

## TRAVEL

## Spend some time in paradise – St. Lucia

BY SANDIE PARROTT  
SPECIAL WRITER

It's not just the twin mountain peaks, thousands of acres of lush rain forest teeming with wild orchids, ferns and rare birds such as the "jacquot" (St. Lucian Parrot) that make the island of St. Lucia a nature lover's paradise.

Let's not forget the sulfur springs, mineral rich waterfalls, beaches, hiking trails, botanical gardens and plenty of warm waters for snorkeling and diving.

Most of the resorts and nicer beaches are on the northwest side of the island. And you'll get a panoramic view of what you arrive at Howanorra Airport at the southern tip of the island and travel toward Castries. The route can take an eastern or western approach around the rain forest and higher elevations. While the western route is more scenic, it's a bit slower. Roads are not clearly marked, but if you watch a map for village names, you will be fine.

## The Drive-in

St. Lucia claims to be the only place where you can drive into a volcano. Well, you don't really drive in, but you are able to park within a few hundred feet. Your nose will tell you that you are getting close to the volcano because of the pungent scent of sulfur springs.

There is an interesting half-hour tour included in the admission price. A guide will take a small group of people on a hike around the bubbling, gurgling steaming mass and explain the workings of the volcano. It is pretty interesting if you can stand the smell.

## Soufriere

This quaint fishing village settled by the French in 1746 is the oldest town in St. Lucia. The area is not as prosperous as it once was, but the 9,000 or so res-

## If you are going:

## CURRENCY

One U.S. dollar is approximately equal to 2.7 of the East Caribbean dollar. This rate changes daily so check the exchange rate before you go. Retailers readily accept U.S. dollars, but you must do your own rate conversion.

## WINDJAMMER LANDING

The Villa Beach Resort is sprinkled over 55 acres looking down upon Labrelotte Bay. We rented one of the many two bedroom villas strewn across the hillside. Some of the one bedroom and all of the 2, 3 and 4 bedroom Mediterranean style villas each have their own plunge pools.

The villas are equipped with tropical furnishings, multiple bathtubs and everything you will need except food. There is every amenity available at the resort including a pleasant wide beach, water sports, restaurants, special parties and even nannies and cooks. They also have special golf cart vehicles to take guests up and down the cobblestone paths. Several pricing options are available from an all-inclusive deluxe room to a villa with private plunge pool. Call (800) 743-9509 or check their Web site at [www.windjammer-landing.com](http://www.windjammer-landing.com) for booking or questions.

## GROCERY SHOPPING

You will need to get supplies if you rent a villa or condo. Resort stores are terribly expensive, but very convenient. If you want better prices and a little adventure, go to the nearest local grocery store. It is a challenge to figure out what is available for meals without your usual brand names and favorites. Produce of all kinds such as mangoes, bananas, pineapples, passion fruit, coconuts and guavas are fresh, cheap and available — desired snack foods and sodas are not.

## RENTING A CAR

If you think you will be driving to your hotel, make sure to reserve a car before you go on your trip. Cars can be in short supply if several airplane flights or cruises arrive at the same time. Don't worry if they are all gone. Just insist you reserved a car. The rental agency will take you to your hotel and deliver your car either later that day or usually the next day. If you need a car for an outing, make sure to reserve in advance — maybe even the previous day. Make sure you reserve a car that will carry all of your group's luggage. Most cars are quite small. Main roads are generally good, but secondary roads can have large potholes. Don't drive too fast — roads are winding and you never know what is around the next bend. Driving is European-style, so don't forget to drive on the left.

idents always have a friendly smile.

We were cautioned not to give money to the children. It is easy to hand a few children some quarters — it seems harmless enough, but unfortunately, we were told the children start skipping school to beg for quarters.

They end up as delinquents hanging around the wharf, getting into trouble and not completing their education.

## Diamond in the rough

Diamond Botanical gardens is a 2,000-acre estate still owned



Wonderful waterfall: Diamond Waterfall, produced from the La Soufriere Volcano waters, is one of the natural wonders you'll see on St. Lucia Island.

by descendants of the Devaux brothers from Normandy. There are pathways lined with flowers and flowering trees leading to a natural gorge.

