

THE Guide

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

THE CHIC TWINS

Sarongs hanging between palm trees at the Englishman's Bay, Tobago Island.

While Trinidad and Tobago are popular with the West for their sunny beaches and rivers of rum, **Bedatri Datta Choudhury** finds out why the two islands are making their way back to the Indian holiday itinerary.



Clockwise: Designer Anya Ayong-Chee; a model wearing Chee on the runway; one of Chee's inspiring designs; Meiling Esau.



"I love shopping at the West Mall for the variety it offers. My usual stops are **Little Black Dress** (Shop 180, The Falls at West Mall, West Main Road, Port of Spain; +1-868/632-2028) and **Peter Elias** (Ellerslie Plaza, Port of Spain; +1-868/622-0442). The **Ellerslie Plaza** is also a favourite for the eateries and the shops selling knick knacks."

—**GISELLE LARONDE-WEST**
Former Miss World and Senior Manager, Public Affairs and Communications, Angostura

ISLAND STYLE

Local designers you should shop for when in town.

MEILING

One of the most famous fashion designers far West, **Meiling Esau** was declared a national icon in 2013. Known largely for her edgy urban wear, Meiling has recently ventured into vintage and contemporary bridal wear as well. Check out her flagship studio at Woodbrook, Port of Spain. meilinginc.com

CLAUDIA PEGUS

Also known as the 'Grand Master of Caribbean Fashion', **Claudia Pegus'** signature style includes a wide range of hand-embroidered silk work on different fabrics. Operating out of her store in Woodbrook, she runs the Claudia Pegus couture label and the prêt label, CBFS. claudiapegus.com

ANYA AYOUNG CHEE

After winning *Project Runway Season 9*, **Anya Ayong Chee** started her clothing label, Pilar and lingerie line, Anya de Rogue. Among the country's younger crop of designers, she collaborates with other designers to produce fashion inspired from the Trinidad Carnival at the canyavalshop.myshopify.com



FLAVOUR

ALL THE WORLD'S A PLATE

For a country whose demography is marked by immigration and settlers, it is only natural that its food reflects different cultural influences.

FRENCH

Chaud A veal cheek cannelloni served with sautéed escargots, the chicken al matrone, or a Crème Brûlée Napoleon—everything about Chaud screams French. The restaurant has separate lunch and dinner menus, and enlists a long list of cocktails and sorbets. chaudkm.com

ITALIAN

Aioli Owned by Chef John Aboud, Aioli is one of Trinidad's most popular and favoured fine dining destinations. The menu uses the choicest of local produce to create a grand Italian fair and boasts a mouth-watering Crab Risotto and the Venetian Fritto Misto. aiolitrinidad.com

CARIBBEAN

Waterfront This Caribbean speciality restaurant at Hyatt Regency Trinidad contemporises traditional recipes that are complemented by an impressive wine list. A warm ambience and a great view later, the restaurant delivers a well-rounded meal. trinidad.regency.hyatt.com

INDIAN

Apsara Restaurant This has been Trinidad's go-to restaurant for authentic North Indian food for over 16 years now. The menu is elaborate with a diverse vegetarian fare and includes the less-common scallops and duck preparations, among other meats. apsaroroti.com



EAT, BEACH, AND MAKE MERRY

Travel through Tobago in a three-day adventure itinerary that covers the best of life and living.

T+L TRAVEL GUIDE

Take a virtual tour of these clear-water beaches with white sand beds at travelandleisureindia.in.

Putting anchor near Nylon Pool and Buccoo Reef, Tobago. Right: Snorkelling at the Nylon Pool.

DAY 1 Start at **Pigeon Point** and once you are done admiring the beauty of the bluest waters, take a glass-bottomed boat to Buccoo Reef, one of the world's largest concentrations. You can either peer down at the world of corals through the bottom of the boat, or snorkel and swim with fish of every colour and reach the corals that flap and flutter in the undercurrent.

