

Sun and sand, moderate weather and super friendly people who love Canadians—the Caribbean rocks! If you only read one thing, read this **Inside Scoop**; keep it with your travel documents. It's packed with tips to smooth any sandy beaches!

travel: delighting in the spirit of adventure • a vacation from home to explore places that are not your home • knowing life is different, knowing this is a joy of travel • enjoying the journey, not just the destination • a privilege best used with patience, humour and curiosity • fun • coming home with great tales •

Dress Up or Down

Dress codes are fairly casual. Locals observe Sundays as a religious day: in town, be respectful, cover up and keep hats off in restaurants. With moderate temperatures and breezes, pack a jacket. **Tip:** if you love to snorkel, bring your gear as some resorts limit equipment time (or gear is not as clean or new as you like).

Your Counsellor

Our knowledge and experience help turn dreams into first-rate vacations. Ask your counsellor about any details, including:

- advance seats and upgrades
- cancellation/interruption and medical insurance
- airport transfers, maps
- the differences between hotels and cottages.

Maritime Travel

We Know Travel Best.™

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Maritime Travel

Inside Scoop: CARIBBEAN

Know before you go: “travel” isn’t just your destination; it’s also the journey

Those gorgeous beach photos in travel brochures are real so head off to the islands for miles of beaches and classic turquoise waters. Each island has unique attractions, www.caribbeantravel.com. Helpful tips:

- Be realistic: we know you want value for money in balancing amenities and choices but no matter what your budget, aim to relax and enjoy. Special requests are requests only, such as for an oceanview room. These are premium (why upgrade fees apply).
- Phone and internet access varies. Check with your cell phone provider (beware of roaming charges).
- Have a valid passport www.cic.gc.ca/english/passport/index.asp. Keep a separate photocopy or a photo on your cell of its ID page.
- English is widely spoken on all islands.
- Currency varies from island to island. Banks are best to exchange funds: take US or Canadian cash and check with your bank for debit use: ATM's (where available) have withdrawal fees. Most large hotels change money. For security, log the dates you'll be away with your credit card company.
- Most nations are on Eastern or Atlantic Standard Time, some use Daylight Saving Time; ask your counsellor.
- Electricity supply varies by island: most hotels provide hair dryers.
- French islands are provinces so fresh goods flow in: supermarket shopping is like being in France! **Tip:** if you're not staying at an all-inclusive, buy fantastic cheeses and other delicacies to enjoy a picnic lunch.
- We strongly recommend Maritime Travel cancellation/interruption and medical insurance. Take documents on any medical conditions you might have.

Above all, travel with a positive attitude—patience and a spirit of adventure will carry you through any experience!



Pack Strategically

The world is overrun with black bags so put coloured tape or ribbon on your luggage to spot it quickly. Put your name outside and inside and remove old tags. In your carry-on, pack valuables such as jewellery; over-the-counter and prescription drugs in original containers with a list, dosage and your doctor's phone number (syringes/needles for personal medical use with caps in original containers).

Pack liquids/lotions/gels in checked bags (inside plastic bags)—due to carry-on restrictions, the maximum size container is 100ml(3.4oz). All must fit in 1 clear/resealable plastic bag of no more than 1 litre (often available before airport security), then place the bag in the tray provided. You may take baby formula, food or milk for a child under 2 years of age (0-24 months). In carry-on pack a notebook, pens, hand wipes, munchies (no fruit, meat or veg) over borders.

Permitted in carry-on: cell phones, laptops, portable music players, disposable razors, umbrellas, canes and nail clippers. Items you can't take on include knives, corkscrews and sports gear such as golf clubs, baseball bats, racquets and pool cues. Check with your airline and www.catsa.gc.ca/home for restrictions.

Car & Scooter Rentals

Many islands have British traffic rules with driving on the left. Be familiar *before* you rent any vehicle or even a bicycle. Cars and motorized scooters are popular and make it easy to get around, but don't forget standard legal and safety issues. Travel doctors cite motor vehicle incidents as the top cause of death and injury for Canadians—don't be added to the statistics. You must have a valid Canadian driver's license to rent a car; depending on the locale you might not need one to rent a scooter (and check if this affects your insurability). Don't drink alcohol before (or during). If you've not driven scooters, first practice, practice, practice. It's not a bicycle: if you must react quickly to a situation, you might not have much control. Forget “helmet hair.” besides common sense, a helmet is protection. Always keep the keys so others can't drive off.

Your Airline

Sign up online for your airline(s) email or text flight notifications as your flight could be delayed (the plane might be flying in). CATSA notes “Travellers should arrive at the airport earlier than usual, exercise patience and **contact their airline for further information on their flight(s).**” Airline staff are on duty some 3hrs prior: due to staffing and security, check-in closes 1hr before departure. If late, you’re not entitled to board (or a refund). Unless booked ahead, seats are first-come first-served. **Check-in/carry-on baggage allowances**, see your airline’s website or ask your counsellor as size and weight restrictions varies by airline. **Entry requirements depend on the island:** your counsellor will tell you about tourist cards/departure tax (fee or in airline tickets). Have US\$30 cash for each person for departure in case.



