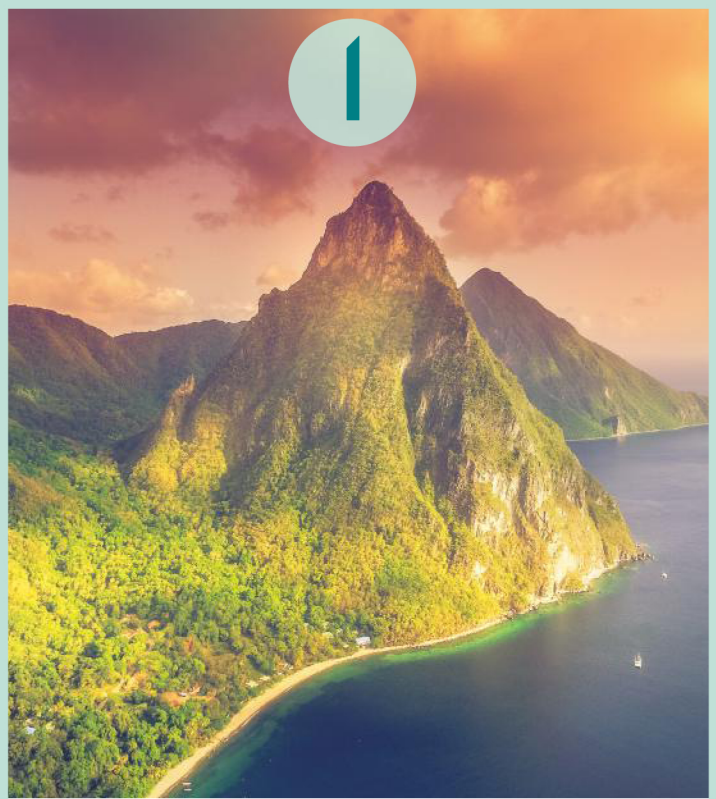


8 of the BEST

WORLD HERITAGE SITES

Nigel Tisdall picks the standout Unesco spots from across the Caribbean

Everyone knows the Caribbean does a great line in beaches, sunshine, music and rum, but this balmy region also has many world-class historic and scenic attractions. Those recognised by Unesco as being of “outstanding universal value” are particularly rewarding, and can be flagged up when discussing which island best suits a client.



1 THE PITONS, SAINT LUCIA

Saint Lucia’s twin peaks present an iconic Caribbean image, but they are only one part of an 11 square-mile World Heritage Site located south of Soufrière, encompassing geothermal springs, dense rainforest and a protected coastline home to rich marine life. The guided climb to the 798m summit of Gros Piton, which takes around four hours return, is a popular challenge, and there are several upmarket resorts close by. **Book it:** Five-star Sugar Beach, A Viceroy Resort sits bang in the middle of the two Pitons, with a white-sand beach and 96 rooms, each featuring a four-poster bed, private plunge pool and butler service. Doubles from \$564, room-only. viceroyhotelsandresorts.com



2

HISTORIC BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOS

With its cheerful markets, historic Careenage and splendid neo-Gothic parliament buildings, our favourite Caribbean island’s capital has bags of character. Both the city centre and Garrison area to the south were declared a Unesco World Heritage Site in 2012 due to their 17th to 19th-century layout and buildings “essentially unchanged for 200 years”. One must-do is the Garrison Savannah horse racing track, where meetings have been held since 1845 – a highlight is the Sandy Lane Barbados Gold Cup on March 7, 2020. **Book it:** Sweetfield Manor is an elegant 1900s mansion overlooking Bridgetown with 10 antique-filled rooms, peacock-dotted gardens, a small pool and a restaurant. Doubles start at \$378, room-only. sweetfieldmanor.com

