My Drift

Title: Caribbean
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I got the idea for this article from watching Wheel of Fortune. Yes, I have been watching Jeopardy! and Wheel of Fortune for more than 30 years. Whoever wins the "Prize Puzzle" gets a trip to some place in the world like Hawaii or an island in the Caribbean. I have never been to any island in the Caribbean and some of them I have never heard of before. So, I have done some research and we will be looking at the Top 10 Caribbean Islands I would like to visit if I ever got the chance. However, at my age, it will probably have to be in my next lifetime.

The Caribbean is a region that consists of the Caribbean Sea, its 7,000 or so islands (some surrounded by the Caribbean Sea and some bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean) and the surrounding coasts. The region is southeast of the Gulf of Mexico and the US state of Florida, east of Central America, and north of South America. (See map above)

The table below provides information about the countries and territories located in the Caribbean Region.

Country or Territory	Sovereignty	Area	Pop.	Capital
Anguilla	United Kingdom	91	15,000	The Valley
Antigua and Barbuda	Independent	442	97,000	St. John's
Aruba	Netherlands	180	106,000	Oranjestad
The Bahamas	Independent	13,943	390,000	Nassau
Barbados	Independent	430	290,000	Bridgetown
Bonaire	Netherlands	274	12,000	Kralendijk
British Virgin Islands	United Kingdom	151	30,000	Road Town
Cayman Islands	United Kingdom	264	65,000	George Town
Cuba	Independent	107,886	11,500,000	Havana
Curaçao	Netherlands	444	163,000	Willemstad
Dominica	Independent	751	72,000	Roseau
Dominican Republic	Independent	48,671	10,700,000	Santo Domingo
Grenada	Independent	344	112,000	St. George's
Guadeloupe	France	1,628	400,000	Basse-Terre
Haiti	Independent	27,750	11,200,000	Port-au-Prince
Jamaica	Independent	10,981	3,000,000	Kingston
Martinique	France	1,128	380,000	Fort-de-France
Montserrat	United Kingdom	102	5,000	Plymouth
Nueva Esparta	Venezuela	1,151	500,000	La Asunción
Puerto Rico	United States	8,870	3,100,000	San Juan
Archipelago	Colombia	53	76,000	San Andrés
Saint Barthélemy	France	21	7,500	Gustavia
Saint Kitts and Nevis	Independent	261	53,000	Basseterre
Saint Lucia	Independent	539	182,000	Castries
Saint Martin	France	54	38,000	Marigot
Saint Vincent	Independent	389	112,000	Kingstown
Sint Eustatius	Netherlands	21	3,000	Oranjestad
Sint Maarten	Netherlands	34	42,000	Philipsburg
Trinidad and Tobago	Independent	5,130	1,400,000	Port of Spain
Turks and Caicos	United Kingdom	948	38,000	Cockburn Town
US Virgin Islands	United States	347	105,000	Charlotte Amalie
	Totals	235,667	45,000,000	

The three yellow highlighted countries (Cuba, Dominican Republic, and Haiti) are the largest and most populated. I have no desire to visit any of these places.

#1 St. Lucia

Saint Lucia island is located in the eastern Caribbean Sea on the boundary with the Atlantic Ocean. The island was previously called Iyonola, the name given to the island by the native Arawaks and later, Hewanorra, the name given by the native Caribs, two separate Amerindian peoples.

The French were the first Europeans to settle on the island. They signed a treaty with the native Island Caribs in 1660. England took control of the island from 1663 to 1667. In ensuing years, it was at war with France fourteen times, and the rule of the island changed frequently (it was ruled seven times each by the French and British). In 1814, the British took definitive control of the island. Because it switched so often between British and French control, Saint Lucia was also known as the "Helen of the West Indies" after the Greek mythological character, Helen of Troy.

Toraille Waterfall

St. Lucia is known for its great chalk-colored beaches, towering volcanic peaks, and luxury resorts.

