

# St Vincent & the Grenadines

Just the name St Vincent and the Grenadines evokes an emotive response with visions of exotic, idyllic island life. And the fantasy rings true. Imagine an island chain buried deep within the Caribbean Sea, uncluttered by tourist exploitation; white sand beaches on deserted islands, sky-blue water gently lapping the shore and barely a soul around.

Thirty-two islands dot the seascape, all vying to one-up each other in terms of tranquility. St Vincent is the largest in the group, home to the capital, Kingstown. This lively town is a throwback to colonial times with cobblestone streets and locals rushing about.

Once you get off the big island and into the Grenadines, everything changes. Gone is the traffic, the hustle and the pavement. All you're left with is a smattering of tiny islands waiting to be explored. Beaches stretch out before you, the pace of life slows to a crawl and the desire to go home vanishes.

You'll find unassuming budget hideaways, where you can escape from the world and (almost) live like a king on the income of a pauper. Or you can spend time on the island of Mustique where renting a house for the week will cost more than buying a luxury car.

These islands have enchanted sailors for centuries, and continue to do so. Whether you have your own vessel or are happy to hitch a ride, the island-hopping opportunities are irresistible. These islands were once the realm of real pirates but now they are the stomping grounds of the *Pirates of the Caribbean*. St Vincent and the Grenadines have jumped into the limelight thanks to Hollywood and they're not looking back.

## FAST FACTS

- **Area** 150 sq miles
- **Capital** Kingstown
- **Country code** ☎ 784
- **Departure tax** EC\$40
- **Famous for** Deserted islands, yachting, *Pirates of the Caribbean* – and real pirates, too.
- **Language** English, French patois (increasingly rare)
- **Money** Eastern Caribbean dollar (EC\$); EC\$1 = US\$0.38 = €0.24 = UK£0.19
- **Official name** St Vincent and the Grenadines
- **People** Vincentians (formal), Vincys (colloquial)
- **Phrase** Check it? (Do you follow me?)
- **Population** 118,000
- **Visa** No visa required; see p672



## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Tobago Cays** (p669) Visit the jewel of the Caribbean – these picture perfect islands are the essential SVG experience
- **Canouan** (p665) Check out the undeveloped half of this picturesque island, before it's too late
- **Kingstown** (p654) Hardwire yourself into the local scene, cruise the cobblestone streets of SVG's biggest city
- **Mustique** (p664) If you've got more dollars than sense, kick up your heels with rock stars and drop more coin than the GDP
- **Island-Hopping** (p661) Cruise the ocean, vagabond around the islands, find your own perfect beach or untouched bay and play pirate

## ITINERARIES

- **One Week** Spend a day or two in St Vincent, exploring the busy streets. Then head south and get ready to relax. Take the boat to Bequia and settle into the beach life. Go for a wander, if the mood takes you, and compare stretches of sand. Be sure to factor into your plans a day trip to the Tobago Cays aboard the *Friendship Rose*.
- **Island-Hopping Adventure** Start your journey in St Vincent and spend a few days on in the big island, then jump on a ferry and head to Bequia, where you'll be overwhelmed by the change of pace. After decompressing, loop back to St Vincent and catch the ferry south to Mustique, then onwards to Canouan, Mayreau, the Tobago Cays, Palm Island and finally to Union Island. Take as much time as you have – the slower the better.

## CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

The climate varies between the islands, as the Grenadines to the south are slightly drier and marginally warmer than St Vincent. In St Vincent the dry season runs approximately from January to May. In July, the wettest month, rain falls for an average of 26 days, while in April, the driest month, it averages only six days. In January the average daily high temperature is 29°C (85°F), while the nightly low is 22°C (72°F). In July the average high is 30°C (86°F), while the nightly low is 24°C (76°F).



The high season (winter) runs from December to April/May. The wetter months can still be nice, and they keep the islands lush and green.

## HISTORY

St Vincent is not as remote as it appears and has actually been inhabited for some 7000 years. Originally it was sparsely populated by the hunter-gatherer Siboneys. Around 2000 years ago they were replaced by the Arawaks, who moved up from present-day Venezuela. The raiding Caribs eventually took over from the Arawaks, but held some of the islands for as little as 100 years before the arrival of the heavily armed Spanish. Fierce Carib resistance kept the Europeans out of St Vincent

**HOW MUCH?**

- **Taxi from Kingstown to airport** EC\$25
- **Ferry from St Vincent to Bequia** EC\$20
- **Bottle of Hairoun beer** EC\$5
- **Bed in a budget hotel** US\$30
- **Villa for the week on Mustique** US\$40,000

long after most other Caribbean islands had fallen to the colonists. This was in part because many Caribs from other islands fled to St Vincent (Hairoun, as they called it) after their home islands were conquered – it was the Caribs' last stand. On the island, Caribs intermarried with Africans who had escaped from slavery, and the new mixed generation split along ethnic lines as Black Caribs and Yellow Caribs.

In 1783, after a century of competing claims between the British and French, the Treaty of Paris placed St Vincent under British control. Indigenous rebellions followed and British troops rounded up the 'insurgents,' forcibly repatriating around 5000 Black Caribs to Roatán island, Honduras. With the native opposition gone, the planters capitalized on the fertile volcanic soil and achieved the success that had eluded them. However, it didn't last long: two eruptions of La Soufrière, the abolition of slavery in 1834 and a few powerful hurricanes stood in the way of their colonial dreams. For the remainder of the British rule the economy stagnated; plantations were eventually broken up and land was redistributed to small-scale farmers.

In 1969, in association with the British, St Vincent became a self-governing state and on October 27, 1979 it was cobbled together with the Grenadines as an independent member of the Commonwealth. Tourism, for all its good and bad, has helped to reinvigorate the once flagging economy, although unemployment is still a major issue.

**THE CULTURE**

Pigeonholing Vincy culture is a tough task. With 30 islands in the chain, the cultural variance is as vast as the ocean in which they sit. Locals tend to be conservative, quiet and a tough nut to crack for outsiders. Many view travelers as just another transient

group and don't make much of an effort to open up. In St Vincent the residents are the product of a busier place so they tend to stick to themselves a bit more, creating a slightly cold exterior. However once you get onto the smaller islands the warmth freely shines through.

To a certain degree there is a feeling of detachment from the outside world. The isolation of the islands has created an interesting culture where there is a strong desire to emulate the images seen in the media. Hip-hop fashion has permeated the youth scene, with 50 Cent as likely to be heard on a car stereo as Bob Marley. American TV now dominates the airways and threatens to derail the cultural independence of St Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG).

The idea of conservation and environmentalism unfortunately isn't on the minds of many locals. There is rubbish on the land and the sight of someone casually tossing their KFC wrapper over the rail of an interisland ferry is sadly far too common.

Most locals find work in traditional industries such as fishing, microagriculture or laboring. Tourism also dominates the employment landscape with a growing number of Vincys moving up into management positions. The laid-back attitude of the locals can be perceived as lazy, uninterested or apathetic – but the reality is that behind the chilled exterior often sits an ambitious soul who wants a piece of the economic pie.

Christianity is the dominant faith on the islands, with several branches of the tree represented. The majority of islanders are Protestant, with Anglicans being the largest denomination. Other faiths include Methodist, Seventh Day Adventist, Jehovah's Witness, Baptist, Streams of Power and Baha'i. About 20% of Vincintians are Roman Catholic. Religion is taken seriously, with the Sabbath observed throughout, meaning that very little happens on Sunday – many restaurants and nearly all shops will be closed. You'll see Rastas around but few of them practice the religious elements associated with the faith, preferring to stick with music, weed and fashion as their expression of Rastafarianism.

**ARTS**

Music is the cultural lifeblood of St Vincent. The infectious Caribbean rhythms permeate the air and are inescapable. Musical pref-

erence is divided along generational lines. Aging Rastas groove to the mellow jams of old-school reggae legends like Bob Marley and Pete Tosh. The younger generations are enchanted by the frenetic beats of modern dancehall and imported American hip-hop. This American influence is easily seen on the streets, with T-shirts displaying the rap star *de jour* being standard issue.

Miniature-boat building is a popular artistic endeavor and the craftsmanship on these miniature crafts is as exacting as for their grown-up cousins. Full-size construction of seaworthy vessels helped to put the boat-builders of St Vincent on the map. Their skills are widely known and respected throughout the region.

## ENVIRONMENT

### The Land

St Vincent is a high volcanic island, forming the northernmost point of the volcanic ridge that runs from Grenada in the south up through the Grenadine islands. It is markedly hilly and its rich volcanic soil is very productive – St Vincent is often called the ‘garden of the Grenadines.’ It has a rugged interior of tropical rainforest, and lowlands thick with coconut trees and banana estates. The valley region around Mesopotamia, northeast of Kingstown, has some of the best farmland and luxuriant landscapes.

The island of St Vincent makes up 133 sq miles of the nation’s 150 sq miles. The other 17 sq miles are spread across 30 islands and cays, fewer than a dozen of which are populated. The largest of the islands are Bequia, Mustique, Canouan, Mayreau and Union Island. The larger Grenadine islands are hilly but relatively low-lying, and most have no source of freshwater other than rainfall. All have stunning white-sand beaches and abundant sea life.

### Wildlife

The crystal-clear waters surrounding St Vincent and the Grenadines are as abundant with sea life as any stretch of ocean on the globe. Plentiful reefs are a flurry of fish activity with turtles, moray eels, angelfish, barracuda, octopus, nurse sharks and countless other species calling the region home. Dolphins also frequent the area and are often seen surfing the bow waves of oceangoing vessels.

On land, the fauna become decidedly more sparse. The sun-drenched islands are home to

a few interesting species, like the St Vincent parrot, an endangered and strikingly beautiful bird that has multicolored plumage and is seen in the jungle interior of St Vincent. This rainforest also provides the home for *manicou* (opossum) and *agouti* (a rabbitlike rodent). *Agouti* roam freely on Young Island, where they are easy to spot.

### Environmental Issues

The concepts of climate change and environmental responsibility are slowly creeping into the collective mindsets of Vincentians. The government has started a program to try to curb damage done to the sea by overfishing and irresponsible boating practices. It’s a great start, but getting locals to comply could be an uphill battle. A shocking amount of rubbish is crudely tossed into the sea and into ditches along the side of the road. Broken glass and the ever-present KFC wrappings are major features in gutters, ditches and roadways in Kingstown, especially.

As a visitor, lead by example: put your garbage in a bin and avoid taking shells, or damaging coral when you are snorkeling. Fresh water is also a major concern, with a combination of runoff, wells and desalination plants supplying the hydration for the islands. Demand outstrips supply when cruise ships roll up and refill their tanks and this continues to be a divisive issue for locals, depending on which side of the economic equation they sit.

### FOOD & DRINK

As far as West Indian food goes, SVG is one of the better destinations for enjoying its unique flavors. The fertile ground of St Vincent makes it a prime location for farming and the fruits and vegetables produced here are top quality and delicious. Likewise the sea provides a bounty of delights; lobster, shrimp, conch and fish are all popular and readily available.

Typical dishes include *callaloo* (a spinach-like vegetable) and savory pumpkin soup. Saltfish and rotis are common simple snacks and light meals. Rotis (curried vegetables, potatoes and meat wrapped in a flour tortilla) are a national passion and are on offer everywhere.

