

ERASMUS CARIBBEAN



Handbook for:
Montserrat

Contents

- Tips and Tricks
 - Before You Stay
 - During Your Stay

- Montserrat - The Facts

- Living in Montserrat
 - Public Transport
 - Communications
 - Food
 - Banking
 - Healthcare

- Map: Caribbean Region
- Map: Montserrat
- Map: Brades



Tips and Tricks

Before you travel:

Below is a list to help you with buying and packing things to bring with you;

- **Light clothing** (shorts, t shirts etc.) In the Caribbean the weather is very hot, around 28-30°C (80-84 °F) so be prepared. Bring light loose clothing.
- **Smart wear.** You may spend time working in an office, attending meetings and at events where you will need to look smart. Please bring appropriate clothing.
- **Long trousers.** Although the Caribbean is hot, it important to cover up, especially in the evening times, to protect yourself from insect bites.
- **Flip flops.** Flip flops are a very popular form of footwear especially for trips to the beach!
- **Comfortable footwear.** Flip flops are not always suitable for important meetings or for hiking!
- **Umbrella/waterproof garment.** Whilst most of the time the sun shines, when it rains in the Caribbean It usually rains very heavily; a small umbrella or waterproof jacket can be useful if you get caught in a shower
- **Laptop.** Although the smartphone can do everything a laptop can, it useful to have more than one piece of equipment capable of accessing the internet.
- **Small Rucksack/bag.** You will often be out and about and may need to carry some items with you so a bag is necessary.
- **Swim wear.** It is much cheaper to purchase swim/beach wear before you travel as retail prices for these items can be very high in the Caribbean.
- **At least two towels.** One for the beach and one for yourself!
- **Mosquito repellent.** You can never have too much as they can be a real pain, although a piece of lime can do the trick if you leave the house without any!
- **Sun screen.** It depends on your skin type but it's good to have a high factor to prevent sun burn and heat stroke
- **Medication.** Paracetamol, rehydration sachets, bite cream, sea-sickness tablets and Imodium tablets will all be useful.
- **Camera.** So when you phone dies you can still capture those breath taking pictures to make everyone at home jealous!
- **Plug adapters.** In Montserrat you will need a US and UK power adapter).
- **Family and friends via Skype, WhatsApp etc.** It is common to get homesick in such a new environment, be sure you have all friends and family as contacts on free communication apps and to bring anything that may help in times of homesickness

More pre-departure tips;

- 📄 Make sure your passport is valid for six month beyond your return.
- 📄 Get proper travel and medical insurance

📄 Remember to take two photocopies of your passport and insurance; one for you and one for Erasmus Caribbean.

During your stay:

- Be sure to greet people on the street, especially in the quieter areas (outside town) by saying “Good Morning”, “Good Afternoon”, “Good evening” or “Good Night”. This is common courtesy in the Caribbean. The phrase ‘Good Night’ in particular as a greeting or way or saying hello more often than it is used as a farewell.
- Dress appropriately at all times. Montserrat is a consistently hot country and so it will be important to wear clothes that keep you cool and comfortable. However, it is also highly important, especially in the work place, to dress appropriately. Regardless of the temperature, it is expected that dress codes for work and public are respected just as they are in Europe. The Caribbean is largely religiously conservative and so particularly revealing or inappropriate clothing is likely to cause offense.
- Learn dialect! Many English speaking Caribbean people speak in ‘dialect’. This is a form of English spoken with a very heavy accent and many unique phrases, abbreviations and pronunciations. It is unlikely that you will be expected to be able to use dialect yourselves however it will be useful for you to try your best to pick up a phrase or two.
- Don’t be afraid to say no. It is likely that, as a foreigner, you will find yourself being asked if you want to look at something, go somewhere or buy something from a street vendor. If you are not interested then do not be afraid to politely but firmly say ‘no’ or ‘no thank you’.
- Do not travel alone at night. Whilst the Caribbean is not a particularly dangerous place, it can be severely lacking in public security and safety measures. For example, there few CCTV cameras, police do not patrol the streets, many areas are not lit up and there are very few visible street names outside of the capital. This mean that those walking alone at night are vulnerable to being victim to a crime with few to no witnesses in an unidentifiable area. To remain safe, it is best to travel by taxi or public transport in groups of 2 or more after dark.
- Drink responsibly. Depending on where you go, alcohol can be much cheaper in Caribbean than many places in Europe, bar tenders are also far more generous with their measurements. Despite this, most Caribbean people handle their alcohol consumption very well with examples of serious drunk and disorderly conduct being very rare. It is important for all interns, volunteers and youth workers to know and respect their own alcohol limits.
- Don’t do drugs. The Caribbean has a reputation in some parts of the world as a main supply of cannabis to drug traffickers. As a result, cannabis can have a very low market value and it is

