St. Eustatius
Dutch Caribbean

Unhurried & unspoiled

The Caribbean's hidden treasure

Travel back in time to the 17th and 18th centuries

St. Eustatius is a small but very prosperous island. Each day, dozens of merchant ships from Europe, Africa, and America drop anchor in its harbor. It's a hive of activity. Hundreds of warehouses along the coast are filled to the brim with merchandise. The nearly 20,000 residents come from all over the world. They call St. Eustatius "The Golden Rock".

The golden rock

Today "Statia" - as the island is popularly called – has a population of around 4,000. Visitors will find no mass tourism here, and no sprawling sandy beaches surrounded by large resorts.

Instead, they will find the tranquillity to explore the island's rich history, incredible diversity, and the peace to enjoy the varied, unspoiled nature on offer in the Caribbean's amiable climate. The dormant volcano "The Quill" sticks its head and shoulders out above the island. A hike up the 600-meter-high volcano is highly recommended. A spectacular tropical rainforest is hidden within its crater. Hundreds of shipwrecks just off the coast of Statia make it a true diver's paradise. Experience the well-preserved reef ecosystem and abundant habitats of colorful fish, lobsters, and sea turtles under the crystal-clear waters of the Caribbean Sea.

Welcome to St. Eustatius.

Miraculous nature

Statia measures just a little over twenty square kilometers. Still, the island is home to an unprecedented wealth of natural beauty above and below sea level.

In the northern region of the island, steep hills were formed by the heavily eroded remains of five extinct craters. The middle part of the island is mostly flat, whereas the southeastern side is dominated by a dormant volcano known as “The Quill”. The coastline of St. Eustatius is mainly composed of steep cliffs, with a few bays that comprises small sandy beaches.

The amazing thing about the nature of St. Eustatius is that coral reefs are located within walking distance from the coastal tropical rainforest. Preserving and protecting the ecosystem of Statia is the top priority of its people. St. Eustatius National Parks Foundation (STENAPA) oversees the management of the island’s flora and fauna.

Scan For more miraculous

Statia Morning Glory

In addition to the eighteen species of herbaceous vines, which give St. Eustatius its vibrant color, the Statia Morning Glory (Ipomoea sphenophylla urban) is considered the most beautiful. This extremely rare plant grows nowhere else in the world and it was long thought that it was extinct. Since its rediscovery, the Statia Morning Glory has become a national symbol of the island.

Scan For more natural beauties

Hiking to heaven on Statia

A visit to Statia is only complete after hiking the trails on the island. One thing can be agreed upon about the adventurous paths: an unprecedented diversity of vegetation. Cacti and shrubs dominate the lower parts. The farther up you go, the greener and more colorful the plants and flowers become.

Climbing The Quill is an absolute “must” when visiting Statia. At the highest point the view of the neighboring islands is phenomenal. Then comes the descent into the crater. Here, giant trees and colorful flowers grow in a world all their own. Watch critters scurry over the forest floor, push a Colocasia leaf (elephant ear) aside and new discoveries reveal themselves.

Hiking is possible without protective clothing. But it’s advisable to wear sturdy hiking boots. Especially in the crater where it can be slippery and wet. Always take plenty of drinking water. Young and old alike can master The Quill without a guide. But, for an optimal experience, it’s advisable to choose a guided tour.

The STENAPA guides are available year-round, Monday to Friday, for all visitors. They have the expertise and knowledge to ensure that visitors fully appreciate the natural beauty in and around the crater. It is recommended to book a guide at least three days in advance to ensure availability. Make an advance reservation online at www.statiapark.org or info@statiapark.org.

