



Festivals and fundraisers - News from Montserrat

This month's news from Montserrat includes a new sailing adventure from Ondeck, details of the upcoming St Patrick's Day festival and the results of fundraising for Haiti on the island.

- 1. Celebrate St Patrick's Day Montserrat style**
 - 2. Ondeck launches a new Hidden Caribbean sailing adventure visiting Montserrat**
 - 3. EC\$90,000 raised for the Haiti appeal after a fund raising drive on Montserrat**
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1. Celebrate St Patrick's Day Montserrat Style

The Caribbean island of Montserrat is the only country besides Ireland to celebrate St Patrick's Day as a national holiday. In fact, a whole week of events takes place on the island to mark the occasion.

This year the celebrations begin on March 13th and continue until March 20th 2010. Visitors are welcomed to the island to experience and celebrate St Patrick's Day, Montserrat style.

Events taking place during the week include the annual St Patrick's dinner at the Montserrat Cultural Centre; a Freedom Run to commemorate an eighteenth century slave uprising; an island pub crawl starting at Garry Moore's Wide Awake Bar; and a Heritage Day and feast in Festival Village, with local food, music, dances, games and the heritage day Jamboree.

The week-long festival encompasses everything Montserrat has to offer including entertainment, legend and folklore, sight-seeing tours, cultural exhibitions and much more, making it one of the most popular times of year for overseas visitors.

St Patrick's Day is celebrated on Montserrat to remember the island's Irish Heritage which dates back to the 17th century. The Irish connections are still evident today from the moment visitors arrive on the island and receive their shamrock passport stamp. During the St Patrick's Day festival, visitors will notice many locals wearing national dress – in which green is the dominant colour – and both Guinness and 'Green' Heineken are available in bars alongside the customary rum punch cocktails.

The festival is more accessible than ever this year with the return of a regular ferry service between Antigua and Montserrat and improved flight connections with two airlines now offering scheduled services on the route. As well as widening the choice for holidaymakers to Montserrat, this also means that those staying in Antigua can

hop across to Montserrat for a day-trip or short break to also participate in the St Patrick's Week of Activities.

For more information about the celebrations visit www.visitmontserrat.com

2. Ondeck launches a new Hidden Caribbean sailing adventure visiting Montserrat

Ondeck sailing company has launched a new 'Hidden Caribbean' sailing trip visiting Montserrat and three other islands in the region - St Kitts, Saba and Barbuda.

The eight-day trip departs from Antigua bound for its first stop, Montserrat. Guests on the trip will have the opportunity to explore Montserrat and view the volcano from Jack Boy Hill and from the Volcano Observatory. The boat will be moored overnight in Montserrat before setting sail for St Kitts.

The next available trip departing from Antigua is March 22nd – 28th 2010, costing US\$1,295 per person (approx. £812). The price includes breakfast and dinner on the boat.

For more information and reservations visit www.ondeck.co.uk or call 02392 583000.

3. EC\$90,000 raised for the Haiti appeal after a fundraising drive on Montserrat

A huge EC\$90,000 (approx. £21,567) has been raised for the Haiti appeal after a fundraising drive on Montserrat. With a population of around 4,700, this is equivalent to each resident donating over £4.50 for their Caribbean neighbours.

The island of Montserrat has benefited hugely from the overseas aid it has received since its volcanic crisis began in 1995, making islanders more willing to dig deep and give generously to Haiti which is dealing with a disaster on a much bigger scale.

On Saturday January 30th 2010, a family day and concert was organised to help raise money for the victims of the Haiti earthquake. Residents across Montserrat donated their time, prizes, facilities and singing voices to make the day happen.

The family day and concert were held at the Montserrat Cultural Centre, a fitting venue for the occasion since it was itself built as a result of fundraising activity for Montserrat. Funding came partially from the Music for Montserrat concert staged by Beatles producer Sir George Martin at the Royal Albert Hall in 1997, during the peak of Montserrat's volcanic crisis.

Singers and performers from across the island including the legendary Arrow took part in a special concert on Saturday evening. Arrow sang his famous song *Hot, Hot, Hot* with the help of the island's governor and chief minister on backing vocals.

The community raised over EC\$20,000 (approx £4,793) at Saturday's concert, with the final figure still to be confirmed.

In total the people from Montserrat have raised over EC\$90,000 (approx. £21,567) for the Haiti appeal. This includes EC\$70,000 which had already been raised during a Radiothon on January 15th 2010.

Jeevan Robinson, who hosted the Radiothon, said he was amazed at the generosity shown and that it made him “proud to be Montserratian”.

For more information and images of the concert, visit the Montserrat Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/islandofmontserrat?ref=nf>

For more information about Montserrat visit www.visitmontserrat.com or call 020 7928 1600.

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