DAY 2 Put on your hiking shoes and climb up to the **Argyle Waterfall**, the country's highest waterfall that accumulates in pools at three different height levels; dip your feet in the cool waters at the lower pools before making the climb to the top, then train your ears to follow the sound of water. Make sure you carry a swimsuit.

DAY 2 Named after the way the waters look like on a sheet of cloth, the **Nylon Pool** is a shallow sandbar in the middle of the sea. The magical turquoise waters are so clear that you can see the white sand that lines the sea bed. Wade through the pool, or take dips—and while you're at it, rub some of the sand on yourself, it is believed to make you look 10 years younger.

● The **Rooftop Seahorse Inn Restaurant** (seahorseinntobago.com) is the best place to end up after an exhausting day. Try their Pan Fried Mahi Mahi with some Riesling, as you hear waves hit the shore in the distance.

● Follow up with lunch at **Jemma's Treehouse Restaurant** (Charlotteville-L'Anse Fourmi Road, Hermitage; +1-868/660-4066) and get the closest to salvation you'll ever get. Everything on the menu is packed with flavour—from the beans to the king fish and the cheese crusted breadfruit pie. Pure transcendence!

● Head to the **Café Havana Restaurant** (cafehavana.org) and settle down to some house cocktails and Ancho Chile Dusted Calamari. The sirloin steaks, cooked with Caribbean flavours and served with local vegetables, are perfect for dinner. Order the Monte Cristo#1 dessert and douse your end-vacation blues in some much needed sugar.



DON'T MISS
Celebrating its beautiful diversity, Trinidad transforms into a pool of colour, music, and costumes during its annual carnival (February 27-28, 2017).
gotrinidadandtobago.com



From left: A succulent bowl of beef stew; a local delicacy, pig's trotters.



STREET-FOOD

- Trying the exciting array of the street food, is a must. It ranges from doubles—a sandwich made with two *baras* (flat fried bread)—to the more adventurous corn and cow heel soup; the customised Bake and Shark sandwiches to the sticky barbecued pig tails. St James district in Port of Spain and Store Bay in Tobago are some of the sought-after haunts.
- The French creole slaves, when kept away from Carnival celebration, began making their own instruments from pans, drums, and lids to celebrate the 'Canboulay'. Today, the pans have become synonymous with the region's indigenous music scene. tntisland.com

HOT 'N HEARTY

Hunt down these five dishes for a good ol' taste of fiery local food.

CURRY CRAB & DUMPLINGS

This Tobagonian staple strikes the perfect harmony with local crabs. Cooked in an Indian curry, it is served with the African flat flour dumpling. This is like a world map on your plate.

CALLALOO & COO COO

Heavily influenced by West African cuisine, the dish combines a leaf vegetable, cornmeal served with cassava, yams, sweet potatoes, and a Creole fish stew that is usually light but tangy-spicy.

PELAU

A pot dish where the caramelised meat is cooked with rice and pigeon peas (a local staple). A favourite food for social gatherings, pelau is usually served with a side of salad.

STEWED BEEF SERVED WITH BEANS & PEAS, MACARONI PIE

'Stewing' in Caribbean food refers to the process of caramelising the meat before cooking it, which lends it a brown colour and a fall-off-the-bone texture. Usually

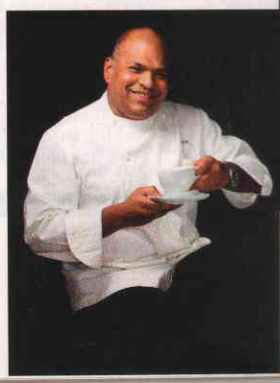
served with beans, this is the Trinidadian Macaroni Pie, the Caribbean variation of the American mac and cheese.

THE ROTI

Stemming from the East, with Indian influence on the cuisine—the staple bread is either the shredded variety (called 'BussUpShot' because it resembles a bust up shirt) or the *Dhalpouri* with a chickpea filling. Then there's the *Dosti Roti* (friendship in Hindi) where two balls of dough are rolled and cooked together.