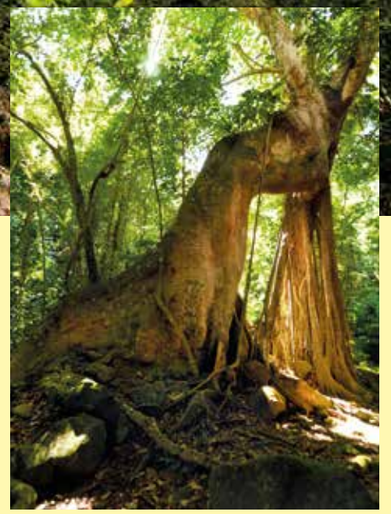
There are seven hiking routes, each with varying degrees of difficulty:
- Quill trail
- Couchar trail
- Around the mountain trail
- Panorama Point trail
- Mazinga trail
- Botanical garden trail
- Crater trail

Scan For more Walking on Sint Eustasius

The Quill: a tropical, pocket-sized rainforest

The absolute highlight of St. Eustatius is undoubtedly “The Quill” - a dormant volcano that is much less eroded than the island’s other volcanoes because it dates back to a later period.

The English name for the volcano is derived from the Dutch word for “pit”. The Quill is perfectly symmetrical and the rolling hills that make it up rise majestically from the surrounding landscape to nearly 2,000 feet above sea level. At the peak of the volcano, visitors can explore a mysterious crater that is completely covered by a tropical, pocket-sized rainforest. Inside the crater, lianas, orchids, and sweet-smelling bromeliads compete for sunlight throughout the year, while the floor is covered in ferns and the tree trunks are draped in silky mosses.



The Colossal kapok

On Statia, the Kapok tree (Ceiba pentandra) stands out as the most striking tree. This tropical tree can grow to tens of feet in height, with its trunk sometimes measuring several feet in diameter. The tree is supported by an impressive network of roots, some of which protrude above the ground.

Eco-tourism: Leave No Trace

St. Eustatius values the unspoiled natural beauty of the island. Unlike many other popular tourist spots, the island treasures nature as its true wealth.

Thus, endeavors are made to prevent overwhelming the island with mass tourism. Ecological preservation takes precedence over economic gain on Statia. The island leans towards ecotourism, whereby visitors leave no detrimental environmental impact when they leave. STENAPA takes responsibility for safeguarding the environment, concentrating on protecting the island's underwater world and natural habitats. STENAPA also monitors the island's endangered animal and plant species.

STENAPA manages three national parks on Statia:
- Marine Park. This pristine underwater ecosystem covers an area of over ten square miles..
- National Park. This park consists of roughly two square miles separated into two parts: the dormant volcano, "The Quill", and the "White Wall" - the limestone formation on the south side of the volcano. It also includes the "Top" area which comprises of five hills to the north of St. Eustatius.
- Botanical Garden. The Miriam Schmidt Botanical Garden is adjacent to the National Park and extends over 5.3 hectares.

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Your own kingdom in the sand