3

NAVAL DOCKYARD, ANTIGUA

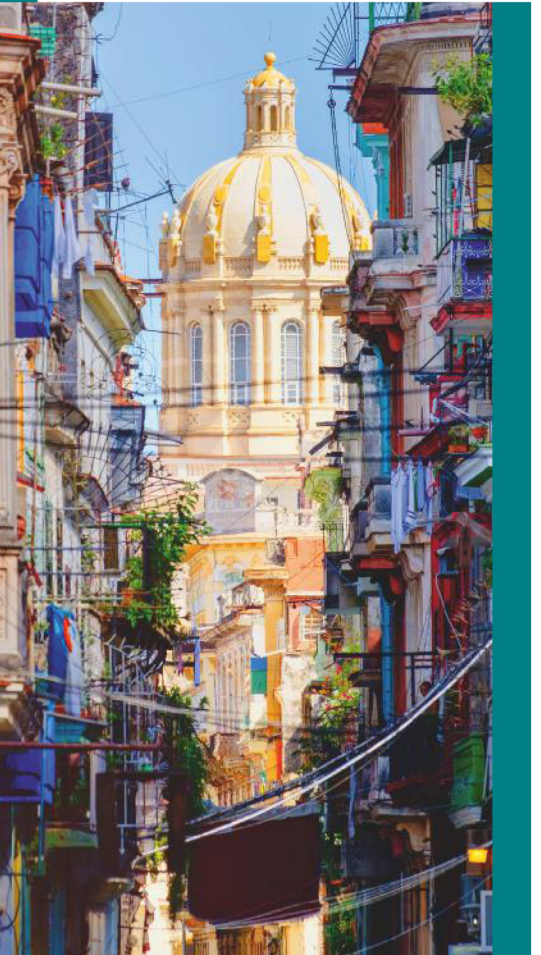
A young Horatio Nelson famously called Antigua “an infernal hole” when stationed here in 1784-87, but the naval hero’s name nevertheless graces an impressive ensemble of Georgian buildings at English Harbour. The island’s top heritage attraction is worth visiting for its Dockyard Museum, a waterfront glistening with superyachts, and Shirley Heights, which forms the setting for a well-known Sunday afternoon barbecue, complete with local live music. **Book it:** Four-star Admiral’s Inn and Gunpowder Suites is an intimate 23-room hotel in Nelson’s Dockyard. It occupies brick buildings that date back to 1788 and once stored barrels of pitch. Doubles from \$225, room-only. admiralsantigua.com



4

OLD HAVANA, CUBA

The Cuban capital celebrated the 500th anniversary of its founding in November and remains an intensely atmospheric city thanks to its grandiose Spanish colonial buildings and heady mix of salsa, rum, cigars and revolution. There are many ways to explore the plazas, cathedrals and fortifications of its historic heart, including by foot, bike, cyclo-taxi and in a classic American car. The island has eight more World Heritage Sites, including the Viñales Valley, Trinidad and Camagüey, so consider suggesting a tour. **Book it:** Locally Sourced Havana Tours has a range of group and private city tours with an English-speaking guide. A three-hour walk through Old Havana costs from \$25 per person. havanatourcompany.com





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DESTINATIONS

WORLD HERITAGE SITES | CARIBBEAN

5



BRIMSTONE HILL FORTRESS NATIONAL PARK, ST KITTS

Set on a hilltop with a panoramic coastal view, this colossal 'Gibraltar of the West Indies' is one of the forgotten wonders of the Caribbean. Dating from 1690 and built by African slaves, Brimstone Hill Fortress was once home to more than 1,000 soldiers and their families and now forms the centrepiece of a national park that includes this mighty citadel and an extensive military museum. Pair it with a stop at the nearby Amazing Grace Experience, which explains the link between St Kitts and this famous hymn.

Book it: The fortress is a key stop on round-island taxi tours and cruise ship excursions available from local operators such as Tropical Tours, who charge \$48 per person for three hours.
tropicaltourstkitts-nevis.com

6

BLUE AND JOHN CROW MOUNTAINS, JAMAICA

These magnificent peaks, rising to 2,256m, cover almost a fifth of Jamaica and lie in the east of the island near Kingston. A World Heritage Site since 2015, it's a place to enjoy scenic drives, terrific views, forest hikes and a cup of Blue Mountain coffee, one of the best brews in the world. Insider tours can be arranged to historic gardens and private residences such as the lofty Clifton Mount Estate, founded in 1751.

Book it: Opened in 1994 by Island Records founder Chris Blackwell, Strawberry Hill is a characterful base. It's ideal for exploring the Blue Mountains, with 13 rooms set in white wooden buildings with colonial-style interiors. Doubles from \$337 including breakfast.
strawberryhillhotel.com



DESTINATIONS

CARIBBEAN | WORLD HERITAGE SITES

7



WILLEMSTAD, CURACAO

Founded in 1634, the capital of this spirited Dutch island north of Venezuela is a blaze of brightly painted heritage buildings gathered beside the inland harbour of Schottegat – a colour scheme dating back to 1817. Cruise passengers have an easy walk from the terminal to the city centre, where popular buys are cheeses, liqueurs and beauty products made with locally grown aloe vera. Plasa Bieu, the old market turned open-sided food court, is a good place for an inexpensive lunch sampling local dishes.

Book it: Art Now Curaçao runs tours by foot and bike (recommended) to see the highly creative murals of the Punda and Pietermaai Districts, from \$10 per person for two hours.

artnowcuracao.com

8

MORNE TROIS PITONS NATIONAL PARK, DOMINICA

Dominica is a moody, mountainous island that appeals to active travellers seeking fresh adventures. This Unesco-listed national park lies in the centre, amid a clutch of active volcanoes that includes the 1,532m Morne Trois Pitons. The arduous hike to Boiling Lake, the world's second-largest hot water lake, is a big attraction, along with easier trails to waterfalls such as Middleham and Emerald Pool.

Book it: Newly built Jungle Bay has 30 eco-friendly villas set on a former lime plantation at Soufrière. Doubles from \$368 per person including transfers, organic meals, excursions, a daily 30-minute spa treatment and yoga.

junglebaydominica.com



PICTURES: Shutterstock