



TOBAGO

If you want burgers and piped-in Bob Marley, you don't want Tobago. This sister island of Trinidad, found off the Venezuelan coast, is a confluence above and below water. Topside, this means complex dishes and a multicultural people with a whole lot of festivals. Underwater, it means speed and size — sure, you can find nudibranchs, but that's not likely what landed Tobago on your list.



For the Drift Diver

It's a tiny island set among the convergence of the North Atlantic Equatorial and Guyana currents. Sound exciting? Heck yeah, if you like a swift ride that, at times, can be unpredictable. What's guaranteed: monstrous sponges that have contorted, like wind-swept palms. Japanese Gardens off Speyside packs an adrenaline-inducing finale at Kamikaze Cut, where the flow carries you between two rock walls. At Bookends, a dive off Little Tobago, tarpon feed and spook the clouds of baitfish here year-round.

For the Big-Fish Lover

Everything in Tobago is bigger, and there's lots of it.

Turtles, rays and nurse sharks rule these reefs year-round. The other big find might as well be the island's mascot: Off every coast, mantas ply the waters April through late June. Because of the currents and steady nutrient supply, Tobago is a stop-off point for many migrating pelagics; head south to sites such as Diver's Thirst for encounters with blacktip reef sharks, eagle rays and nurse sharks.

For the Birder

Even if you've never picked up binoculars before, you'd be remiss not to scout the canopy on Tobago: The island's Asa Wright Nature Center is home to 150 species. Go-it-alone types should pick up a copy of *Birds of Trinidad and*

Tobago — otherwise, hire a guide. Species are tame, so you won't necessarily need binoculars — though they do come in handy. Many birds hail from Venezuela, so species diversity is the largest in the Caribbean, second only to Cuba.

For the Heat Seeker

Learn this word: *kutcheela*. If you want to work up a thirst when noshing on *roti* — a West Indian curry potpie of sorts — the standard order will suit. Otherwise, ask for less of the hot-mango pickle, but don't let the heat dissuade you. Tobago is a place to try the street food whose flavors owe to India, Africa, Latin America and beyond. Another must-try:

doubles, which are two slabs of fried bread with a chickpea curry tucked inside.

For the Culture Vulture

With so many cultures and religions merging on one small island, it follows that holidays are plentiful. Perhaps the most familiar is Carnival: Trinidad hosts the bigger celebration, but the event in Scarborough is raucous enough to shut down traffic. During Diwali — the autumnal Hindu celebration also called the festival of lights — visitors will enjoy the candle displays, street parties and honorific dishes. Tobagonians hold goat races around Easter, as well as harvest and kite-flying festivals. — *BM*

Must Dive

- 1) Dutchman's Reef
- 2) *Maverick* wreck
- 3) London Bridge
- 4) Japanese Gardens
- 5) Coral Gardens

Resort Dive Center

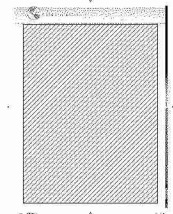
- 1 Blue Waters Inn

FOR MORE INFO

VISIT SPORTDIVER.COM/TOBAGO



J & C SOHNS/AGEFOTOSTOCK; OPPOSITE, FROM TOP: KERI WILK; NORBERT PROBST/AGEFOTOSTOCK



Divemaster's Day Off

“A little restaurant called King's Bay Cafe looks down over the water. I always recommend that folks have the grilled fish. It's absolutely fantastic.”

Wayne Palmer, instructor on island a year and a half

Colorful life such as blennies and sponges below water, and (opposite) colorful birds like the Purple Honey-creeper above.

