

CASTRIES, ST LUCIA, DECEMBER 23rd 2007

We arrive at Castries, the port and capital of St Lucia before breakfast time.

We do not have to return to the ship until 10 pm so we have a whole day to explore this island.

St Lucia (pronounced Loosha) has been fought over by the British and French for hundreds of years, and is now fully self governing. Many of the place names are French, although they drive on the left, and have British style electrical plugs. The official language is English and most of the inhabitants speak a French-Patois.

This morning, we choose to take a catamaran trip to the famous landmarks of the island, - The Pitons, cone shaped volcanic rocks almost 800 metres high. On the way there we see many other small craft making their way along the coast, including the "Unicorn", a galleon which was used in the film "The Pirates of the Caribbean". As we pass it we are "shot at" by its dummy cannon! Apparently St Lucia has been used for many films, including Dr Doolittle, and Superman .





The island appears mountainous, lush and green, with many secluded coves and sandy beaches; there are a number of expensive hotels here including the "Sandals" inclusive resort. Our catamaran stops at one of the beaches and we have a welcoming swim here.

On the catamaran journey back to the ship, we pass many beautiful houses and low rise hotels, and we sail into a sheltered lagoon /marina where there are lots of large yachts. One of these craft is flying the Welsh flag, and was registered in Swansea!



When we return to the quayside, we get together with a group of Van Gogh passengers and hire a minibus to take us to a local beach. As it is Sunday today, there are quite a few locals here, swimming and sunbathing. We have a lunchtime meal, in an open air restaurant on the beach, before returning to the ship.





Back on the quayside, most of the duty free shops and bars are now closed, but one remains open, and is doing a good trade in Rum Punch and local beers. Many of the Travelscope staff are here, all "drowning their sorrows". Some tell us of their own difficulties, Julie our cruise director has just taken out a £160,000 mortgage, and she thinks the house will be repossessed before she and her husband even move in. Other staff cannot wait to get home. We think that there will be some thick heads at 7 am tomorrow morning when we dock at Barbados.