CULINARY GENIUS

Chef **Khalid Mohammed** is a French Culinary Institute alum and the man behind the upscale Chaud Restaurant, Port of Spain. To celebrate the Trinidadian Creole, he pioneered fusion recipes to bridge the gap between local produce and international cooking techniques.



STAY

THE HYATT REGENCY, TRINIDAD

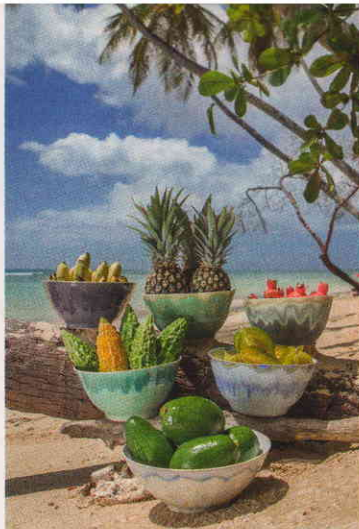
The Hyatt Regency, Port of Spain, traces the city's waterfront that lends it a heartwarming view. It boasts of a beautiful sundeck, impeccable rooms, top-notch room service, a restaurant, a patisserie, and a fascinating rooftop infinity pool! trinidad.regency.hyatt.com

ARTY TOUCH

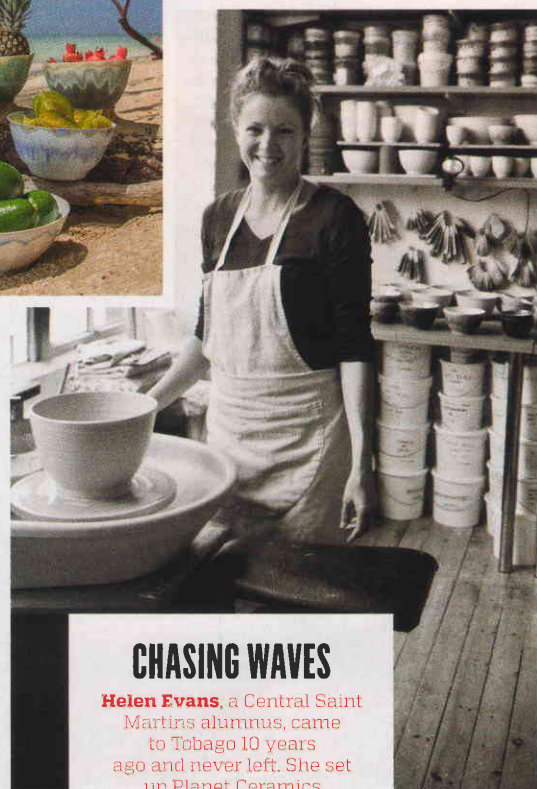
Service standard of the islanders is only superceded by their talents in food, culture, music, and art.

Drive to the **Tobago Cocoa Estate** (tobagococoa.com) on Cameron Canal Road to experience a day out on a cocoa plantation, the best time being the harvest season between December and March. Walk amidst the twitter of birds, the rustle of leaves, and open cocoa pods, on a journey to understand

the science of making cocoa. End your trip on a high note by taking a rum and chocolate pairing session at the property, followed by sumptuous local dinner. All the finished products here are made by the artisan chocolatier, Francois Pralus, who uses the Trinitario cacao beans, native to this country.



The Trinitario cacao beans, native to the country, make for a sensual ingredient in the local recipes.



CHASING WAVES

Helen Evans, a Central Saint Martins alumnus, came to Tobago 10 years ago and never left. She set up Planet Ceramics (planetceramics.com) at Pigeon Point where she sells high-fired ceramic artefacts inspired by the waves, colours, and sounds that surround her in Tobago. Mosaics, home lighting, house signs, and jewellery, she creates magic with her art.



