

SUN'S TRAVEL



A hummingbird approaches a feeder to get its morning meal at the Adventure Farm and Nature Reserve Bird Observation Centre in Plymouth.



Guests kick back poolside at Mount Irvine Bay Resort. EDDIE CHAU/POSTMEDIA NETWORK PHOTOS

Flock to Tobago

EDDIE CHAU

Punch your ticket to this tropical paradise

Eddie Money can sell you *Two Tickets to Paradise*, and they'll likely land you in Tobago.

And while there are many visitors who migrate to Tobago to soak in the sun and beaches, some more feathery friends also flock to the Caribbean island.

And if you blink, you might just miss some of them.

When you visit the Adventure Farm and Nature Reserve Bird Observation Centre in Plymouth, Tobago, you could be greeted by half a dozen tiny friends.

No, we're not talking about the annoying mosquitoes that are out to eat you.

Rather, it's different species of hummingbirds — Copper-rumped hummingbird,

black-throated mango, white-necked jacobin, rufous-breasted hermit, and white-tailed sabrewing, to name a few — which inhabit this attraction.

Owned by Ean MacKay, the centre is home to a variety of bird species, including the beautiful hummingbirds.

Every morning, these birds will flutter to the main villa after the ringing of a bell, awaiting their breakfast.

Patient and observant visitors will catch a glimpse of these majestic birds, including some rare ones.

The prettiest hummingbird in the world is called the ruby topaz.

It's a migratory hummingbird and it spends eight

months here," says MacKay. "The first sighting of the ruby topaz in Trinidad and Tobago for the past 18 years has always been here at the nature reserve."

"This kind of tells you that there's some kind of navigation that brings them back here."

MacKay says the nature reserve has a lot to offer for birds and visitors alike.

The facility is an organic farm with plenty of fruit trees that attract a lot of birds at different times of the year.

And all kinds of wildlife benefit from the site, MacKay adds, as the leftover fruit the birds have eaten also feed the termites.

Those insects, in turn, then feed the tilapia fish in

the water.

For those who can't get enough of the sights and sounds of the Adventure Farm in one visit, MacKay also offers the Adventure Eco Villas, where guests can stay in one-bedroom accommodations with a front patio that overlooks the nature reserve.

It's perfect for those who want to bird watch without leaving the comfort of their own room.

"We try to provide a total and complete environment here," he says.

CRAB AND DUMPLINGS

It's sometimes hard to separate Trinidad and Tobago — especially when it comes to food.

While most visitors to the island nation will say 'doubles' — curried chickpeas served in bara flatbread — is the must-have food to feed your belly, it's something that's most associated with Trinidad.

While doubles are widely available in Tobago, it's not a food item locals rave about.

No sir. In Tobago, crab and dumplings are where it's at!

Tobago's signature dish truly stands out, featuring delicious crab covered in a curry sauce made from a variety of island herbs and spices, served with doughy dumplings.

It's a messy eat definitely to be savoured using hands — but so worth it.

Meisha Trim, of Miss Trim's Foods in Crown Point, is famous for her curry crab and

dumplings.

So what makes crab and dumplings uniquely Tobagonian?

"We have crab in the other Caribbean islands, but no others cook it like we do," says Trim. "People boil it sometimes and make it more like lobster or crab legs, but we actually cook it with our sauces and spices together and we have it as a full meal with dumplings."

"It's the signature dish of Tobago and people come far and wide to have them."

Being surrounded by the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean means there's seafood aplenty.

Besides crab and dumplings, Trim says curried conch is also an island specialty, along with cou-cou, a dish made from cornmeal.

Two goats get a workout in preparation for an upcoming race.



OFF TO THE (GOAT) RACES

We all know Superman can't outrun The Flash.

But these Tobagonian goats may come close.

We've all heard of horse and greyhound racing, but in Tobago goat racing is a serious sport.

Goat racing originated in Buccoo, Tobago, in 1925 by Barbadian Samuel Callendar, who considered it the poor man's version of horse racing.

The races typically happen during 'Easter Tuesday,' an unofficial public holiday that takes place the first Tuesday after Easter.

The sport has grown in popularity that the Buccoo Goat Race Festival was created, drawing thousands of spectators annually.