For the traveler there are countless eating options, with both traditional West Indian fare and European varieties freely available. Italian, French and even Mexican cuisine can

be found on most islands – all have a seafood bent to them and do well fusing the local ingredients into their dishes.

Hairoun (pronounced 'high-rone') is the local beer. Brewed in Kingstown, the light lager is a tasty drop and very popular throughout the islands. On St Vincent, tap water comes from a reservoir and is generally safe to drink. On the outer islands water comes from rain collection, wells or desalination plants – so the quality can vary and the taste can be unpleasant at times. Bottled water is widely available and recommended.

## ST VINCENT

pop 105,000

St Vincent is the largest island and the hub that most travelers will pass through on their visit to SVG. Though not uninspiring, the allure of the Grenadines pulls most visitors away from here quickly.

The beaches are sadly on the average side and the frenetic pace of Kingstown tends to put off those in search of the quiet life. The lush green, rainforested interior has some pleasant hiking options. Vast banana plantations and other agricultural pursuits form the mainstay of farming in the region.

There are also opportunities to get an insight into traditional Vincy life as the towns and villages are unspoiled by tourism – unlike the resorts around the island that, for the most part, do their best to insulate guests from the realities of life on St Vincent, preferring to bathe them in rum punch and lull them to sleep with incessant steel-pan serenades.

### Getting There & Away

#### AIR

The runway at ET Joshua Airport receives regular flights (with connections further afield) to/from Barbados, St Lucia, Grenada and Trinidad. See p673.

There are also intracountry flights to Bequia, Canouan, Mustique and Union Island. Ferries will take you to Barbados, through all of the Grenadines, where you can continue on to Grenada.

#### BOAT

For details on the cargo or passenger mailboat ferries that ply the waters to Bequia and Union Island, see p673.

Fantasea Tours has day trips that head to Mustique, Bequia, Canouan, Mayreau and the Tobago Cays; see p657 for details.

### Getting Around

Bus routes are a good way to get around St Vincent, with fares ranging from EC\$1 to ED\$5, depending on the destination.

Cars can be rented from **Avis** (☎ 456-4389; ET Joshua Airport), while **Sailor's Cycle Centre** (☎ 457-1274; modernp@caribsurf.com; Upper Middle St), in Kingstown, rents road bikes and mountain bikes from EC\$25 per day.

Taxis are available at the airport and at a couple of stands in central Kingstown. **Sam's Taxi Tours** (☎ 456-4338; sams-taxi-tours@caribsurf.com) offers day tours that take in the sights of either the west or east coast of St Vincent for around US\$100 for up to two people.

## KINGSTOWN

pop 30,000

Rough cobblestone streets, arched stone doorways and covered walkways conjure up a forgotten era of colonial rule. The city of Kingstown heaves and swells with a pulsing local community that bustles through its narrow streets and alleyways. Hot, stagnant air envelops the town, amplifying the sounds of car horns, street hucksters and the music filtering through the crowd.

Though not a tourist destination in itself, for nearly all visitors to SVG Kingstown is the gateway to exploring the outer islands of the Grenadines. This popular hub is frequented by locals and travelers who use the bank, stock up on supplies and have a taste of town before heading out into the quiet of the surrounding islands.

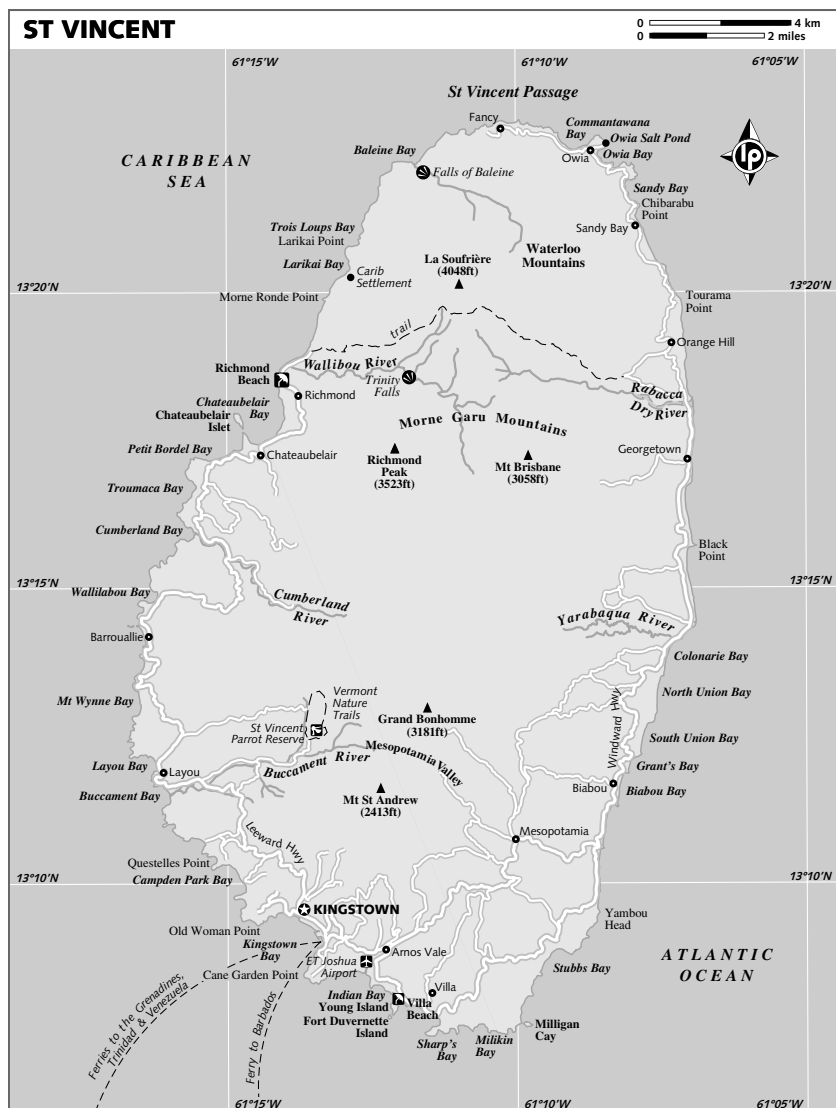
There is more tourist infrastructure a few miles down the road from Kingstown in the towns of Villa and Indian Bay – this is where you will find the majority of the resorts on the island.

### Orientation

The city is hemmed in by the island's hilly topography, and the center consists of only about a dozen dense blocks. Ferries from the Grenadines arrive at the jetty just south of the city center.

#### MAPS

You'll find basic maps of Kingstown in pamphlets and maps of the Grenadines



that are distributed through the **tourist office** (☎ 457-1502; [www.svgtourism.com](http://www.svgtourism.com); Cruise Ship Terminal; 🕒 8am-noon & 1-4:15pm Mon-Fri) and various travel agencies and hotels.

## Information

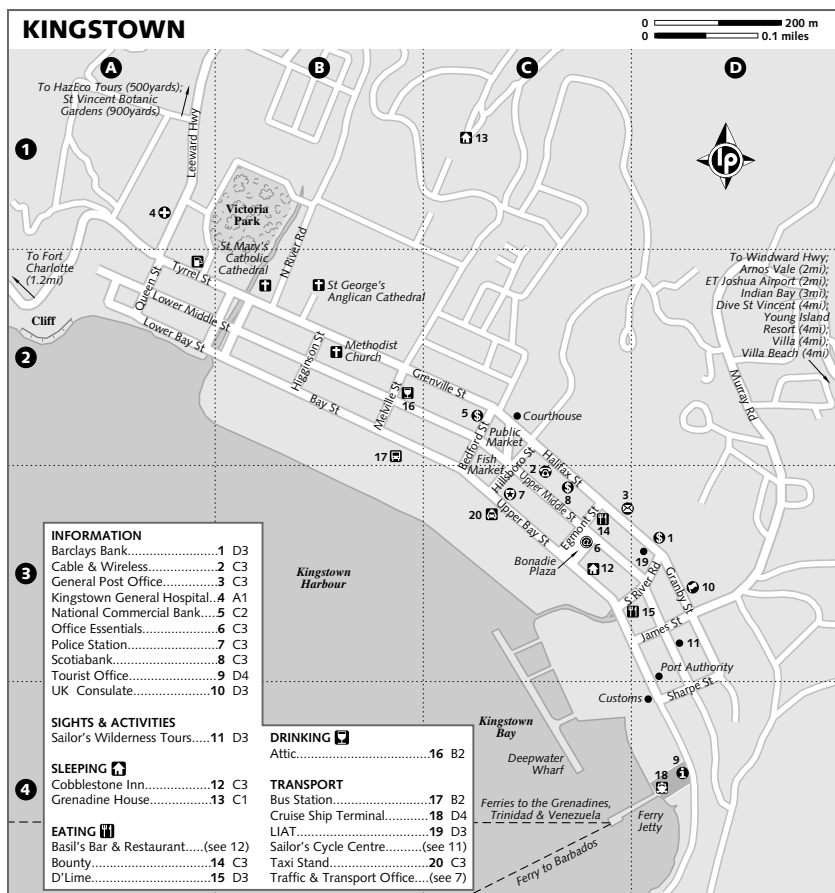
### EMERGENCY

**Police station** (☎ 999; cnr Upper Bay & Hillsborough Sts)

## INTERNET ACCESS

**Ferry Terminal** (per hr US\$2) A great way to kill some time while waiting for the ferry and also a good option if you're in this end of town. Good computers and a pretty fast connection.

**Office Essentials** (☎ 457-2235; [oe@caribsurf.com](mailto:oe@caribsurf.com); Bonadie Plaza, Upper Middle St, per hr EC\$5.75) Provides internet access.



## MEDICAL SERVICES

**Kingstown General Hospital** (☎ 456-1185; 🏥 24hr)

On the Leeward Hwy. For serious illness or decompression sickness you will be sent to Barbados (p680).

## MONEY

**Barclays Bank** (☎ 456-1706; Halifax St; 🕒 8am-3pm Mon-Thu, to 5pm Fri) Opposite the LIAT office.

**National Commercial Bank** (☎ 457-1844; cnr Bedford & Grenville Sts; 🕒 8am-3pm Mon-Thu, to 5pm Fri)

**Scotiabank** (☎ 457-1601; Halifax St; 🕒 8am-2pm Mon-Thu, to 5pm Fri)

## POST

**General post office** (☎ 456-1111; Halifax St;

🕒 8:30am-3pm Mon-Fri, to 11:30am Sat) Also offers telephone service.

## TELEPHONE & FAX

**Cable & Wireless** (☎ 457-1901; Halifax St; 🕒 7am-7pm Mon-Sat, 8-10am & 6-8pm Sun)

## TOURIST INFORMATION

**Tourist office** (☎ 457-1502; www.svgtourism.com; Cruise Ship Terminal; 🕒 8am-noon & 1-4:15pm Mon-Fri)

## TRAVEL AGENCIES

**Fantasea Tours** (☎ 457-4477; www.fantaseatours.com; Villa; 🕒 9am-5pm) A one-stop shop for all travel needs; inbound, outbound and all around the islands.

