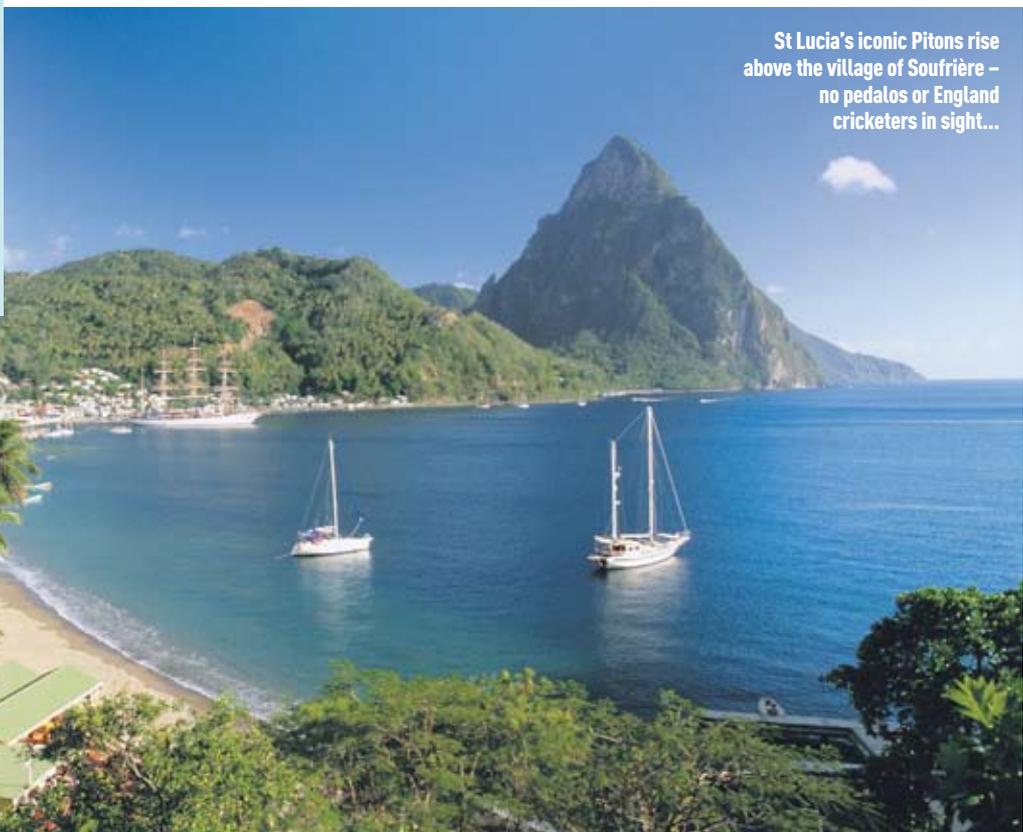


**FAST FACTS**

**Destination** St Lucia  
**Currency** East Caribbean Dollar (£1 = \$4.37)  
**Time difference** -4 GMT  
**Best time to go** Dec-May  
**Costs** Flights and 7 nights at 3\* St Lucian from £682 in March ([www.ba.com](http://www.ba.com)); Flights and 7 nights at 4\* Royal from £1,065 in May ([www.letsgo2.com](http://www.letsgo2.com))



St Lucia's iconic Pitons rise above the village of Soufrière – no pedalos or England cricketers in sight...

# ST LUCIA Tropical treasure

With its white beaches, lush rainforest and luxurious hotels, the Caribbean island of St Lucia has all you need for a superb sunshine break. Throw in some cricket at the Beausejour Stadium for the 2010 ICC World Twenty20, and you're officially in paradise



➔ The first Brits to stumble slack-jawed across the majestic Caribbean island of St Lucia arrived in 1605, having been blown off course en route to Guyana. In a prescient nod to the behaviour of 'Brits abroad' throughout history, just four weeks later, after a fall-out with the natives, the no-doubt sunburned Brits were promptly fleeing in a canoe.

Four-hundred-and-two years later, during the 2007 Cricket World Cup, boozed-up England cricketer Andrew Flintoff attempted a similarly dramatic Captain Jack Sparrow-style escape from St Lucia in a plastic pedalo.

However, St Lucia, dubbed the 'Helen of the West Indies' on account of a staggering natural beauty akin to that of Helen of Troy, is not a place that any right-thinking person would ever want to flee. And, with its atmospheric Beausejour cricket stadium hosting 10 games for the ICC World Twenty20 this



May, St Lucia is about to become a cricket fan's paradise, too.

Despite being just 238 square miles in size, St Lucia oozes variety. A boat trip along its western coast ([www.seaspraycruises.com](http://www.seaspraycruises.com)) will enable you to gawp at the island's iconic Pitons, two ancient volcanic cones that erupt out of the Caribbean Sea, and visit the nearby fishing port of Soufrière, where you can explore the bubbling craters of St Lucia's 'drive-in' volcano.

In the north lies Pigeon Island National Park, which provides stupendous coastal views and the chance to roam the ruins of Fort Rodney, while the mountainous heart of the island is sliced open by various trekking and cycling routes ([www.islandadventurestlucia.com](http://www.islandadventurestlucia.com)). Golf fans, meanwhile, can tackle the course at the St Lucia Golf Resort and Country Club, which is situated at the northern tip of the island and offers stunning

views of both the Caribbean and the Atlantic Ocean ([www.stluciagolf.com](http://www.stluciagolf.com)).

Nearby Rodney Bay is a good base for sun-seekers. Both the Royal and St Lucian hotels ([www.rexresorts.com](http://www.rexresorts.com)) back on to the bay's elegant white sand Reduit Beach. Watersports can be arranged from here and the Royal's Chic! restaurant serves up delicious French-inspired fine dining.

Rodney Bay is also the best place for 'liming out' – the local term for hitting the bars at night. Last year, Andrew Strauss' team celebrated their one-day series triumph against the West Indies in the Delirius bar. Alternatively, head to nearby Gros Islet for the Friday night 'jump-up' street party, where locals sink Piton beers and dance to reggae-infused music. Keep an eye out there for a red-eyed Freddie – if there's an England game on the next day, stick him in a taxi and send him home.

MARK BAILEY

GAMING/ROBERT HARRING IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES; ISTOCKPHOTO.COM; GABRIEL COPLEY/PA IMAGES