

Caribbean Cruise Ports

What to do when you get there?

By Melanie Reffes

Photo Credit: Fashionable House Wife



Montego Bay, the port is a partnership between **Royal Caribbean Cruises** and the Port Authority of Jamaica. The dock is big enough to host the *Oasis of the Seas* and *Allure of the Seas*; the world's largest cruise ships. In one of the island's most storied cities dating back more than two centuries, Falmouth is where Olympians Veronica Campbell-Brown and Usain Bolt were born. Close to the port, hop on the Historic Falmouth by Trolley tour to see remnants of the once bustling sugar industry, a Baptist Church that was the headquarters of the movement to abolish slavery, and the centuries-old Jewish cemetery. Close by in Little Port Royal Village, Dolphin Cove is home to sharks and stingrays, and at Mystic Mountain, waterslides entertain the entire brood.

www.hfcport.com

DOCK FOR A DAY

In Grand Cayman, the big players from **Carnival** and **Disney**, to **Royal Caribbean** and **Princess Cruises** pull into one of four anchorages in George Town; capital city of Grand Cayman. Three cruise terminals; North Terminal, South Terminal and Royal Watler Terminal are where passengers are tendered to shore and back to the ship. There are plenty of excursions from George Town with its duty-free shops, six-hundred banks, and Stingray City where Atlantic rays that look like floating dinner plates cavort with swimmers in the shallow sand bars. Serious divers will find everything they need in the East End.

www.caymanislands.ky



Cayman Islands 3 Cruise Ship
Credit: Patrick Gorham Cayman Islands
Department of Tourism

The Caribbean is one of the most coveted cruising destinations in the world, with millions of vacationers sailing into the wild blue wonder for an adventure on the high seas. Big boats mean big business with some cruise ships wider than the wingspan of a Boeing 747, and suites larger than many apartments in Manhattan. Rivaling amenities at a six-star resort, perks run the gamut from wine bars and chocolate buffets to casinos and rock-climbing walls. Yes, a cruise liner may be your client's fantasy home away from home but the authentic Caribbean experience is in the towns where the ships drop anchor.

ANCHORS AWAY

Popular with half a million cruisers a year, Curacao Mega Pier is for the uber-large ships that can't fit under the Queen Ju-

liana Bridge that links *Punda*, or downtown, with *Otrobanda*, the other side of Willemstad. Those who want to keep it simple head to Fort Rif and the adjacent **Renaissance Curacao** with shops like the Royal Dutch Cheesery, where masters teach the fine art of eating cheese. For those who prefer a day away from the city, there are plenty of taxis to take you to swim and snorkel on Playa Kip Beach and on the northwest coast, Cas Abao Beach ups the ante with a seaside massage gazebo and daiquiri bar. For nature buffs who like to get off their duff, Christoffel National Park is home to Boca Grandi caves and Mount Christoffel, which at 1292 feet is the highest point on the island.

www.curacao.com

In Jamaica, Falmouth Cruise Port is the new kid on the cruise block. On the north coast, eighteen miles east of

Bermuda's Royal Dockyard will welcome more than one hundred and fifty cruise ships this year, up from 135 in 2015. Once the bastion of Royal Naval influence in the western Atlantic, the dockyard was the starting point for ships that changed history, like the British fleet that sailed during the War of 1812 to seize Washington DC. One-stop-shopping for folks who don't want to stray too far from the ship, the Royal Naval Dockyard is fun with restaurants, shops and bars, like the Frog & Onion that pours the only beer brewed on the island. With stops in front of the National Museum or Clocktower Mall, pink and blue buses make the trip to Hamilton, and for those who like flowers and pink sand; Bus #7 will take you to the Botanical Gardens and the beaches on the south shore. www.dockyardbermuda.com

BOATS AND BEACHES

Busy and bustling, Nassau is the largest port in The Bahamas, welcoming 3 million passengers each year. Up to seven big ships dock at the same time at the Prince George Wharf, where you'll find the Festival Place Welcome Center. Taxis (look for

those with yellow license plates), buses that are called jitneys (\$1.25 per ride) and horse-drawn surreys (yes, real horses) make the short trip to downtown Nassau. Compact enough that you won't get lost, there's a lot to see, like the Straw Market, Queen's Staircase, and for those with kids in tow; Pirates Museum, in a pink building at the corner of King and George Streets, is an interactive fun house with a whole lotta campy loot in the gift shop. Cabs and buses go to Cable Beach where you can hang ten with a frosty Kalik beer and nibble on conch fritters. A good bet for families, hoof it one mile up Chippingham Road to Ardastra Gardens (www.ardastra.com) for the Flamingo Show starring thirty pink birds marching in unison. Golfers won't be disappointed at the 18-hole Nassau Cable Beach Golf Course; the oldest course in The Bahamas. www.nassauparadiseisland.com

More than two million visitors arrive by ship, making St. Maarten the busiest

port in the Leeward Island chain. The giant floating cities dock on the Dutch side at the A.C. Wathey Pier in Phillipsburg, while the smaller ones drop anchor in Great Bay with tenders transporting cruise ship-ers to the center of town. (www.portstmaarten.com) Fifteen minutes on foot from the terminal or a five minute water taxi ride (\$5.00), Front Street is where you'll find bargains priced up to sixty percent less than at home, and plenty of sightseeing in the St. Maarten Museum. For yachties or wannabees, 12 Metre Challenge at Bobby's Marina next to the port is family fun with 3-hour regattas departing at 8:30am, 10:00am, 11:45am and 1:30pm. www.12metre.com

St Maarten Aerial Of Port
Credit: Port St Maarten



NEWS

CUBA CRUISE

Celestyal Cruises is pleased to announce its newest port of call Punta Frances for the upcoming 2016-2017 Caribbean season, replacing Maria La Gorda on Celestyal Cruises' all-inclusive seven-day Cuba itinerary. Located on the secluded Isla de la Juventud (Isle of Youth), Punta Frances features nearly two miles of sugary white sand beaches and crystalline Caribbean seas where travelers can discover the natural splendors of one of the country's most memorable marine sanctuaries: Punta Frances National Marine Park. The revised itinerary offers travelers opportunities to enjoy both on-board and on-shore the unique immersion in Cuban natural beauty and deep-dive into an authentic Cuban experience. The updated 7-day, all-inclusive Celestyal Cruises Cuba cruise itinerary to be performed starting in November 2016, through the end of 2017 offers embarkation in either Havana, Cuba or Montego Bay, Jamaica and is scheduled weekly.

www.yourcubacruise.com

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