#2 and #3 The British and U.S. Virgin Islands

Christopher Columbus named the islands after Saint Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins. The official name of the British territory is the Virgin Islands, and the official name of the U.S. territory is the Virgin Islands of the United States. In practice, the two island groups are almost universally referred to as the British Virgin Islands and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The Virgin Islands were originally inhabited by the Arawak and Carib, almost all of whom are thought to have perished during the colonial period due to enslavement, foreign disease, and mass extermination brought about by European colonists, as is the case in the rest of the Caribbean.

The U.S. Virgin Islands consists of the main islands of Saint Croix, Saint John, and Saint Thomas, and many other surrounding minor islands.

The British Virgin Islands consist of the main islands of Tortola, Virgin Gorda, Anegada, and Jost Van Dyke, along with over 50 other smaller islands with about 16 of the islands inhabited.

I would stay in Road Town in the British Virgin Islands. Then take a boat tour of all the main scenic islands in both the British and U.S. Virgin Islands. The shoreline at Cane Garden Bay is particularly picturesque, the white sand beaches on Anegada island are stunning and the boulders and sea pools at The Baths National Park are mystifying.

#4 Turks & Caicos

The Turks and Caicos Islands were inhabited for centuries by native Amerindian peoples. The first recorded European sighting of the islands occurred in 1512. In the subsequent centuries, the islands were claimed by several European powers, with the British Empire eventually gaining control.

These are an archipelago of 40 low-lying coral islands (consisting of the larger Caicos Islands and smaller Turks Islands) in the North Atlantic side of the Caribbean just southeast of the Bahamas. The gateway island of Providenciales, known as Provo, is home to expansive Grace Bay Beach, with luxury resorts, shops, bars, and restaurants. Scuba-diving sites include a 14-mile barrier reef on Provo's north shore and a dramatic 7,000 feet underwater wall off Grand Turk island.

Grace Bay Beach
Located on Providenciales (known as Provo locally) - an island in the northwest Caicos Islands

#5 St. Vincent and The Grenadines

Best known simply as Saint Vincent is an Anglo-Caribbean country of several islands in the Lesser Antilles island arc just north of the South American country of Venezuela and the island of Grenada. It consists of the main island of Saint Vincent and the northern two-thirds of the Grenadines, a chain of 32 smaller islands.

Visitors normally stay and enjoy time on the biggest island of St. Vincent in its capital and port city, Kingstown, where you'll find a lush botanical garden and fresh fish and produce markets. Then, hop on a boat and sail between the many other remote land masses for diving, snorkeling, golfing, sunbathing, and photo opportunities.

Downtown Kingstown

Palm Island in the Grenadines

St. Vincent Black Sand Beaches

Due to the island's volcanic origin, most of St Vincent beaches are black sand with two notable exceptions at Villa and Indian Bay, where many hotels are located. For classic white sand beaches, choose the Grenadines such as Union Island, Canouan, Mustique, Bequia, and Palm Island.
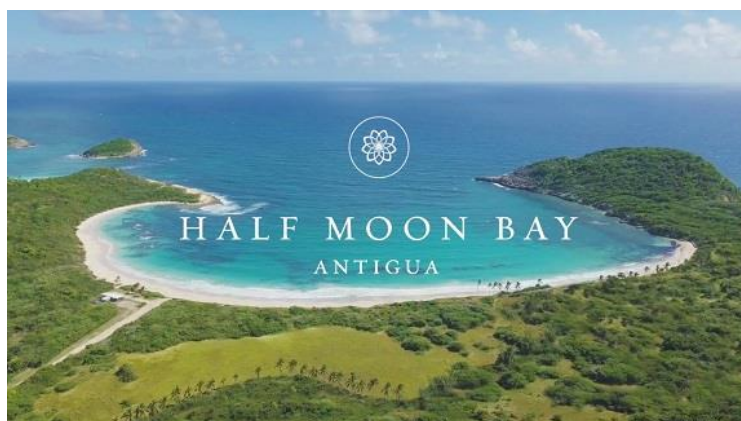
#6 Antigua and Barbuda

Antigua also known as Waladli by the native population, is an island in the West Indies. It is one of the Leeward Islands in the Caribbean and the main island of the country of Antigua and Barbuda. Antigua and Barbuda became an independent state within the Commonwealth of Nations on 1 November 1981.