## Sights & Activities

### FORT CHARLOTTE

Just north of the city and standing proudly atop a 660ft ridge, **Fort Charlotte** (🕒 daylight)

offers commanding views of both town and the Grenadines to the south.

Built in 1806 and named after King George III's wife, the fort was built to repel the French navy. In its heyday it was the home to 600 troops and 34 cannons. These days it's a fair bit quieter, but the walls and a few of the guns remain. It's a steep 30-minute walk from town or you can hop on a bus that will drop you off near the fort; then you only have to contend with the last 10 minutes uphill.

### ST VINCENT BOTANIC GARDENS

The oldest botanical gardens in the western hemisphere, the **St Vincent Botanic Gardens** (☎ 457-1003; Montrose; ☞ 6am-6pm) are lovingly tended and provide an oasis of calm that's only half a mile north from the frenzy of Kingstown. Originally established in 1762 to propagate spices and medicinal plants, the gardens now comprise a neatly landscaped 20-acre park with lots of flowering bushes and tall trees. There's a small **aviary** that is intermittently home to some of the island's remaining 500 endangered St Vincent parrots. Guided tours are available for US\$2 per person.

### BEACHES

The beaches of St Vincent are sadly substandard, especially compared to the magnificent sandy examples found further south in the Grenadines. The best options on St Vincent are **Indian Bay Beach** and **Villa Beach**. Their proximity to local accommodations makes them a convenient place for a swim.

### DIVING & SNORKELING

**Dive St Vincent** (☎ 457-4714; [www.divestvincent.com](http://www.divestvincent.com); Young Island dock, St Vincent) offers dive trips and instruction, as well as snorkeling trips.

Snorkeling can be OK a little way off Indian Bay Beach and Villa Beach.

### Tours

**Fantasea Tours** (☎ 457-4477; [www.fantaseatours.com](http://www.fantaseatours.com); Villa) Arranges sailing day tours from St Vincent to the Grenadine islands. One goes to Mustique and Bequia for US\$70 per person, and another takes in Canouan, Mayreau and the Tobago Cays for US\$90 per person.

**HazEco Tours** (☎ 457-8634; [www.hazecotours.com](http://www.hazecotours.com); Gun Hill, Kingstown) Offers a range of tours with an emphasis on the outdoors. A half-day outing to the Vermont Nature Trails is US\$30 per person, or a hiking trip to the summit of La Soufrière is US\$100 for up to two people.

**Sailor's Wilderness Tours** (☎ 457-1274; [www.sailor-tours.com](http://www.sailor-tours.com); Upper Middle St) One of the few operators offering mountain bike tours. Various cycling, hiking and cruising options are available.

### Festivals & Events

For more than 30 years **Vincy Mas** has been the big yearly event in St Vincent. This enormous carnival takes place at the end of June or in early July. The calypso and soca competitions culminate in a street party in Kingstown with steel bands, dancers and drinks. For more festivals and events, see p671.

### Sleeping

The majority of accommodations options are in the beachside communities of Indian Bay and Villa. There are a few places to stay in Kingstown itself, which is a good option if you need to catch an early flight or boat.

**Skyblue Apartments** (☎ 457-4394; [skyblue@caribsurf.com](mailto:skyblue@caribsurf.com); Indian Bay; s/d US\$55/75; ☞ ☑) Nestled in the suburban neighborhood of Indian Bay, this place has quirky extras aplenty, with turtles in the yard and a miniature golf course. Rooms are tidy and basic; all come equipped with kitchens. Offers wi-fi access.

**our pick Cobblestone Inn** (☎ 456-1937; [www.thecobblestoneinn.com](http://www.thecobblestoneinn.com); Upper Bay St, Kingstown; d/tr US\$65/75; ☞ ☑) The Cobblestone Inn was built from the shell of an 1814 cobblestone warehouse and modernized into a fantastic urban hotel. Arched stone passageways connected with narrow stairs form a labyrinth that's as enticing as it is aesthetic. Rooms are nicely fitted out with Renaissance-style curtains and shiraz-colored hardwood. The stylish rooftop breakfast and lunch spot is the final cherry on top of this establishment that truly leaves no (cobble)stone unturned.

**Beachcombers Hotel** (☎ 458-4283; [www.beachcombershotel.com](http://www.beachcombershotel.com); Villa; s/d incl continental breakfast US\$75/99; ☑ ☑) This is a real find on the west side of Villa. Multicolored buildings dot the landscape in true Caribbean style. The basic rooms are perhaps a bit too basic, but the superior rooms really cut the mustard. Spacious grounds, a bar and a pool sweeten the deal.

**Fitness Quest Gym & Hotel** (☎ 457-5898; [fitnessquest@vincysurf.com](mailto:fitnessquest@vincysurf.com); Villa; s/d US\$84/108; ☞ ☑) Some hotels have a gym, this gym has a hotel. Not nearly as grim as it sounds: the rooms have been soundproofed to keep the throbbing bass out and the facilities are quite good. Ocean views from the rooms, large kitchens and a



decent living area make it a good option for longer stays. Free use of the gym too, so if you're looking to get ripped this could just be the place for you.

**Villa Lodge Hotel** (☎ 458-4641; www.villalodge.com; Indian Bay; s/d from US\$110/130; 🏠 📺 📶) Luscious landscaped grounds, large rooms and friendly staff make this a popular place for retuning guests. Just off the succulent sands of Indian Bay, each room is equipped with a balcony and some have sea views too. Offers wi-fi access.

**Grenadine House** (☎ 458-1800; www.grenadinehouse.com; Kingstown; s/d from US\$200/233; 🏠 📺 📶) High in the hills overlooking Kingstown, like a fortress of whitewashed luxury, Grenadine House is a step in a different direction compared to most properties on the island. Away from the beach and in the heart of suburbia, the views of town and of the Grenadines are fantastic. White linen with thread-counts to brag about, wicker headboards and fresh flowers complement the bedrooms. There are two bars on site and a double shot of restaurants too. The French Governor General, the original resident in the 1760s, would still approve.

**Young Island Resort** (☎ 458-4826; www.youngisland.com; Young Island; d incl meals US\$535; 🏠 📺 📶) It's only 200yds off shore, but the vaguely heart-shaped private Young Island is a whole world away. Swaying palms line the beach and shade the attractive villas that speckle the hillside. Abundant gardens of native plants assault the senses and the stilted bar sitting among the breakers teases your imagination. The villas are dead sexy, with plunge pools, killer views and everything you'd need to settle in for a good long stay.

## Eating & Drinking

**Bounty** (☎ 456-1776; Egmont St; meals from EC\$10) Cruise upstairs to this cool little find. Rotis, mac and cheese, and other simple favorites populate the menu – good grub, unpretentious and tasty. There is a decent selection of souvenirs for sale here too and there are even nice views of town from the window side tables.

**X-Cape** (Villa; mains from EC\$15) Head upstairs to take in the view and stay for a great local meal. The rotis are top shelf and the bamboo furniture, hardwood floors and drifting sea breeze all add up to make for a perfect island setting in Villa.

**French Veranda** (☎ 458-4972; Villa; mains from US\$18) This outdoor bistro at the end of the road at Villa is a gastronomic delight. The menu drips with panache and is highlighted by delectable dishes such as curried conch and grilled farm fresh chicken – *bon appetit!*

**Basil's Bar & Restaurant** (☎ 457-2713; Upper Bay St; mains from EC\$30; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Downstairs in the Cobblestone Inn you'll find the door into the dungeonlike Basil's Bar & Restaurant. This upscale pub has a feel like you might have just stepped into a pirate movie, with darkened booths, filtered light and cobblestone walls. Both Caribbean classics and Western favorites populate the menu – it's a tasty option for lunch or dinner. It's popular with Kingstown professionals.

**ourpick Lime** (☎ 458-4227; Villa; pub food from EC\$25, mains from EC\$40; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Classic travelers bar complete with '80s beer posters on the wall, signed undies and hand-drawn maps to secret islands. This Villa establishment does a great burger at lunchtime and the dinner menu is best described as eclectic, with the standards and a flair for the exotic including rabbit and pigeon up for grabs.

**Young Island Resort** (lunch US\$20, dinner US\$50; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) There are few places that can boast that their specialty is bread, but here at Young Island the proof is in the pumpernickel. Every meal comes with a barge full of fresh breads to accompany the equally fresh seafood and other delights. Reservations are required for nonguests and be sure to drop by on a Saturday night when the steel band cranks up. If that's not your thing, be sure to avoid Saturday, as that's when the steel drum band cranks up.

**Attic** (☎ 457-2559; Melville St; cover EC\$10-15; 🍷 5pm-late) A chilled 2nd-floor club in an old stone building, the Attic has live jazz a few nights a week and sometimes soca bands on Saturday.

**D'Lime** (Upper Bay St; 🍷 5pm-late) Looking for a cold beer on a hot day? Want to chat to some locals about Vincy life or a place to take a load off during the weekly jump-up? D'Lime's got you covered. Right on the main strip in the heart of town, this beer hall, rum shack and meeting place is a Kingstown classic.

## Shopping

Looking to get a cheap T-shirt, a mix CD of local reggae favorites or perhaps a dubious DVD of the latest Hollywood release? Look no

further than Upper Middle Street. If nothing else, this lane of street stalls and tiny shops is a great spot to hang out with the locals in their element and find some real bargains.

### Getting There & Away

Kingstown is the transportation hub of SVG. If you arrive in St Vincent by boat, you will disembark in Kingstown; if you arrive by plane, you will land at ET Joshua Airport in the nearby suburb of Arnos Vale. There are numerous boats and airlines that service St Vincent (see p673).

The Cruise Ship Terminal at the south end of Kingstown Harbour receives international cruise ships and has tourist facilities, including information and shops.

The bus station is near the Little Tokyo Fish Market on Bay St, although buses can also be hailed along the road.

### Getting Around

There's an abundance of taxis and minivan buses to shuttle you around town, but it is easy to walk around Kingstown, which is surprisingly small. A taxi from the airport in Arnos Vale to Kingstown costs EC\$25.

### WINDWARD HIGHWAY

The windward (east) coast of St Vincent is a mix of wave-lashed shoreline, quiet bays and small towns. Away from the tourism that dominates the southern coast of the island; this is a fine place to visit for those wanting to experience a more sedate version of St Vincent. The black-sand beaches meld into the banana plantations and the lush vegetation grows up into the hilly interior. Scuffy villages pop up from time to time, filled with down-to-earth locals and ramshackle buildings.

Buses from Kingstown to Georgetown are fairly regular (except on Sunday) and cost EC\$6. Buses driving north from Georgetown are irregular, so get information from the Kingstown bus station before heading off.

As you head further north along the east coast, you really start to get off the beaten track. The jungle gets a bit thicker, the road a bit narrower, and towering **La Soufrière** volcano (4048ft) begins to dominate the skyline. Still active and slightly ominous, this striking feature is the hallmark of the northern end of St Vincent. About a mile north of Georgetown the road passes over an old lava flow from the

1902 eruption – a solemn reminder of the power of the volcano.

