

# Sint Eustatius

Raise your hand if you've ever heard of Sint Eustatius. You haven't? Don't feel bad, intrepid traveler – how about Statia? (That's what the locals endearingly call this scrubby little island.) No? OK. How about this: which Caribbean island was once the busiest seaport in the world, but whose name most people don't even recognize today? Now we're on the right track...

Yes, it's true, this quiet speck on the map was the It spot during the 18th century, when valuable goods bounced between Europe, Africa and the New World. In fact, the naturally deep harbor was so sought after that the island changed hands 22 times before the Dutch permanently secured their claim.

Today, the island has shed all evidence of its former political importance and has garnered an avid cult following among scuba divers (Statia boasts some of the top sites in the Caribbean) and those who enjoy sun-kissed days full of blissful nothingness.

If Statia were to sign up for a Caribbean beauty pageant, it wouldn't take the crown, although it might have a running shot at being named Miss Congeniality. Unlike the other contestants, this honest island hasn't had any plastic surgery whatsoever – no grandiose landscaping, no condo development, and barely a hint of any urban planning. Oranjestad, the island's only town, is a charming collection of ramshackle structures, each one a quiet homage to a different era. Statia lets it all hang out.

## FAST FACTS

- **Area** 31 sq km
- **Capital** Oranjestad
- **Country code** ☎ 599
- **Departure tax** US\$5.65 within Netherlands Antilles, US\$12 elsewhere
- **Famous for** Seemingly infinite archaeological sites
- **Language** Dutch officially; English is spoken by everyone
- **Money** Netherlands Antillean guilder (ANG); US dollars accepted everywhere; ANG1 = US\$0.56 = €0.36 = UK£0.29
- **Official name** Sint Eustatius
- **People** Statians
- **Phrase** Hi! (mandatory when passing anyone on the street)
- **Population** 2900
- **Visa** None needed for citizens of North America and most European countries; see p493



## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Diving** (p488) Cavort with reef sharks and sea turtles at one of Statia's many shallow shipwrecks
- **The Quill** (p486) Ascend this stunning volcano peak and wind your way down to the bottom of the interior crater, which drips like a rainforest and features impossibly huge trees
- **Archaeology** (p485) Uncover the island's remarkably rich history at one of the 600 documented archaeological digging sites – contact Secar to get involved
- **Oranjestad** (p485) Walk around the island's only town to find intriguing ruins in various states of disarray – many untouched for hundreds of years
- **Sint Eustatius Museum** (p486) Check out this fascinating collection of annotated artifacts, including the 2000-year-old skeleton in the basement

## ITINERARIES

- **Three Days** Spend your first two days blowing bubbles with rays and sea turtles at various dive sites including Charlie Brown, Barracuda Reef, Wreck City and Aquarium. Before leaving, spend your last morning hiking the Quill all the way down to the heart of the volcanic crater.
- **One Week** After following the three-day itinerary, spend another two days exploring additional scuba sites – try a night dive and explore the rougher Atlantic side of the island. Round out the week with an afternoon at the Sint Eustatius Museum, a hike in the Boven, a visit to teeny Zeelandia Beach and a laid-back walk through Oranjestad to see the city ruins, including Fort Oranje and the crumbling synagogue.
- **One Month** After checking all the sights off your to-do list, contact Secar and get in touch with your inner Indiana Jones by helping to unearth buried artifacts from the island's rich historical past. If nature's more your thing, sign up with Stenapa (Sint Eustatius National Parks Foundation) to volunteer at the Miriam C Schmidt Botanical Gardens.

## CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

In January the average daily high temperature is 29°C (85°F), while the low averages 22°C (72°F). In July the average daily high is 32°C

(90°F) and the average low hovers around 24°C (76°F).

The annual rainfall in Statia averages 114.5cm and is split between two distinct periods – the wet season and the dry season. Mid-January to June is the dry season while the remaining months corresponding with the hurricane seasons are obviously quite rainy. Relative humidity is in the low 70s from March to December and in the mid-70s in January and February.

Statia's relative lack of tourism means that prices stay the same most of the year. As a result, it's a good place to come December through April when nearby islands double their rates.