Christopher Columbus named the island "Antigua" in 1493 in honor of the "Virgin of the Old Cathedral" found in Seville Cathedral in southern Spain.

Antigua is home to a wealth of diverse beaches – 365, to be exact. So, whether you're interested in surfing and water sports activities at Galley Bay Beach or seeking a more secluded, romantic vacation at Half Moon Bay, you likely won't be disappointed.

Antigua and Barbuda along with most Caribbean Islands are located in "Hurricane Alley". On 6 September 2017, the Category 5 Hurricane Irma destroyed 90 percent of the buildings on the island of Barbuda and the entire population was evacuated to Antigua.

#7 Cayman Islands

The Cayman Islands are in the western Caribbean Sea and are the peaks of an undersea mountain range called the Cayman Ridge. This ridge flanks the Cayman Trough that is 20,000 feet deep. The islands lie in the northwest of the Caribbean Sea, east of Quintana Roo, Yucatán State, Mexico, northeast of Costa Rica, north of Panama, south of Cuba and west of Jamaica. They are situated about 430 miles south of Miami, 470 miles east of Mexico, and 227 miles south of Cuba. Grand Cayman is by far the largest of the three islands that include Cayman Brac and Little Cayman.

One of the most scenic spots in the Caribbean, the Cayman Islands is home to premier dive sites, including Eden Rock and Devil's Grotto, and plenty of crescent-shaped shorelines.

Eden Rock and Devil's Grotto

The Cayman Island territory is considered a major world offshore financial haven for international businesses and many wealthy individuals. So, what this means is - if you have a few million dollars that you don't want to pay taxes on, you can stash it in one of the banks here.

#8 The Bahamas

The Bahamas is a country within the Lucayan Archipelago of the West Indies in the Caribbean. It takes up 97% of the Lucayan Archipelago's land area and is home to 88% of the archipelago's population. The archipelagic state consists of about 700 islands, cays, and islets in the Atlantic Ocean, and is located north of Cuba, northwest of the Turks and Caicos Islands, and southeast of the US state of Florida.

From gorgeous beaches to expansive golf courses, most agree the Bahamas are the quintessential relaxing Caribbean vacation. There are historic attractions and bustling marketplaces in Nassau and Freeport. And if you're looking for more active pursuits, strap on some diving gear and explore the coral reefs or hike around The Glass Window Bridge. Kid-friendly attractions like the water park at Atlantis and Paradise Island make this a great family destination.

Swim with the Pigs

Paradise Island

#9 St. Kitts and Nevis

Saint Kitts and Nevis is an island country in the West Indies. Located in the Leeward Islands chain of the Lesser Antilles, it is the smallest sovereign state in the Western Hemisphere, in both area (101 square miles) and population (55,000). The country is a Commonwealth realm, with Elizabeth II as Queen and head of state. The only federated Caribbean country, it uses the federation system which is different from other Caribbean countries which use a unitary system.

The capital city of Basseterre is located on the larger island of Saint Kitts. The smaller island of Nevis lies approximately 2 miles to the southeast of Saint Kitts, across a shallow channel called The Narrows.

St. Kitts garners its popularity in part from the soft sands and buzzing nightlife of Frigate Bay. While many choose to vacation here to relax at a resort on the beach and enjoy delicious cuisine, this destination offers plenty in the way of culture as well. It hosts excellent festivals like the St. Kitts & Nevis National Carnival and the St. Kitts Music Festival. When you need a break from the action, hop on a ferry for a daytrip to the quieter island of Nevis, where you'll find Oualie and Pinney's beaches.
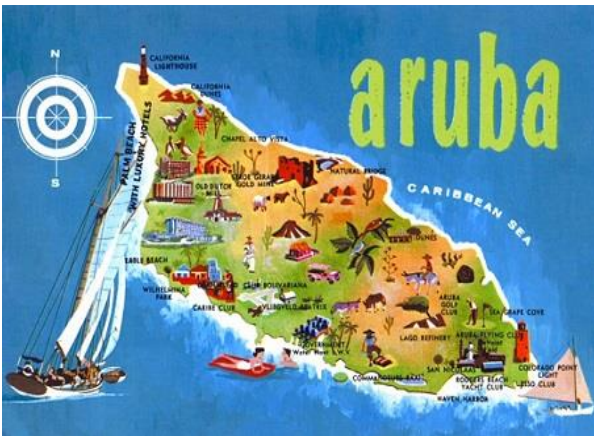
The Island of St. Kitts