Anthony Horsford knows a thing or two about goat racing.

He has been a racer and trainer for more than 30 years. "Goat racing is a part of our heritage," he says. "These goats, you have to train them like they're athletes in order for them to do good (on the track). I start my training (in February) to get them ready for Easter."

He says there are 10 goats racing at one time.

And while the winner gets a handsome purse for their

efforts, for Horsford, his satisfaction comes from the love of the sport.

"This sport keeps me fit. There's also bragging rights," he jokes.

BREATHE, RELAX, UNWIND

The Mount Irvine Bay Resort has a little bit of everything for visitors looking for a siesta while in Tobago.

Want to unwind and have a poolside drink?

They've got you covered. Keep those golf skills in check while on vacation?

You can do that too. Or why not rejuvenate with a spa massage?

That's also a possibility. Located in Mount Irvine,

the resort is known as one of the most picturesque properties in the Caribbean.

And it also has a storied past.

The land on which the hotel sits was once where the Amerindian settlement made its home.

In 1763, Charles Irvine of Scotland purchased 160 hectares in Courland Bay and rechristened it Mount Irvine.

Irvine built his property into a thriving sugar cane plantation, which became one of the major sugar producers in Tobago.

He sold the property in 1774 and ownership changed hands several times before being acquired in 1824 by

Lord William Robert Keith Douglas, who built a sugar mill on-site.

Mount Irvine later turned into a coconut plantation until the crop died off in 1963 thanks to a hurricane.

Owner Patrick Boyle Lake Coghlan converted the ex-plantation land into a hotel and golf course.

The property was purchased in 1983 by businessman Robert T. Yorke.

While Yorke died in 2015, the now branded Mount Irvine Bay Resort is retained by his family.

Remnants of the site's plantation days — such as sugar boilers, cannons, water tanks and hoppers — can be found on the resort grounds.

The four-star hotel itself features rooms, suites and even cottages for visitors to stay in while in Tobago.

In addition to the spa and golf course, the resort also features the open-air Sugar Mill Restaurant, where patrons can enjoy full Caribbean breakfasts or delicious local and international meals for lunch and dinner.

Mount Irvine Bay also has facilities that can host events, meetings and weddings.

WHAT TO DO IN TOBAGO

■ **Bioluminescence Tour** — Taking place just after the moon rises at Pigeon Point, kayakers can enjoy the brilliance of bioluminescence (emission of light by living organisms) glow in the water. With the aid of a tour guide, kayakers paddle in a loop following the mangroves with a stop at No Man's Land beach before heading back for shore. While the amazing glow is a sight to behold as the light emits from plankton and the animals in the water, taking pictures of it will be next to impossible, so don't bring your cameras or cellphones.

■ **Main Ridge Forest Reserve** — Main Ridge is a mountainous ridge in Tobago that's the home to a large habitat of native animals and plants. Spanning 29 km in length, the Main Ridge contains a beautiful rainforest that can be hard to tread through without the proper footwear. With the aid of guide Newton George of NG & Co. Nature Tours, visitors can bask in the natural beauty of Tobago's ecosystem while trekking

through the rainforest.

■ **Tobago Estate Chocolate W.I. Ltd.** — Located in Roxborough, the Tobago Cocoa Estate was created by Duane Dove as a way to reinvigorate the cocoa industry on the island. Visitors will learn about the cocoa crop, its different varieties and how it's turned into a plethora of products sold worldwide. A must tour for any chocolate lover (there may even be samplings of some sweet treats!).

■ **Jemma's Tree House Kitchen** — There's no way you can stop in Tobago without having a meal at Jemma's Tree House Kitchen in Speyside. The open-air restaurant gets its name from being built around a large coconut tree (there's even a falling coconut warning sign). The star attraction on the menu is the seafood. While helpings of fresh fish, shrimp or lobster will fill your tummy, it's the homestyle servings of sides, such as rice, beans, fried bananas, mixed vegetables and breadfruit pie, that will leave you stuffed and happy for hours on end.



Harry Dove, a tour guide at Tobago Cocoa Estate, shows visitors what's inside of a cocoa plant.



Meisha Trim prepares curry crab and dumplings.