

■ Day-tours

Bequia, Mustique and Tobago Cays fall within the day-tour category. Nearly every operator has these, separately or in combination, as standard tours.



Treasure Tours, ☎ 784-456-6432, treasuretours@vincysurf.com, visits the **Turtle Sanctuary** on Bequia (see page 143), the **Old Fort** on Mount Pleasant and, after some free time, sails back to the main-

land. Other interesting options are moonlight tours by sea or on land.

Archipelago Tours, ☎ 784-456-1686, archtours@caribsurf.com, takes passengers to the Tobago Cays, the rainforest, the volcano; you name it, they do it.

Sam's Taxi Tours, ☎ 784-456-4338, sam-taxitours@caribsurf.com, is another smooth operator with a 29-seater bus, as well as smaller vehicles in the fleet.

Similar comprehensive tour service is provided by **Pleasure Island Charters**, ☎ 784-493-2352, pleasureisland@vincysurf.com.

Sightseeing

■ Kingstown



Kingstown is very much a working capital and, as some would suggest, does not lend itself to tourism. The hustle and bustle around the harbor and backstreets might prove too frantic for those expecting a leisurely stroll around a typically sculpted and pedestrianized center with street cafés and souvenir shops.

In Kingstown you have to move with the pace of the place, sharing the main streets with cars, dollar buses and porters with large wooden barrows. The sidewalks are lined with

St. Vincent



street vendors selling everything from fruit and vegetables to hats, CDs and cassette tapes – not really with the tourist in mind.

Begin on Bay Street, a short walk from the ferry and cruise ship terminal. Under the arched stone walkway is **Basil's Restaurant & Bar** and on the floors directly above is the **Cobblestone Hotel**. These two establishments are housed in a renovated sugar warehouse built in 1814. The bar is a busy meeting spot for local businessmen and gets its fair share of travelers. A rooftop restaurant and bar is ideal for those wishing to avoid the air-conditioning and crowds downstairs.

Two blocks farther north along the harbor is the **central police station**. Although it has a history of fires dating back to 1866, it is thought to be one of the oldest buildings in town. The country's quest for modernization



will probably see its demolition in the near future. This is evident by the new buildings surrounding it – the one harborside is the **government financial complex** completed in the 1990s. Opposite is the new **fruit and vegetable market**, dubbed the “Poor Peoples’ Palace,” which opened in 2000 – not necessarily a welcome addition as many of the vendors still prefer to be outside in the open air.

Continue past the market and small war memorial along Bay Street. A concrete tower on the left is **Little Tokyo**, a fish market built by the Japanese vendors. The daily catch is impressive in terms of size and variety. They sell tuna, snapper, jack, barracuda, grouper, mahi mahi – everything you can imagine on an island menu. Next to the fish market is the **bus terminal**. The lines designate the area of St. Vincent the bus is heading. Ask any driver and you'll be pointed in the right direction.



On the inland side of the fruit and vegetable market is the **court-house**, built in 1798. “The Courthouse is built of stone, and contains two rooms on the upper story appropriated for the sittings of the Council and Assembly, with two Committee Rooms; below the Courts of Justice are

held. Here also are the Public Offices of the Registrar, and Marshall; this building stands in front of the Market Place, and is enclosed with an iron railing; behind it the Gaol, the Cage, and the Treadmill are placed.” Charles Shepherd’s description of the courthouse in 1831 still holds true today; only the cage and treadmill fortunately are missing, but the men’s prison is still there. Farther north along Grenville Street are two cathedrals – St. George’s and St. Mary’s – and the Methodist Church.



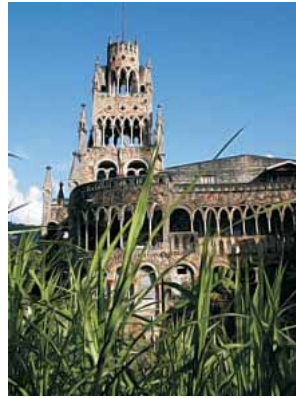
St. George's Cathedral

St. George's is the usual no-frills Anglican structure. It was built in the early 1800s with the addition of a chancel in the late-Victorian years. An earlier church had stood on the site until the hurricane of 1820. Inside, there are elaborate chandeliers and memorials,

such as the one to Rear Admiral Sir Charles Brisbane, governor for 20 years until his death in 1829. Soldiers, planters and other citizens who succumbed to the perils of life in the tropics are buried and remembered here. Perhaps the most understated is William Leyborne Leyborne (not a misprint) who lies beneath a moss-covered obelisk in the graveyard. He was the first governor of the Southern Caribbee Islands in 1770.

The **Methodist Church** is almost directly opposite St George's and was the site of the original Catholic Church. The division between French Catholic and British Protestant was so strong that the church was abandoned shortly after the British took control in 1783. Even when the new St. Mary's was holding its first mass 40 years later, a riot broke out in the street.

St. Mary's Cathedral of the Assumption titillates the eye with its playful Gothic exterior, a creation of the Belgian father, Dom Charles Verbeke, in the 1930s. The interior is 100 years older and more subdued in style, although quiet contemplation is sometimes broken by sounds emanating from the adjoining primary school.



St. Mary's Cathedral

Past St. Mary's, and behind a modern gas station, is the Kingstown General Hospital, now renovated and renamed the **Milton Cato Memorial Hospital**. This is the one structure we don't mind seeing upgraded into the 21st century. The old building, still standing, is rather gruesome and did little to promote wellness.



Half a mile inland from the hospital are the **Botanical Gardens**. These are the oldest botanical gardens in the Western Hemisphere, dating from 1763. A breadfruit tree grows from a sucker brought to

the island by Captain William Bligh. The gardens are open daily from 6 am to 6 pm and are free to the public. Please note that taking a guided tour is not obligatory, but several guides

wait for business at the entrance. These gentlemen are expert and knowledgeable guides and we highly recommend you take a tour with them to get the full benefit of your visit. Tours last from an hour to 90 minutes and the fee is set by the government at EC\$20 for two people. An additional gratuity will not be out of place. If you have only an hour or two to spend in Kingstown then this is the place you should visit.



Annexed to the gardens is the **Nichols Wildlife Complex**, which sounds fancier than it actually is. The few resident animals and birds are housed in kennel-like facilities. At least you can get a good look at the St. Vincent parrot.

If you're planning to visit the Vermont Nature Trails (see page 65), this gives you a preview of the endangered bird you might see in its natural habitat.

Until recently, the gardens housed an archaeological museum in the old curator's house. Arawak and Carib artifacts were collected from all over the island and kept here under the auspices of Dr. Earle Kirby. The old **Carnegie Library** building on Granby Street is the proposed home for the collection in the near future.



View from Fort Charlotte

The road behind the Hospital and Kingstown cemetery leads up to **Fort Charlotte** at the northwest point overlooking Kingstown Harbour. Near the top, the road narrows to one lane. On the garden wall of a house is a historical marker commemorating

King Ja Ja of Opobo, an African king who was in exile in St. Vincent in the late 1800s.