Scan For more pristine waters

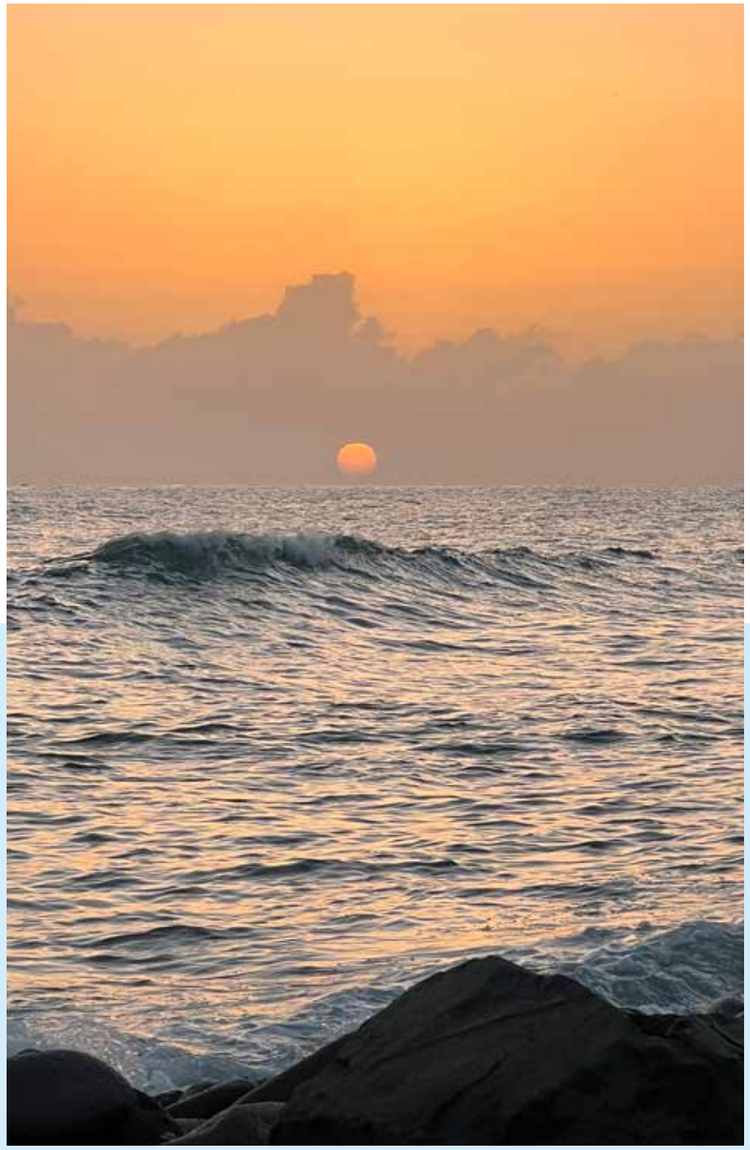
Statia may not fit the classic image of a beach destination, with its lack of sprawling white-sand beaches adorned with trendy bars. Nevertheless, the island's small bays possess their own charm, providing an authentic and unadulterated beach experience.

Smoke Alley Beach, adjacent to Lower Town, boasts crystal-clear waters perfect for a refreshing swim. Its tranquil ambiance makes it a wonderfully peaceful place to relax, and only in the late afternoon do the locals arrive for a dip.

To the south of Oranjestad lies Crooks Castle Beach, which attracts snorkelers due to its diverse marine life. Lynch Beach, the third sandy option, is also visually appealing but swimming is prohibited due to the hazardous undertow.

The fourth alternative for sun-seekers is Zeelandia Beach. This nearly three-kilometer-long bay features jet-black volcanic sand and invites visitors to bask in the wonderful climate. However, swimming is also not allowed due to the treacherous undertow.

In the absence of mass tourism, Statia's bays guarantee that whoever seeks paradise, will find it here.



Historical blue glass beads

An intriguing tale is that of the blue beads, which served as Statia's local currency during the 17th century. The renowned Dutch West India Company used these beads to trade in tobacco, cotton, rum, and slaves. Even today, the beads resurface whenever violent storms stir up sand on the seafloor and deposit them around the island.

Oranjestad: "Smallest capital in the world"

Oranjestad is the only city on the island. It's divided by a rugged cliff into two distinct sections: Upper Town and Lower Town. These regions are linked by the steep Bay Road. Upper Town's historical center has been extensively renovated and is now a cultural treasure trove for the entire Caribbean.

Restored to its former glory, Fort Oranje, founded in 1636, rests between the upper and lower districts, with its cannons and bastions keeping watch over the island. The original structure's most remarkable feature is its original Dutch architecture, infused with clear and vibrant local influences.

Lower Town is located along the narrow coastal strip that initially functioned as the island's port. The island still boasts 16 forts, some of which have been restored. The fortifications offer exceptional views of the neighboring islands, particularly from Fort de Windt, which provides an awe-inspiring vista of St. Kitts.

Location

Caribbean destination: St. Eustatius, a small Dutch Caribbean island, is a popular destination. It is part of the Windward Islands, alongside Saba and St. Maarten. Bordered by the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, St. Eustatius is neighbored by St. Kitts-Nevis, Saba, and St. Maarten. The island is the southernmost of the Windward Islands and measures 2.8 miles wide and 5.6 miles long, with a total area of about 9.2 square miles.

