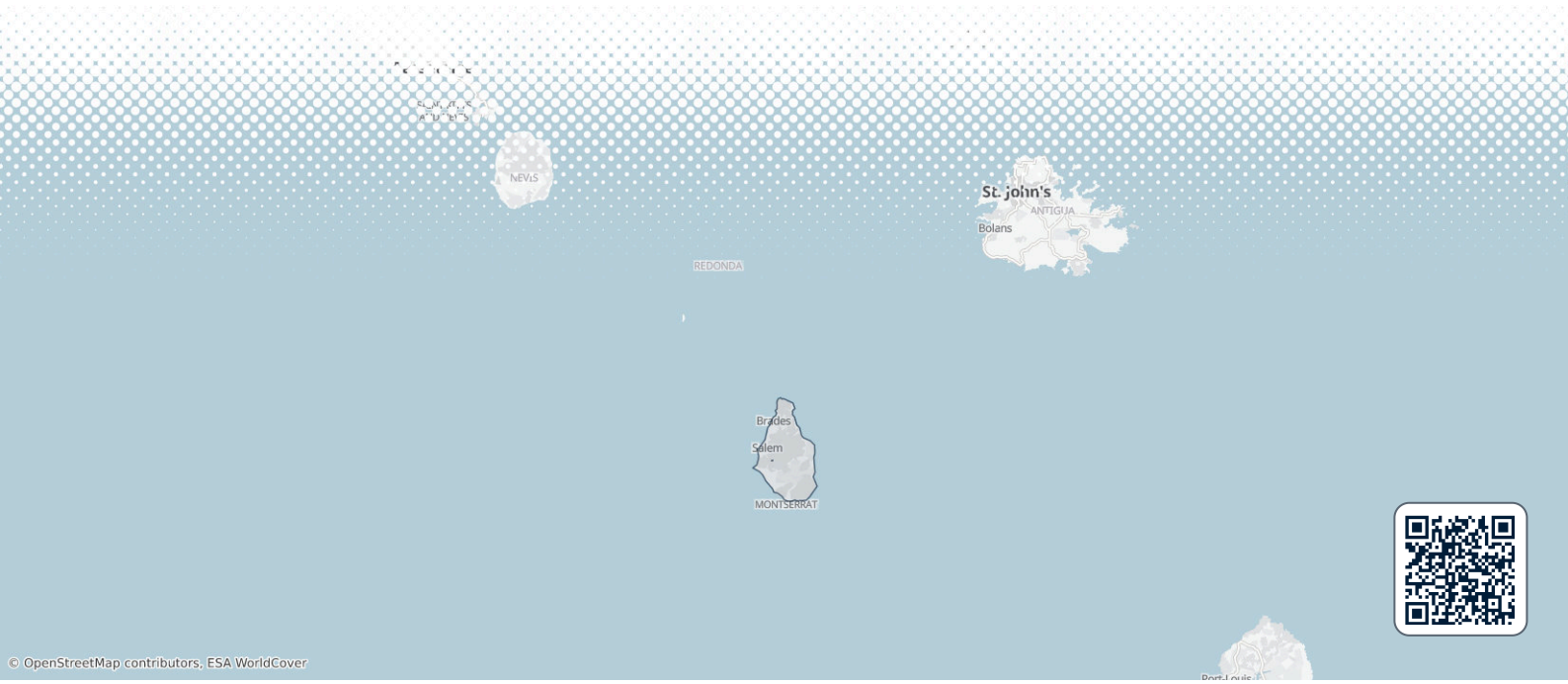


Montserrat

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



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Overview

Montserrat is a small, green and mountainous British Overseas Territory in the Eastern Caribbean. The island is about 16 km long, and fewer than 5,000 people live here. Its story changed in 1995, when the Soufrière Hills volcano woke up. In the following years, eruptions buried the old capital, Plymouth, under ash and mud. The south of the island is still a closed **exclusion zone**, and daily life now happens in the north, around Brades and Little Bay.

Montserrat suits travelers who want quiet nature and an unusual story, not big resorts. You can see the volcano from viewpoints such as Jack Boy Hill, look down on the buried town from Garibaldi Hill, and learn how scientists watch it at the Montserrat Volcano Observatory. Hike the forest trails of the Centre Hills, swim at black-sand beaches like Woodlands Beach, and visit the National Museum of Montserrat in Little Bay. The island calls itself the Emerald Isle of the Caribbean because of its Irish heritage, and its St Patrick's festival in March is a highlight of the year.