Heading yet further north the rough track turns inland and, amid the coconut palms and the banana plantations, the **hiking trail** to La Soufrière's crater begins. This 3.5-mile hike will take you up to the crater, where you can see the lake and, on a clear day, spectacular views of the island and the Grenadines.

Getting to the hike is a bit of mission in itself. The trailhead is 2 miles off the main road and bus access this far north is a bit sporadic. You can either arrange for a taxi, which will cost you over US\$100 from Kingstown, or join a guided tour (see p657).

Continuing north you will hit **Sandy Bay**, a sizable village that has the island's largest concentration of Black Caribs. North of Sandy Bay is Owia Bay and the village of **Owia**, where you'll find the **Salt Pond**, tidal pools protected from the crashing Atlantic by a massive stone shield. This is a popular swimming hole with crystal-clear waters and a view of St Lucia to the north. There are thatched shelters, picnic tables and restrooms here.

### LEEWARD HIGHWAY

The Leeward Hwy runs north of Kingstown along St Vincent's west coast for 25 miles, ending at Richmond Beach. Offering some lovely scenery, the road climbs into the mountains as it leaves Kingstown, then winds through the hillside and back down to deeply cut coastal valleys that open to coconut plantations, fishing villages and bays lined with black-sand beaches.

About a 3-mile drive north of Kingstown is a sign along the Leeward Hwy, pointing east to the **Vermont Nature Trails**, 3.5 miles inland. Here you'll find the Parrot Lookout Trail, a 1.75-mile loop (two hours) that passes through the southwestern tip of the **St Vincent Parrot Reserve**.

The drive from Kingstown all the way to the gorgeous black-sand **Richmond Beach** takes about 1½ hours. There are weekday buses roughly every 15 minutes from Kingstown to Barrouallie (EC\$4, 45 minutes). From there it is a 1-mile walk to Wallilabou Bay, and about four buses per day continue north to Richmond.

### Wallilabou Bay & Falls

The small village of Wallilabou has in recent times become one of the most recognizable places in all of SVG. *Pirates of the Caribbean*

## LIGHTS, CAMERA, PIRATES!

Not since the days of Errol Flynn have the words *Pirates* and *Caribbean* been so firmly planted into the lexicon of the world cinema public. The *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie franchise has made eye patches, parrots on the shoulder and general skullduggery suddenly cool. You could argue that the world was ripe for a pirate adventure, but we're sure that having Johnny Depp and Keira Knightley prancing around the screen was a big factor.

Visitors to St Vincent and the Grenadines can get a bit closer to Captain Jack and his mates by visiting some of the locations that were used in the three films. The Tobago Cays were used extensively as were the seas off St Vincent and Bequia. A village set was built in Wallilabou on the west coast of St Vincent, where much of the first film was shot.

If you really want to get into the pirate spirit you can take a ride on the *Sacra Nouche* (p668). This vintage sailboat was used in the first film and now takes amateur pirates for a cruise among the Tobago Cays for the day. If you really want to go on a *Pirates* pilgrimage you should also check out locations in the Bahamas (see p84 and p99) and in Dominica (p592) – if ye dare! Yarr!

filmed here, creating a full-scale seaside pirate village for scurvy dogs and old sea salts to call home. Many of the sets remain and it's a great spot for film buffs to get a behind-the-scenes look. Sadly the sets are starting to fall into disrepair – but efforts are under way to maintain them for the future.

**Wallilabou Falls** are near the inland side of the main road, about a mile north of Wallilabou Bay. Although only 13ft high, the falls are beautiful and drop into a waist-deep bathing pool.

**Wallilabou Anchorage** (☎ 458-7270; www.wallilabou.com; Wallilabou) runs the mooring facilities, and has a pleasant bayside restaurant and bar. Adjacent to the restaurant is its small hotel (rooms from US\$50), with seafront accommodations.

## Falls of Baleine

The 60ft Falls of Baleine, at the isolated north-western tip of the island, are accessible only by boat. These scenic falls, which cascade down a fern-draped rock face into a wide pool, are a few minutes' walk from the beach where the boats anchor.

Most tour operators charge around US\$50 for the day tour and require at least three people to make the trip. **Sea Breeze Nature Tours** (☎ 458-4969) has both a 36ft sloop and a powerboat. It charges US\$40 per person. The company also runs whale-watching trips.

# BEQUIA

pop 5000

Striking a balance between remoteness, accessibility, development and affordability – Bequia (beck-way) could very well be the

most perfect island in the whole Grenadines chain. Stunning beaches dotting the shoreline, accommodations to fit most budgets and a slow pace of life all help to create an environment that is utterly unforgettable. There are fine restaurants to dine in, shops that retain their local integrity and enough golden sand and blue water to keep everybody chilled right out.

The northernmost island in the Grenadines group, Bequia is a snap to get to via daily ferry services and boasts a variety of small areas to explore. Though only 7 sq miles in size, this little island packs a punch with lots of hidden treasures to dig up. The main town of Port Elizabeth is a charming seaside place that is worth investing some time in. It is popular with the yachting set; the boats in the harbor originate from all over the globe and are a testament to the allure of the area.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Bequia's airport is near Paget Farm, at the southwest end of the island, and is served by **Mustique Airways** (☎ 458-4380; www.mustique.com) and **SVG Air** (☎ 457-5124; www.svgair.com) – but flights are infrequent so most visitors take the ferry.

### BOAT

The **Bequia Express** (☎ 458-3472; www.bequiaexpress.net) and **MV Admiral** (☎ 458-3348; www.admiralty-transport.com) ferries run between Bequia and St Vincent. See p673 for details. The docks are located in the center of Port Elizabeth. The

ferries are generally punctual and serve basic food and drink, and the crossing takes only one hour. Tickets are sold upon entry; the fare is EC\$15/25 one way/round trip.

Bequia is a popular port of call for sailors on an island-hopping journey. The **Bequia Customs and Immigration Office** (☎ 457-3044; 🕒 8:30am-6pm) is in Port Elizabeth opposite the ferry dock. Several shops in town cater to boats, where bulk supplies, ice and charts are easily found.

## Getting Around

As the island is small, many places are accessible on foot from Port Elizabeth. Everything else is a quick trip by bus, taxi or other motorized transportation.

### BUS

Port Elizabeth is full of 'dollar vans,' shared minibuses that will take you to most main-road destinations on the island for EC\$1 to EC\$4 per trip. For route information, have a chat to the driver or drop into the tourist office in Port Elizabeth. It can sometimes get crowded, so isn't the best option if you're carrying luggage.

### CAR, MOTORCYCLE & BICYCLE

Opposite the waterfront in Port Elizabeth, **Handy Andy's** (☎ 458-3722) rents out mountain bikes (per day US\$20), motor scooters (US\$25), Honda 250cc motorcycles (US\$55) and Jeep Wranglers (US\$75). Vehicles can also be rented from **Sunset Rentals and Island Tours** (☎ 458-3782; Port Elizabeth).

### TAXI

Taxis on Bequia are great fun; the open-air pickup trucks have bench seating in the back and wind-generated air-conditioning. The fees are set and should be agreed upon prior to departure. The drivers are friendly and can act as good tour guides (EC\$65 per hour) if you're keen to see the island.

From Port Elizabeth it costs EC\$20 to Lower Bay or Friendship Bay, and EC\$30 to the airport. Taxis meet flights at the airport and there is a glut of them near the docks in Port Elizabeth.

## PORT ELIZABETH

pop 2500

The charming little town of Port Elizabeth is little more than a line of shops rimming the beach of Admiralty Bay. Restaurants, grocery stores and shops line the strip, weaving an interesting fabric that's a joy to walk among.

The harbor is often packed with yachts and the streets are busy with visitors and locals going about their days. But remember, we're talking 'busy' by Grenadine standards, so in the grand scheme it remains a sleepy seaside town.

### Orientation

A narrow sidewalk along the shoreline at the south side of Port Elizabeth – known as the Belmont Walkway – provides the main access to many of the town's restaurants and accommodations. For those arriving by sea, one of the first ports of call will be the **Bequia Customs and Immigration Office** (☎ 457-3044; 🕒 8:30am-6pm).

## ISLAND-HOPPING

The chain of islands that make up St Vincent and the Grenadines is so perfect for a seafaring adventure, it's as if some all-powerful mariner conjured them for their own pleasure. Just because you don't own a yacht, or for that matter don't know a yard-arm from a jib sail, doesn't mean that you can't cruise these islands by sea. There are several ways to get around, from crewing on yachts or hopping on scheduled ferries to hitching rides on water taxis or even stowing away on the mail boat. All are easily sorted once you're on the ground and are reliable ways to get from one island to another.

Besides being a great way to get under the skin of these islands, traveling by sea is also the green way to go. Just think of the good earth karma you get from every gallon of jet fuel you don't burn.

With a bit of flexibility you can easily piece together a trip starting in St Vincent and ending in Grenada (or the reverse) while hitting most of the islands along the way. It's a great adventure, and a throwback to the traveling of old – tossing your pack onto a rickety old boat as it casts off and heads into the open sea to a new port among these sun-kissed islands.

## Information

### BOOKSTORES

**Bequia Bookshop** (☎ 458-3905; Front St; 🕒 8:30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) The best bookstore in the Grenadines stocks everything from charts and survey maps to yachting books, flora and fauna guides, and West Indian, North American and European literature.

### INTERNET ACCESS

**Digicel** (per hr EC\$18; 🕒 8am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-9pm Sat & Sun) This Caribbean cell-phone provider has a herd of computers out back, all with fast connections and comfy chairs.

**Maria's Cafe** (wi-fi per hr EC\$18) Just down the road from the main marina, and upstairs. Sit on the balcony, grab a drink and check your email via a wi-fi connection.

### MONEY

The following banks have a 24-hour ATM:

**National Commercial Bank** (☎ 458-3700; Front St; 🕒 8am-1pm Mon-Thu, 8am-1pm & 3-5pm Fri)

**RBT** (☎ 458-3845; Front St; 🕒 8am-2pm Mon-Thu, to 5pm Friday)

### POST

**Port Elizabeth post office** (☎ 458-3350; 🕒 9am-noon & 1-3pm Mon-Fri, 9-11:30am Sat) Opposite the ferry dock on Front St.

### TELEPHONE

Coin and card phones are located in front of the post office on Front St.

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Bequia Tourism Association** (☎ 458-3286; [www.bequatourism.com](http://www.bequatourism.com); 🕒 9am-noon & 1:30-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) Located in the small building on the ferry dock, it's staffed by helpful locals and is a great starting point for your stay.

## Dangers & Annoyances

Beware of manchineel trees around Lower Bay Beach as they can cause a rash. Also be careful walking on the roads as they are narrow, devoid of footpaths and the drivers always seem to be in a hurry.

## Sights & Activities

### BEACHES

There are a few nice beaches in the close vicinity to Port Elizabeth. The best is the divine **Princess Margaret Beach**. Located just around the corner from Port Elizabeth, it is one of the loveliest stretches of sand on the island. To

get there requires a slightly contrived journey, traveling on the main road south and turning down the narrow road to the beach.

**Friendship Bay** on the southeast corner of the island is another great place to spend the day. It's a strenuous yet short walk over the spine of the island to get there, or a short taxi or bus ride.