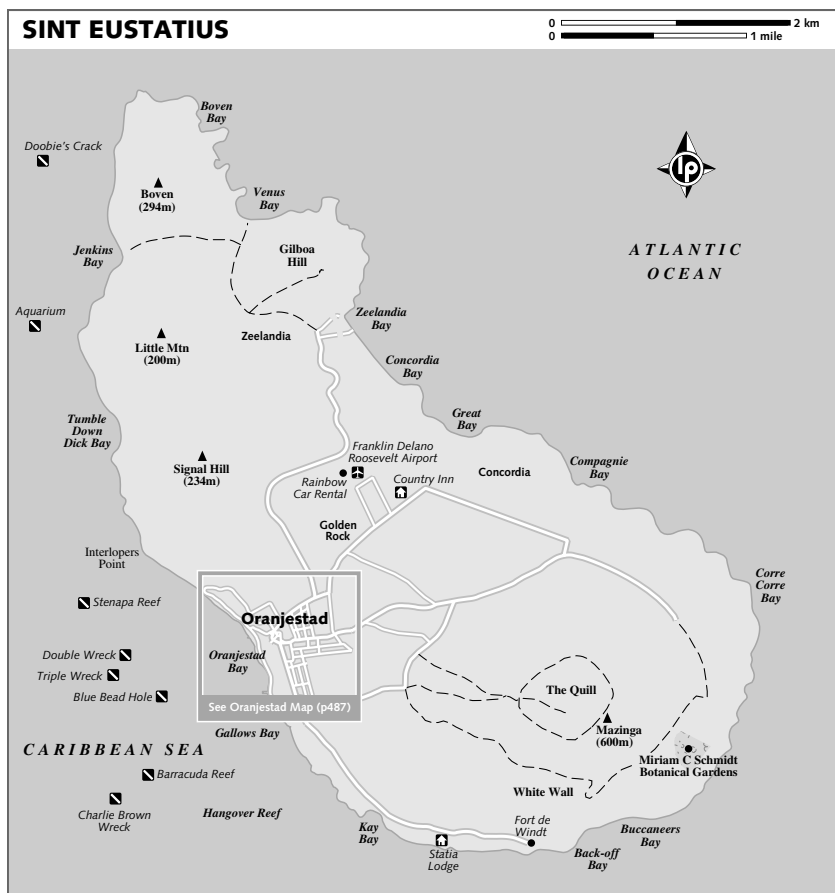
## HISTORY

Statia has been the Caribbean whipping boy for centuries. Caribs had already left Statia at the time Columbus came across the island, in 1493. Consequently, when the French arrived there was no indigenous population to be devastated by disease or enslavement. Then came the Dutch, who established the first permanent settlement here in 1636. Statia subsequently changed hands 22 times among the squabbling Dutch, French and British over the next couple of centuries.

Statia was a primary link between Europe and the Atlantic world for much of the later 18th century. As the English and French levied duty after duty on their islands, the Dutch made Statia a duty-free island in 1756. Subsequently, thousands of ships used Oranjestad as their main stopping point between Europe and the colonies in America, bringing arms and gunpowder to the rebellious colonists, among other things. At its heyday, Statia was home to no less than 10,000 full-time residents, both European

### HOW MUCH?

- **Taxi from the airport to Lower Town per person** US\$5
- **One-tank dive** US\$45
- **Curried shrimp with peas and rice at a local joint** US\$10
- **Admission to the must-see Sint Eustatius Museum** US\$3
- **Authentic Statian blue bead** US\$150



colonists and African slaves. The population rose to above 25,000 when taking in to account the sailors that were in port for months at a time while their ships loaded and unloaded cargo.

On November 16, 1776, Statia's most infamous moment occurred. A member of the rebellious colonies' fledgling navy, the brigantine *Andrew Doria*, sailed into the harbor and fired a 13-gun salute signifying American independence. Statia responded with an 11-gun salute, cementing itself as the first foreign nation to recognize the new United States of America, and consequently the US and the Netherlands have the longest standing peaceful relationship between two nations in history. Plans are in the works to

have a replica of the ship created (see [www.andrewdoria.org](http://www.andrewdoria.org) for more information).

Needless to say, Britain was none too pleased – although, contrary to popular belief, it wasn't the British navy's attack on Statia in 1781 that started the island's downhill spiral, which produced massive emigration and ultimately saw the demise of Statia's former glory as 'The Golden Rock.' It was actually the taxes imposed by the French in 1795 that eventually drove the merchants away to nearby islands such as St-Barthélemy (at the time a newly established Swedish colony) and St Thomas (designated a tax-free port by the Danish).

Statia had been part of the Netherlands Antilles, along with Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba and Sint Maarten since 1954. On Statia Day,

## VOLUNTEERING

Statia has some amazing opportunities for educational volunteer trips. **Stenapa** (☎ 318-2884; [www.statiapark.org](http://www.statiapark.org); Lower Town, Oranjestad) connects long- and short-term volunteers with opportunities like tagging sea turtles on Zeelandia Beach, maintaining the Miriam C Schmidt Botanical Gardens, staffing the office and cataloguing Statian flora. Contact Stenapa for more information.

For those looking to unleash their inner Indiana Jones, check out **Secar** (Sint Eustatius Center for Archeological Research; ☎ 524-6770; [www.secar.org](http://www.secar.org); Oranjestad), the island's sanctioned organization dedicated to unearthing and restoring relics from the past. For more information about Secar see our interview with Grant (p489), the project's leading archaeologist.

November 16, 2004, the island adopted a new flag, but in 2005 it voted to remain part of the Netherlands Antilles. However, all four other members voted to disband the island nation group, effectually leaving Statia the sole member of the Netherlands Antilles. In December 2008 Statia will again have direct ties to the Netherlands effectively ending the half-century experiment in self-government. For more on the fate of the Netherlands Antilles, see p779.