The historic capital: Oranjestad (Dutch for 'Orange Town'), the historic capital of St. Eustatius, is located in the middle of the island and on the west side of Oranje Bay. Previously a vital trade center, the city's trading activity declined sharply from the beginning of the 19th century.

The flag of St. Eustatius: The flag is divided into four blue five-sided sections with a red border. In the center are a white diamond shape containing the green contours of the island and a yellow star.

Scan For how to get to Statia

Amazing Diving

Statia's rich and diverse underwater world makes it a must-visit destination for experienced divers.

With a pleasant temperature throughout the year, diving is possible around the island at any time. Each dive location offers its own unique character, such as corals, sponges, steep walls, canyons, and lava flows, and underwater life like gray reef sharks, eagle rays, sea turtles, nurse sharks, and curious fish.

Experienced divers can explore the various dive sites with reefs ranging from 40 to 120 feet deep, while wreck divers can admire numerous shipwrecks scattered across the bottom at depths of 60 to 70 feet. The Charles Brown, one of the longest wrecks in the region, is also located in Statia, offering divers the opportunity to observe a fascinating diversity of marine life around its remains.

To protect the vulnerable ecological zones around the island, the St. Eustatius Marine Park was created with marked dive sites and clear regulations prohibiting anchoring and limiting one boat per dive spot. Snorkelers can also enjoy the island's snorkel-friendly dive sites.

Scan For more amazing divings

Scan For the diving brochure

Illustrious history

Christopher Columbus 'discovered' St. Eustatius in 1493. The island changed hands among 22 different countries during the colonial era. However, after the Eighty Years War, the island officially became Dutch territory in 1816 and remains so today.

In the late 18th century, Statia played a significant role during the uprising of the British colonies in North America. The British authority on the island was weakened, and a lively trade continued with the rebels, resulting in unprecedented prosperity.

In 1776, an 'independent' ship called Andrew Doria, representing the new United States of America arrived at the harbor of Oranjestad on St. Eustatius. The ship fired a 13-gun salute as a tribute to the island's authorities, and in response, Fort Oranje, under the leadership of Governor Johannes de Graaff, fired an 11-gun salute, recognizing America's independence. This gesture made St. Eustatius the first nation to officially acknowledge the independence of the United States.

The old world was taken aback by this action, but it paid off for St. Eustatius, which saw an increase in trade and wealth as a result. This gesture was significant for Oranjestad, as it filled the warehouses with goods, and the island reached the height of its prosperity in 1795, with the extent of its legal trade being slightly larger than illegal trade.

Today, St. Eustatius serves as an open-air museum, where its rich history can be experienced above and below the water. It is said that if you happen to find a blue bead during your visit, you will surely return to Statia for another visit.

Scan for more discovering the 'Golden Rock'

Discover St. Eustatius

Tropical climate: Throughout the year, the daytime temperature averages around a pleasant 80°F. The nights are slightly cooler at about 75°F. The climate is moderated by cool trade winds from the northeast and the tropical weather ensures that Statia is green all year round.

Getting there: By plane from St. Maarten. Winair maintains regular flight connections from St. Maarten to Statia five times a day. You are there within 20 minutes (www.fly-winair.com).

Eating, drinking, sleeping: St. Eustatius has a number of distinctive accommodations, notably The Old Ginhouse, The Country Inn, Golden Era Hotel, and Kings Well Resort. Food and drink can be found in one of the many restaurants and cafés on the island.

Money: The currency on St. Eustatius is the US Dollar.

Language: The main speaking language is English. But the people of Statia are highly international. All residents grow up in multilingual households and varied school systems. Locals speak fluent Dutch, Spanish, and the Creole language of Papiamento.

Scan to plan your trip

St. Eustatius
Dutch Caribbean

St. Eustatius Tourism Development Foundation

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