### BOAT TRIPS

There are a few options for tours through the Grenadines by boat. Some are infrequent and all have flexible and variable schedules. Drop into the tourist office and have a look at the notice board to see which boats are going where and when.

**Friendship Rose** (☎ 495-0886; [www.friendshiprose.com](http://www.friendshiprose.com); day trips adult/child US\$125/62) is an 80ft vintage schooner that is a beautiful example of boat building – even to a steadfast landlubber. This former mail boat now runs tours throughout the Grenadines to various islands on a relaxed schedule. There are day trips to Mustique, Canouan, Young Island and to the Tobago Cays. You can also charter the boat and have your own private seafaring adventure.

### DIVING

You don't have to go far for great diving on Bequia – there are some top sites just on the edge of Admiralty Bay. There are two excellent dive shops in Port Elizabeth that visit dive sites around the island; both offer similar services at comparable prices.

**Bequia Dive Adventures** (☎ 458-3826; [www.bequia.diveadventures.com](http://www.bequia.diveadventures.com); Belmont) Charges US\$40 per dive if you prepay on the internet.

**Dive Bequia** (☎ 458-3504; [www.dive-bequia.com](http://www.dive-bequia.com); Belmont) Charges US\$60 per dive.

## Sleeping

**Julie's Guesthouse** (☎ 458-3304; [julies2007@hotmail.com](mailto:julies2007@hotmail.com); Front St; s/d from EC\$33/50; 🚿 📺) It may not look like much from the outside, but after you wind your way back through the laneway and up the steps, all efforts are rewarded. Pleasant, basic and clean rooms are on offer at a great price. The central location isn't the best if you are there to lounge on the sand – but you are definitely in the heart of the action.

**L'Auberge des Grenadines** (☎ 458-3201; [www.caribrestaurant.com](http://www.caribrestaurant.com); s/d US\$40/60; 📺) Tucked up into one of the nicer restaurants in town is this delightful little place to stay. There are only three rooms, so you have to get in quick. Nothing

fancy here but there's great food only steps away, the ocean only a few steps further, and great staff to take care of you.

**Frangipani Hotel** (☎ 458-3255; www.frangipani.bequia.com; Belmont Walkway; s US\$60-175, d US\$70-200) Reputations precede Frangipani, known throughout the island as one of the premier places to stay – the buzz hits the nail right on the head. This converted house has 15 rooms and a good location on the beach. The 2nd floor of the wooden-shingled house has pleasantly simple rooms. Out back are the modern garden units, with stone walls and harbor-view sundecks. The restaurant and bar are popular in the evening.

**Gingerbread Hotel** (☎ 458-3800; www.gingerbreadhotel.com; Belmont Walkway; ste from US\$160) Like a set piece from a production of Hansel and Gretel, Gingerbread looks exactly as you'd expect, with ornate eaves nailed to a steep roof. Spotless rooms, some with four-post beds, sit behind swaying palms and a grassy verge only a stone's skip from the baby-blue sea.

**our pick** **Firefly** (☎ 458-3414; www.fireflybequia.com; r from US\$600; ♿ ♿) Up and over the hill, and only five minutes by car, you are transported into a whole new world of tranquil luxury. Modeled after its sister property on Mustique, which shares its name, this new addition to the scene more than ups the standards of decadence. There are but a handful of rooms, tastefully decorated with a minimalist flare, accented with muslin-draped bedposts, snow-white furnishings and views worthy of royalty. Innovative and delicious extras, like iPod-included sound systems and a bottle of vino to help you settle in, just prove that management knows a thing or two about doing all the little things right.

## Eating & Drinking

**our pick** **Green Boley** (☎ 457-3625; Belmont Walkway; boneless chicken roti EC\$8, fish burger EC\$10) Just look for the fluorescent-green bamboo shack on the beach, filled with locals sipping cold beer and eating hearty West Indian fare. The chalkboard menu doesn't swim far from the standards but they're done well – tasty favorites like fish burgers won't break the bank and will leave you smiling.

**Gingerbread Restaurant** (☎ 458-3800; lunch EC\$12-25, dinner from EC\$35; ☎ 8am-9:30pm) Up the steps at the Gingerbread Hotel, this 2nd-floor eatery is a spacious, vaulted-ceiling dining room with a view. Lunch brings on sandwiches and casual

fare, while dinner classes it up a notch, with seafood the main go.

**Frangipani Restaurant & Bar** (☎ 458-3255; Belmont Walkway; lunch EC\$12-30, dinner from EC\$35; ☎ 7:30am-9pm) This popular seaside bar-restaurant offers sandwiches, burgers, salads, omelets and fresh fish dishes until 5pm, and then seafood and West Indian fare is served at dinner. There's live music on Thursday and occasionally on other nights.

**Porthole** (Belmont Walkway; mains from EC\$15; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Not far from town, Porthole along the walkway. You won't find many tourists with sunburn in here; locals, lifers and those in the know frequent it for the yummy local grub. Rotis for lunch topped off with cricket on the telly, all served up in a setting best described someplace between ramshackle and falling to bits.

**Tommy Cantina** (mains from EC\$20; ☎ lunch & dinner) Don't let the steady stream of tourist traffic deter you. Tommy Cantina has good-value, freshly prepared Mexican standards plus a great viewpoint for the nightly sunset. There's a healthy list of cocktails to get the party going and one of the best burritos east of Baja.

**Mac's Pizzeria** (☎ 458-3474; Belmont Walkway; pizzas from EC\$40; ☎ 11am-10pm) Mac's packs in the crowds. Its fearsome reputation is known far and wide – and it delivers the best pizza around. A few steps from the beach, sit on a deck crammed with tables and overflowing with happy diners swapping slices and telling lies.

## Shopping

The artistic community in Bequia is formidable and luckily there is a great selection of shops in which to purchase their wares. Model boats, paintings, prints and crafts are available and of good quality. The market is a good spot to get T-shirts and other tourist-oriented paraphernalia.

**Garden Boutique** (☎ 458-3892) Ever wanted to own a boat? Well, here's your chance – and this one you can actually afford (and it will fit in your luggage). Beautifully crafted model boats, prints, batik and other locally made specialties are all found here.

**Noah's Arcade** (Belmont Walkway) Watercolors, prints and locally made stuff all of a good standard and under the same roof.

**Bequia Market** (☎ vegetable market 7am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 4pm Sun) It's hard to miss the local market, just off the water, near the centre of town. In

classic Caribbean style it has a bit of everything for everyone: fresh fish caught daily, fruit off the vine and a staggering selection of T-shirts and other tourist crap that you'll be embarrassed to wear once you get home. Rest assured you are supporting the local economy no matter what you purchase.

## LOWER BAY

pop 500

The tiny beachside community of Lower Bay is a charming oasis of Caribbean calm. The stunningly clear waters of Admiralty Bay spread out in front like a turquoise fan, while the golden beach meets the sea and unites into that synergy of surf and sand you've been looking for. There's not much to do here – it's quiet by comparison to Port Elizabeth (not that Port Elizabeth ever gets going beyond a gentle purr) – but it has a few places to stay, a couple to eat and enough square footage of sand to keep the beach bunnies happy. From the bus stop on the main road it's a 10-minute walk down to the beach, along the steep paved road.

The location of **Keegan's** (☎ 458-3530; keegans.bequia@yahoo.com; Lower Bay; d US\$50-60, d incl breakfast & dinner US\$80-90; 🍷) is hard to beat – right off the sand. The hotel has character and a restaurant that belts out karaoke on a Saturday night. On the downside, the rooms are older than most of the guests and the standards of cleanliness could use some work – but the location is tops.

With an unforgettable name, **Can't Remember the Name** (dinner from EC\$60; 🍷 6pm-late) is an airy beach bar that serves up fresh fish for lunch and dinner. There's an inviting bar to dock up to any time of day, great meals, occasional live music and a cool atmosphere.

## FRIENDSHIP BAY

If all the hustle and bustle of the rest of Bequia is getting you down, head over to Friendship Bay where things are even quieter. Located on the southeast coast of the island, this small settlement is about 1.5 miles from Port Elizabeth.

Just up the road from the beach is **Friendship Garden Apartments** (☎ 458-3349; www.friendshipgardenapt.com; d per week US\$560), a no-nonsense, affordable place to stay. The apartments are simple and well laid out with everything a family needs for a vacation without the extras that start to amp up the price.

Right next door to the Friendship Garden and a nearly identical property, **Island Inn Apartments** (☎ 458-3706; www.islandinnsvg.com; d per week from US\$500) is also a great family option with apartments that feature full kitchens. The rooms are clean and it's a short stroll to the beach.

**Friendship Bay Resort** (☎ 458-3222; www.friendshipbay.vc; ste US\$250-700), a sprawling Swedish-run resort, has just undergone extensive renovations and has a fresh new look. The distinctly European feel has the ambience of a ski lodge looking over the sea. The 24 rooms are often booked by families over from the old country to enjoy some Caribbean sunshine.

Don't worry, you won't need the repellent at **Moskito** (☎ 458-3222; Friendship Bay Resort; mains from EC\$70; 🍷 11am-10pm). This great restaurant and bar has a feel that can only be described as lived-in: darkened wood, hemp rope and a sea view. The bar has swings rather than stools and the frequent lobster specials are as good as they sound.

# MUSTIQUE

pop 3000

What can you say about Mustique other than 'Wow!?' First take an island that is nearly unfathomably beautiful, stunning beaches and everything else you expect to find in paradise, then add to the mix accommodations that defy description or affordability. With prices that exclude all but the super-rich, film stars and burnt-out musicians, this island is the exclusive playground of the uberaffluent. The private island is run by the Mustique Company who assures that this paradise is only visited by the well heeled.

For those lucky enough to have inherited a small fortune, starred in a Hollywood blockbuster or fronted a band like the Rolling Stones, luxury awaits. There are 70 private villas and houses on the island that will accommodate you in the height of luxury. The beaches are sublime and the small island, only 5 miles in length, has everything one could ever want in a private Caribbean hideaway. Though out of reach for almost everybody, it's a must-do if your idea of a holiday is not seeing change out of 50 grand.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Firefly Mustique** (☎ 488-8414; www.mustiquefirefly.com; r incl meals & transportation US\$850-1050; 🍷 📺 📺) Set

on a steep cliffside overlooking Britannia Bay, each of its four supremely well-appointed rooms has a private bathroom, ocean view and unique styling. Although it is pricey (but relatively cheap by Mustique standards), Firefly is not stuffy and is a popular hangout in the evenings. It's a first-rate option for a honeymoon. Offers wi-fi access.

**Mustique Company** (☎ 448-8000, in USA 212-758-8800, in UK 0162-858-3517; www.mustique-island.com; villas per week US\$8500-45,000) when you get the urge to spend more money on a vacation than the GDP of SVG, this is the place to do it. Nothing is short of perfection and every need is catered for. Each villa comes with its own staff of servants, housekeepers and cooks. (Stays must be for a minimum of seven nights.) But if that all sounds just a bit too ghetto, you can upgrade to one of the company's premium estates that will set you back up to US\$150,000 per week. Why buy a Ferrari when you can rent a really nice house in the Caribbean for a week?