## THE CULTURE

Most islanders are descendants of African slaves brought over to work in the warehouses in Lower Town and on the long-vanished plantations. The culture is a mix of African and Dutch heritages with many expats. A recent surge in immigrants has included an influx from the Dominican Republic, resulting in a vibrant Latin addition to the local vibe.

## ENVIRONMENT

The Quill looms above the southern half of the island. This extinct volcano, which reaches 600m at Mazinga, the highest point on the rim, is responsible for the high, conical appearance Statia has when viewed from neighboring islands. Volcanologists maintain the Quill is one of the most perfectly shaped volcanoes in the world.

Cliffs drop straight to the sea along much of the shoreline, resulting in precious few beaches. At the north side of Statia there are a few low mountains, while the island's central plain contains the airport and Oranjestad.

Most of the northern end of the island is dry with scrubby vegetation, although oleander, bougainvillea, hibiscus and flamboyant flowers add a splash of color here and there. The greatest variety of flora is inside the Quill, which collects enough cloud cover for its central crater to harbor an evergreen

seasonal forest (which can feel at times like a rainforest) with ferns, elephant ears, bromeliads, bananas, and tall kapok and silk cottonwood trees that are many centuries old. The island also has over two dozen varieties of orchids, and new species are still being found today.

There are 25 resident species of birds on Statia, including white-tailed tropical birds that nest on the cliffs along the beach north of Lower Town, in Oranjestad. There are also harmless racer snakes, iguanas, lizards and tree frogs. Most other terrestrial animal life is limited to goats, chickens, cows and donkeys. The marine life offers additional diversity with hundreds of fish species, extensive coral reefs, schools of cuttlefish and large families of Caribbean spiny lobster.

## FOOD & DRINK

Tiny Statia has a remarkably diverse range of interesting eating choices if you know where to look. For local cuisine head to Golden Rock, a 'suburb' (and we use that term very loosely) of Oranjestad, for a smattering of cheap local grub. The Fruit Tree in town has an excellent assortment of tried-and-true Statian cuisine. International eats are aplenty as well – try Superburger for anything from ice cream milkshakes to salt-fish sandwiches. The Old Gin House is a good spot to grab a drink, or try Ocean View Terrace for a lovely view of the Caribbean Sea.

## SINT EUSTATIUS

Little Statia, as it's commonly known, has but one town: Oranjestad. The rest of the island is rugged, rural terrain. The island's points of interest are located in town unless otherwise noted.

## INFORMATION

The two main banks are First Caribbean National Bank and Windward Islands Bank (WIB). There's also an ATM on the corner of Fort Oranje Straat and Breedeweg.

The Old Gin House and Stenapa headquarters have internet access.

**Post office** (☎ 318-2207; Cottageweg; ☒ 7:30am-4pm Mon-Fri)

**Public library** (Oranjestad; internet access per hr US\$5; ☒ noon-5pm Mon, 8am-5pm Tue-Fri) Offers internet facilities.

**Queen Beatrix Medical Centre** (☎ 318-2371; Oranjestad) Has quite a good reputation considering the island's remoteness and minuscule population. There are always two doctors on call 24 hours per day.

**Sint Eustatius Tourist Bureau** (☎ 318-2433; www.statiatourism.com; Fort Oranje)

## SIGHTS

### The Quill

Looming large over the rest of the island, the lone photogenic peak, known as the Quill (whose name is derived from the Dutch word *kwil*, meaning pit or hole), spikes high above the rolling terrain below. The once-active volcano now lies perfectly quiet and makes for a fantastic hiking day trip. Follow the markers deep down into the interior crater and witness a thriving rainforest-like environment stocked with dripping foliage and skyscraping trees that are several centuries old. See p489 for more information about hiking the Quill.

### Fort Oranje

Right in the center of town, **Fort Oranje** (admission free; ☒ 24hr) is one of the last remaining bastions of Statia's historic past, an intact fort complete with cannons, triple bastions and a cobblestone courtyard. The French erected

the first rampart in 1629, but most of the fort was built after the Dutch took the island from the French in 1636. They added to the fort a number of times over the years.

The courtyard has a couple of memorials, including a plaque presented by US President Franklin Roosevelt to commemorate the fort's fateful 1776 salute of the American war vessel *Andrew Doria*. At the time, the British on neighboring Antigua didn't take too kindly to Statia being the first foreign power to officially recognize the new American nation. The British navy later sailed for Oranjestad and, led by Admiral George Rodney, mercilessly bombed it to high heaven, and then took possession of the island and all its wealth.

