



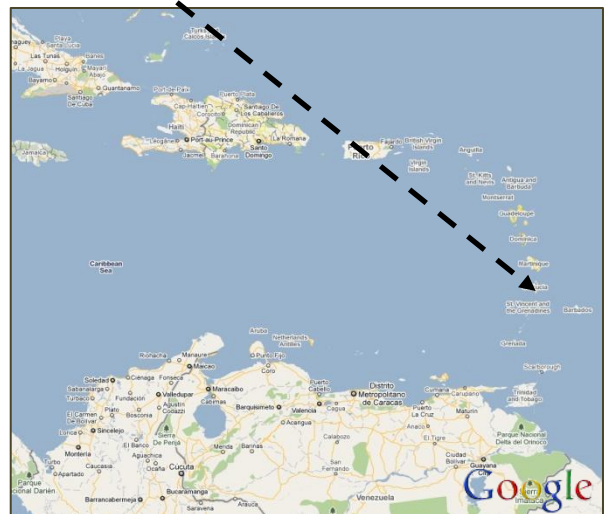
Trekking the Planet

Discovering the Cultural and Natural Significance of the World



Where are we now?

- Darren and Sandy are in St. Lucia, located at 14° N and 61° W.
- We have traveled approximately 56,847 miles (91,524 kilometers) from our starting point in California.



People and Culture

- There are 13 countries and 17 territories in the Caribbean. It gets its name from the Carib tribe that inhabited the islands prior to European discovery.
- Christopher Columbus discovered many of the islands during his four voyages to the area from 1492 to 1504. The area was originally called the West Indies because Columbus thought he had reached Asia.
- Almost every island was colonized by Europeans, including the British, French, Danish, Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish and Swedish. The population grew as slaves were brought in to the area from the 1500s to the 1800s. Many of the current Caribbean population of approximately 40 million people are African descendants.
- Tourism is important to the Caribbean. It comprises a great percentage of the economy and is the largest source of employment on many of the islands.
- St. Lucia was discovered during Columbus's explorations. The first explorers were fought back by the Caribs until 1651 when the French, from the neighboring island of Martinique, staked a claim. The island moved back and forth between French and British rule until the British gained control in 1814. St. Lucia became independent in 1979.

Did you know?

The island of Saint Martin is the smallest inhabited territory in the world divided by two nations. It was discovered by Columbus during his second voyage. In 1648 a treaty divided the island between France and the Netherlands. Half the island (population 41,000) is a Dutch territory (Sint Maarten) and the other half (population 36,000) is a French possession (Saint-Martin).



Dutch Sint Maarten

(source: Newworldencyclopedia.org)



St. Lucia (source: Skvots.net)



Caribbean map (source: Caribbean.com.au)

The West Indian Manatee

This mammal is found in shallow rivers and coastal areas of Florida and the northern South American coast. They grow to an average of 10 feet (three meters) long and weigh about 1,000 pounds (453 kilograms). Manatees are herbivores and can eat 10-15% of their weight daily. Their population is threatened by collisions with boats, ingestion of fish hooks or litter and loss of habitat. There are about 4,500 left in the wild.



sources: Encyclopediaofearth.org,
Theflatlandalmanack.typepad.com

Nature and Environment

- The Caribbean region is comprised of the Caribbean Sea, its islands and the North American and South American coasts. There are more than 7,000 islands, reefs and cays in this area with just a small percentage that are inhabited.
- The islands are grouped into three areas: the Bahamas / Turks and Caicos, Greater Antilles (Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Cuba, Dominican Republic and Haiti) and Lesser Antilles (other islands). The Greater Antilles islands comprise 90% of the total Caribbean land area.
- Caribbean weather is tropical, with two seasons: wet (July to December) and dry (January to June). Hurricanes can be a threat from June to November.
- The islands have a wide variety of plants, with about 13,000 species. Cuba alone has more than 6,500 different plants and is by far the most diverse island in the region. Habitat destruction has been taking place in Cuba since the 1960s, making conservation a priority.
- The world's smallest snake, the Barbados Threadsnake, is found in the Caribbean. It is four inches (10 centimeters) long and 0.9 inches (24.3 millimeters) in diameter.



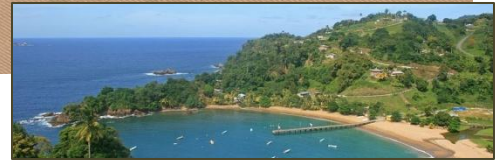
source: Wikipedia.org

Our Plans

- We visited Sint Maarten a few days ago. After spending the day in St. Lucia, we will go to Trinidad and Tobago.
- Our next stop after that will be in South America, as we spend a day in French Guiana before heading to Brazil and up the Amazon River.
- We would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year! We appreciate all the support and good wishes we have received!
- As we get closer to our next trek in the Amazon, please contact us with what you would like us to report on while we are in South America and we will try to include it in a further update.

Trinidad and Tobago

Located in the southeastern portion of the Caribbean, these two islands were discovered during the 1498 Columbus voyage. They were later colonized by the British. Oil was discovered in 1857 and it is the third largest exporter of petroleum in the Western Hemisphere. Tobago is a much smaller island than Trinidad, making up only 6% of their total area. Trinidad and Tobago gained independence in 1962.



source: Flickr.com/Cheesy42

More Information

- <http://www.factmonster.com/atlas/caribbean.html>
- <http://www.caribbean-search.com/fastfacts.cfm>
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caribbean>
- <http://www.islandflave.com/caribbean-history>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Caribbean
- <http://www.savethemanatee.org/manfacts.htm>
- <http://www.columbusnavigation.com/cctl.shtml>

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