



TOUR INFORMATION FOR ST LUCIA AND ST VINCENT

These notes are designed to help you prepare for your tour. Please read them carefully.

ENTERING ST LUCIA: United Kingdom citizens need to have a passport that has a minimum validity of 6 months remaining after the tour has finished. This is an immigration requirement for many countries.

It is always a good idea to take a photocopy of your passport with you when travelling abroad. They can prove invaluable in helping you get a replacement if your original is lost or stolen. Obviously you should keep the photocopy in a separate bag to the originals.

TIME DIFFERENCE: St Lucia and St Vincent are 4 hours behind Greenwich Mean Time.

CURRENCY: The local currency in St Lucia is the East Caribbean Dollar (ECD). It is possible to change currency directly into ECD at the airport or at most hotels. Credit cards are accepted at the hotels.

LANGUAGE: English is widely spoken in St Lucia.

CLIMATE: The days are generally quite warm (in the 80's F) and summer clothes are suitable year-round. Please be prepared for the possibility of cool, damp (or rainy) weather in the mountains. Light rain is always a possibility (although rare in February). The winter sun can feel intense.

ALTITUDE: The highest elevation we visit is just over 3,000 feet above sea level.

PACE OF THE TOUR AND DAILY ROUTINE: This tour has daily starts between 06:30 and 07:00, with siestas breaks back at our hotel on some afternoons. Many meals will be taken in the field with one picnic breakfast and two picnic lunches, returning to the hotel between 16.00 and 17.00, before dinner. Trails are smooth and straightforward. Much of the birding is along roadsides, and the walks are less than 1½ miles in duration.

HEALTH: It is essential that you contact your own doctor to obtain the latest information on the regions you are visiting. Please contact your doctor well in advance of your tour's departure as some medication must be initiated weeks before the period of possible exposure.

It is recommended that you are up-to-date on routine vaccinations. These include measles-mumps-rubella (MMR), diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis, varicella (chickenpox), polio, and your yearly flu jab. It is further recommended that most travellers have protection against Hepatitis A and Typhoid.

Malaria: Malaria and other tropical parasites are not normally present in St Lucia, but mosquitos in the country (more prevalent in the wet season) have been known to transmit Dengue Fever in the past. We typically encounter very few mosquitoes during the tour. Useful information on all aspects of malaria, including how to reduce your chances of being bitten can be found at the website <http://www.preventingmalaria.info>.

Miscellaneous: Although we typically encounter few biting insects during the course of the tour, we would recommend taking an insect repellent which has a high concentration of DEET. Like most islands in the Caribbean, there are may be chiggers on St Lucia.

It may be difficult to obtain any special medication during the tour, so bring all you are likely to need.

ST LUCIA AND ST. VINCENT: Tour Information ...2

For further information on health advice refer to the Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad website www.masta-travel-health.com

ACCOMMODATION: During the tour we'll stay at only two hotels. One on St Lucia and one on St. Vincent. The Coco Palm hotel on St. Lucia is 1½ hours from the airport and is a higher-end US/UK style hotel with Spa facilities. Guests would find the swimming pool very refreshing after a hot day in the field, so please do bring swimwear. On St Vincent we will stay in similar standard accommodation to that on St Lucia, where there is also a swimming pool for guest use.

LAUNDRY: Laundry facilities are available at our hotel on St. Lucia.

ELECTRICITY: 110/120V AC 60Hz. An international travel plug is useful and can be bought in most airport departure lounges. You may find the following website helpful: <http://www.power-plugs-sockets.com>.

FOOD: Food is very good with some excellent seafood. Most mornings we'll take breakfast at our hotels and on other mornings we'll have a picnic breakfast out in the field. Lunches are mostly in restaurants, but we will enjoy several field picnics. Evening meals at our hotels offer tasty fusion dishes as well as traditional authentic Creole cuisine, and mostly include fish or chicken.

Sunbird tours are all-inclusive and no refunds can be issued for any tour meals participants choose to miss. While we will try to do all we can to accommodate the requirements of all participants, please note that we cannot guarantee all causes of food allergies can be avoided at every destination. Many restaurants offer set menus and are unable to accommodate all special requests within a group. Thus, participants with significant food allergies or special dietary needs should bring appropriate foods with them for those times when their needs can, regrettably, not be accommodated. Our tours are carefully scheduled to ensure the best possible birding experience and although the leaders will do all they can to make sure the group eats at a reasonable time, sometimes early or late lunches and/or evening meals cannot be avoided. Any participants who need to eat at specific times may need to take supplemental food with them.

DRINKS: Bottled water, a soft drink or a beer (or wine if appropriate) are provided at meals, as is coffee or tea. In addition we keep a supply of bottled water on the tour vehicles. Bottled or filtered water may also be provided in some rooms where we stay.

INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE ACCESS: Free WiFi is available at Coco Palm Hotel. Smartphone data generally carries over to St Vincent however please check with your phone provider to ensure that no additional charges would be incurred. At our hotel in Coco Palm mobile phone service is patchy due to the coastal mountains (The Pitons) which can affect the signal.

FIELD CLOTHING: Dress is Informal throughout. The generally warm temperatures will dictate lightweight clothing for use in the field and elsewhere.