### Sint Eustatius Museum

Chock full o' history, this **museum** (☎ 318-2288; Oranjestad; adult/child US\$3/1; ☒ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, until noon Sat) gives meaning to the Statian tag line and license plate insignia, 'The Historic Gem.' Set up as an upper-class colonial-era house, the museum also houses a pre-Columbian collection of artifacts and information on slavery, nautical history and colonial relics. The entire venture has been funded by private donors, so it's a bit ramshackle; however, the exhibits are thoroughly informative. Head down to the basement and learn about the Saladoids, who came all the way from the Orinoco region in Venezuela to settle here. They had abandoned the island before the arrival of the Arawaks, but left behind several interesting burial grounds. The unearthed skeleton of a 60-year-old man sits on display and, if you look closely, you'll notice that his teeth are in remarkably perfect condition – a testament to the indigenous diet before sugar cane was introduced in the slave-trading days.

### Government Guesthouse

The Government Guesthouse is the handsome 18th-century stone-and-wood building opposite First Caribbean National Bank. It was thoroughly renovated in 1992 with funding from the EU and is now the government headquarters, with the offices of the lieutenant governor and commissioners on the ground floor and the courtroom on the upper floor. You'll see the lieutenant governor's Mercedes Benz parked out front – the nicest car on the island, by far.

### BEST BOOKS ABOUT SINT EUSTATIUS

Those who most enjoy their visit to Statia have no qualms about copious amounts of down time – it's a great opportunity to snuggle up with a good read. Before arriving on the island consider swinging by the bookstore to check out *The Golden Rock*, by Ronald Hurst, and *The First Salute*, by two-time Pulitzer Prize winner Barbara Tuchman, both of which shed some light on the island's rich history.



## Dutch Reformed Church

The thick 60cm stone walls of the old Dutch Reformed Church, built in 1755, remain perfectly intact, but the roof collapsed during a 1792 hurricane and the building has been open to the heavens ever since. The grounds are the resting place of many of the island's most prominent citizens of the past.

## Stenapa

The Sint Eustatius National Parks Foundation is known as **Stenapa** (☎ 318-2884; www.statiapark.org; Lower Town; ☎ 7am-5pm Mon-Fri) and collectively manages the Statia Marine Park as well as the aboveground national park and the Miriam C Schmidt Botanical Gardens (below). This nongovernment organization was started in 1998 to protect Statia's ample natural resources. The office has detailed information about diving and hiking, as well as everything you need to know about Statian flora and fauna.

## Sint Eustatius Historical Foundation

The small historical foundation museum **gift shop** (☎ 318-2856; Oranjestad; ☎ 9am-noon Mon-Sat) along Lower Town sells used books and local artwork and crafts. Proceeds support the museum and historical research on Statia.

## Miriam C Schmidt Botanical Gardens

The semiwild **Miriam C Schmidt Botanical Gardens** (☎ 318-2884) grow under the watchful eye of the Quill. Volunteers and Stenapa staff have been busy preparing them to show residents and visitors alike the rich biodiversity of Statia. Take Rosemary Laan towards the Quill and follow the dirt road that points to the Botanical Gardens. Take care, as it can be rough riding.

## Zeelandia

Zeelandia, about 3.2km northeast of Oranjestad, takes its name from Statia's first Dutch settlers, who were from Zeeland province in the Netherlands.

The dark-sand beach at Zeelandia Bay collects its fair share of flotsam and is not an ideal beach for swimming; the Atlantic side of the island is turbulent and there are dangerous currents and undertows. It is a reasonable strolling beach, however, and you can find private niches by walking south along the beach toward the cliffs.

For those who are up for a longer walk, a track from the main road leads north to the partially secluded Venus Bay. There's no beach, but it makes for a nice hike, taking about 45 minutes one way.

## Forts

Besides the imposing Fort Oranje, which anchors Oranjestad, there are an additional 18 forts scattered throughout the island. Most of these have been consumed by island foliage, and others lie in various states of disrepair, but a few are worth a glimpse if only for the magnificent views out to sea.

At **Fort de Windt**, at the southern end of the island, a couple of rusty cannons sit atop a cliff-side wall. While there's not much else to this small 18th-century fort (which looks more like a wooden platform), you'll be rewarded with a fine view of St Kitts to the southeast. The most interesting geological feature in the area is the white cliffs to the east of Fort de Windt, a landmark readily visible from neighboring islands.

Other forts and batteries include **Fort Amsterdam**, **Fort Rotterdam**, **Battery Corre Corre**, **Frederick's Battery** and **Royal Battery** – all were constructed in the 1780s and face the gentler Caribbean side of the island.

## Beaches

No one visits Statia for its beaches, which can't compare with those of other islands in the Caribbean. Volcanic Zeelandia Beach, on the east coast, has rough surf and undertows, butts up against the island's landfill, and is not recommended for swimming; nonetheless, it rates as Statia's second beach; the first being the strip of sand in front of Lower Town. From an archaeological perspective, this beach is absolutely fascinating because much of it was once reclaimed land (that has since been re-reclaimed by the sea) and the sturdy stone frameworks of old warehouses are visible beneath the emerald waters.

