<i>un boleto a ...</i>	bo-le-to a ...

one way	<i>ida</i>	ee-da
return	<i>ida y vuelta</i>	ee-da ee vwel-ta
bus station	<i>la estación de autobuses</i>	la es-ta-syon de ow-to-boos-es
ticket office	<i>la boletería</i>	la bo-le-te-ree-a

Private Transportation

I'd like to hire ...

<i>¿Quisiera alquilar ...</i>	kee-sye-ra al-kee-lar ...
a bicycle	
<i>una bicicleta</i>	oo-na bee-see-kle-ta
a car	
<i>un auto/un coche</i>	oon ow-to/oon ko-che

Is this the road to ...?

<i>¿Se va a ... por esta carretera?</i>	se va a ... por es-ta ka-re-te-ra
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Where's a gas/petrol station?

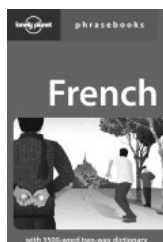
¿Dónde hay una bomba? don-de ai oo-na bom-ba

Please fill it up.

<i>Lleno, por favor.</i>	ye-no por fa-voor
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I'd like ... liters.

<i>Quiero ... litros.</i>	kye-ro ... lee-tros
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Also available from Lonely Planet:
French and Latin American Spanish Phrasebooks

Glossary

accra – fried mixture of okra, black-eyed peas, pepper and salt

agouti – short-haired rabbitlike rodent resembling a guinea pig with long legs; it has a fondness for sugarcane

Arawak – linguistically related tribes that inhabited most of the Caribbean islands and northern South America

bake – sandwich made with fried bread and usually filled with fish

bareboat – sail-it-yourself charter yacht usually rented by the week or longer

beguine – Afro-French dance music with a bolero rhythm that originated in Martinique in the 1930s; also spelled ‘biguine’

bomba – musical form and dance inspired by African rhythms and characterized by call-and-response dialogues between musicians and interpreted by dancers; often considered as a unit with *plena*, as in *bomba y plena*

breadfruit – large, round, green fruit; a Caribbean staple that’s comparable to potatoes in its carbohydrate content and is prepared in much the same way

bush tea – tea made from the islands’ leaves, roots and herbs; each tea cures a specific illness, such as gas, menstrual pain, colds or insomnia

cabrito – goat meat

callaloo – spinachlike green, originally from Africa; also spelled ‘kallaloo’

calypso – popular Caribbean music developed from slave songs; lyrics reflect political opinions, social views and commentary on current events

Carnaval – see *Carnival*

Carnival – major Caribbean festival; originated as a pre-Lenten festivity but is now observed at various times throughout the year on different islands; also called *Carnaval*

casa particular – private house in Cuba that lets out rooms to foreigners

casareep – molasses-like sauce made from *cassava*, water, sugar and spices

cassava – a root used since precolonial times as a staple of island diets, whether steamed, baked or grated into a flour for bread; also called ‘yucca’ or ‘manioc’

cay – small island; comes from an Arawak word

cayo – coral key (Spanish)

chattel house – type of simple wooden dwelling placed upon cement or stone blocks so it can be easily moved; often erected on rented land

chutney – up-tempo, rhythmic music used in celebrations of various social situations in Trinidad’s Indian communities

colombo – spicy, East Indian–influenced dish that resembles curry

conch – large gastropod that, due to overfishing, is headed for the endangered-species list; its chewy meat is often prepared in a spicy *Creole*-style sauce; also called *lambi*

conkies – mixture of cornmeal, coconut, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, raisins and spice, steamed in a plantain leaf

cou-cou – creamy cornmeal and okra mash, commonly served with saltfish

Creole – people: person of mixed Black and European ancestry; language: local pidgin that’s predominantly a combination of French and African; food: cuisine characterized by spicy, full-flavored sauces and heavy use of green peppers and onions

dancehall – contemporary off-shoot of reggae with faster, digital beats and an MC

dasheen – type of taro; the leaves are known as *callaloo*, while the starchy tuberous root is boiled and eaten like a potato

daube meat – pot roast seasoned with vinegar, native seasonings, onion, garlic, tomato, thyme, parsley and celery

dolphin – a marine mammal; also a common type of white-meat fish (sometimes called *mahimahi*); the two are not related, and ‘dolphin’ on any menu always refers to the fish

duppy – ghost or spirit; also called *jumbie*

flying fish – gray-meat fish named for its ability to skim above the water, particularly plentiful in Barbados

fungi – semihard cornmeal pudding similar to Italian polenta that’s added to soups and used as a side dish; also a Creole name for the music made by local *scratch bands*; ‘funchi’ on Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao

gade – street (Danish)

gîte – small family-run accommodations (French)

goat water – spicy goat-meat stew often flavored with cloves and rum

gommier – large native gum tree found in Caribbean rainforests

green flash – Caribbean phenomenon where you can see a green flash as the sun sets into the ocean

guagua – local bus; *gua-gua* in Dominican Republic

houngan – Vodou priest

I-tal – natural style of vegetarian cooking practiced by Rastafarians

irie – alright, groovy; used to indicate that all is well

jambalaya – a Creole dish usually consisting of rice cooked with ham, chicken or shellfish, spices, tomatoes, onions and peppers

jintero/a – tout or prostitute; literally 'jockey'

johnnycake – corn-flour griddle cake

jug-jug – mixture of Guinea cornmeal, green peas and salted meat

jumbie – see *duppy*

jump-up – nighttime street party that usually involves dancing and plenty of rum drinking

lambi – see *conch*

limin' – hanging out, relaxing, chilling; from the Creole verb 'to lime'

mahimahi – see *dolphin*

mairie – town hall (French)

manchineel – tree whose poisonous fruit sap can cause a severe skin rash; common on Caribbean beaches; called *mancenillier* on the French islands, and *anjanelle* on Trinidad and Tobago

manicou – opossum

mas camp – workshop where artists create *Carnival* costumes; short for 'masquerade camp'

mauby – bittersweet drink made from the bark of the rhamnaceous tree, sweetened with sugar and spices

mento – folk calypso music

mocko jumbies – costumed stilt walkers representing spirits of the dead; seen at *Carnival*

mojito – cocktail made from rum, mint, sugar, seltzer and fresh lime juice

mountain chicken – legs of the crapaud, a type of frog found in Dominica

native seasoning – homemade mixture of salt, hot pepper, cloves, garlic, mace, nutmeg, celery and parsley

négritude – Black Pride philosophical and political movement that emerged in Martinique in the 1930s

obeah – system of ancestral worship related to Vodou and rooted in West African religions

oil down – mix of *breadfruit*, pork, *callaloo* and coconut milk; national dish of Grenada

out islands – islands or cays that lie across the water from the main islands of an island group

Painkiller – popular alcoholic drink made with two parts rum, one part orange juice, four parts pineapple juice, one part coconut cream and a sprinkle of nutmeg and cinnamon

paladar – privately owned restaurant in Cuba serving reliable, inexpensive meals

panyards – place where *steel pan* is practiced in the months leading up to *Carnival*

parang – type of music sung in Spanish and accompanied by guitars and maracas; originated in Venezuela

pate – fried pastry of *cassava* or *plantain* dough stuffed with spiced goat, pork, chicken, *conch*, lobster or fish

pepperpot – spicy stew made with various meats, accompanied by peppers and *cassareep*

plantain – starchy fruit of the banana family; usually fried or grilled like a vegetable

playa – beach (Spanish)

plena – form of traditional Puerto Rican dance and song that unfolds to distinctly African rhythms beat out with maracas, tambourines and other traditional percussion instruments; often associated with *bomba*

público – collective taxis; *publique* in Haiti

quelbe – blend of jigs, quadrilles, military fife and African drum music

rapso – a fusion of *soca* and hip-hop

reggaeton – mixture of hip-hop, reggae and *dancehall*

roti – curry (often potatoes and chicken) rolled inside flat bread

rumba – Afro-Cuban dance form that originated among plantation slaves during the 19th century; during the 1920s and '30s, the term 'rumba' was adopted in North America and Europe for a ballroom dance in 4/4 time; in Cuba today, 'to rumba' means 'to party'

salsa – Cuban music based on *son*

Santería – Afro-Caribbean religion representing the syncretism of Catholic and African beliefs

snowbird – North American, usually retired, who comes to the Caribbean for its warm winters

soca – energetic offspring of *calypso*; it uses danceable rhythms and risqué lyrics to convey pointed social commentary

son – Cuba's basic form of popular music; it jelled from African and Spanish elements in the late 19th century

souse – dish made out of pickled pig's head and belly, spices and a few vegetables; commonly served with a pig-blood sausage called 'pudding'

steel pan – instrument made from oil drums or the music it produces; also called 'steel drum' or 'steel band'

Taino – settled, *Arawak*-speaking tribe that inhabited much of the Caribbean prior to the Spanish conquest; the word itself means 'We the Good People'

taptap – local Haitian bus

timba – contemporary *salsa*

Vodou – religion practiced in Haiti that is a synthesis of West African animist spirit religions and residual rituals of the *Taino*

zouk – popular French West Indies music that draws from the *beguine*, cadence and other French Caribbean folk forms

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