Diamond Waterfall, produced from the La Soufriere Volcano waters, makes a colorful statement because of the mineral laden waters that have stained the rock. Bring along your bathing suit so you can sample the mineral baths, which they claim to have curative powers. There is a small fee for the mineral baths.

## Jump Up

Don't miss Friday night Jump Up in Gros Islet. It is a small village, so all you have to do is follow the crowd and the music to the street party. Parking is

■ St. Lucia is still a relatively undiscovered destination in the Caribbean. You can catch the lush sights of the rain forest and lush tropical flowers without all the trapping of more popular settings.

wherever you find it. Bring cash in single U.S. dollar bills or the equivalent in their currency which is the East Caribbean dollar.

The locals, in front of their very tiny houses, serve drinks and food from coolers and handmade grills. We were a bit suspicious of the food, but it looked interesting. We mostly drank beer or soft drinks from bottles.

The reason for bringing dollar bills or small change became obvious to us when we tried to buy a beer. We only had a five-

dollar bill for a one-dollar purchase. The lady tried to make change — even asking nearby vendors. Finally she said, "Go ahead and take the beer." Well, we gave her the five dollars.

St. Lucia is still a relatively undiscovered destination in the Caribbean. You can catch the lush sights of the rain forest and lush tropical flowers without all the trapping of more popular settings.

I wouldn't have missed a single minute of the adventure.



Volcano: On St. Lucia Island you can park within a few hundred feet of a volcano. Your nose will tell you that you are getting close to the volcano because of the pungent scent of sulfur springs.

Observer & Eccentric INVITES YOU TO WIN  
A FAMILY FOUR PACK OF TICKETS!

**ROYAL HANNEFORD**  
**CIRCUS**

**THURSDAY, APRIL 5 - SUNDAY, APRIL 8**

You can win a Family Four Pack of VIP tickets including a backstage tour courtesy of the Observer & Eccentric. Send in a postcard with your Name, Daytime Phone Number and Address to: Hanneford Circus c/o The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers 36231 Schoolcraft Rd., Livonia, MI 48150.

Entries must be received by Fri., March 30.

Winners will be chosen at random from all postcard entries.

Palace Sports & Entertainment and Observer & Eccentric employees are not eligible for this contest.



Tickets on sale at [Hanneford.com](http://Hanneford.com). The Palace Box Office and [www.hanneford.com](http://www.hanneford.com). Charge at (248) 645-6668. Discounts available on select shows for groups, kids and seniors. Call (248) 377-0100 for more information.

Two Extraordinary String Quartets  
Perform in Ann Arbor!



Orion String Quartet  
and Peter Serkin piano

Sunday, April 1, 4 pm  
Rackham Auditorium

Hailed for its technical mastery, richness of tone and exquisite artistry, the Orion String Quartet is one of the most admired chamber music ensembles on the scene. For this performance, American pianist Peter Serkin joins the ensemble.

PROGRAM  
Debussy String Quartet No. 13 in G Major, Op. 104  
P. Liebermann Piano Quintet  
Mozart Piano Quartet in E-flat Major, K. 493

Presented with the generous support of Ford and Price Research.

Emerson String Quartet

Friday, April 6, 8 pm  
Rackham Auditorium

"The Emerson has been regarded for more than a decade as one of the hottest quartets. It has maintained the music world's admiration by giving consistently insightful, polished concert performances." (New York Times)

PROGRAM  
Haydn Quartet in G Major, Op. 54, No. 1  
Beethoven Quartet in F minor, Op. 95 ("Serioso")  
Korngold Quartet, Op. 13  
Bartok Quartet No. 4

SPONSORED BY  
Bank of America



734.764.2538 | [www.ums.org](http://www.ums.org)

Outside the USA area code, toll-free 800.221.1221. 401 BOX OFFICE HOURS: W 12:00-4PM, SAT 12:00-1PM

PEOPLE 1000774