## ACTIVITIES

### Diving & Snorkeling

The waters off Sint Eustatius are blessed with stunning reefs and loads of attractions: reef dives, seahorses, colonial trading shipwrecks, giant octopuses, stingrays, barracudas, coral, lobster, tropical fish... The list could go on forever. Statia's diving is regarded as among the best in the Caribbean.

## VOLUNTEERS DIG SINT EUSTATIUS

R Grant Gilmore III is an American archaeologist who runs the Secar archaeological initiative. For additional information about Secar, see p485.

### What first brought you to Sint Eustatius?

I first came to Statia on the invitation of Norman Barka, one of my archaeology professors at the College of William and Mary in Virginia, USA. Professor Barka had been working on the island since 1979. I first visited in 1997. I moved here permanently in 2004 to continue my research. I love the island dearly; in fact, my wife Joanna and I gave our daughter the middle name 'Eustatia' – an 18th-century variation of the island's moniker.

### What is Secar, and how does one get involved?

First, most people haven't even heard of Sint Eustatius, and those who have probably don't know that there are over 600 documented archaeology sites scattered around the island. Secar provides an opportunity for people of diverse backgrounds to experience Statia's rich archaeology first hand. We are also dedicated to bridging the gap between the past and the future by protecting standing historic structures and archaeological sites on Statia and on other nearby islands. Secar volunteers are not only immersed in archaeology (they live at the archaeology lab), but they also are encouraged to engage in local social life as well. If you are interested in joining the team, email me at [info@secar.org](mailto:info@secar.org).

Part of what keeps it this way is the US\$4 per day or US\$20 per year pass fee paid to Stenapa (opposite) to help this foundation maintain the pristine conditions of the Statia Marine Park. There is also an additional US\$1 per day harbor fee. Please take only photos and leave all historic objects and marine life alone (fines have been levied at the airport on divers found to have stashed more than just a blue bead or two).

For a deep dive, Doobie's Crack, a large cleft in a reef at the northwest side of the island, has black-tip sharks and schools of large fish. Try Blue Bead Hole if you're feeling particularly lucky and want to give bead hunting in an underwater sand dump a go. Adventurous types should do a night dive at Stenapa Reef to check out the creatures that hide during the day.

In the last 10 years, Statia has sunk several ships, creating some of the best wreck diving in the world. The *Charlie Brown* was sunk in 2003 and a map of its cavernous hull and quarters now hangs on the Stenapa wall so divers can plan their route beforehand. A dive to *Charlie Brown* is best done before 11am. Several colonial-era wrecks also exist under the waves, but most of them have deteriorated to the point where all that remains are the awesome rusty anchors. See p57 for more on Statia diving.

One-tank dives average US\$45, two-tank dives US\$75. Night dives, certification courses and multiday packages are also available. PADI Open Water courses will set you back US\$375.

Statia has three diving operations:

**Dive Statia** (☎ 318-2435, in the US 866-614-3419; [www.divestatia.com](http://www.divestatia.com), [www.mystatia.com](http://www.mystatia.com); Oranjestad) The oldest dive center on the island. Friendly Rinda and Rudy run a solid operation.

**Golden Rock Dive Center** (☎ 318-2964, in the US 800-311-6658; [www.goldenrockdive.com](http://www.goldenrockdive.com)) Based at the Old Gin House, this scuba shop has been around for almost as long as Dive Statia. Michele and Glenn, the affable owners, make sure everything runs smoothly. There's a second location further down the coast where you suit up and do all the paperwork before departure.

**Scubaqua Dive Center** (☎ 318-2160; [www.scubaqua.com](http://www.scubaqua.com); Oranjestad) A newer addition to the mix. Swiss- and Swedish-run.

## Hiking

The tourist office has a free hiking brochure with descriptions of 12 trails, and it can provide information on current trail conditions. Keep your eyes peeled for trail markers, which are usually small orange ribbons.

The most popular hike is to the Quill, Statia's extinct volcano. The Quill, and its surrounding slopes, was designated a national park in May 1998. The trail leading up the mountain begins at the end of Rosemary Laan in Oranjestad and it takes about 50 minutes to reach the edge of the crater. From there you can continue in either direction along the rim. The trail to the right (southeast) takes about 45 minutes and ends atop the 600m-high Mazinga, Statia's highest point. The shorter Panorama Track to the left offers great views and takes only about 15 minutes.



## BLUE BEAD FEVER

When Peter Minuit purchased the island of Manhattan (the heart of present-day New York City) from its local inhabitants, he paid for the land with 60 Dutch guilders' worth of trinkets, including several alluring blue beads.

These glassy pentagonal balls were produced in Amsterdam and traded throughout all of the Dutch holdings around the world. According to legend, several hundred years ago a large wooden vessel that sank off the coast of Statia was carrying these precious beads by the barrelful. And even today a lonely little bead will, once in a while, wash ashore.

Although the price of the blue beads hasn't risen in value quite like the real estate of New York, these shimmering talismans are considered to be quite a find. They are the only historical artifacts that are allowed to leave the island and, after years of avid plundering, the chance of finding one is slim.