Money & payments

Prices are shown in Eastern Caribbean dollars (EC$), which have a fixed exchange rate to the US dollar. Many businesses also accept US dollars.

Small restaurants, taxis, minibuses, tour guides and roadside stalls often take cash only. **Do not rely on local ATMs**, because they may not accept foreign cards. Bring enough US dollars or EC$ with you, for example from Antigua. Montserrat is not a cheap island: most food is imported, and accommodation is mainly small guesthouses and private villas.

Typical costs

Rough prices in touristic areas, per person

Hotel (double room, per night) guesthouse or villa room for two, per night	250 – 600 XCD €82 – €197
Dinner (mid-range restaurant) main course at a sit-down restaurant	60 – 120 XCD €20 – €39
Inexpensive meal local lunch plate or takeaway	20 – 40 XCD €7 – €13
Local beer	6 – 10 XCD €2 – €3
Water small bottle from a shop	3 – 5 XCD €1 – €2

Currency

CURRENCY	1 XCD	1 XCD
XCD	**0.3289 EUR**	**0.3694 USD**
	1 EUR = 3.04 XCD	1 USD = 2.707 XCD

Cards accepted in major venues

Tipping

Tipping is appreciated but relaxed. Check restaurant bills first, because some already include a service charge. Tour guides and taxi driver-guides are an important part of any visit, and they usually receive a tip for a full-day tour.

Restaurant 10 % if no service charge on the bill	Optional
Taxi round up	Optional
Tour guide 10–15 % of the tour price	Expected
Hotel a few EC$ for porters and housekeeping	Optional
Bar	Not customary

Electricity

You may find both US-style and British-style sockets, often in the same building. Bring an adapter that covers both. Most phone and laptop chargers work fine. The voltage can differ between sockets, so check other devices before you plug them in.

ELECTRICITY



Type A

ELECTRICITY



Type B

ELECTRICITY



Type G

230 V · 60 Hz

Language

English is the official language, and all signs, menus and official information are in English. Among themselves, locals often speak Montserrat Creole, an English-based Creole with a strong local accent and its own words. People switch to standard English easily when speaking with visitors.

Safety & emergencies

Montserrat is a very safe island with low crime. Use normal care: lock your car and do not leave bags in it.

The main risk is natural. The Soufrière Hills volcano is still active, and the south of the island, including Plymouth, is a **closed exclusion zone**. Entering it without permission is illegal. Plymouth can only be visited on an approved tour with a certified guide. Check the current hazard level and access rules on the Montserrat Volcano Observatory website before you go.

The hurricane season runs from June to November. Heavy rain can cause landslides and floods, especially in the Belham Valley. Many hiking trails are steep and slippery, so hike with a local guide.

Emergency numbers

GENERAL EMERGENCY	POLICE	AMBULANCE	FIRE BRIGADE
911	999	999	999

Health

Tap water comes from mountain springs and is generally fine to drink. After heavy rain, storms or ashfall, switch to bottled water.

Dengue and Zika are present. Use insect repellent, especially at dawn and dusk. There is one small hospital and a few health centres. Serious cases need evacuation to a nearby island, and medical flights can only leave in daylight. Good travel insurance with evacuation cover is essential.

There are only a couple of pharmacies, and some medicines can be out of stock. Bring enough of any prescription medicine for your whole stay.

Visas & entry

Many visitors, including British citizens, can stay for up to six months without a visa. Other nationalities should check whether they need a visa before booking. All flights connect through Antigua or St Maarten, so you must also meet the entry rules of your connecting island.

Every visitor must complete the online immigration and customs form. It opens 72 hours before your travel date. Save or print the receipt and show it on arrival: Montserrat immigration and customs portal. A departure tax applies when you leave, and it is usually included in the air fare.

> Visa and entry requirements change frequently. Verify current requirements with the official immigration authority or your country's embassy before travel.

Etiquette

Montserrat is small, friendly and quite conservative. People greet each other. Say "good morning" or "good afternoon" before you ask a question in a shop or on the street.

