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HOW TO TAKE A MEMORABLE TRIP 'DOWN DE ISLANDS' IN TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

Top five things to do when exploring the off-shore islands along Trinidad's northwest coast

PORT OF SPAIN, Trinidad – May 5, 2016 – Have you ever considered visiting an island off an island? Many Caribbean destinations have islands of their own that lie offshore, just waiting to be explored. Visitors to [Trinidad & Tobago](#) are gifted with a variety of experiences to make the most of their visit to the dual-island nation, including cultural events, eclectic cuisine and picturesque beaches. One must-do favored by the locals is 'Down de Islands,' which is known to be a fun-filled and memorable day trip spent exploring the offshore islands of Trinidad's Northwest coast – Chacachacare, Monos, Huevos and Gaspar Grande. The various boat tours depart from the Chaguaramas Heritage Park marina, located about eight miles outside of the capital city of Port of Spain. Here are the top five 'Down de Islands' activities sure to bring out the inner 'Trini' in visitors:

Beach Lime

Whether renting a vacation house on one of the islands or simply taking a day trip, a beach lime is a popular activity complete with ice-cold Carib beer and Angostura rum punch flowing, coupled by a pig roast with fresh spiny lobster on the grill. Many of the islands offer house rentals, which can sleep up to eight or 10 people with event space accommodating up to 40 people, making for a great group vacation or event. With the mountainous view of Trinidad's Northern range and Caribbean waters surrounding, guests also can arrange for a sunset sail for a small or large group to wind down from the eventful day.

Cave Exploration

A 15-minute boat ride from Chaguaramas, the Gaspree Caves lie below the ground on the island of Gaspar Grande, which is essentially a large coral that has been pushed up out of the ocean. At approximately 90 feet deep, the caves were once used by pirates and smugglers to secure stolen treasures and are home to a variety of creatures, including harmless bats. The caves feature formations of Stalactites and Stalagmites which tower over a massive, mysteriously clear pool in the center for explorers to take a dip in. Tours to Gaspar Grande must be booked through an official guide and can be arranged through the Chaguaramas Development Authority by calling (868) 225-4232 or emailing customerservice@chagdev.com.

Fishing

The Chaguaramas waters of Trinidad are one of the top locations for tarpon fishing attracting tarpon novice and veteran anglers for tournaments or those who fish for fun each year. June to November are the prime months for fishing in Trinidad, when the waters offer the perfect conditions for tarpons to thrive. Trinidad's [Tarpon Thunder Tournament](#) takes place each August. This year, the tournament takes place on Friday, August 12. For more information on fishing in Trinidad, visit <http://www.gotrinidadandtobago.com/trinidad/fishing/>.

Historical Sites

A former leper colony, Chacachacare Island attracts both locals and visitors seeking a paranormal experience. Legend has it that the head nun hanged herself in the chapel in the mid-1900's and witnesses have reported seeing the nun walking around with a lantern at night in addition to hearing voices, being pushed and feeling

cold spots. Prior to housing the leper colony, the island served as a cotton plantation and a whaling station. In 1896, the highest lighthouse in the world was built on the island. It has since been downgraded to the second-highest and is still maintained by a lighthouse keeper to this day. With its storied past, the island was previously featured on [Ghost Hunters International](#).

Nelson Island is the largest of the *Five Islands*, which were all previously quarantine islands, and is dominated by the Quarantine Station built in 1802. It was the largest quarantine station for indentured immigrants to Trinidad & Tobago in the 19th and 20th twentieth centuries and is often compared to Ellis Island in the United States due to their similar purposes. In the 1900's, the island also served as a detention center for prisoners.

Water sports and Land Adventure

The waters and islands off the north-western shore of Trinidad offer many water and land activities for adventurers of all ages. Novice kayakers can try their hand at exploring the fairly calm and protected waters of Williams Bay in Chaguaramas and Five Islands, just a little offshore. The more experienced kayaker can paddle to Gaspar, Monos and the Boca Islands. Both Scotland Bay and Chacachacare Island are popular spots for swimming and guided snorkeling tours, which guests will be able to spot feather dusters, sea horses, angle fish, butterfly fish and much more. Stand-up paddle lessons are also available as well as fly boarding, wake boarding and stand-up paddle yoga.

Those seeking a thrilling experience head to Centipede Island, which is only accessible by jumping the boat and swimming to before taking a short but steep and slippery hike to a 40-foot cliff. Adventure-seekers can then repel into the water from the cliff, while others have the option to climb shorter cliffs nearby. After a quick lesson on jumping from the guide, those interested can opt to jump into the sea from some of the shorter cliffs. For more information, please visit <http://www.pariasprings.com/index.html>

For more information on 'Down de Islands' tour operators, visit <http://www.ttitoa.com/>.

About Trinidad & Tobago

Home to the largest Carnival celebration in the Caribbean, Trinidad & Tobago is the southernmost Caribbean nation located seven miles east off the Venezuelan coast. Ranked the happiest nation in the Caribbean by the United Nations' [World Happiness Report](#), in 2013 and 2015, the destination's distinct and harmonious blend of cultures, eclectic cuisine and eco-adventure activities continue to attract travelers of all ages to its shores. Birthplace of the limbo and the world famous steelpan, the only-acoustic instrument invented in the 20th century, as well as a diverse mix of monthly [festivals and events](#), it's little wonder that Trinidad is known as the 'cultural capital of the Caribbean.' Sister island Tobago offers a quintessential Caribbean vibe with secluded beaches, quaint villages, private villas and award-winning environmental treasures. Tobago is home to the largest brain coral in the Western Hemisphere and the oldest protected reserve in the Western hemisphere, The Main Ridge Rainforest. Come explore Trinidad & Tobago - the true Caribbean. For more information on Trinidad & Tobago, visit www.goTrinidadandTobago.com or www.visittobago.gov.tt.

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