As you walk around Oranjestad, you'll notice that local expats regularly sport their found beads with pride while Zen-fully exclaiming 'you don't find the beads; the beads find you...'

A third option is the track leading down into the crater, where there's a thick rainforest-like jungle of tall trees, some with huge buttressed trunks. This steep track, which takes about an hour each way, can be very slippery, so sturdy shoes are essential.

Guided tours focusing on native flora and fauna can be organized through **Stenapa** (☎ 318-2884; www.statiapark.org; Lower Town, Oranjestad), which oversees the national park, or through **Sint Eustatius Tourist Bureau** (☎ 318-2433; www.statia-tourism.com; Fort Oranje).

## SLEEPING

Take your pick from the five places to stay on wee Statia. Private house rentals (starting at US\$100 per night) are also an option; contact Rinda at Dive Statia (p489) for more information.

**Country Inn** (☎/fax 318-2484; countryinn@statia-tourism.com; Concordia; s/d US\$50/60; 🚽) Within walking distance of the airport, Statia's lowest-priced lodging isn't fancy, but the six quaint rooms are clean and quiet. Breakfast is available for US\$5 and Iris Pompier, the dedicated proprietor, will even cook you one of her fabulous lunches or dinners upon request. About a 20-minute walk or quick hitch from town. Credit cards are not accepted.

**Kings Well** (☎/fax 318-2538; www.kingswellstatia.com; Van Tonningenweg, Oranjestad; s US\$90-125, d US\$110-140; 🚽) Bursting with character from every vine-draped crevice, Kings Well is a colorful menagerie of horse-sized Great Danes, squawking pet macaws and swirls of hyper goldfish. The owners are some of the most down-to-earth folks you'll ever meet and tend to their B&B-style rooms with love and affec-

tion. Loads of wooden furnishings abound, and there's always a new project under way, like adding on an extra bedroom or creating new mosaic art.

**Statia Lodge** (☎ 318-1900, in France 33 6 9989 0403; www.statialodge.com; s/d/tr US\$110/125/205; 🚽 🚿) The newest digs on the island, beautiful Statia Lodge opened its doors two years ago and has been getting good reviews ever since. The 10 quiet wooden cabins are billed as 'ecolodges' and sit on a silent stretch of fenced-in land. A small beach bar and L-shaped pool are on the water's edge. The property is just beyond the limits of Oranjestad on the southern part of the island near Fort de Windt. Single and double rooms come with complimentary scooters; triple and family rooms come with a car.

**Old Gin House** (☎ 318-2319; www.oldginhouse.com; Bay Rd, Lower Town, Oranjestad; s US\$135-300, d US\$145-315; 🚽 🚿 🚿) This beautiful, brick ginning station (no, not the booze – the cotton seeds) has been restored to its 17th-century glory, and makes for a romantic spot to relax and dine. Most of the hotel accommodations are situated in a two-story complex behind the original structure and feature strong air-conditioning, wi-fi access and satellite TV. The rooms have burgundy and black accents giving them a bit of a Moroccan feel, and bathrooms are slightly out of date, but the shower nozzles are new and provide excellent water pressure. Rates include continental breakfast. Rumor has it that the lodging will be getting a makeover soon – look out for rising prices.

**Golden Era Hotel** (☎ 318-2345, in the US 800-223-9815, in Canada 800-344-0023; goldenera@goldenrock.net;

Bay Rd, Lower Town, Oranjestad; d US\$150; 📶 📺 📺) 'Golden Era' probably refers to the last time this place had a renovation – it really needs a facelift. The property sits right along the ocean and a few rooms have private balconies with unobstructed sea views. The grounds are covered with yellow-bells and oleander, and the pool bar practically forces guests to lounge on a beach chair with a mystery novel and a piña colada. All credit cards accepted.

## EATING & DRINKING

Statia's no culinary capital relative to St-Martin/Sint Maartin nearby, but there's a wide enough assortment to keep the taste buds curious every night of the week. There are plenty of joints dishing out local recipes and, bizarrely, seven Chinese restaurants serving up cheap eats. All of the hotels on the island serve lunch and dinner by request and are definitely worth a try (the Old Gin House dishes out dinner to guests and others nightly).

**Intermezzo Coffee Shop** (☎ 318-2520; Heilligerweg, Oranjestad; sandwiches from US\$6; 🍳 breakfast & lunch, closed Sat) Colorful Intermezzo is the best joint to grab an espresso and a quick sandwich. Stop in for pancakes on the first Sunday of every month, and on the third Friday of each month swing through for some live music and complimentary hors d'oeuvres.

**Blue Bead** (☎ 318-2873; Bay Rd, Lower Town, Oranjestad; lunch US\$7-10, dinner US\$12-20; 🍳 lunch & dinner) A breezy restaurant along Oranjestad Bay, Blue Bead offers pleasant water-view dining and reasonable prices. Try the special catch of the day or go for a big pizza smothered with veggies.