DUANE DOVE

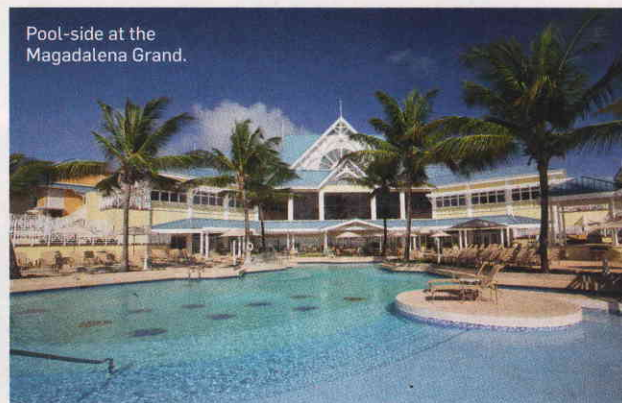
Owner, Tobago Cocoa

An absolute purist, the Academy of Chocolate Silver Award winner says he has always focused on the raw material, and so, the tree-to-bar process keeps the key ingredient unaltered.

UNWIND

PRIME SPACE

Check in at one of these fabulous hotels in **Tobago** for a cultural immersion before you set foot in the city.



NATIVE ABODE

Stein and Kaye Trotman, extremely hospitable siblings, run this bed and breakfast nestled in the lap of nature. The rooms are provided with kitchenettes, which one shouldn't make much use of given the wonderful and elaborate brunch spread that Kaye himself makes with care and a lot of warmth. nativeabode.com

MAGDALENA GRAND BEACH AND GOLF RESORT

The resort sprawls over miles of greenery and looks out into the ocean. With the golf course in front and the waterfront behind, the rooms enjoy enviable views and receive a lot of natural light. The property houses some of the best restaurants and bars on the island. magdalenagrand.com



Scarlett Ibis take flight at the Caroni Bird Sanctuary.



THE HUMMINGBIRD MAN

Theodore Ferguson is a leadership development professional, a poet, and a photographer who lives in a house with no directions or signs—with hummingbirds and his lovely wife, Gloria. For him, **Yeretté** is only a means to share the calm and peace that nature and his loved hummingbirds bring to him.

NATURAL HABITATS

On a cool morning, arrive at one of **Trinidad's** numerous sanctuaries and meet the island's other inhabitants.

YERETTÉ

Hidden amidst the lush slopes of the Maracas Valley, **Yeretté** is the home that the Fergusons share with 13 of the 17 species of hummingbirds inhabiting Trinidad and Tobago. Sit back on their patio and spend hours being enamoured by their songs, vivid colours, and aerial acrobatics. yerettett.com

TURTLE SANCTUARY, MATURA

Spearheading the country's developing eco-tourism efforts, the sanctuary started as a conservation and mapping project for leatherback turtles. The long drive to **Matura** at night gives you the surreal experience of watching the endangered species lay eggs in the sand, under the moonlight. turtlevillagetrust.org

CARONI BIRD SANCTUARY

A boat ride on the **Caroni Swamp** is perhaps the best place to see the widest variety of the islands' wildlife in their natural habitat. Strain your eyes on the mangrove to spot endangered species and marvel at the sudden sight of a flock of Scarlet Ibis take flight in poetic harmony. caronibirdsanctuary.com

THE MASTER OF RUM

John Georges trained under the rum producing legends, Albert Gomez and Tommy Gatliffe, has been in the business for more than 30 years. The man behind the range of differently aged rums from Angostura, Georges, takes keen interest in experimenting with its aging process.



SAVOUR

SPIRITED AWAY

Although famous for their aromatic bitters, a round of the Angostura distillery reveals the fine rums they have been producing and effectively keeping our spirits high.

Angostura 7 Year Old



This amber coloured rum smells of chocolate and honey, and lets off a deep, woody aroma. Soaked in oak barrels, the rum has a nice, clean flavour and leaves behind a beautiful heat at the back of the throat. Ideal for buttered rum and cuba libre.