- **Dress**: swimwear is for the beach only. Cover up in shops, restaurants and villages.
- **Church**: Sunday is a quiet church day. Dress neatly if you attend a service.
- **Photos**: ask before you take close-up photos of people.
- **Pace**: service is relaxed and unhurried. Patience goes a long way.

Holidays & opening hours

Shops, banks and government offices close on public holidays. The two big celebrations are the St Patrick's festival in March and the Christmas festival season, which runs from December until 1 January. During both, many events take place and accommodation fills up early.

Many shops close on Sunday. Many small businesses keep short or flexible hours, so call ahead before you make a special trip.

Public holidays

Jan 1	New Year's Day
Mar 17	Saint Patrick's Day
Dec 25	Christmas Day
Dec 26	Boxing Day
Dec 31	Festival Day
movable — Mar/Apr	Easter Monday
movable — Aug	Emancipation Day
movable — Mar/Apr	Good Friday
movable — May	Labour Day
movable — Jun	Queen's Birthday
movable — May/Jun	Whit Monday

Getting around

All roads and towns are in the north, because the south is a closed exclusion zone. There are no traffic lights.

- **By air**: small planes fly to John A. Osborne Airport from Antigua in about 20 minutes, and from St Maarten in about 50 minutes. Seats are few, so book early.
- **By sea**: the passenger ferry from Antigua is suspended until further notice. Check the Montserrat Tourism Authority for updates.
- **By minibus**: private minivans with a licence plate starting with "H" work as buses. They have no timetable and stop anywhere on the main road when you wave.
- **By taxi or tour**: taxis wait at the airport and can be booked by your accommodation. Taxis have no meters, so agree the fare before the ride. Many drivers also work as tour guides, which is the easiest way to see the viewpoints.
- **By car**: renting a car gives the most freedom. You need a temporary local licence, see the Driving section.

Driving

Montserrat drives **on the left**. Roads are narrow and winding, with sharp hairpin bends and steep drops, but traffic is light.

- **Licence**: you need a temporary visitor's licence together with your home licence. Apply online at least 72 hours before travel at Government of Montserrat driving licence services, or in person at the airport or the police headquarters in Brades. Drivers with a full licence from another OECS country do not need one.
- **Key rules**: the speed limit is very low everywhere. Local drivers do not always keep to it, so expect cars in the middle of the road on blind bends.
- **Restricted areas**: never drive into the exclusion zone in the south. Roads into it are closed.
- **Tolls**: there are no road tolls.
- **Parking**: free and easy almost everywhere.
- **Fuel**: there are only two fuel stations, both in the north. Fill up when you pass one, and carry some cash.
- **Electric vehicles**: do not plan on public charging. Rent a petrol car.

URBAN	RURAL	PETROL	DIESEL
32 km/h	32 km/h	Gasoline	Diesel

Drive on the left

No motorway vignette needed

Food & drink

Food on Montserrat is simple, home-style Caribbean cooking. Breakfast is often saltfish with fried johnny cakes. Lunch is the main meal for many locals, and small takeaways serve plates of chicken, fish, rice and peas and local vegetables. Dinner is usually eaten early, and only a few restaurants stay open late.

The national dish is **goat water**, a rich, spiced goat stew. It is served at festivals, family events and on weekends. Fresh fish is common, often grilled. The island's former signature dish, "mountain chicken", is a giant frog that is now critically endangered and protected, so it is no longer served. For drinks, try fresh local juices such as soursop, passion fruit or sorrel, and rum punch. Most locals eat at small family restaurants, roadside grills and beach bars rather than formal dining rooms.

What to eat & drink

BREAKFAST

Saltfish and johnny cakes
Sautéed salted cod with fried dough cakes.

DINNER

Fresh grilled fish
Local catch such as snapper or mahi-mahi, grilled and served with rice and peas.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Coconut tart
Pastry filled with sweetened grated coconut.

DRINKS

Rum punch
Rum mixed with fruit juice, lime and spices.

Fresh fruit juices
Soursop, passion fruit, guava or sorrel, often homemade.

SIGNATURE DISHES

Goat water
Rich, spiced goat stew, the national dish, often served with bread rolls.

Montserrat – Plan Your Trip
Turn the places from this guide into a real itinerary, with smart routing, time estimates, and everything you need for a perfect trip.
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DATA SOURCES

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