**Super Burger** (☎ 318-2412; Fort Oranje Straat, Oranjestad; mains around US\$8; 🍳 breakfast & lunch) Skell, the owner, cooks up some (yeah, you guessed it) super burgers, and there's a good assortment of veggie dishes if you aren't in a carnivorous kind of mood.

**Sonny's** (☎ 318-2929; Fort Oranje Straat, Oranjestad; mains US\$8-16; 🍳 lunch & dinner) This open-air, lantern-filled joint doesn't win any culinary prizes, but it's a great place to chill with regulars over a bowl of cheap noodles. Free delivery available.

**Fruit Tree** (☎ 318-2584; HM Queen Beatrix, Oranjestad; mains US\$10; 🍳 lunch) Friendly Fruit Tree has an excellent assortment of home-cooked goodness. The fried fish cutlet and curried shrimp get top marks. If you want to come for dinner

swing in during the day to let them know and they'll stay open for you in the evening.

**Local Restaurant** (☎ 318-1513; Paramiraweg, Oranjestad; mains US\$10; 🍳 lunch & dinner) The name pretty much says it all – this local spot on Paramiraweg is run by the pots-and-pans-wielding Mama, who dishes out hearty Stavian favorites such as stewed seafood.

**Ocean View Terrace** (☎ 318-2934; Fort Oranje Straat, Oranjestad; mains US\$11-18; 🍳 closed Sun) In the courtyard next to the Government Guesthouse, this place has a quiet open-air setting, and offers stellar views and tasty seafood dishes. Stop by for a li'l drunken karaoke on Friday nights.

**Smoke Alley Bar & Grill** (☎ 318-2002; Bay Rd, Lower Town, Oranjestad; mains from US\$12 🍳 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Commanding an enviable location directly over the ocean on the turn into Lower Town, this open-air restaurant-cum-nightclub has group bench seating, pulsing music at night (with a DJ and dancing till late on Friday), an eclectic crowd of medical students, locals and foreigners...and mediocre food.

**Cool Corner** (☎ 318-2523; Paramiraweg, Oranjestad) Also known as Chuckie's, after the affable owner and chef, this hot spot at the top of the Slave Path is *the* choice hangout for the local expat crowd, especially on Friday nights. Watch as Chuckie tends bar with an impressive robotic efficiency while chatting up the gaggle of usual patrons.

Spice things up with a stop at Stone Oven in the late evening, and dance to soca and salsa beats.

Hit **Duggins Supermarket** (☎ 318-2150; De Windtweeg, Oranjestad; 🍳 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 6am-9pm Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) for all of your grocery needs. The main supermarket on this duty-free island, Duggins is packed with cheap European and American brand names. You'll find loads of Kittitians here, who boat over from next door to stock up on cheap provisions.

# DIRECTORY

## ACCOMMODATIONS

The Sint Eustatius Tourist Bureau sanctions five places to stay during your time on the island. Three are located in Lower Town near the water's edge, one sits out near the airport and the fifth occupies a quiet patch of land beyond Oranjestad in the district of Whitewall (near Fort de Windt). Luxurious pampering is not on the cards, although

**PRACTICALITIES**

- **Newspapers & Magazines** Statia doesn't have its own newspaper but imports St Martin's *Daily Herald*.
- **Radio & TV** Statia's sole radio station is at 92.3 FM. Cable TV comes mostly from the US but a few channels are from within the Caribbean.
- **Electricity** 110V/60 cycles; North American-style sockets are common.
- **Weights & Measures** Metric.

each hotel can adequately suit your sleeping needs. The general lack of tourism means that prices stagnate throughout the year. Plans for renovation of several properties mean that there may be an increase in tariffs over the next few years.

The government tax on hotels is 7% and restaurants affiliated with hotels charge 15% service fee in lieu of gratuities.

Camping is technically allowed on Statia, although the tourist office has never had a request in its history. If you're willing to pioneer through the bureaucracy, Zeelandia might be the best location to bunker down.

**ACTIVITIES**

See p488 for information on activities.

**BUSINESS HOURS**

Stores and offices are open during the week from 8am to 6pm while grocery stores usually open around 7:30pm and close at 7pm.

Restaurants usually serve breakfast between 7am and 10am, lunch starts around 11:30am and goes until 2:30pm, while dinner starts at 6pm and lasts until 10pm or later, depending on the establishment. Local joints tend to have more flexible hours.

The two most common religious groups on Statia are Seventh Day Adventists and Roman Catholics: on Saturday the Seventh Day Adventists' establishments are closed and on Sunday it's the Roman Catholics that close up shop.

**EMBASSIES & CONSULATES**

There are no embassies on Statia.

**FESTIVALS & EVENTS**

**Statia Carnival** With 10 days of revelry in late July, this is the island's biggest festival, culminating on a Monday. Music, jump-ups (including early-morning pajama ones), competitions and local food are the highlights.

**Statia Day** Fort Oranje is the site of ceremonies held on Statia Day, November 16, which commemorates the date in 1776 when Statia became the first foreign land to salute the US flag. On this date in 2004, Statia adopted a new flag.

