



THE ROUGH GUIDE to Trinidad & Tobago

EXPERT ADVICE • FULL COVERAGE • EASY TO USE



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HOW TO USE THIS ROUGH GUIDE EBOOK

This Rough Guide to Trinidad and Tobago is one of a new generation of informative and easy-to-use travel-guide ebooks that guarantees you make the most of your trip. An essential tool for pre-trip planning, it also makes a great travel companion when you're on the road.

From the [table of contents](#), you can click straight to the main sections of the ebook. Start with the [Introduction](#), which gives you a flavour of Trinidad and Tobago, with details of what to see, what not to miss, itineraries and more – everything you need to get started. This is followed by [Basics](#), with pre-departure tips and practical information, such as flight details and health advice. [The guide](#) chapters offer comprehensive and in-depth coverage of the whole of Trinidad and Tobago, including area highlights and full-colour maps featuring all the sights and listings. Finally, [Contexts](#) fills you in on history, wildlife and Carnival.

Detailed area maps feature in the guide chapters and are also listed in the [dedicated map section](#), accessible from the table of contents. Depending on your hardware, you can double-tap on the maps to see larger-scale versions, or select different scales. There are also thumbnails below more detailed maps – in these cases, you can opt to “zoom left/top” or “zoom right/bottom” or view the full map. The screen-lock function on your device is recommended when viewing enlarged maps. Make sure you have the latest software updates, too.

Throughout the guide, we've flagged up our favourite places – a perfectly sited hotel, an atmospheric café, a special restaurant – with the “author pick” icon ★. You can select your own favourites and create a personalized itinerary by bookmarking the sights, venues and activities that are of interest, giving you the quickest possible access to everything you'll need for your time away.





INTRODUCTION TO TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

Sitting pretty just off the coast of the South American mainland it was once part of, the twin-island republic of Trinidad and Tobago (often shortened to “T&T”) is one of the Caribbean’s most diverse and underexplored destinations. The islands boast spectacular rainforests, waterfalls, savannahs and reefs, and the endless undeveloped beaches are some of the prettiest in the region, from palm-lined white sand fringed by limpid waters to secluded, wave-whipped outcrops. As the home and heart of West Indian Carnival and the place where calypso, soca and steel pan were invented, T&T is a cultural pacemaker for the Caribbean and a fantastic place to party.

Trinidad and Tobago’s economy is the most diversified and industrialized in the English-speaking Caribbean, with an average of 151,000 barrels of oil and 40 billion cubic metres of natural gas produced here each year. Because gas and oil are the main economic earners, both islands remain largely unfettered by the more noxious elements of Caribbean tourism, and are well suited to independent travellers without being fully fledged resorts. Visitors are not generally corralled in all-inclusives or holed-up on private swathes of sand and the beaches are enjoyed by locals and foreigners alike, with visitors often in the minority. Sun and sea are by no means the only draw here, however: no other Caribbean island offers such a variety of **wildlife and habitats** in so compact an area (roughly half the size of Hawaii Island). In Trinidad, there are tropical rainforests of mahogany and teak patrolled by howler monkeys and ocelots, wetlands harbouring manatees and anacondas, and **remote beaches** where giant leatherback turtles lay their eggs, while Tobago is best known for its stunning **coral reefs**, favoured by manta rays and shoals of brightly coloured tropical fish. Both islands also offer some brilliant opportunities for birdwatching; with more than 430 recorded species T&T has one of the richest concentrations of birds per square kilometre in the world.

The crowded and dynamic **towns and cities** are equally engaging, with fretworked “gingerbread” homes sitting side by side with temples, mosques, Catholic cathedrals and Anglican churches. The many ethnic groups brought to labour in the islands after slaves were freed in 1834 have given rise to a remarkably varied populace, hailing from India, China, Portugal and Syria as well as Africa, England, France and Spain. Though racial tensions are inevitably present, Trinbagonians (as they’re collectively known) generally coexist with good humour, and are proud of the multiculturalism that has so enriched the islands. This easy-going mentality is best expressed in the local propensity for “liming” – taking time out to meet friends and talk, usually over food and a beer or glass of rum.