Broad-rimmed sun hat
Comfortable footwear
Sandals
Short-sleeved shirts
Light sweater or jacket

Long-sleeved shirts
Lightweight cotton trousers
Lightweight raincoat
Shorts
Folding umbrella

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS:

Notebook & pencil
Rucksack/small day pack
Sun glasses and sun screen
Shampoo
Personal medication

Alarm clock
Torch with spare batteries
Small water canister or water bottle
Insect repellent

ST LUCIA AND ST. VINCENT: Tour Information ...3

Optional: Telescope & tripod (recommended if you have them), camera, film or memory cards, spare binoculars and spare spectacles (in case of loss or damage), field guide, swimwear.

Note: The most effective insect repellents are those containing at least 35% of the active ingredient diethyltoluamide (DEET). The higher the percentage, the greater the effectiveness. However, care must be taken to avoid getting the repellent on to optical equipment as it dissolves rubber and plastic and can damage coated lenses. A reasonably effective alternative, which isn't corrosive, is Mosi-guard, produced by MASTA, and we recommend this. It is available in most high street chemist (including those at the airport). Camping supply stores sell a product containing permethrin 0.5%, which must be applied directly to clothing in advance of wearing and allowed to dry. This non-staining, odourless chemical is non-toxic to humans and protective on clothing through several launderings. Please make sure you never to spray insect repellent inside the vehicle or when you are standing close to other participants – it may drift on to their optical equipment.

LEADER'S EQUIPMENT: The leader will provide the following:

Telescope
First aid kit

Reference books and maps
Icebox

LUGGAGE: Our Final Information document, which will be sent to you approximately three weeks before departure, will give details about baggage weight and size restrictions imposed by the airline used for this tour.

If possible, please bring your luggage in soft-sided bags or cases (rather than large hard 'Samsonite'-type suitcases) as these pack more easily into our vehicles during the tour. Please note that on many tours there are no porters to carry your luggage so please ensure that **no bag is so heavy that you are unable to lift and carry it yourself**. As a general rule, in addition to using your luggage labels, it is a good idea to fix identification to the *inside* of each piece of luggage.

PHOTOGRAPHY: A camera is highly recommended. This tour offers some beautiful scenery and memory shots will be plentiful and simple to obtain. Bring all the memory cards you are likely to need with you. Camera equipment should be packed in moisture- and dust-proof bags as a precaution. Digiscoping is perfectly compatible with the tour, though it is recommended you bring your own telescope as the leader's telescope will not be available for this activity.

There will be plenty of opportunities to take photos of birds, mammals and scenery and the leaders will do all they can to accommodate anyone wishing to take photographs. However if you are a serious photographer please bear in mind that this is first and foremost a birdwatching tour. Please do not allow your photographic desires to conflict with other participants' birdwatching activities.

TRANSPORT: We will be travelling by minibuses or people-carriers. The leader will arrange a seating rotation and participants should be able to ride in any seat in tour vehicles. One day we will enjoy a leisurely cruise along the coast and you will be required to wear the personal lifejackets supplied. We use schedule flights between the two islands.

SMOKING: Smoking is not allowed in the vehicles or when the group is gathered for meals, checklists etc. If you are sharing a room with a non-smoker, please do not smoke in the room. If you smoke in the field, we ask that you do so well away and downwind from the group if possible.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Travel insurance is essential and we insist that you take out suitable cover as soon as your tour is booked. If you are bringing expensive optical equipment or other valuable items, please make sure they are also adequately insured on your home contents policy, as most travel insurance policies do not cover very expensive individual items. You may wish to consult your insurance broker regarding coverage.

ST LUCIA AND ST. VINCENT: Tour Information ...4

Please also ensure that your policy covers you in the event of a medical emergency, cancellation of a trip or severe delays. Medical costs abroad can often be extremely expensive.

Please note that Sunbird is not liable for any medical or repatriation costs resulting from injury or illness during a tour or for covering any costs resulting from a flight delay such as extra hotel accommodation.

If you wish, insurance can be arranged by Stephen Allen at Stephen Allen Insurance Broker, 13 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK40 3JY. Tel: 01234 215194. Please contact him for a quote and he will send the schedule directly to you.

TIPPING: All tour-based tips are included in the tour price. These include tips to local guides, drivers, hotel porters, and waiters and waitresses when we have group meals together in restaurants. You only need to pay tips for personal services such as room service or drinks from the bar.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Field Guides:

Bond, James. 1985. *Birds of the West Indies*. Fifth edition. Houghton Mifflin, Boston

National Geographic Society. 2006. *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Fourth edition. One of the top two field guides for North America, more portable than the Sibley guide.

Raffaele, Herbert, Wiley, James, et al. 2003. *Birds of the West Indies*. Bloomsbury Publishing. **Recommended.**

Sibley, David Allen. 2014. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. Second edition. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. Arguably the best North American field guide. **Recommended.**

History:

Williams, Eric. 1970. *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean 1492-1969*. A comprehensive history of the region. Well written, but not exactly light reading.

OBTAINING BOOKS: Most of the field guides and the major ornithological references in print are available by mail order from booksellers specialising in natural history titles.

Natural History Book Service Ltd
Tel: 01803 865913
www.nhbs.co.uk

Subbuteo Books
Tel: 0870 010 9700
www.wildlifebooks.com

WildSounds
Tel: 01263 741100
www.wildsounds.co.uk

MAPS: Maps of the region may be available from:

The Map Shop
Tel: 01684 593146
www.themapshop.co.uk

Stanfords
Tel: 020 7836 1321
www.stanfords.co.uk

FINAL INFORMATION: Final information with instructions for meeting the group, hotel addresses etc., and your international air tickets will be sent out about three weeks before the start of the tour. If you have any questions, please contact us.