**Golden Rock Regatta** Held in mid-November, this colorful sailing race is held between the nearby islands to commemorate Statia's importance during the American Revolution and the 11-gun salute that was fired from the island on November 16, 1776.

**HOLIDAYS**

**New Year's Day** January 1

**Good Friday** Friday before Easter

**Easter Sunday/Monday** late March/early April

**Queen's Birthday** April 30

**Labor Day/Ascension Day** May 1

**Emancipation Day** July 1

**Antillean Day** October 21

**Statia Day** November 16

**Christmas Day** December 25

**Boxing Day** December 26

**MEDICAL SERVICES**

See p486 for details.

**MONEY**

The official currency is the Netherlands Antillean guilder (also called the florin), though US dollars are accepted everywhere.

**TELEPHONE**

Statia's country code is ☎ 599. To call the island overseas, dial your country's international access code followed by ☎ 599 + the local number. We have included only the seven-digit local number in Statia listings in this chapter.

**EMERGENCY NUMBERS**

- **Ambulance** ☎ 111
- **Police** ☎ 111

## TOURIST INFORMATION

The **Sint Eustatius Tourist Bureau** (☎ 318-2433; www.statiatourism.com; Fort Oranje) has free island maps that show the roads and hiking trails. They are open during the week from 8am to noon, and 1pm to 5pm. Also check out the tiny tourism information desk at the airport, which is open when flights are landing. A new 63-page walking tour booklet has been assembled to give visitors a more in-depth perspective of the island, especially the ruins of Oranjestad.

## VISAS

Citizens of North America and most European countries do not need a visa to visit Statia. Other nationalities should check with the Dutch representation in their home country.

# TRANSPORTATION

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Entering Sint Eustatius

All visitors need a passport and onward or return ticket.

### Air

**Franklin Delano Roosevelt Airport** (EUX; ☎ 316-2887) is Statia's only airport. It's tiny and currently only accommodates the **Winair** (☎ 318-2303; www.fly-winair.com) puddle jumpers from St-Martin/Sint Maarten.

### Sea

There is currently no regular ferry service to Statia. Save for a few dive boats and the odd small ship, no cruise ships alight here. Virtually all tourist traffic arrives by airplane.

Yachts need to radio the Marine Park at VHF channel 16 or 17 as there are many protected spots around the island and there is only anchorage for about 10 yachts at a time.

## GETTING AROUND

Statia has no buses so renting a car is useful if you want to explore every nook and cranny of the island (which can easily be done in a day). If you're staying in Oranjestad, you won't need a car for most of your stay, but expect to do some serious walking, as the town is somewhat spread out. Hiking enthusiasts can easily access the trail up into the Quill from the center of Oranjestad by foot.

## Car & Motorcycle

Driving is on the right side of the road. Road conditions are spotty outside of Oranjestad and the road to the Miriam C Schmidt Botanical Gardens can be impassable after rain. Watch out for roaming goats, cows and chickens all over the island, even in town. Also keep an eye out for surprise one-way streets – they tend to appear out of nowhere and the locals can get very upset if you're heading the wrong way.

Little Statia has a ridiculous number of car rental agencies, including the following lot. Figure around US\$35 per day, although deals are usually negotiable for weekly rates and such. Just remember, you get what you pay for.

**ARC Car & Jeep Rental** (☎ 318-2595; arcagency@megatropic.com) Rates between US\$35 and US\$45. All major credit cards accepted.

**Brown's Car Rental** (☎ 318-2266) Vans available for US\$50. MasterCard accepted.

**Rainbow Car Rental** (☎ 318-2811; raintour@goldenrock.net; booth at airport) Rates from US\$40.

**Reddy Car Rental** (☎ 524-2342) Rates from US\$35 including tax and insurance.

## EXCESS BAGGAGE

Winair provides fun and friendly service over to Sint Eustatius; however, on virtually every flight over to the island, someone disembarks sans luggage even though they thought they saw it being loaded onto the plane. This is usually due to weight limits – frequently the captain realizes at the last minute that the plane has reached its full capacity and will hold back a couple suitcases for the next flight, when the passenger complement is perhaps not as large. If you are arriving or departing on the last flight out, you'll have to wait until the following day, or even longer, to retrieve your luggage.

It's a good idea to pack a small carry-on stocked with 48 hours' worth of essentials just in case you too become a statistic. Despite harsh airline restrictions on liquids, Winair keeps a slightly more relaxed attitude, so you can bring your insect repellent along.

## Hitchhiking

The usual safety precautions apply, but hitchhiking on Statia is considered to be very safe and easy, so it's perfectly fine to stick your thumb out at someone (and not in the Shakespearean kind of way).

## Taxi

The island's taxis congregate at the airport after flights arrive. If you're looking for a cab, ask a local to call one, or they'll just give you a lift. You can also try the dispatch line (☎ 318-2205) Figure US\$5 per person per trip.