therefore not uncommon to witness it being used and/or have it casually offered to you for little or no cost. Despite this, use and possession of cannabis is an arrestable offense.

- Protect yourself. Caribbean islands are small therefore sexually transmitted infections travel fast. Always protect yourself.
- The Caribbean is a beautiful place with many great photo opportunities across the island. Please be sure to refrain from taking pictures of individuals without their expressed permission.
- Mind the dogs! Many households in the Caribbean have dogs that are usually kept outside of the property. Unlike Europe or the USA, dogs in the Caribbean are not often kept for the sole purpose of being pets and are most often kept for home security. It is not uncommon to walk past a house and be barked at by the dog(s) belonging to the property. Whilst this can seem intimidating at first, the best thing to do is to remain calm, ignore the barking and continue walking. Dogs are rarely trained to attack and are most often used as a form of alarm to alert the owner of persons entering the property.



Montserrat – The Facts

Facts

STATUS: A British Overseas Territory

HEAD OF GOVERNMENT: Donaldson Romeo

POPULATION: 4,900

FLAG: It is a Blue Ensign with the Union Flag in the canton and the coat of arms of Montserrat in the fly.

The flag of Montserrat is simply the Montserrat arms placed on the fly of the British Blue Ensign and was taken into use sometime considerably after 1909, quite possibly after the colony of the Leeward Islands (which consisted of several British-administered islands in the region) dissolved in 1958, making Montserrat a stand-alone colony.

The arms feature Erin, the female personification of Ireland, and the golden harp, another symbol of Ireland. This reflects the colony's Irish ancestry.

CURRENCY: Montserrat currency is the East Caribbean dollar (sign: \$; code: XCD). The East Caribbean Dollar was introduced in 1965 and is normally abbreviated with the dollar sign \$ or, alternatively, EC\$ to distinguish it from other dollar-denominated currencies. The EC\$ is subdivided into 100 cents. It has been pegged to the United States dollar at US\$1 = EC\$2.7 since 1976.

This currency is used by: Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Anguilla and Montserrat.

The EC\$ is issued by the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, located in Saint Kitts and Nevis. The bank was established by an agreement signed at Port of Spain on July 5, 1983: The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank Agreement.

TIME: Montserrat local time zone is GMT-4.

NATIONAL HOLIDAYS - 2017

New Year's Day - Sunday January 1, 2017

St. Patrick's Day - Friday March 17, 2017

Good Friday - Friday April 14, 2017

Easter Sunday - Sunday April 16, 2017

Easter Monday - Monday April 17, 2017

Labour Day - Monday May 1, 2017

Whit Monday - Monday June 5, 2017

Queen's Birthday Holiday - Saturday June 10, 2017

Emancipation Day - Monday August 7, 2017

Christmas Day - Monday December 25, 2017

Boxing Day - Tuesday December 26, 2017

GEOGRAPHY:

The island of Montserrat is approximately 480 km (300 mi) east-southeast of Puerto Rico and 48 km (30 mi) southwest of Antigua. The island lies north-northwest of Suriname and French Guiana (France). It comprises 104 km² (40 sq mi) and is gradually increasing owing to the buildup of volcanic deposits on the southeast coast. The island is 16 km (9.9 mi) long and 11 km (6.8 mi) wide, with rock cliffs rising 15 to 30 m (49 to 98 ft) above the sea and a number of smooth bottomed sandy beaches scattered among coves on the western (Caribbean) side of the island.

Montserrat has two islets, Kingdom of Redonda and Virgin, as well as Statue Rock.

In July 1995, Montserrat's Soufrière Hills volcano, dormant for centuries, erupted and soon buried the island's capital, Plymouth, in more than 12 metres (39 ft) of mud, destroyed its airport and docking facilities, and rendered the southern part of the island, now termed the exclusion zone, uninhabitable and not safe for travel. The southern part of the island was evacuated and visits are severely restricted. The exclusion zone also includes two sea areas adjacent to the land areas of most volcanic activity.

