

# TOP 5 LESS KNOWN GREEN DESTINATIONS IN THE CARIBBEAN



Warm waters, perfect temperature, and endless beaches that compete in color, warmth, flavor. A leisure place enriched with beautiful landscapes. It looks just like paradise. The Caribbean is just that. An irrepresible desire to wear a bathing suit 24 hours a day while the finest and clearest grains of sand slip through your fingers. The big drawback of the Caribbean is how quickly its destinations escalate in popularity. Here are a few green destinations that will become a trend for the following seasons but for now they are still hidden from the general public. Brought to you by Tourism Review.

## Bonaire, Netherlands Antilles

It is an ecotourism destination par excellence. It is an island territory of the Netherlands, located in front of Venezuela, where Dutch is spoken. From the depths of its pristine waters to the height of its highest peak, the Brandaris, Bonaire has a magic that is perceived from the moment you arrive and throughout the days as you tune into the leisurely local rhythm.

In addition to being famous for surfing and snorkeling, Bonaire is also recognized as one of the best diving destinations in the world. For the 24th consecutive year, Bonaire took first place as the top shore diving destination in the Caribbean/Atlantic in the annual Scuba Diving magazine awards.

It has positioned itself as the world's first blue destination. The vision is people-centred. As a community, the people of Bonaire are tasked with protecting, unifying and enhancing the island. Therefore, they also have to minimize the negative impacts on the community and the environment and create opportunities to balance the financial benefits. In addition, the economy is magnified by integrating culture, tourism, commerce and nature. At the same time, the authenticity of Bonaire is also respected by preserving its standards and values.

Bonaire is at the forefront of nature preservation and conservation and its authorities state that the entire population strives to maintain the island as one of the Caribbean's top ecological and green destinations.

A place not to be missed is the salt flats. Salt flats are formed by a distinctive line of white salt pyramids on the southeastern tip of the island. Each pyramid, about 15 meters high, contains approximately 10,000 metric tons of 99.6% pure salt. Depending on the time of year, there may be more than 200,000 metric tons of salt stacked in long rows.

It is one of only four areas in the world where flamingos breed. Its sanctuary, Pekelmeer, means "salt lake" in Dutch. The ponds have a pinkish appearance on the white of the salt pans because a large number of tiny pink brine shrimp live in the water. The sanctuary is located in the vast salt flats at the southern tip of the island and is home to more than ten thousand flamingos. Tourists are not allowed in the sanctuary, but the birds can be observed with binoculars.

## **Punta Rucia, Dominican Republic**

It is a small fishing village in the northwest of the country located in the bay of La Isabela. This place is extremely quiet, with beautiful beaches and very friendly and helpful people.

Start by taking a trip back in time by visiting the ruins of La Isabela. In this historic place, Christopher Columbus built the first European settlement in America during his second visit in 1493. Today, you can visit a museum with representations of the Taino inhabitants (ancient aboriginal population) and the arrival of the Spanish in the Dominican Republic (formerly "La Hispaniola"). There is also a church and a cemetery with some archaeological pieces.

Punta Rucia beach has speed boats that take you to Cayo Arena in a fast and fun way. It is also known as Cayo Paraiso, Paradise Island. A huge coral reef surrounds this dazzling sandbank in the middle of the ocean. There you can enjoy fantastic snorkeling and swimming experience in crystal clear waters. The temptation to lie back and relax on the stunning white sand beach is a must.

## **Palmaia, Mexico**

Although the Riviera Maya is usually a classic destination, Palmaia offers a different approach. Imagine a mystical place born from the effervescent complexity of contemporary Mexico, where millenary roots and sacred rituals interact with international visitors. A secluded sanctuary with oceanfront suites and pool, jungle spa, gourmet restaurants with Michelin star chefs from all around the world, locally-based cuisine, remote white sand beach, private terraces, and infinity pools.

A level of seclusion is often associated with remote islands and an atmosphere of tranquillity one would expect from a yoga retreat. The perfect opportunity to re-establish the connection between mind and body with guided meditation sessions, yoga classes, sound baths, and energy healing, all while immersing oneself in the vibrant energy of the Riviera Maya jungle.

At Palmaia, there is the possibility to experience local methodologies that help train the mind with ancient Mayan techniques and support health under a philosophy based on holistic principles. A place to eat delicious food, have a good drink, dance your heart out and enjoy life to the fullest. A meaningful, sustainable and lasting green destination.

## **St. Eustatius, Netherlands Antilles**

It is hard to imagine that this hidden secret, St. Eustatius (Statia in local slang), was the busiest port in the Caribbean in the 18th century. Thousands of large merchant ships visited the island in its heyday each year and it was known as the commercial center of the world. It changed hands 22 times before becoming one of the Dutch Caribbean Island destinations. Now Statia is a peaceful island where time stood still.

There is an authentic Caribbean atmosphere with friendly locals and small family-run restaurants and bars. The dormant volcano dominates the landscape and hosts an evergreen rainforest in its crater. The view from the rim is like watching Jurassic Park on a huge screen. Here you will find the

largest tree in the Netherlands and the smallest bird species and protected wildlife species such as the Lesser Antillean iguana. But the real hidden treasure awaits you under the clear waters of the Caribbean Sea.

St. Eustatius is known as "the historical jewel of the Caribbean" for its rich history and preservation of the island's heritage. The island is an open-air museum, as it is home to several ruins dating back to the 1700s. There are numerous stories to tell from the time when St. Eustatius was known as the Golden Rock. St. Eustatius is not dedicated to mass tourism but offers its visitors a variety of ecotourism activities including exploring its rainforest, hiking its trails and much more. The local environmental organization St. Eustatius National Parks Foundation (STENAPA) is active in protecting the island's marine life and terrestrial environment. They run several ecotourism activities and encourage visitors to leave no ecological trace.

## **Martinique, French West Indies**

Martinique and its French touch. Inhabited since 2500 B.C. by different tribes, around the year 1000, the Carib aboriginals, coming from the Guyana plateau, came up to the Antilles archipelago and gradually replaced the previous populations. In 1502, the Caribs occupied Martinique when Christopher Columbus landed in the region of Le Carbet during his third voyage. Later, they would be defeated by the French.

Martinique's architecture reveals much about the island's history. There are more than 40 plantation houses scattered throughout the island. In the capital, the town of Fort de France is the famous cast-iron balconies. The well-known 19th-century Schoelcher bookstore and the Saint Louis Cathedral are historical monuments that must be visited.

Martinique's gastronomy, rich in color and flavors, is impregnated with different ethnic influences (South America, Europe, Africa, Caribbean, Asia). Agricola Rum, produced since the end of the 17th century, is known for its authenticity and finesse and is a source of real pride for the people of Martinique.

It is known throughout the world for its biodiversity. Two-thirds of Martinique's territory is protected which makes the place a perfect green destination.

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