**Basil's Bar & Restaurant** (☎ 488-8350; www.basilsbar.com; dinner from EC\$70; 🕒 9am-late) Famous Basil's is a delightful open-air thatch-and-bamboo restaurant that extends out into Britannia Bay, and is the place to eat, drink and meet up with others in Mustique. The bar hosts the Mustique Blues Festival in late January each year.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Mustique's airport is served by **Mustique Airways** (☎ 458-4380; www.mustique.com), **SVG Air** (☎ 457-5124; www.svgair.com) and private jet. For more details, see p673. Britannia Bay is Mustique's port of entry and the only suitable anchorage for visiting yachts; immigration and customs can be cleared at the airport. It is also possible to hop on one of the tour ships from Bequia (see p657) to get to the other Grenadines.

# CANOUAN

## pop 1250

Canouan (cahn-oo-ahn) is an interesting place, both historically and aesthetically. This stunningly beautiful hook-shaped island has some of the quietest, cleanest and most supremely aesthetic beaches in the entire Grenadines chain, and some of the most secluded hideaways too. In contrast it is also home to one of the biggest developments in the region and is on the cusp of irreversible development that threatens to change this paradise forever.

In the mid-1990s, the development that has since transformed the island started on the northern end of Canouan. The Raffles Resort, which now occupies nearly half the landmass, is the prototypical ultraluxury hideaway. Complete with a Donald Trump-operated casino, this resort has privatized beaches and sequestered most of the tourists.

Reaction is mixed: with the rest of the island a virtual ghost town and high-flying tourists rarely venturing beyond the gates of their hotel, the economic benefits are few and far between for the average local. The flip side is that the independent traveler can enjoy an authentic town, beaches that are deserted and a local community that is warm and welcoming. But with airport expansion, the construction of a huge marina and further development on the horizon, the question is, for how long?

## ACTIVITIES

Diving can be arranged with **Dive Canouan** (☎ 458-8044; www.tamarind.us) through Tamarind Beach Hotel & Yacht Club.

## SLEEPING

**our pick** **Ocean View Inn** (☎ 482-0477; www.oceanview-can.com; Charlestown Bay; s/d from US\$105/125; 📶) There

### TWIST MY ARM: THE SPOTS THE AUTHORS WANTED TO KEEP SECRET

Part of coming to St Vincent and the Grenadines is finding that perfect beach where you really feel like you've been stranded in paradise. The problem is that so many of these perfect spots have been spoiled with hotels, developments and private houses. But don't despair, there are a few slices of unadulterated perfection to be found out there. On Canouan, if you're willing to take a bit of a hike and get off the beaten track, you can get to that deserted beach with the ultrablue water. **Twin Bay**, on the east side of the island just south of the big development, is a hidden morsel of tranquility. Ask a local for directions, pack a lunch and get lost in paradise for the day.



## THE PRICE OF PROGRESS

Zuri Reid calls the luscious island of Canouan home. This young and ambitious hotel manager has big plans. He dreams of opening his own hotel one day, a place that respects the local community and can live in cooperation with the villagers on the island.

### So what do you think are the real highlights of this area?

Well, people really have to experience island hopping, they have to go and see the Tobago Cays. While they are here in Canouan, people should take the time to visit in the local community. It's not a very big or busy place but the people are really heart-warming.

### What do you think about all the development that is happening in Canouan?

Some of it is good, and some of it is a little too extreme. For instance, at the moment they are concentrating their development on one side of the island and removing a lot of the nature in the process. There should be an emphasis on keeping things green and letting people experience the natural beauty of the island. Sometimes it feels like the development is out of control. The big development happened so rapidly that everyone is doing their own thing and it isn't organized or planned.

### So does the island feel busier with a resort taking up nearly half the land?

No, not really. The people who come and stay in the big resort just stay behind the big locked gates and never bother to come and see the village or see the other parts of the island.

### It can't be all bad?

There are some good things; they provide a lot of jobs for local people. And the water that they make in their desalination plant can be bought by locals during the dry season.

### What about the impact on the environment?

Well, there are more people coming to the island now so there is more garbage. But it's not just tourists, people from St Vincent leave their garbage on the ground, construction projects leave pallets and other bits of waste – it has to go somewhere, and we don't have the space for it here. If everyone worked together this whole island could be green, but at the moment no one is working together so we have a long way to go. There is a push to change things though: the Sustainable Grenadines Project has just started to try and help hotels and businesses to become greener – which I think is a great step.

are few options for the budget traveler on Canouan – luckily this place not only fits the budget but also exceeds expectations. Rooms don't necessarily inspire long-term lounging, but the included breakfast, proximity to the beach and laid-back vibe are worth every penny. On top of all that, the staff rock!

**Tamarind Beach Hotel & Yacht Club** (☎ 458-8044; [www.tamarindbeachhotel.com](http://www.tamarindbeachhotel.com); s/d US\$280/325) Giant thatched-roof buildings stand guard over the beach and invite you in for pure relaxation. Elegant rooms accented with white walls and chocolate-colored hardwood entice the visitor and make it hard to return to the daily grind. The beach is right out front and is a fine selection of sand. Two restaurants on site, a dive center and water sports are all thrown in too.

## EATING

**Majella's on the Beach** (☎ 482-0269; Grand Bay; meals from EC\$34; ☺ lunch & dinner) Flatbread pizzas, fresh fish from the grill, quesadillas and more are all served up beachside, just a stumble away

from the main wharf. With tables aplenty and a great vantage point to take in what little action there is, you can't go wrong.

**Hill Top Restaurant & Bar** (☎ 458-8264; meals from EC\$40) This well-known restaurant is located – not surprisingly – on a hill, overlooking Grand Bay. It serves West Indian seafood and other dishes, including tasty vegetarian options, and has a good variety of wines.

**Pirate Cove** (☎ 458-8044; Tamarind Beach Hotel; meals from EC\$40; ☺ lunch & dinner) Shiver me timbers, the food is a good find here, with Western standards and a mean pizza that's in competition with Majella's for the best on the island. The location overlooking the sea, and the great variety of grub makes this a popular spot for the salty sea dog in all of us, with casual dining beside the bar and bandstand.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

The airport is served by Mustique Airways, SVG Air and American Eagle. For international flight links to Canouan and inter-

island air travel, see p673. Ferries from St Vincent connect Canouan with the other Grenadine islands (see p673).

## MAYREAU

### pop 500

The compact palm-covered island of Mayreau sits just west of the Tobago Cays. With only a handful of roads, no airport and a small smattering of locals, Mayreau is the paradigm for chilled. The small village that sits beside Saline Bay is the sole habitation, rising up the hill to give commanding views of the sea.

Over the ridge and down to the other side you are confronted with the sublime Saltwhistle Bay. Picture perfect and the star of countless racks of postcards, this white-sand beach defies description. The thin strip of sand leads to a point where the ocean laps on both sides, sometimes only a few feet away. The azure water is a mecca for boaters – yachts drop anchor in the bay and bob along with the swaying palms.

The island is wonderfully quiet, until the cruise ships arrive to vomit passengers onto the land for a short excursion. Clad in socks, sandals and sunburn, they traipse around for a few hours. Luckily the invaders are soon to leave and you are left with the island the way it's supposed to be – nice and quiet.

### SLEEPING

There are only two hotels on the island, but it is also possible to rent a room or a house, sometimes for a better nightly rate. Ask around at restaurants such as Robert Righteous & De Youths.

**Dennis' Hideaway** (☎ 458-8594; [www.dennis-hideaway.com](http://www.dennis-hideaway.com); d US\$65) Stuck among the scattered plot of houses that make up 'town' is the no-nonsense Dennis' Hideaway. It's a great budget option – actually it's the only budget option on the island, and luckily it's worth staying in. Standard rooms and a restaurant are there, but the beach isn't – that's a 10-minute walk away.

**Saltwhistle Bay Club** (☎ 458-8444; [www.saltwhistlebay.com](http://www.saltwhistlebay.com); d incl breakfast & dinner US\$480) Set on a stunning stretch of sand on a sheltered bay, rimmed with swaying palms and azure water just begging to be splashed in. The 16 guests can dine beneath thatched shelters on the beach. Rooms are tasteful and inviting, and nearly as alluring as the setting. The atmos-

phere is idyllic, the feel is cathartic and the setting is like something out of a tropical lucid dream.

### EATING

**Combination Café** (fish sandwich EC\$18; ☎ ) A casual two-story spot right on the edge of town, this bar-restaurant has friendly management and an excellent selection of fish dishes and sandwiches. It's a good place to meet and converse with locals, and it also has internet access (per hour EC\$20). The views from the upstairs bar are not impeded by electrical wires like most outlooks from town.

**Island Paradise** (barbecue US\$45) Up the hill from town, the local uberrelaxed mentality continues here. While it has the best view of any of the local eateries, the decor is the sparsest and the food is the most basic. Having said that, it's a great authentic place to grab a meal and dig into some West Indian classics such as roti, seafood and sandwiches.

**Robert Righteous & De Youths** (☎ 458-8203; lunch EC\$35-50, dinner EC\$45-65) This place is overflowing with Rasta flavor and enough Bob photos to make you think you're in a college dorm room. It's hard to tell how authentic the Rastafarianism theme is, with a good selection of carnivorous items on the menu – but no matter, the food is tasty and the vibe is, as you'd expect, chilled out. Go for the lobster.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

For information on ferries connecting Mayreau with the other Grenadine islands, see p673. When leaving Mayreau, talk with the management at Dennis' Hideaway, who can check the variable boat schedule for you.

The **Captain Yannis** (☎ 458-8513; [yannis@caribsurf.com](mailto:yannis@caribsurf.com); Yacht Club, Union Island) catamaran tours from Union Island can drop passengers off at Mayreau and pick them up the following day for the usual cost of its day tour (US\$80). For details, see p668.

## UNION ISLAND

### pop 3000

Union Island is one of those places that tends to polarize visitors. Some find charm in the scrubby streets and eclectic alleyways. Some just see the transient nature of the town of

Clifton, the dirt and the concrete. It's not for everyone but there are some highlights in this anchor of the Grenadines chain.

As the island is just across the channel from Carriacou (Grenada), most visitors to Union are on the way to someplace else. The gateway to the Tobago Cays and the logical place to gather supplies for a Grenadines sailing mission, the small town of **Clifton** is alive with Argonauts getting ready to hit the high seas.

The energetic little town has some nice places to eat and just down the coast some decent beaches can be discovered, too. The quiet fishing village of **Ashton** is nice alternative to the frenetic pace of Clifton.

## INFORMATION

**Internet Café** (☎ 485-8258; youngbuffalo@yahoo.com; Clifton; per hr EC\$10; ☎ 8am-4:30pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sun)

**National Commercial Bank** (☎ 8am-1pm Mon-Thu, 8am-1pm & 3-5pm Fri) Towards the airport. Has a 24-hour ATM.

**Union Island Tourist Bureau** (☎ 458-8350; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-4pm) On the main road in Clifton.