After the destruction of Plymouth and disruption of the economy, more than half of the population left the island, which also lacked housing. During the late 1990s, additional eruptions occurred. On 25 June 1997, a pyroclastic flow travelled down Mosquito Ghaut. This pyroclastic surge could not be restrained by the ghaut and spilled out of it, killing 19 people who were in the (officially evacuated) Streatham village area. Several others in the area suffered severe burns.

For a number of years in the early 2000s, the volcano's activity consisted mostly of infrequent ventings of ash into the uninhabited areas in the south. The ash falls occasionally extended into the northern and western parts of the island. In the most recent period of increased activity at the Soufrière Hills volcano, from November 2009 through February 2010, ash vented and there was a vulcanian explosion that sent pyroclastic flows down several sides of the mountain. Travel into parts of the exclusion zone is occasionally allowed, though only by a licence from the Royal Montserrat Police Force.

The northern part of Montserrat has largely been unaffected by volcanic activity, and remains lush and green. In February 2005, The Princess Royal officially opened what is now called the John A. Osborne Airport in the north. Since 2011, it handles several flights daily operated by Fly Montserrat Airways. Docking facilities are in place at Little Bay, where the new capital town is being constructed; the new government centre is at Brades, a short distance away.

In recognition of the disaster, in 1998, the people of Montserrat were granted full residency rights in the United Kingdom, allowing them to migrate if they chose. British citizenship was granted in 2002.

AREA: The total area is 102 km² (39 sq mi)

CLIMATE: Montserrat is an island, overseas territory of the United Kingdom, which has a tropical climate, hot and humid all year round, with a relatively cool and dry season from January to mid-April, and a hot, humid and rainy season from mid-June to mid-November.

CAPITAL: The official capital of Montserrat at Plymouth in the south of the island was abandoned in 1997 after it was buried by the eruption of the Soufriere Hills volcano. Interim government buildings have since been built at **Brades**, becoming the new capital in 1998. The move was initially intended to be temporary, but it has remained the island's *de facto* capital ever since. Several names have been

suggested for the new capital now being constructed in the Little Bay area. These include Port Diana, in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales and St Patrick's to commemorate the March 17th Uprising and to attract Irish-American tourists.

MAIN LANGUAGES: The official language is English, but most Montserratians also speak a Creole language similar to that spoken in Jamaica.

MAIN RELIGIONS: Christian denominations have deep roots in postaboriginal Montserratian history, and most Montserratians claim some Christian identity. The Catholic church has been present since the first Europeans arrived, although its adherents suffered legal discrimination until the early nineteenth century. The Anglican church was the favored and established church of the English colonizers. Toward the end of the eighteenth century, Methodist missionaries began to work assiduously in Montserrat, as they did elsewhere in the Caribbean. For a century they taught Christianity, literacy, and English middle-class morality, first to slaves and then to freed people and their descendants, wherever they were able to establish schools and congregations. These three denominations, along with the Pentecostal sects that began to penetrate Montserrat in the 1940s, are still strong.

ECONOMY:

From 1979 to 1989, Montserrat was home to a branch of George Martin's AIR Studios, making the island popular with musicians who often went there to record while taking advantage of the island's climate and beautiful surroundings; the studio closed as a result of Hurricane Hugo.

Since the devastations of Hurricane Hugo and the eruption of the Soufrière Hills volcano, the Montserratian economy has been effectively halted. Export businesses based in Montserrat deal primarily in the selling and shipping of aggregate for construction. Imports include virtually everything available for sale on the island

The island's operating budget is largely supplied by the British government and administered through the Department for International Development (DFID) amounting to approximately £25 million per year. Additional amounts are secured through income and property taxes, licence and other fees as well as customs duties levied on imported goods.

The limited economy of Montserrat, coupled with a population under 5,000, many living in shelters and shacks without utilities, only consumes 1.7 MW of electric power, produced by five diesel generators. Two exploratory geothermal wells have found good resources and the pad for a third geothermal well was prepared in 2016. Together the geothermal wells are expected to produce more power than the island requires.