Get Packing Checklist and General Planning & Packing Tips

at www.maritimetravel.ca/inside-scoops

- Your sense of adventure & humour!

Before Leaving

Do a room sweep for belongings. If you leave clothes or gifts for a staff member, leave a note as s/he’ll need it to pass hotel security: clothes for children, toiletries and school supplies are welcome. Although noon check-out is usual, your hotel may offer late checkout for a fee. Before buying wooden items, ensure there’s no worm holes; if there are, the item will be confiscated at customs. Don’t bring back plants, drugs, meat/animal products or endangered species parts.

Don’t buy or accept anything suspect or that may be taken from you. Know your limits and exemptions, www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/travel-voyage/bgb-rmf-eng.html such as on duty free alcohol and tobacco.



Websites and emails in blue are hyperlinked; just click!

Canadians: Emergency? Contact Global Affairs at 613-996-8885 (collect if needed) or email sos@international.gc.ca. Consulate information for the countries you’re visiting: <https://travel.gc.ca/assistance/embassies-consulates>.

Can You Spell Relaaaax?

The islands are tropical or semi-tropical, and climates can vary from moderate to hot and humid, from 82F/28C in hotter months (July-August) to 76F/24C in cooler months (January-February). Trade winds blow throughout the islands for a warm temperate climate which varies little (a terrific vacation spot with off-season discounts!). There’s typically some stormy weather between June-November.

There are generally three types of sand, the most usual on gorgeous **white** beaches. **Pink** sand (specific spots like Barbuda off Antigua) comes from the red shells of tiny “foraminifera.” These creatures live beneath rocks and inside caves, shells broken by surf into fine, soft sand. **Black** sand beaches are formed by volcanic activity in the volcanic islands including St. Lucia, Grenada, Dominica, Nevis, St. Kitts and Montserrat. The texture is coarse, unlike white or pink sand; black sand is very hot underfoot.

When You Arrive

Depending on your package, after clearing customs (your counsellor will confirm), meet your rep outside the baggage area for the bus to your hotel. Others might say they’ll drive you and you’ll be reimbursed –this is not true! Before you get on the bus, check luggage to ensure it’s secure and loaded. The bus may drop travellers at other resorts—a great way to see other properties.

Since others are leaving, rooms are often not ready when you arrive, but start on the fun: with a swimsuit in carry-on or if you can shed clothes, head to the pool or beach (the front desk will hold luggage).

You’ll be advised of the time/place of your orientation meeting. Don’t miss it; if you need assistance, the rep works part-time at your hotel (and other resorts) during posted hours. If you see something broken or unacceptable in your room, notify the front desk. Whether at a 5-star resort or housekeeping cottage, you’ll experience island hospitality.

The International Language of Courtesy

Delays and cancellations are all part of travelling. Indeed a slower pace is guaranteed in the Caribbean: enjoy it! You’re a guest so tread lightly—on holiday we’re all more casual, but littering and cigarette butts are unwelcome everywhere. Most staff work very long hours—a smile, patience and a kind word are always welcome.

When You’re There

Each island offers unique activities: try sailing, windsailing, parasailing, deep sea fishing or cruising in glass-bottom boats—it’s magical! Try scuba diving, helmet-diving (a family-friendly way to enjoy coral reefs) or golfing on lush fairways. For a great experience, check out the main town as many host markets, festivals and celebrations with art, music and dance—lots of history with a blending of cultures, cool shops, fantastic food and island-hopping.

Many go to the beach early to “reserve” beach chairs with towels: don’t leave valuables and don’t swap chairs already taken. To reduce loss on hotel beach towels, they often charge a deposit that’s returned on departure.

Tours? Make sure you can handle them: don’t book Advanced Scuba diving if you can’t swim. Book excursions through your counsellor and our suggested suppliers—you’ll have guaranteed spots, get good value, budget in advance and avoid “fly-by-night” operators.

If you go for local nightlife, be safe: go with others and return to your resort. If you’re not interested in buying goods or services, be firm but polite. Avoid timeshare sales pressures; there’s no “free” lunch. Many banks and stores close in the afternoon. Use your in-room safe or hotel’s safety deposit box. For credit cards, some merchants want to see photo ID.

Enjoy local food and drink in moderation—sun and alcohol don’t mix. Drink only bottled water and wash your hands often. Avoid local animals (rabies concerns), uncooked food and food from street vendors. Ice at resorts is safe but check with your tour rep; in town avoid ice cubes. To avoid bug bites, avoid the beach at dusk.

Our 24/7 Emergency Service

We constantly survey airlines, local tour companies and hotels to ensure they meet our customer service standards, so don’t let a problem ruin your holiday. Nearly all issues can be handled quickly on site—first seek help from the venue’s local staff. Otherwise, call our Emergency Travel Service at **1-888-551-1181**. Deposits are non-refundable and non-transferrable. Schedule changes can occur and airlines and tour operators have the right to change flight and/or tour times, alter, combine services or substitute accommodations. Your counsellor will work with you to ensure you receive information as soon as possible and ensure satisfaction. See your brochure and ticket terms and conditions.

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