## ACTIVITIES

The three 60ft sailboats owned by **Captain Yannis** (☎ 458-8513; Yacht Club; yannis@carib surf.com) – the catamarans *Cyclone*, *Typhoon* and *Tornado* – account for most of the daytime sailing business from Union Island. The cruise (US\$80) includes a stop on Palm Island, a few hours in the Tobago Cays for lunch and snorkeling, and an hour on Mayreau before returning to Union in the late afternoon. There's a good buffet lunch, and an open bar of rum punch and beer. The boats leave Clifton around 9am, but schedules are flexible.

Sure you've seen *Pirates of the Caribbean*, but have you actually sailed on one of the boats from the iconic trilogy? Well, here's your chance. The **Sacra Nouche** (☎ 458-8418; US\$80) was used in the filming of the first flick and now offers daily trips out to the Tobago Cays so you can go play Captain Jack for the day and see some pretty stunning scenery at the same time.

The owner of **Grenadines Dive** (☎ 458-8138; www.grenadinesdive.com; Clifton), Glenroy, will pick you up on Petit St Vincent, Palm Island or Mayreau. This is your best choice for diving in the Tobago Cays or surrounding islets.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Clifton Beach Hotel** (☎ 458-8235; Clifton; s/d from US\$31/50; ☎) You'll be hard pressed to actually find the beach and even if you do it isn't the main attraction. There always seems to be rooms available as the hotel is easily twice as big as it needs to be. The CBH is getting a bit old and tired – it's well in need of a tart-up. Rooms are at times windowless, always basic, small, hot and cheap. The central location and the dirt-cheap tariff save the day here.

**Anchorage Yacht Club Hotel** (☎ 458-8221; d from US\$110; ☎) This is at the far end of the beach and near the airport – well, actually everything is near the airport on this tiny island. Popular with visiting sailors, midmarket holiday makers and those willing to spend a few extra dollars for a roof over their heads, the rooms are nice but not spectacular. There is an enormous restaurant and bar out front that is a popular place with guests and visitors too.

**L' Aquarium** (Clifton; lunch/dinner from EC\$38) Don't let the reasonable prices deter you. The food in this French and Italian fusion restaurant is top flight, both in preparation and presentation. L' Aquarium is perched on the waterfront where yachties gather to watch their homes bob in the swell and landlubbers come to salivate over the food. The atmosphere is class, with white linen, extra forks and an aquarium the size of a family home dominating one wall of the establishment.

**Captain Gourmet** (☎ 458-8918; Clifton; pain au chocolat EC\$5) Get your pinky up in the air and sip an espresso at this café-cum-yacht-provision shop. The distinctive French flavor permeates and divine decadence is for sale throughout. There is free wi-fi for those dining in, so grab a *pain au chocolat* and get wired.

**Blue Pelican Bar** (Clifton) It's worth the effort to find the Blue Pelican. Wander down the road away from the harbor and search for the narrow passageway lined with art galleries, minibars and hardware counters. Then climb the 51 steps to the tiny bar overlooking the sea. Everything is painted blue and it's barely big enough for the captain and his first mate – but it's great; once you find it you won't want to leave.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

SVG Air, LIAT and Mustique Airways have flights to Union Island. For further details, see p673.

## Boat

### MAIL BOAT

For details on the MV *Barracuda*, which connects Union Island with St Vincent's other main islands, see p673. For details of boat services between Union Island and Carriacou, see p673.

### YACHT

Midway between the airport and central Clifton, **Anchorage Bay Yacht Club** (☎ 458-8221) has stern-to berths for 15 boats, ice, water, fuel, showers and laundry facilities. Other popular anchorages are at Chatham Bay, on Union Island's west coast, and the west sides of Frigate Island and Palm Island.

## GETTING AROUND

Union is pretty small and even the most sedate won't have trouble exploring on foot. The airport is an easy 200yd walk from Clifton and Ashton is a 1.5-mile walk from town. There are a few taxis and buses around; alternatively you can also easily hitch a ride from a friendly local.

## OTHER ISLANDS

If you really want to get off the beaten track, be sure to explore the smaller islands in the SVG group. What these islands lack in infrastructure and accommodation options, they more than make up for in delightful obscurity.

### TOBAGO CAYS

Ask anyone who's been to SVG what their highlight is and you're bound to hear all about the Tobago Cays. These five small islands ringed with coral reefs are just the sort of thing you've imagined the Caribbean comprises.

Free of any sort of development, the islands sit firmly in a national park and are only accessible via boat on a day trip from one of the Grenadines. And what a day trip it can be – the snorkeling is world class and the white-sand beaches look like a strip of blinding snow.

These islands really are the pride of the country and there has been a serious push to protect them – mooring buoys and an increased awareness of human impact are helping, but on a busy day it's plain to see that the

risk of these jewels being loved to death is a real worry. Be sure you visit with a reputable operator, take your rubbish home and do your part to preserve these natural wonders. For information on day trips to the cays, see p657, p662 and opposite.

### PALM ISLAND

Once called Prune Island, the now more attractively titled Palm Island is just a 10-minute boat ride southeast of Clifton, Union Island. It's a small, whale-shaped isle dominated by a private resort. **Casuarina Beach** has long been a popular anchorage with yachters, and is a stopover on many day tours between Union Island and the Tobago Cays.

The very plush **Palm Island Beach Club** (☎ 458-8824; [www.palmislandresorts.com](http://www.palmislandresorts.com); s/d/tr from US\$715/815/1015; ☎ ☑ ☒) is a delightful place to hole-up for a week. The palatial grounds are spotted with palms (obviously) and dotted with villas. The rooms are well fitted out, with an emphasis on luxury living and a penchant for sea views. The large pool is a nice place for mixing with your fellow guests and the iguanas that frequent the grounds stick around to keep you company. A convivial beachside bar and restaurant welcomes day-trippers.

### PETIT ST VINCENT

It's not called petit for nothing – this island is the southernmost and smallest in the Grenadines chain. Sequestered and exclusive, PSV has a formidable reputation as one of the best private islands in the world. That reputation isn't unwarranted – the beaches are just as spectacular as its neighbors' and having the place (almost) to yourself makes the price seem a bit more affordable.

The **Petit St Vincent Resort** (☎ 954-963-7401; [www.psvresort.com](http://www.psvresort.com); r US\$755-960; ☑) is the only accommodations option on the island – thankfully it's divine. The cottages are designed with luxury and privacy in mind. There are spacious sun decks only feet from the ocean and living spaces that bristle with fine stonework and whitewashed luxury. There are two staff members per bungalow, ensuring that your every wish is fulfilled. When you want to call on *your* staff, simply raise the flag out front and they'll be right there. The prices are all-inclusive and there is little to do on the island so this is a great option for those wanting to really get away from it all.

# DIRECTORY

## ACCOMMODATIONS

There are a wide range of accommodations options throughout SVG. Some places are decidedly casual where the rates are low and the atmosphere supremely chilled. Other places you will have to remortgage the house to spend the week and are expected to dress accordingly. Having said that, there are beds to be found to suit most budgets and the scale of operations is generally quite small. Hotels and resorts are for the most part quite personal, with only a few rooms for the relaxed staff to look after.

Rates usually spike during the busy high season (winter, December to April/May) so those looking to save some money should consider visiting outside this short peak period. The rates listed in this chapter do not include 10% VAT that is added to all hotel rooms, or the 10% service charge that is frequently tacked on to bills – be sure to clarify exactly what price you are being quoted. Prices are in either EC\$ or US\$, depending on the hotel.

There are no campgrounds on SVG, and camping is not encouraged.

## ACTIVITIES

### Beaches & Swimming

The beaches in SVG are one of the main reasons to come to this hidden-away corner of the Caribbean. Some of the very best stretches of sand in the world can be found around here. Most are quiet, free of big waves and offer good swimming and snorkeling. The beaches on St Vincent are a bit of a letdown,

but the shores of the Grenadines are the real find.

### Boat Trips

See p657, and p668 for information on boat trips through the Grenadines.

### Diving & Snorkeling

The warm clear waters of SVG draw divers from around the globe. They come to swim with a stunning array of sea life, from reef-hopping angelfish and grass-munching sea turtles to ocean predators like nurse sharks. The reefs are pristine with forests of soft and hard coral colored with every hue of the rainbow. Wrecks, rays and the odd whale just add to the appeal. Spearfishing is prohibited.

Visibility is often unlimited and the warm water makes for comfortable diving. Great sites can be found at the very recreational depth of 60ft to 80ft and currents are minimal.

The going rates are around US\$60 for a single dive, US\$100 for a two-tank dive and US\$75 for a night dive. A 'resort course' for beginners that includes a couple of hours of instruction and a shallow dive is available for around US\$70. Dive prices come down considerably for larger packages.

Many dive shops also offer complete certification courses. Bequia Dive Adventures (p662), one of the best-regarded shops on the islands, charges US\$420, and offers the industry-standard Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) accreditation.

There are also dive shops in Kingstown (p657), on Union Island (p668) and on Canouan (p665).

Most dive shops run snorkeling trips in parallel with their dive excursions. You

## PRACTICALITIES

- **Newspapers & Magazines** There are two local weekly newspapers: the *Vincentian* and the *News*. *Cross Country* comes out midweek and the *Herald* is a daily paper that covers international news. You can buy international news magazines at the airport. The *Caribbean Compass* is an excellent monthly paper that covers marine news and travel issues. Two useful (and free) tourist magazines are *Ins and Outs* and the smaller *Life in St Vincent and the Grenadines*.
- **Radio & TV** The one local AM radio station, NBCSVG, broadcasts at 705kHz. Three stations broadcast on the FM band: NICE FM 6.3, HITZ FM107.3 and WE FM99.9. St Vincent has one broadcast TV station, SVGBC, on channel 9, and two local cable TV broadcasters. Additionally, most hotels pick up US cable.
- **Electricity** The electric current is 220V to 240V (50 cycles). British-style three-pin plugs are used.
- **Weights & Measures** Imperial system.

can also hire a water taxi to shuttle you to good snorkeling spots, although unless you are a very strong swimmer this is not recommended as the floating taxis have no safety precautions.

### Hiking

There are few developed hiking trails in SVG. Of note are the Vermont Nature Trails (p659) and the La Soufrière volcano trail (p659), both on St Vincent.

### Water Sports

The trade winds that sway the palms are an advantage for sailors of craft big and small. Most resorts have small sailboats (Hobie Cats and Sunfish) for guests to borrow or rent. Windsurfing and, to a lesser extent, kitesurfing are available in some resort locations. Kayaks are often available for those nonwindy days and snorkeling equipment is usually on offer too.

### BUSINESS HOURS

Shops are generally open from 8am to 5pm Monday to Saturday and closed on Sundays. Restaurants that serve breakfast as well as lunch and dinner open at 8am and close at about 9pm – or when the last customer is finished.

### CHILDREN

While there are few accommodations or restaurants in SVG that go out of their way to cater to families with children, some of the more tranquil islands are great for relaxed family time. Most resorts allow children, but you should always check ahead.

### DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Manchineel trees are poisonous so be sure not to eat their applelike fruit or shelter under them during a rainstorm – the sap causes blisters on the skin and is quite painful.

### EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Only the **UK** (☎ 457-1701; Granby St, PO Box 132, Kingstown) has representation in SVG. For the US and other countries, see the consulate in Barbados, p697.

### FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The carnival, called Vincy Mas (supposedly short for St Vincent Masquerade, although

there are a few competing theories), is the main cultural event of the year.