Living in Montserrat

Public Transport

Buses

The public bus system in Montserrat is very different to that which may be found in Europe or the USA. Buses are, in fact, 16-18 seat mini-buses/mini vans.

- There are very few clearly designated bus stops in Montserrat, as a consequence many people stand on the nearest street corner or shaded area and wait for buses to come.
- Generally, each bus is run by the driver. Passengers are expected to open and close the bus door themselves.
- At times, if a bus driver sees somebody who looks likely to want to catch the van he will slow down and sound the horn.
- All buses in Montserrat follow the same route along the main highway, if you are not sure where the van is going or whether it will take you to your desired destination then **be sure to ask the driver before you enter the van.**
- The buses usually seat up to 18 people. A full bus will have passengers seated in rows of four. Take note that some buses are not spacious and **you are likely to be seated next to somebody during peak traffic hours.**
- Once in a bus and you wish to get out, you must indicate this to the driver to slow down and stop. There are a couple of common ways to indicate to the driver that you wish to get out; If you know you are going to get out at a designated bus stop then many people use the phrase '**bus stop!**'.
This, provided you are soon approaching a bus stop, should be all the driver needs to hear to know where to stop. If you are not getting out at a designated bus stop then buses will usually stop at the nearest **convenient place depending on traffic and location.**

If the driver is unsure of exactly where you are referring to, he is likely to turn around and ask you to clarify. Be ready to respond and physically indicate or use a nearby landmark to describe where you want to get out.
- When paying bus fare, most people pay their fare just before getting out of the bus as they move toward the door.
If you only have large bills, it is advisable to tell the driver before you get out the bus to allow him enough time to quickly provide you with the correct change.
- Bus fares in Montserrat are a flat rate of EC\$ 3.00 unless you request to be taken off the main road i.e. to the airport or to Little Bay, in which case it will cost EC\$ 5.00.

- Stay aware of your personal belongings at all times, especially when in a bus, as **there is no system for recovering lost items.**
- When catching buses at night, please be aware that, as a matter of safety, the buses are less likely to slow down and stop for people standing in dark areas. If you need to catch a bus during the night or late evening be sure to stand in a well-lit area and clearly indicate to passing buses that you want them to stop for you.
- Buses start running from around 6:00am and usually stop at around 8:00pm. Relying on a bus after 8:00pm on any given day is not advisable. When travelling late is safer to make taxi arrangements.

Taxis

Taxis have green license plates beginning with the letter "H." You can flag them down along the side of the road. A recommended list of the local taxi operators and fares is available from the Tourist Board. Ensure you agree on the fare in advance with the driver and whether the quote is in EC\$ or US\$. Island taxi tours are available in addition to standard taxi service.

Getting to Montserrat

Whilst Montserrat does not have any major international ports, Montserrat is accessible via air and sea from the neighboring island of Antigua.

By Sea

Ferries from Antigua travel from the Heritage Quay Ferry Terminal to the Little Bay sea port in Montserrat, the journey takes about an hour and a half. The fares for the ferry service are EC\$300 return (EC\$150 one way) for adults, EC\$150 return for children between 2 and 12 years and EC\$50 return for infants below 2 years.

Each passenger is allowed 2 pieces of baggage free and any additional baggage is charged at EC\$50.00 per piece.

A ferry timetable can be found on the Montserrat tourist board website www.visitmontserrat.com.

By Air

Flights to Montserrat from Antigua's V.C Bird International Airport take about 20 minutes and are run by Fly Montserrat and SVG Air. Up to date air fares and flight schedules can be found on their websites;

www.flymontserrat.com

www.flysvgair.com

Communications

Mobile Networks

In Montserrat there are two main network providers; Flow and Digicel. Each network provider offers competitive pre-paid and post-paid rates for minutes, texts and data usage.

You will find that the costs of telephone and internet usage is higher than the costs in Europe or the USA; it will be useful to ensure that you are connected to a WIFI network as much as possible when using large amounts of data.

The easiest form of SIM card to get for those with unlocked phones is a pre-paid (pay as you go) SIM card on which you can top up credit or buy minutes, texts and/or data packages. There are many shops and supermarkets from which you can purchase credit.

The dialing area code for Montserrat is +1 664.