Angostura 1919



Named to honour Fernandes—the local rum maker who bought charred casks full of rum made in 1919 after a warehouse fire—this is a smooth and mellow eight-year-old rum with high caramel and vanilla notes. It's best when had neat or in a daiquiri.

Angostura 1824



The mature, twelve-year-old rum is a heady and complex concoction of notes of raisin, clove, licorice, and a final hit of tobacco. Named after the year the German doctor, Johann Gottlieb Benjamin Siegert made his first bottle of bitters, this rum is best had on the rocks.

FIT FOR THE QUEEN

Angostura's Master Distiller, John Georges shares the recipe for the rum cocktail, Queen's Park Swizzle:

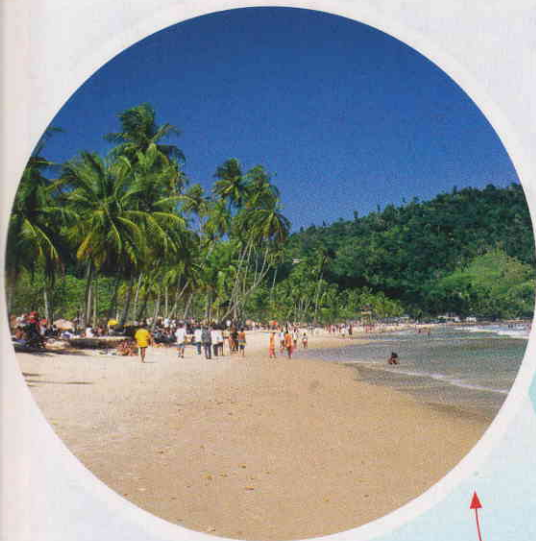
2 oz Angostura 7-year-old rum
1 oz sugar syrup
1 oz fresh lime juice
12-14 mint leaves
6-8 dashes of Angostura aromatic bitters

A HIGHBALL GLASS

Build in a highball glass; muddle mint leaves in lime juice and simple syrup. Then fill glass with dry crushed ice. Pour rum over the ice and swizzle well till glass is frosted. Pack glass with more crushed ice and top with Angostura aromatic bitters. Garnish with a mint sprig.

MAPPING THE PLOT

These five tours will help you flag Trinidad and Tobago on a map.



HEADING NORTHWARDS

The northern coast boasts the best beaches in the country; driving through the Maraval village, one can stop by St Andrews Golf Course before viewing all of the La Vache Bay on the way to **Maracas Beach**. Customise your bake and shark sandwich by the beach and end it on a sweet note with some local home-made ice cream.



CITY SIGHTS

A drive around the capital city of Port of Spain reveals the various cultural influences history has had on the city. A cityscape of many contrasts and dotted with Brutalist architecture, it has a beautiful house of parliament, a 200-year-old Anglican Church, the colonial **Queen's Royal College** and for the lovers of literature, VS Naipaul's house.



LIMING LOVE

Driving up to **Lopinot** from Port of Spain is a heavy affair because you carry your meat and alcohol, and some loudspeakers with you. But it all makes sense when you stand by the river, play the soca loud, and cook some duck curry with a glass of punch in your hand. This is what vacations are really for: Sitting back with a bowl of curried mango and taking a break, or like they say in Trinidad, 'lime'.



THE JUNGLE BOOK

An eco-tourism haven, the **Main Ridge Reserved Forest** is something straight out of our storybooks. Abundant in flora and fauna, it serves as home to the rare native white-tailed Sabrewing Hummingbird. Even if you don't end up seeing it, you will always go home with stories from the walking trails, the waterfalls, and the thousand songs that the birds keep singing in the forest.



TOBAGO



GONE FISHING

The **Castara Bay** is probably the cleanest beach you'll ever see. At the fishing village nearby, you can watch fishermen at their daily catch, and maybe get lucky enough to spot sting rays among the droves of fish. Don't forget to look up to see the seagulls hovering greedily in pursuit of lunch!

The Trinidad accent ranks among CNN's top 10 sexiest accents in the world.

ONE MORE REASON TO VISIT?