

St. Lucia

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline Itinerary

Day 1	Fly London to St. Lucia
Day 2 - 7	Anse Chastanet with daily excursions
Day 8	Depart St. Lucia
Day 9	Arrive London

Departs

January

Focus

Birds, Whales and other Wildlife

Grading

A/B. Optional day walks only.

Dates and Prices

See website (tour code LCA01) or brochure

Highlights

- Colourful and easy-to-see birdlife
- Whale watching. Sperm Whales possible.
- The five endemic bird species all expected. St Lucia Parrot, Oriole, Warbler, Black Finch and Pewee.
- Explore Atlantic forests for the rare White-breasted Thrasher.
- Wonderful Caribbean climate
- Award-winning hotel base
- Stunning scenery, including the dramatic forest-clad Piton Hills.
- Superb, award winning cuisine



Magnificent Frigatebird, Green Sea Turtle, Les Pitons



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Introduction

The Caribbean island of St. Lucia is one of the prettiest of the Windward group of the Lesser Antilles. An increasingly popular holiday destination for visitors attracted by the island's tropical beaches and relaxing pace of life, it is also of great interest ornithologically, boasting several endemic species including the internationally famous St. Lucia Parrot which has been the focus of a very successful conservation and educational project. Based at one comfortable hotel for the duration of our stay, this easy-paced tour offers an ideal introduction to the flora and fauna of the Lesser Antilles utilising the cooler morning period for many of the excursions but leaving most afternoons available for relaxation.

The hotel we will be staying at is the award-winning Anse Chastanet which is situated above an idyllic sheltered cove on the west coast of the island near Soufrière. In the mountainous interior lies the enormous National Rain Forest, and the island's protected coastal sites include the breath taking spires of Les Pitons which form the backdrop to our activities. These primeval twin peaks, 2,900 feet high, are St Lucia's most famous landmark. The hotel has a number of excellent restaurants to dine in, including a fully vegan restaurant - Emerald's.

We will also try our luck at cetacean watching a short distance off the coast, and hope to encounter some of the dolphins that regularly occur in the seas around this most pleasant of islands.



Anse Mamin, one of Anse Chastanet's beaches

Itinerary

NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

Depart UK, travel to Anse Chastanet

We fly to St. Lucia from London on a scheduled service flight. Once landed we will be met by our minibus driver for the one hour journey to our first night beneath Petit Piton in the hotel which will be our base for the tour. The journey prepares us for the grandeur of this mountainous island. On arrival we are settled into our rooms. We can then relax and watch the sun set while listening to the myriad frogs and cicadas. The award-winning Anse Chastanet Hotel is an ideal base for our stay, a very comfortable hotel complex with grounds sloping down to its own sheltered bay.



Bananaquit (*Coereba flaveola martinicana*)

Day 2

Anse Chastanet

On this first day we plan a gradual introduction to St Lucia avifauna gained by exploring the hotel grounds during a morning walk. Four of the five island endemics have been recorded in the grounds and by nightfall we will very likely have seen a fine selection of birds in between making use of the hotel amenities to recover from any residual jet-lag! Birds to be anticipated include: Magnificent



Purple-throated Carib (*Eulampis jugularis*)

Frigatebird, Broad-winged Hawk, American Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Zenaida Dove, Scaly-naped Pigeon, Common Ground Dove, Green-throated and Purple-throated Carib, Antillean Crested Hummingbird, Mangrove Cuckoo, Tropical Mockingbird, Scaly-breasted Thrasher, Grey Trembler, Caribbean Elaenia, St Lucia Pewee, Grey Kingbird, Black-whiskered Vireo, St Lucia Warbler, St Lucia Oriole, Lesser Antillean Bullfinch and the ubiquitous Bananaquit.

Days 3 - 7

Anse Chastanet with Daily Excursions

We adapt to a Caribbean style of life during our stay which perfectly suits the surroundings and obviates the need for a rigid timetable of activities. A full birdwatching and natural history



Rufous-throated Solitaire (*Myadestes genibarbis*)

programme is planned for each day of our stay but tour members may choose whether they wish to join particular excursions and may opt instead to spend time on the beach or perhaps to just relax at the hotel. Most outings will occupy half-days but will start early in the morning to take advantage of the maximum period of bird activity during the cooler hours around first light. The excursions will include visits to the following locations.

During our time on St. Lucia we visit two rainforest trails. The first is Des Cartiers, a trail within the Quillesse Forest Reserve and about 2 hours south from Anse Chastanet. It is considered to be the best rainforest trail on the island. It is home to tree ferns, bromeliads and many orchids. Like all forests, it is not always easy to uncover all the secrets in one visit but with luck we should find a great selection of St Lucia birds including the raucous St Lucia Parrot, Pearly-eyed Thrasher, Antillean Euphonia and Rufous-throated Solitaire. On our route back we then drop by Vieux Fort wetlands, the largest lake on the island home to a variety of water birds including Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Osprey, American Coot, Common Gallinule, Pied-billed Grebe, Blue-winged Teal and Belted Kingfisher.