Food

Supermarkets

The largest supermarket in Montserrat is Ram's located in Salem, Angelo's, Ashok's and Umpire frozen meats in Brades and Aravin's and Deepaks in St. Johns.

Most food products found in supermarkets is important from the US, Europe or larger Caribbean nations such as Jamaica or Trinidad.

National Dish

Montserrat's national dish is Goat water, a thick goat meat stew served with crusty bread rolls.

The Montserrat cuisine resembles to the general British and Caribbean one, as it is situated in the Caribbean zone and it is a British territory. The cuisine includes a wide range of light meats, like fish, seafood and Chicken, which are mostly grilled or roasted. Being a fusion of numerous cultures, like Spanish, French, African, Indian and Amerindian, the Caribbean cuisine is unique, yet complex.

Restaurants

For eating out, Montserrat offers a range of different options. Whilst there are no major fast food chains such as KFC or Mc Donald's, Montserrat is home to many small restaurants and bars offering local food as well as pizza, burgers, fried chicken, salads etc. There are also places that offer vegetarian or Ital options for those who don't eat meat products.

Banking

Montserrat has two banks located in the capital; the Bank of Montserrat and Royal Bank of Canada (RBC).

The RBC bank and ATM are the only services available for international visitors to use their visa cards to withdraw cash - there are no other other ATMs on the island. The Bank of Montserrat only caters to those who have an account with the bank.

As most businesses and even supermarkets do not yet accept card payments, it is essential that those travelling to Montserrat are prepared to make international bank withdrawals.

Healthcare

Immunizations and Healthcare Concerns

Immunizations

No vaccinations are required to enter the island. However we recommend that you ensure you are up-to-date on routine vaccines before traveling to Montserrat. These vaccines include measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis vaccine, varicella (chickenpox) vaccine, polio vaccine, and your yearly flu shot.

Sun Protection

Montserrat is situated in the heart of the Caribbean and close to the equator. As a result, visitors are at risk of sun-burns or sun-poisoning. A high-SPF sunscreen is recommended and sunblock is advised for those that are not used to the intense sunlight. A good pair of sunglasses and a hat are strongly recommended.

Dengue Fever

Dengue is a viral disease transmitted by the Aedes mosquito (Aedes aegypti in the Caribbean) that manifests itself as a high fever accompanied by headache, muscle and joint pain and weakness, which may last for several weeks. Symptoms appear two to seven days after a bite from an infected mosquito.

Chikungunya

Chikungunya is an illness caused by a virus that spreads through mosquito bites. The most common symptoms of chikungunya are fever and joint pain. Other symptoms may include headache, muscle pain, joint swelling, or rash. Chikungunya disease rarely results in death, but the symptoms can be severe and disabling. Most people who get sick feel better within a week. In some people, the joint pain may last for months or years.

Protect yourself from mosquito bites by using mosquito nets, wearing long clothing and using repellents (citronella) and sprays.

Ciguatera (fish poison)

Certain fish, particularly reef fishes, contain toxins that may, if eaten, cause serious illness (paralysis and low blood pressure) and very unpleasant symptoms (itching, numbness, dizziness). This is known as ciguatera, or gratte – “itch” in French. Avoid eating fish until you have consulted the proper authorities, especially if you have caught the fish yourself. Large fish (+1 kilo) have the highest count of these toxins.

Aids and Sexually-Transmitted Diseases

Located in the heart of the Caribbean, the island of Montserrat is a melting-pot for many different groups and remains a high risk zone. On Montserrat, like anywhere in the world, the only protection is to use a condom during sexual intercourse

Health Services in Montserrat

If in need of medical assistance, your first step should be to call and make an appointment at the nearest health centre (district clinic) unless it is an emergency in which case an appointment is not necessary. If it is outside working hours, or on the advice of the nurse, the next step is to go to the Casualty Department (Accident and Emergency) at Glendon Hospital. If being referred by the nurse she will give you a note to take with you.

Each clinic is staffed by at least one trained nurse, who is available between 8am and 4 pm. On Tuesdays and Thursdays St John's Clinic stays open until 5pm.

Health services provided at the hospital are generally accessed by referral from primary health care, medical or surgical outpatients, private doctors' offices, or from casualty. Patients from Primary Health Care attending the district clinics (health centres) also attend the hospital for laboratory, pharmacy, X-ray and physiotherapy services.