Capital City of Basseterre

Qualie's Beach on the Island of Nevis

#10 Aruba

Aruba is an island and a constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands lying in the southern Caribbean Sea, located about 18 miles north of the Venezuelan peninsula of Paraguaná. It measures 20 miles long from its northwestern to its southeastern end and 6 miles across at its widest point. Together with Bonaire and Curaçao, Aruba forms a group referred to as the ABC islands. Collectively, Aruba and the other Dutch islands in the Caribbean are often called the Dutch Caribbean.

Aruba appeals to all types of travelers: Gamblers can hit the casinos, nature enthusiasts can check out Arikok National Park or hike through the Ayo and Casibari rock formations, and water lovers can explore the sea or hop on a boat tour. Meanwhile, beach bums can soak up some sun along the shoreline on a lounge chair, typically without overheating thanks to the constant breeze Aruba enjoys. What's more, this island lies outside the hurricane belt, so it's an ideal place to visit year-round.

Flamingo Beach

Aruba Natural Bridges

Arikok National Park

A Few Fun Facts and Statistics

The safest Caribbean islands to visit	Caribbean cities with the most crime
- Barbados - Anguilla - St. Maarten/St. Martin - St. Barts - The Virgin Islands - Antigua - Turks & Caicos	- Port-Au-Prince, Haiti - Kingston, Jamaica - Basse Terre, St. Kitts & Nevis - Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic - Laventille, Trinidad & Tobago - San Juan, Puerto Rico - Nassau, Bahamas

English is the most widely spoken language in the Caribbean Region. However, while most of the nations in the Caribbean have English, French, or Spanish as their official language, most locals actually speak Creole.

Just six times the size of a Boeing 777 and wrapped precariously along the edge of a beach is the world's smallest runway for commercial aircrafts. Located on the Dutch Caribbean isle of Saba, it's just 400 meters or 1,312 feet long!

The Caribbean islands are home to over 44 million people. However, over 33 million of these inhabitants live on just two of the region's 7,000 islands—Cuba, and the island that's home to both Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Did you also know that only 2 per cent of the islands are inhabited?

The Caribbean islands are actually filled with tall mountains, many of which are almost as tall as many that are found in the nearby United States of America. For example, Duarte Peak in the Dominican Republic sits at 10,417 feet. To compare, the tallest American mountain (that isn't in Alaska) is Mount Whitney in California at 14,505 feet.

The Trinidad Moruga Scorpion Chilli Pepper registers at 1.2 million Scoville heat units on the Scoville Scale (compared to jalapeños that register at about 5,000 units). It was the hottest chilli pepper in the world in 2012. It was dethroned in late 2013 by the Carolina Reaper that registered 2.2 million Scoville heat units.

One of the most delicious meats in the Caribbean is goat, which is even part of the national dish of Montserrat. Though it's called "goat water" it's actually a goat stew that's made with the meat of male goats (never female), along with lots of spices and a bit of rum. It's served at special events like weddings and funerals.

The Dominican Republic has the highest Coronavirus case count in the Caribbean, and Haiti is next. As a result, both countries have closed their borders and are not welcoming tourists.

Well, that's it. I know that some of you have taken a cruise in the Caribbean and have visited several of the islands. You would know more than me which islands are the best to visit. Please let me know if my list is bad.

Regardless, there are many scenic islands in the Caribbean region. Some of those great beaches give Hawaii, California, and Florida a run for their money.

I need a vacation!

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