Another day we head north and visit the Millet trail, looking out towards the Grand Bois Forest and the highest mountain in St Lucia, Mount Gimie. The birds here are very special with nearly all the endemic species occurring in the forests including; St Lucia Parrot, St Lucia Oriole and the St Lucia Pewee. Coconut feeders set up since Hurricane Tomas in 2010 help bring some of the shyer species out of the woodland and afford goods views of one of St Lucia's other



St. Lucia Pewee (*Contopus latirostris*)

endemics, the Black Finch. Grey Tremblers, St Lucia Orioles, Lesser Antillean Bullfinches also come down to feed while parrots can be heard all around. On the forest floor yellow and brown land

crabs slink away and up in the trees, Purple-throated Caribs and Green-throated Caribs are common.

The Sulphur Springs is the world's only drive-in volcano (a collapsed caldera), permitting close views of this dormant volcano. It presents a somewhat moon-like terrain, pocked with pools of boiling mud and steaming vents which release great quantities of sulphuric gases, giving the area its unique and pungent odour. Visitors were formerly able to walk out into the heart of all this geo-thermal activity until a local guide fell into a pool of boiling mud. He lived to tell the tale but safety is now a priority. After visiting the springs we stop for the rest of the morning at Emeralds, the hotel's estate near Soufrière where all Anse Chastanet's green foods are grown from lemon grass to mangos, and cocoa beans to turmeric. After a fascinating tour by the estate manager we watch our very own Caribbean-style cooking demonstration and savour the culinary dishes by one of Anse Chastanet's highly skilled chef's using local fruits and vegetables to accompany a meat (usually fish).



Pantropical Spotted Dolphin (*Stenella attenuata*)

A break from travelling by road, one morning we take a 90-minute boat trip up the coast to the capital of St Lucia, Castries. From here we venture inland to experience the rainforest by means of



Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*)

an aerial tram, which will transport us from the forest floor, through the understorey of ferns and tree ferns, into the canopy with its bromeliads and mistletoe. It is an extraordinary sensation to find oneself among hummingbirds feeding on flowering plants high in the tops of the trees then venture back down over the emergent layer, enjoying breath taking views over the north of St. Lucia, and of

both Caribbean and Atlantic coasts beyond. With a guide on board we are able to hear and see the variety of trees, vines, orchids, ferns and mistletoe that comprise this rainforest. After, we go for a short walk in the forest and finish off by some hummingbird feeders with Purple-throated Caribs often metres away.

Dolphin watching tours off the coast regularly result in encounters with Pantropical Spotted and Fraser's Dolphins, while Spinner Dolphins and Pilot Whales are also possible, but of course no single outing can ever guarantee success with such ocean wanderers and we can only hope for good luck! The three-hour excursion offshore from Soufrière will show the beauty of the coastline from a different perspective and the captain will use his local knowledge of these waters to track the movements of our quarry. Brown Boobies often hunt for flying fish near the boat while skuas, frigatebirds and Royal Terns may be seen offshore. On our way back we sail into the harbour of Soufrière to see a Lesser Antillean Fruitbat colony living by day in a long, thin cave in the sea cliffs. 5,000 bats are thought to roost here each day. Snorkelling off the beach will reveal many Caribbean fishes, corals, sponges with the possibility also of encountering a Green or Hawksbill Turtle.

Day 8

Depart St. Lucia

After one final day, spent however you choose, we transfer to the airport to catch an evening flight to London.

Day 9

Arrive UK

We are scheduled to arrive back to London mid-morning.

Tour Grading & Focus

A/B. This tour is mostly graded 'A' – mostly easy birdwatching walks though occasionally in fairly steep and mountainous terrain. All excursions are optional.

Weather, Clothing & Equipment

The weather is likely to be hot with temperatures reaching 30°C. Cloudier conditions can prevail, particularly around the hills, and precipitation is possible at any time with heavy tropical downpours on occasions. It can become windy.

What's Included



Anse Chastanet Hillside Deluxe Room

Comfortable accommodation at Anse Chastanet hotel with private facilities. All food and most drinks are included in the tour cost. The hotel has various categories of room and upgrades are possible for an additional supplement. For an additional cost, your meal package can also be upgraded to include alcoholic beverages. If you are interested in room or other upgrades please enquire

with the Naturetrek office prior to booking your holiday.

Extending Your Holiday

While there are no set extensions to this tour, we can enquire with the resort for you to stay additional nights. Please mention this at the time of booking if you would like us to enquire about availability and provide a quote.

How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements at the time of booking.

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Rainforest Aerial Tram and Antillean Crested Hummingbird (*Orthorhyncus cristatus*)