The Accident and Emergency department is located in the hospital. It is open 24 hours a day and is staffed by nurses, with a doctor on duty during the day and on call at night, weekends and public holidays.

Crime and Safety in Montserrat

Montserrat is generally a safe place however in recent years, violent crime has increased. Assault is the most common form, with an annual rate of just over 10 assaults for every 1000 people. (This is still considered low by world standards. By comparison, Canada's rate is about 7 per 1000).

Visitors should exercise common sense and take basic precautions everywhere on the island, including being aware of one's surroundings, avoiding walking alone after dark or in remote areas, and locking all valuables in a secure place.

Emergency Contacts

Glendon Hospital

St. John's

Tel: (664) 491-2552/2836/2843

Fax: (664) 491-6413

Hospital visiting times are as follows:-

6.00 am – 7.00 am

11.30 am – 12.30 pm

4.00 pm — 5.00pm

7.00 pm — 8.15 pm

There is no visiting during the day on Tuesday as it is operation day. Visiting would be allowed between 6 am and 7am, and from 7 pm to 8.15 pm once surgery is finished.

Visiting may also be restricted due to special circumstances, and is at the discretion of the nurse. No more than two visitors at a time please, and young children are not allowed to visit on the ward.

Accident & Emergency

For emergencies only

Tel: (664) 491-2802

District Clinics

St. John's Clinic

Tel: (664) 491-5218

Cudjoe Head Clinic

Tel: (664) 491- 5258

St. Peter's Clinic

Tel: (664) 491-5436

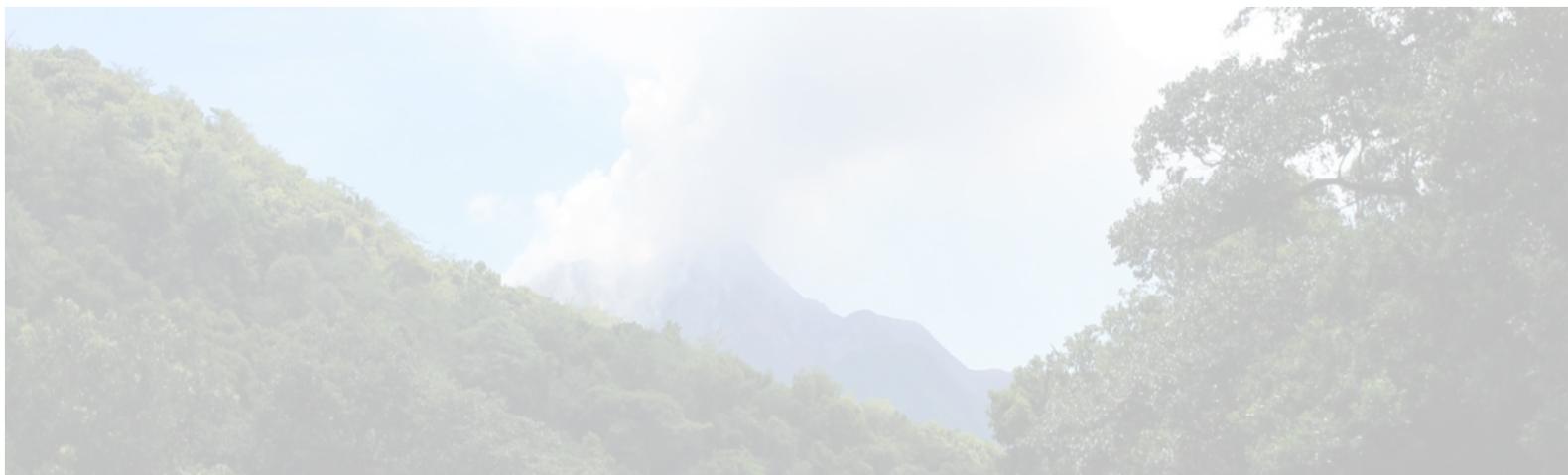
Salem Clinic

Tel: (664) 491-5256

Each clinic is staffed by at least one trained nurse, who is available between 8am and 4pm. On Tuesdays and Thursdays St John's Clinic stays open until 5 or 6pm. There is a weekly doctor's clinic at each health centre.

Emergency Services Numbers

Emergency services - 911



Maps of Montserrat

Caribbean Region



Montserrat

