

Celebrate St Patrick's Day Caribbean Style In Montserrat

Overseas visitors are invited to enjoy the craic in Montserrat as it celebrates its unique St Patrick's Day Festival from 12th-19th March 2011.

Known as 'The Emerald Isle', Montserrat is the only country outside Ireland where St Patrick's Day is a public holiday. The week-long St Patrick's Festival provides a rich mix of Irish and African heritage, with some traditional Caribbean entertainment, making this one of Montserrat's most popular annual events.

The activities for the week include a Freedom Run from Cudjoe Head to Salem Park, a nature hike and a junior calypso competition. Events will take place in parks and buildings across the north of the island, while much of the activity on St Patrick's Day itself (17th March) will centre on a reconstructed Slave Village. Here, stalls will sell traditional food, locals will gather to play traditional games such as dominoes and marbles, and masquerade dancers will put on colourful displays.

Montserrat's Irish heritage dates back to the 17th century when the island became a haven for Irish Catholics who were persecuted on other Caribbean islands. By 1678, a census showed that more than half the people on the island were Irish, so it is hardly surprising that the Irish had such a strong influence on the island's developing culture. This history is still evident today from the moment visitors arrive at the airport in Montserrat and receive a shamrock-shaped stamp in their passports. During St Patrick's Day, 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 aside the traditional rum punch cocktails.

African-inspired events such as the Freedom Run fun-run and masquerade dancing commemorate the slave history in Montserrat, specifically an unsuccessful uprising that took place on St Patrick's Day in 1768.

For all the latest information on travel to and accommodation in Montserrat, plus full events listings for St Patrick's Week, please see www.visitmontserrat.com.

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For further information on Montserrat, please see www.visitmontserrat.com or telephone 020 7928 1600.

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