

ST KITTS

Pause & Play

Pace Saint Kitts to suit your clients, says Jo Cooke

Just when you think you know the Caribbean, you arrive in St Kitts and it throws all your pre-conceived notions up in the air. The beaches here aren't backed by all-inclusive hotels. There aren't any resort areas either. And tourist accommodation is dotted about the island, with each property aiming to please a specific crowd, rather than the mass market.

Those on a budget can bag excellent

value for money on St Kitts, while luxury lovers will find five-star options on the rise, including Belle Mont Farm and the YU Lounge (see panel).

St Kitts isn't short on adventurous pursuits or ways to laze around either. Here's our guide to the island's highlights, whether holidaymakers prefer a pace fast or slow.

PLAY: You're in for an aerobic workout when you explore St Kitts' cherry-on-the-cake attraction. Brimstone Hill Fortress sits on a 40-acre site, 800 feet above the ocean. It was built between 1690 and 1805 to protect British trading interests and has an arsenal of guns that can shoot 32lb cannon balls up to three miles. Once

HISTORY



If you'd rather learn your history with your bum on a seat and a cocktail in hand, the St Kitts' Scenic Railway is for you

you've climbed the steps to the fort's summit it's hard to decide what's more incredible, the ingenious design or the astonishing views of the headland and neighbouring island, St Eustatius.

PAUSE: If you'd rather take your history lesson with your bum planted on a comfortable seat and a cocktail in hand, the St Kitts Scenic Railway

was made for you. While travelling 12 miles along the northeastern side of the island, upbeat guides give you the lowdown on St Kitts' past, present and future, as you trundle through cane fields and sugar estates, wind along the coastline, cross aqueducts, cut through quarries and pass by villages where the residents and schoolchildren cheerily wave you on.

NATURE

PLAY: Those who love a challenge could see how quickly they can scoot up St Kitts' highest peak, the 1,155m Mount Liamuiga. My guide, O'Neil, pointed out century-old ficus trees and orchids hidden among the mesh of bamboo, palms and ferns that line the hiking trail. He recounted that his best group did the climb up in 45 minutes and his slowest took five hours; the

average time is two hours. It's tough and steep in places, and you can expect to notch up muddy knees and fingernails as you grasp at tree roots for support to reach the summit and its view of a concave crater enclosed by verdant hillsides.

PAUSE: There's no need to work up a sweat to surround yourself with St Kitts tropical foliage, just book yourself a massage at Mango Orchard Spa. Set in the lush gardens of Ottley's Plantation Inn, the spa is a single treatment room in an open-sided clapboard hut that overlooks a rainforested gorge. No soothing music from a CD here, just the rustle of the breeze through palm fronds, the chatter of green monkeys and melodic birdsong to aid your relaxation.



LEFT: Sky Safari zipline tour

FAR LEFT: Brimstone Hill Fortress

BELOW: South Friar's Bay



SEASIDE

PLAY: Located on the tip of St Kitts' remote southern peninsula, Cockleshell Bay is an outpost of fun. From a hut on the sand, St Kitts Watersports offers an abundance of activities including paddleboarding, kite surfing, fly boarding, jet skiing, powered paragliding and waterskiing. Book clients a rental or lesson and get 10% travel agent commission. stkittswatersports.com

PAUSE: Frigate Bay is the ultimate spot for beach bums. Also known as The Strip, this long stretch of soft sand gently shelves into the Caribbean Sea making it ideal for a dip. It's lined with beach bars and restaurants serving up everything from burgers and fried chicken to lobster, so there's no need to leave the beach when hunger strikes. Come sundown, DJs and steel bands play, so you can have a beer and a boogie without having to go back to your hotel to change.



the team of local workers as they handcraft clothing and accessories using dyes and wax. Afterwards, wander around the extensive gardens where the centrepiece is a 400-year-old saman tree, then treat yourself to a rum punch at the Rainforest Bar.

STAY

PLAY: St Kitts' hotel stock isn't typical of the Caribbean, so be sure to fix

a contemporary feel and there's a lagoon-style pool.

PAUSE: For clients who seek tradition and tranquillity, a sense of exclusivity and a warm welcome, there's the family-run Ottley's Plantation Inn. At this hillside retreat overlooking the ocean, the 23 rooms are set in cottages or the Great House. Also enjoying an elevated vantage point is [Belle Mont Farm](#), which opened

▶ PEOPLE

PLAY: With its bustle of shops, market stalls, churches and leafy Independence Square, the capital Basseterre is a great place to get an insight into Kittitian life. Spend a morning or afternoon checking out the period architecture, the National Museum and Art Gallery Cafe, then wander down to the port for some duty-free shopping.

PAUSE: A more relaxing way to meet Kittitians is at Romney Manor's Caribelle Batik workshop. Chat to

clients up with an abode that suits their intended pace. Those who want a resort-style hotel with loads of facilities really only have one option, the 393-room St Kitts Marriott. It has three pools, a golf course, tennis courts and a casino. It's also one of the only hotels in St Kitts set on a beach. The 65-room Ocean Terrace Inn, meanwhile, is a city hotel overlooking Basseterre's harbour. It's a great base for checking out local bars, restaurants and the capital's sights. The hotel was recently refurbished, rooms have

in 2014 as part of the extensive and upscale Kittitian Hill development. An on-site organic farm is part of the property's sustainable tourism ethos and it supplies almost all the kitchen's needs. Guests get the opportunity to help harvest the ingredients for their meals too. The 84 uber-luxurious guesthouses have outdoor bathrooms with panoramic views to neighbouring islands from their private pool deck and floor-to-ceiling windows. A giant movie screen acts as a black-out blind at night so you can watch films in bed. 



TOP:
Caribelle
Batik
workshop,
Romney
Manor

RIGHT: Belle
Mont Farm



Western & Oriental offers seven nights' room-only at Otley's Plantation Inn from £1,435 for travel between October 13 and 31, including flights and private transfers. westernoriental.com

ITC Classics offers seven nights' room-only at Ocean Terrace Inn from £1,299 including flights and private transfers for travel completed by December 18. itcclassics.co.uk

Caribtours offers seven nights' all-inclusive at Belle Mont Farm from £3,225 in November, including return flights, use of a lounge at Gatwick, VIP meet and greet at the YU Lounge in St Kitts on both arrival and departure, and resort transfers. caribtours.co.uk

