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PORT EXPLORER & SHOPPING GUIDE

Basseterre ST. KITTS

GENERAL INFORMATION The Carib Indians called the island Liamuiga, meaning "fertile land". Christopher Columbus named the island after his own patron saint, Christopher, during his second voyage to the New World in 1493. The British established their first Caribbean colony on the island in 1624. It was the British who began to call the island St. Kitts (a nick name for Christopher). The French arrived in 1625 and went on to establish Basseterre two years later. It did not take long for the town to become a vital port.

The fact that Basseterre has survived over the centuries is a testament to human perseverance. Looted, pillaged, plundered and burned to the ground by French forces when held by the British who returned the favor when held by the French. The town has been washed out to sea by floods, shaken to its foundation by earthquakes, virtually blown off the map time and again by hurricanes, and transformed from riches to rags when the sugar plantation economy collapsed. It has only been in the past few decades that tourism has helped to revitalize the city and island.

Today Basseterre is a bustling, pedestrian friendly port town with many shops and boutiques, cafés and restaurants and some of the best restored and preserved colonial period architecture to be found in the Caribbean.

HISTORY Sir Thomas Warner founded England's first Caribbean colony on St. Kitts in 1624. Still inhabited by fierce Carib Indians, in 1626 the English joined forces with a newly established French colony on the island, caught the Caribs at night unaware and slaughtered them as they slept. For the next 150 years the armies and navies of England and France took turns driving each other from the island. The 1783 Treaty of Paris gave England permanent sovereignty over St. Kitts.

By the mid 1600s thousands upon thousands of slaves labored in the heat of the sub-tropical sun on the English sugarcane plantations of St. Kitts. The slaves had been brought by force from their defeated homelands thousands of miles across the Atlantic. On St. Kitts the exceptionally brutal conditions under which the slaves suffered and toiled prompted the British Governor of Jamaica, Colonel William Brayne, to write to his government in London. Governor Brayne, perhaps more compelled by capitalism than compassion, described to England's Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell the vivid literary picture of the pitiless and cruel conditions suffered by the slaves on St Kitts. The enslaved were bought cheap, easily replaced, and having little value for the rich planters it was the horrific fate of the vanquished to live without hope and die by the thousands.

Governor Brayne's proposed solution was the importation of slaves who would be far more adaptable to working under the harsh Caribbean sun, African slaves. For you see, the thousands in bondage on St. Kitts and throughout Britain's Caribbean Islands and American colonies had been defeated and enslaved by the Protestant English army of



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PLACES OF INTEREST

the very man to whom Governor Brayne now wrote. They were mostly Irish ... and there is no record of even a single man, woman or child surviving their hell in St. Kitts and returning home to their Emerald Isle.

BASSETERRE PLACES OF INTEREST

1 Port Zante is the sea gate to Basseterre. The port is a hub of activity as it accommodates commercial and sports fishing boats, inter-island ferries, cruise ships and sailboat charters.

2 The National Museum of St. Kitts is located to the left of the pier area facing Bay Road. Housed in the city's beautiful and historic Treasury Building, the museum displays an interesting collection of artifacts, maps and paintings which depict the island's cultural heritage from the pre-Colombian era through the colonial period and independence.

3 The Circus is central to the city. A number of the main streets converge here. This is one of the shopping areas of Basseterre. The most prominent feature of the Circus is the large Berkeley Memorial Clock.

4 Independence Square had its name changed from Pall Mall in 1983. The square was built in the late 1700s and was the site of the town's slave market. The English colonial architecture which surrounds the square gives visitors a glimpse into what life was like in an age long past.

5 The Georgian House is on southeast corner of Independence Square. Dating back to the 1700s, this is one of the city's best preserved buildings. Some historians believe the house was used as a holding area for slaves who were to be taken to the square across the street and sold in the market. The Court House is another colonial period building on Independence Square.

6 Church of the Immaculate Conception was built in 1928. It stands in the spot where previous churches have been since the early 1700s.

7 St. George's Anglican Church was restored in 1869. Numerous churches have been on this site dating back to the late 1600s. All of the previous churches, were destroyed by fires, earthquakes and hurricanes. In the graveyard of the church

are headstones dating back to the 1600s.

Beyond Basseterre

The Brimstone Hill Fortress was designed by the British, built by slave labor beginning in the late 1600s and completed a century later. Now a National Park and UNESCO World Heritage Site, this is one of the best preserved and maintained citadels in the Caribbean. The fort sits approximately 800 feet high atop the plug of a dormant volcano and provides a commanding view of the Caribbean and nearby islands. Visitors might discover what transpired in 1782 when an amazing display of French military gallantry took place as British forces surrendered the fort following the continual bombardment of a month long siege. The British returned the honor to the French garrison a year later when England recovered the fort through the Treaty of Paris.

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

Local Customs

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

Tipping: Some restaurants may add a 10-15% service charge.

Local Cuisine: As is common (and scrumptious) throughout the islands of the Caribbean the cuisine of St. Kitts is a combination of traditional West Indian, French, Spanish and West African. Unlike some islands in the Caribbean, thanks to dormant Mount Liamuiga, St. Kitts has rich and fertile volcanic soil. A wide variety of fruits and vegetables are grown on the island and it is not far from the garden and the orchard to the dinner table. When you add in the fresh seafood available it all combines to make for wonderful dining. "Home cooking" in St. Kitts includes staples such as plantain, sweet potatoes or yams, coconut and white rice. Jerked goat, pork and chicken are always popular. Conkies are rolled dough filled with a mixture of sweet potato, grated coconut, brown sugar, raisins, nutmeg, milk and pumpkin then wrapped and tied with banana leaves and boiled. Goat Water Stew may not sound appetizing however it is a delectably delicious concoction of cubed goat meat (or lamb) simmered in beef stock with olive oil, parsley, thyme, garlic, salt and pepper, curry, carrots, onions, potatoes and tomatoes. Pelau is cubed chicken, or any other meat, which has been browned in hot oil and caramelized sugar into which garlic and onion are added and sautéed then combined with coconut milk and rice and simmered.

Drink Specialties: Cane Spirits Rothschild (CSR) is described as a cross between vodka and white rum. It is produced on St.

Kitts from locally grown sugarcane and the island's famously pure water.

SHOPPING FACILITIES The primary shopping area in Basseterre is just across from the port along Bay Road, Fort Street and Liverpool Row. Inside Port Zante the shopping is duty-free. Some of the most popular items available are works by local artists, casual clothing known as "batik" (get the natural cotton or silk designs), crystal, leather goods, china and jewelry.

LOCAL CURRENCY The official currency on St. Kitts is the Eastern Caribbean Dollar (XCD). U.S. dollars and major credit cards are widely accepted. ATMs are available.

Post Office and Telephone Facilities

The Post Office is located on the pier side of Bay Rd. as visitors leave the port area.

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

AT&T: 1.800.225.5288

MCI: 1.800.888.8000

TOURIST INFORMATION The St. Kitts Tourism Authority & Visitor's Center is located in the pier arrival hall and on the first floor of the pier area's Pelican Mall.

TRANSPORTATION Licensed and insured taxis have the letters "T" or "TA" on a yellow license plate. The main taxi stand is located at the Circus (across Bay Rd. from the pier). Agree on a fare with the driver prior to departure. Car rentals are also available. On West Independence Square Street and Newtown Bay Road mini-vans take visitors and Kittitians along the coast road.

LANGUAGE English is the official language of St. Kitts.