

TRAVEL LOG



SERENITY ON SAINT LUCIA'S SOUTH COAST

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Photo: Night Magic, Credit: Serenity at Coconut Bay

By: Melanie Reffes

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Sitting pretty in the Eastern Caribbean, St. Lucia is vacation perfection with the majestic twin peaks called the Pitons, sandy beaches, tropical fare to-dine-for, plenty of diving and snorkeling, retro-quiet fishing villages, the only drive-through volcano in the world and Marigot Bay, described by novelist James A. Michener as 'the most beautiful Bay in the Caribbean'.

"Getting to the island is a breeze with direct winter service from Montreal, year-round connections through Toronto and vacation packages through Air Canada Vacations, WestJet Vacations, Sunwing Vacations and Travelbrands," said Dunstan James, director marketing, St. Lucia Tourist Board in Canada. "With a wide range of accommodations, natural attractions, a variety of festivals filled with rich French-Creole heritage, Saint Lucia is an ideal destination for Quebecers." — www.stlucia.org

Location, location, location

From the affordable to the upscale, there is no shortage of beds for heads. Most of the resorts are in the north, which means a long hilly drive (up to two hours) from the Hewanorra International Airport in the south. For those who prefer a baggage claim-to-beach holiday, opt for a stay on the southern tip and check into the all-inclusive Coconut Bay Resort & Spa and the brand new, adults-only Serenity at Coconut Bay — both five minutes (literally five minutes) from the airport.

On a nearly two kilometre stretch of beach, Coconut Bay invites with 250 rooms shared between the adults-only Harmony and the family-friendly Splash wing. Sweetening the vacation pot, the resort comes with nine restaurants, seven bars, five pools, spa, windsurfing, Kidz Klub and CocoLand, St. Lucia's largest waterpark. "Canadians love our location and are on the beach with a cocktail in hand soon after arriving to the island," said Zachary Frangos, general manager." — <http://cbayresort.com>

Butlers, plunge pools and soaking tubs

A resort-within-the bigger resort, Serenity at Coconut Bay is an oasis of grown-up relaxation with 36 suites, each with a saltwater plunge pool, hammocks strung between two coconut palms, big soaking tub, four-poster bed, artsy river rock décor and all the privacy you can soak up on the patio that is closed off to the world with a white picket fence. Upping the all-inclusive ante, add private airport transfers, sips and snacks at two bars and one restaurant, 24-hour room service and access to all the fun and food at the larger Coconut Bay Resort. En suite extras run the gamut from blenders for shaking up fruity cocktails and a wet bar with premium spirits and Piton beer to Wi-Fi that really works and room service delivery of a cuppa Cocoa Tea to greet the sunrise. And yes, there is a butler assigned to every suite.



Photo: Couples Massage, Credit: Serenity at Coconut Bay

For a lap and a nap, the pool is a watery showpiece with in-the-water loungers, daybeds, cabanas and servers who deliver cocktails (thumbs up to the watermelon mojitos), hors d'oeuvres, chilled towels and cooling herbal mists. Twosome time rocks at a butler-packed beach picnic that comes with Instagram-worthy vistas of the Maria Islands Nature Reserve and siesta time in a cabana. When the sun sets, a couples massage and romantic dinner under the stars keeps the theme.

At The Greathouse, Chef Dennis Boitnott works his magic with local bounty and seafood so fresh, it's still angry. Opening in October, Chef's Table is a family-style spread of downhome Creole favourites like sweet potatoes gussied up with cinnamon and nutmeg, curried pumpkin, breadfruit balls (like potatoes, but sweeter) and heaping platters of chicken, fish and beef. Ask for a drizzle of the house hot pepper sauce and you've got a real deal Saint Lucian feast. — <https://serenityatcoconutbay.com>

Land and sea

Get out and about on a sunset cruise past the Pitons, snorkeling and diving to see gigantic black coral trees and purple vase sponges and leisurely sails on a comfy catamaran. For those who prefer to keep their feet on land, calorie-burners include Segway tours and cycling through the rainforest, and on the must-do list, the market in the capital city of Castries is where you'll find colourful madras cloth and yummy chocolate made on the island since the 1700s. In the town of Soufriere, fan favourites are the drive-through volcano, Botanical Gardens and Diamond Waterfalls. — <http://cbayresort.com/adventure>

For foodies who like to eat local, head up to Anse La Raye on the west coast for the Friday night fish fry. Enterprising cooks grill lobster, red snapper and ladle bowls with hefty portions of slow-simmered pepper pot stew. Vendors at the ramshackle bars that line the beach pour nonstop rum shots while rocking bands keep the party going past midnight.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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