Both islands share a party-hard ethic, and Trinidad has an electrifying **music scene** that rivals even that of Jamaica. T&T is the birthplace of calypso and the more fast-paced soca, as well as that quintessential sound of the Caribbean, the steel pan; you’ll hear plenty of all three year-round, but especially during the republic’s most famous party, its annual pre-Lenten **Carnival**. During this unique and explosive event, the no-holds-barred debauchery of the Jouvert “dirty mas” parades is

followed by two days of pure joy as 5000-strong bands of intricately costumed revellers take to the streets in a celebration of life.



ZOOM LEFT



ZOOM RIGHT

FACT FILE

- Standing at about 1.34 million, T&T's **population** is around 40 percent Indian, 39 percent black, 18 percent mixed-race, 0.6 percent white and 0.4 percent Chinese. Its population is theologically diverse, too: with 26 percent Roman Catholic, 25 percent Protestant, 23 percent Hindu, 6 percent Muslim, 3 percent Presbyterian and 6 percent adhered to African-based **religions** such as Spiritual Baptist and Orisha.
- Go into almost any bar in the world and you'll see a bottle of **Angostura bitters**, produced in Trinidad and an essential ingredient of many classic cocktails. Its aromatic blend of herbs, spices and alcohol is such a guarded secret that no single person is permitted to know the full recipe.
- Trinidad is one of the world's most important nesting sites for the giant **leatherback turtle**. Grande Riviere on the north coast sees one of the world's highest density of nests, with some 500 turtles visiting per night at the height of the season.
- The peculiar **Pitch Lake**, at La Brea on Trinidad's southwestern coast, is the world's largest natural reservoir of asphalt.
- In 2006, T&T became the smallest nation ever to qualify for the **World Cup**, though the Soca Warriors didn't manage to score a goal in the tournament, drawing one match and losing two more before being knocked out.
- T&T lie outside the region's **hurricane** belt, and haven't suffered a big blast since Flora in 1963, though minor **earthquakes** occur at an average of one per month.
- Native to southern Trinidad, the **Moruga Scorpion** is officially the second hottest pepper in the world, notching up two million units on the Scoville heat scale, just a fraction less than the Carolina Reaper.



HAULING IN A SEINE NET, CHARLOTTEVILLE

Where to go

Bound together for the convenience of the British Empire, Trinidad and Tobago are vastly different places. Trinidad offers culture, ethnic diversity, music, clubs, great food, pristine rainforest and a wealth of undeveloped beaches. Tobago is more of a conventional Caribbean resort, its southwest

replete with busy strips of white sand and hotels of every stripe, as well as plenty of bars, restaurants and places to dance under the stars. The rest of the island is relatively undeveloped, with plenty of fantastic small-scale guesthouses, but nowhere in Tobago will you find the high-rise hotels and slick resort areas of other islands in the region. It's impossible to get a full picture of T&T without visiting both Trinidad and Tobago, and regular and inexpensive plane and ferry services between the two make it easy to see the best of each even during a short stay.

A visit to **Trinidad** will inevitably begin in **Port of Spain**, the vibrant capital which, with its restaurants, nightlife and accommodation, is a natural base from which to explore the rest of the country. To the west, **Chaguaramas** is the capital's playground, with a newly redeveloped waterfront at Williams Bay and the zip line, walking and mountain biking trails, golf course and great beach of Tucker Valley. Chaguaramas is also the jumping-off point for boat trips to the rocky, wooded islands of the **Bocas**. A sweeping curve of powdery sand and powerful waves, **Maracas Bay** is the first of many lovely beaches along the **north coast**, some reachable by road, others only on foot. Inland, the densely forested peaks of the **Northern Range** offer excellent hiking and birdwatching opportunities. South of the hills, the **East–West Corridor** provides access to caves, swimmable rivers and waterfalls, the Yerette hummingbird centre, and the oldest Benedictine monastery in the Caribbean at Mount St Benedict.

The flat agricultural plains of **central Trinidad** provide a fascinating contrast to the north. From the ethereal Waterloo Temple in the Sea and the nearby Hanuman Murti statue to the busy market town of **Chaguanas**, Indian culture predominates; there's plenty of natural allure too, from the scarlet ibis that inhabit the mangrove labyrinth of **Caroni Swamp** to the manatees and monkeys in the protected wetlands at **Nariva**. Endless swathes of fine brown sand lined by groves of coconut palms make **Manzanilla** and **Mayaro** favourite spots for some beach time. The burgeoning city of **San Fernando** is a friendly base from which to explore the largely unvisited "deep south", where modern oil towns such as **Fyzabad** contrast with the spectacular coastline and wetlands around **Cedros** and **Icacos**.