**Blessing of the Whaleboats** Held on the last Sunday in January, on Bequia.

**National Heroes' Day** March 14.

**Easter Regatta (Bequia)** Around Easter, this is SVG's main sailing event.

**Easterval (Union Island)** Around Easter, a three-day music and costume festival.

**May Day** Held on May 1.

**Canouan Regatta** Five days of sailing and events in May.

**Vincy Mas** This carnival lasts for 12 days in late June or early July.

**Nine Mornings Festival** Carolers and steel bands take to the streets, with parties every day from December 16 through Christmas.

### GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELERS

Like most Caribbean nations, the view of gay and lesbian travelers is backward and outdated to say the least. You won't find any gay-friendly events, resorts or cruises here. Gay and lesbian travelers should be cautious with public affection but should otherwise be fine.

### HOLIDAYS

**New Year's Day** January 1

**St Vincent & the Grenadines Day** January 22

**Good Friday** Late March/early April

**Easter Monday** Late March/early April

**Labour Day** First Monday in May

**Whit Monday** Eighth Monday after Easter

**Caricom Day** Second Monday in July

**Carnival Tuesday** Usually second Tuesday in mid-July

**Emancipation Day** First Monday in August

**Independence Day** October 27

**Christmas Day** December 25

**Boxing Day** December 26

### INTERNET ACCESS

Internet access is widely available on all the larger islands in SVG. Wi-fi access has become increasingly abundant too, so those toting a laptop will be able to connect easily to the net. Most towns will have some version of an internet café and the majority of hotels have some form of access.

### INTERNET RESOURCES

Some of the better sites for info on SVG:

**Bequia Tourism Association** ([www.bequiatourism.com](http://www.bequiatourism.com))

The official site of the Bequia Tourism Association, this is your best place to learn more about Bequia and to search for accommodations.

**Gov.vc** ([www.gov.vc](http://www.gov.vc)) The official SVG government site.

**Ins & Outs** ([www.insandoutssvg.com](http://www.insandoutssvg.com)) A nicely presented online magazine all about SVG.

**St Vincent & the Grenadines** ([www.svgtourism.com](http://www.svgtourism.com))

This official site is a good place to start for basic information.

**St Vincent & the Grenadines Diving** ([www.scubasvg.com](http://www.scubasvg.com)) The perfect starting point for divers wanting to plan a SVG dive holiday.

**Searchlight** ([www.searchlight.vc](http://www.searchlight.vc)) A good online SVG newspaper highlighting what's going on.

## MAPS

Tourist maps are easily obtained from the tourist information sites and hotels. Nautical charts can be found in bookstores and marine supply shops.

## MEDICAL SERVICES

There are six public and three private hospitals throughout the islands and several clinics located throughout the country. Each island has some form of medical facility and the standard of care is reasonably high.

## MONEY

The Eastern Caribbean dollar (EC\$ or XCD) is the local currency. Major credit cards are accepted at most hotels, car-rental agencies, dive shops and some of the larger restaurants. All of the major islands, except for Mayreau, have a bank and 24-hour ATMs (which usually accept international cards).

There is 15% VAT that is added onto most retail items; this will already be included in the price. Most hotel rates have 10% VAT and 10% service charge added on top of them.

## POST

Post offices can be found on all of the islands. See individual sections for locations and hours.

## TELEPHONE

St Vincent phone numbers have seven digits. When calling from North America, dial

1-784 followed by the local number. From elsewhere, dial your country's international access code, followed by 784 and the local number. We have included only the seven-digit local number in SVG listings in this chapter.

Both coin and card phones can be found on the major islands. Phonocards can be purchased at Cable & Wireless offices or from vendors near the phones. It costs EC\$0.25 to make a local call. For more information on card phones and making international calls, see p826.

Cell phones are widely used in St Vincent and the Grenadines, and it is possible to use your own phone on these networks. You can either set your phone for global roaming before leaving home or get a local SIM card for it once you get to SVG. Provided that your phone is unlocked, this new card allows for cheaper local dialing. They can be purchased for around US\$10 from the Cable & Wireless office.

## TOURIST INFORMATION

The main office of the **Department of Tourism St Vincent & the Grenadines** (☎ 457-1502; [www.svgtourism.com](http://www.svgtourism.com); Cruise Ship Terminal, Kingstown) is on St Vincent. In addition, there's a tourist information desk at St Vincent's ET Joshua Airport, and branch tourist offices in Bequia and Union Island.

## TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

Travelers with disabilities, especially those in wheelchairs will have difficulty traveling throughout SVG. There are rarely sidewalks, pathways are often sand and ferries and other seagoing transport are not designed with special needs in mind.

## VISAS

Visas are not required unless you want to work in the islands.

## WOMEN TRAVELERS

Women traveling in SVG needn't expect any hassles unique to this country. There are the usual annoyance of extra attention from the local men and the constant queries about taxi hire and bus pick-up but generally it's a pretty safe place to be. Drunken European sailors at the popular yachting ports can be annoying, but they too are mostly harmless.

### EMERGENCY NUMBERS

- **Ambulance** ☎ 999
- **Coast Guard** ☎ 999
- **Fire** ☎ 999
- **Police** ☎ 999

# TRANSPORTATION

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Entering the Islands

All visitors should carry a valid passport with them. A round-trip or onward ticket is officially required.

Passengers arriving on Union Island from Carriacou must pay EC\$10 to Customs for entry. Passengers departing Carriacou pay EC\$1 to Immigration. Arrivals are expected to register at the island's customs office, located at the ferry dock.

### Air

There are no direct flights to SVG from outside the Caribbean, as the runway is too small to land jet aircraft. International passengers first fly into a neighboring island and then switch to a prop plane for the final leg of their journey. Bequia, Mustique, Canouan and Union Island all have small airports, and Palm Island has a small private airfield.

The main point of entry for most travelers is **ET Joshua Airport** (SVD; ☎ 458-4011) in Kingstown, St Vincent. The majority of international flights connect through here, where many travelers switch to oceangoing travel. The airport itself is small and offers little for the traveler other than a small information kiosk in the arrivals hall. There is a EC\$40 departure tax payable by all departing passengers.

The following airlines fly to and from SVG from within the Caribbean and also offer interisland flights in the Grenadines:

**American Eagle** (☎ 800-433-7300; www.aa.com)

From Canouan to St Lucia and San Juan

**LIAT** (☎ 457-1821; www.liat.com; Halifax St, Kingstown)

From St Vincent to Grenada, Trinidad, Barbados, St Lucia, Antigua and Puerto Rico

**Mustique Airways** (☎ 458-4380; www.mustique.com)

Connecting St Vincent, Bequia, Mustique, Canouan, Union and Barbados

**SVG Air** (☎ 457-5124; www.svgair.com) Private air

charters and scheduled flights to St Vincent, Bequia, Canouan, Mustique, Union Island, Palm Island, Petit St Vincent, Carriacou, Grenada, Martinique, Dominica, St Lucia and Barbados

### Sea

The *MV Jasper* is a boat service that runs between Union Island and Carriacou, Grenada, (EC\$20, one hour). It departs Union

every Monday and Thursday at 7:30am for Carriacou, returning at 12:30pm on the same days.

You could also try hopping on one of the various commercial ships that haul goods back and forth between Union Island and Carriacou or Petit Martinique, Grenada, or pay a water taxi (EC\$100 to EC\$150) for the bumpy 40-minute ride.

## GETTING AROUND

### Air

See left for information about flights within St Vincent and the Grenadines.

### Bicycle

Bikes are hard to come by; perhaps it's because of the hilly topography, crazy drivers and compact nature of the islands. On St Vincent there is at least one place to get your gears on (p654), and you can also hire bikes on Bequia (p661).

### Boat

Fares from St Vincent are EC\$15 to Bequia, EC\$20 to Canouan, EC\$25 to Mayreau and EC\$30 to Union Island. The schedule is a bit flexible; it's always a good idea to check around the port for updates on the progress of a boat.

The **Bequia Express** (☎ 458-3472; www.bequia.express.net) and the **MV Admiral** (☎ 458-3348; www.admiralty-transport.com) ferries run between Bequia and St Vincent. Between the two companies there are numerous daily sailings on near identical boats. Boats leave Bequia at 6:30am, 8:30am, 9:30am, 2pm, 4:30pm and 5pm Monday to Friday; at 6:30am, 9:30am, 4:30pm and 5pm Saturday; and at 7:30am, 4:30pm and 5pm Sunday. Departures from St Vincent are at 8am, 10am, 11:30am, 1pm, 4pm, 4:30pm, 6pm and 7pm Monday to Friday; 8:30am, 9am, 12pm, 12:30pm, 6pm and 7pm Saturday; and 8:30am, 9am, 6pm and 7pm Sunday.

The mail boat *MV Barracuda* carries passengers and cargo five times weekly between St Vincent, Bequia, Canouan, Mayreau and Union Island. According to the published timetable, on Monday and Thursday it leaves St Vincent at 11am, Bequia at 1pm, Canouan at 3pm and Mayreau at 4:30pm, and arrives finally at Union Island at 5pm. On Tuesday and Friday it leaves Union Island at 6:30am, Mayreau at 7:30am, Canouan at 8:45am and Bequia at 11am, and arrives in St Vincent at



noon. On Saturday the boat skips Bequia, leaving St Vincent at 11am, Canouan at 3:30pm and Mayreau at 4:30pm, arriving at Union Island at 5pm, and then departing Union at 6:30pm, finally arriving back in St Vincent at 11:30pm. However, all of these times are very approximate; it's best to arrive on time and be patient – there is no way the mail boat is going to be punctual.

The MV *Gem Star* leaves Kingstown on Tuesday and Friday at 12pm, stops in Canouan and arrives in Union Island when it feels like it. On Wednesday and Saturday it does the reverse route, departing Union Island at 8:30am.

See p657, p662 and p668 for information on boat tours through the Grenadines.

## Bus

Buses are a good way to get around St Vincent; you can catch a bus on Bequia and on Union Island, but these islands are so small that buses are usually redundant.

The buses themselves are little more than minivans that are often jammed to a capacity not seen in the outside world. You can expect to get to know at least 20 fellow commuters as you are jammed, packed and squeezed into every available space in the bus. There's a conductor on board who handles the cash and assigns the seats. When you get

to your stop, either tap on the roof or try to get the attention of the conductor over the thumping music and they'll stop for you just about anywhere.

## Car RENTAL

Rentals typically cost from US\$50 a day for a car and from US\$65 for a 4WD. Seventy-five free miles are commonly allowed, and a fee of ECS1 is charged for each additional mile driven. Note that collision-damage insurance is not a common concept, and if you get into an accident you're likely to be liable for damages.

There are car-rental agencies on St Vincent (p654) and Bequia (p661), but most of the Grenadine islands have no car rentals at all. On some islands there are no roads.

## ROAD RULES

Driving is on the left-hand side. To drive within SVG you must purchase a local license (EC\$40). In Kingstown, licenses can be obtained at the **Traffic & Transport office** (☎ 24hr), inside the police station.

## Taxi

Taxis are abundant on most islands and affordable for shorter trips. Agree on a fare before departure.

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