Most people travelling to **Tobago** head for the translucent waters, coral reefs and excellent facilities around **Crown Point** on the low-lying southwestern tip. The vibrant capital, **Scarborough**, with its market and historic fort, offers a more genuine picture of local life, while the rugged windward (or Atlantic) coast is best known for the waterfall and cocoa estate at **Argyle** and the island's finest snorkelling and scuba diving at **Speyside**. The leeward (or Caribbean) coast promises some superb beaches, kicking off with the clear green waters of **Mount Irvine** and the wide sweeps of sand at **Stonehaven Bay** and **Turtle Beach**; further afield there's the twin bays at **Castara** to the palm-lined swathe of **Englishman's Bay**. On the northeast tip, the pretty village of **Charlotteville** has the sublime Pirate's Bay as well as the none-too-shabby Man O'War Bay.

CARNIVAL

Trinidad's **Carnival** is all about participation: rather than watching from the sidelines as in Rio – whether young or old, big or small, anyone with a willingness to “wine their waist” and “get on bad” is welcome to sign up with a masquerade band, which gets you a costume and the chance to dance through the streets alongside tens of thousands of fellow revellers. Preceded by weeks of all-night outdoor fetes, as parties here are known, as well as competitions for the best steel bands and calypso and soca singers, the main event starts at 4am on Carnival Sunday with **Jouvert** (pronounced “jou-vay”). This anarchic and raunchy street party is pure, unadulterated bacchanalia, with generous coatings of mud, chocolate, oil or body paint – and libations of local rum, of course – helping you lose all inhibitions and slip and slide through the streets until morning in an anonymous mass of dirty, drunken, happy humanity, chipping along to steel bands, sound-system trucks or the traditional “rhythm section” percussionists. Once the sun is fully up, and a sluice down with a hose has dispensed with the worst of the mud, the masquerade bands hit the streets, their costumed followers dancing along in the wake of the pounding soca. Monday is a mere warm-up for the **main parade** the following day, however, when full costumes are worn and the streets are awash with colour. The music trucks are back in earnest and the city reverberates with music, becoming one giant street party, until “las lap” and total exhaustion closes proceedings for another year.

When to go

Though T&T's **temperatures** remain tropical year-round, most people visit between January and March, when **Carnival** explodes into life, the trees are in bloom and the climate is at its most forgiving – the sun shines, rain is rare and the nights are cool. By May, the lack of rain has parched the formerly lush landscape: greens turn to yellow, dust clouds put the views into soft focus and bush fire rages through Trinidad's hills. Around the end of May, the **rainy season** begins, and the skies open up with dramatic deluges that can last all day. The wet season lasts until November, but there's usually a respite from the downpours in September, a period of hot sunshine and blue skies known as the **petit carem**. It's an excellent time to visit, with flights at low-season rates, though you'll find the resorts a little quiet. Some Tobago hoteliers raise rates during the **high season** (Dec 15–April 15), and those in Trinidad's Grande Riviere do the same during the turtle-laying season (March–Sept), but most of the smaller hotels charge the same year-round in both islands. During Carnival week, however, all Port of Spain hotels and guesthouses boost their rates.

CLIMATE IN PORT OF SPAIN												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
AVERAGE DAILY TEMPERATURE												
Maximum	31.0°	31.0°	32.0°	32.0°	32.0°	32.0°	31.0°	30.0°	29.0°	28.0°	27.0°	31.0°
Minimum	25.0°	25.0°	25.0°	25.0°	25.0°	25.0°	25.0°	25.0°	25.0°	25.0°	25.0°	25.0°
AVERAGE RAINFALL												
mm	60	41	46	55	64	107	218	246	95	70	85	125



SPEYSIDE LOOKOUT POINT

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SCARLET IBIS: WATERFALL, NORTH TOBAGO

AUTHOR PICKS

Our authors have travelled the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago, shimmying through the streets at Carnival, body-surfing at the beaches and sampling the best of the islands' cuisine. Here are their highlights.

Carnival time Arrive in time to check out the panyards and party at the fetes, then cover yourself in mud and chip along to a rhythm section for Jouvert, and bring out the bling to play mas in the main parades. [Carnival](#) is simply the most fun you will ever have.

Tropical birdlife Whether you get up close and personal with [hummingbirds](#), see the scarlet ibis at [Caroni Swamp](#) or spend an afternoon spotting the mindboggling number of colourful species at [Asa Wright](#), T&T's rich birdlife is not just for the hardened twitcher.

Street food From a hot cup of corn soup to a filled-to-bursting roti dressed with curried mango, plus early morning chickpea doubles and paper bags of pholourí dipped into spicy tamarind sauce, T&T's [street food](#) is ridiculously moreish.

Go cocoa loco Indulge in some chocolate tourism, exploring the cocoa groves at [Velja Estate](#), [Brass Seco](#), [San Antonio](#) or [Tobago Cocoa Estate](#), and take a taste of T&T home via a bar, a box of divine chocolates or some brewing cocoa and nibs.

Swim in a waterfall From floating in cool water under a rainforest canopy, to getting a watery massage, waterfalls are a highlight of T&T; [Rio Seco](#) to [Argyle](#), [Sombasson](#), and [Paria](#) are four of the best.

The deep south There's much more to the south than the Pitch Lake, from beachside palm groves and gorgeous wetlands at Columbus Bay and Tacos to history and culture at Moruga – plus a friendly, hospitable and uniquely southside vibe.

Our author recommendations don't end here. We've flagged up our favourite places – a perfectly sited hotel, an atmospheric café, a special restaurant – throughout the guide, highlighted with the ★ symbol.

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15 THINGS NOT TO MISS

It's not possible to see everything that Trinidad and Tobago have to offer in one trip – and we don't suggest you try. What follows gives a taste of the islands' highlights: gorgeous beaches, thrilling nightlife, fine food and exotic wildlife. All highlights have a reference to take you into the Guide, where you can find out more.



1 [North coast drive](#) The drive along Trinidad's northern coastline provides glimpses of innumerable rainforest-smothered headlands, and stopoffs at some fantastic beaches.



2 [Hiking in the Northern Range](#) Trinidad's Northern Range hills offer excellent hiking, with hundreds of [trails](#) through the lush forest.



3 [Carapichaima](#) Carapichaima provides a great introduction to Indo-Trinidadian culture, from the Temple in the Sea at Waterloo to the gigantic Hanuman Murti statue.



4 [Panyards](#) Take a pre-Carnival tour of Port of Spain's panyards to hear practice sessions for the coveted Panorama prize.



5 **Turtle-watching** Visit in season and you can watch [leatherback turtles](#) lay their eggs in the sand or see the [hatchlings](#) make their way to the sea.



6 [Escapism at Grande Riviere](#) Close to swimmable rivers and rainforest hikes, this remote and unspoiled coastal village is a fabulous place escape the crowds any time of the year.



7 [Port of Spain nightlife](#) From jumping up at an outdoor fete to dancing the night away at a club or bar, there are few reasons to go to bed early in the nation's capital.



8 [Trinbago cuisine](#) From curry crab and dumplin' at Store Bay to gourmet Creole dishes at *Chaud*, T&Ts rich pot-pourri of influences has created a delicious and unique cuisine.



9 [Birdwatching at Asa Wright](#) This standout nature centre is one of the best places in T&T for a spot of birdwatching.



10 [Cruising along Tobago's coast](#) A boat ride along the island's Caribbean coast provides a spectacularly different perspective on Tobago's scenery.



11 [Trinidad's east coast](#) Enjoy some Trini-style beach time or explore the fantastically diverse forests and wetlands of Nariva Swamp.



12 Tobago's beaches From the emerald waters of [Mount Irvine](#) to the often-deserted [Englishman's Bay](#), Tobago's beaches offer plenty of variety beyond the palm-trees-and-white-sand scene.



13 [Hummingbirds at Yerette](#) Witness these magical little birds flitting around the sugar-water feeders of a private garden in the Maracas–St Joseph valley.



14 [Speyside diving](#) With intricate reefs patrolled by shoals of colourful fish, the waters offshore of Speyside are a delight.

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