



## Pitons Management Area

### Identification

**Country** Saint Lucia

**Marine ecoregion** Eastern Caribbean

**Boundaries** The Pitons are already within the borders of Qualibou National Park, the prime tourist attraction of St. Lucia, and are greatly respected for their distinctive character and as symbols of national identity.

**Total area** 29.09 ha

**Land area** 20.34 ha

**Marine area** 8.75 ha

### Site national category

Environmental Protection Area and a World Heritage Site.

### Site international designation

World Heritage status.

**IUCN category** VI

### Biophysical features

**Climate** The island has a moist tropical climate with a rainfall of 2,000-2,500 mm. It is dry between January and April, wet in November and December and the temperature is constant at 26.7°C.

### Physical features

Beaches, rocky shores, volcanic formations, rocky shores, keys

### Biophysical Features (continued)

#### Terrestrial habitats

The Pitons on the SW coast of St. Lucia are two steep forested cone-shaped mountains which rise side by side from the sea with spectacular abruptness. Gros Piton is 3km wide at the base, Petit Piton is 1km wide and is linked to it by the high Piton Miton ridge. The geology illustrates the history of an andesitic composite volcano over a crustal subduction zone. The peaks are the degraded dacitic cores of two lava-dome volcanoes probably formed on the side of a collapsed andesitic strato-volcano. They rise on the edge of the geologically complex caldera-like gravity-slide formation known as the Soufriere Volcanic Centre, and also as the Qualibou Depression, which surrounds the whole area, including the town of Soufriere. Terrestrial flora and fauna species: The dominant vegetation is tropical moist forest grading to subtropical wet forest with small areas of dry forest near the coast and on steep slopes, and small areas of wet elfin woodland on the summits. On the Pitons

especially, small undisturbed natural forests remain, preserved by the steepness of the land. At least 148 species of plants have been recorded on Gros Piton, and 97 on Petit Piton and the ridge. Many St. Lucia species are found only or mainly there. Many mosses, lichens, orchids and bromeliads thrive in the rainforest conditions. There is a relatively high level of endemic or rare species: the endemic shrubs *Acalypha elizabethae*, and *Bernardia laurentii*, found only on the summit of Petit Piton, also, on the slopes, the rare s

#### Marine habitats

The coral reefs are healthy and diverse, comprised of fringing and patch reefs, covering almost 60% of the Marine Management Area

#### Marine invertebrates and fishes

A short survey to a depth of 20 meters revealed 168 species of finfish, 0 species of cnidaria, including corals, 8 molluscs, 14 sponges, 11 echinoderms, 15.

## Biophysical Features (continued)

arthropods and 8 annelid worms. Hawksbill turtles *Eretmochelys imbricata* (CR) are seen inshore; whale sharks *Rhincodon typus* (VU) and short-finned pilot whales *Globicephala macrorhynchus*, are seen offshore. A comprehensive survey would almost certainly reveal greater diversity

## Marine mammals, birds and reptiles

Whale sharks *Rhincodon typus* (VU) and short-finned pilot whales *Globicephala macrorhynchus*, are seen offshore.

## Endangered species

Hawksbill turtles *Eretmochelys imbricata* (CR) are seen inshore;

## Management

### Primary management institution

Forestry Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

### Other institutions that participate in management

Soufriere Marine Management Area (SSMA).

**Personnel** Manager, office assistant and secretary

### Management objectives

Species protection, ecosystem protection, fisheries management, user conflict resolution, and recreational tourism use

### Other management objectives

Creating formal linkages among management and planning agencies and other interest groups, so as to ensure that the integrity of the site in terms of its natural, historical and cultural significance is not compromised. To afford special protection to the flora and fauna of such areas and to protect and preserve the

## Management (continued)

natural breeding grounds and habitats of aquatic life, with particular regard to flora and fauna. To allow for the natural regeneration of aquatic life in areas where such life has been depleted. To promote scientific study and research in respect of such areas.

### Management programmes

Education outreach program, financial or business plan, entrance user fees, fisheries regulations, and tourism regulations

### Funding sources

User fees are the only financing mechanism in place. All other funding comes from the government.

### Cultural resources

Archaeological sites - megalith, petroglyphs and middens -prove the existence of an Amerindian Carib population which was displaced by Africans brought by the French who settled in the mid 17th century. In 1814 the island was ceded to Britain from which independence was gained in 1979. There was a history of slave rebellions and the Soufriere area, especially the slopes of Gros Piton, was a base camp for runaway slaves and their settlements. This, aided by the rugged topography, nurtured a local tradition of independence. There are also old plantation estates and sugarmill ruins.

### Coastal development

No one lives permanently in the conservation and marine areas of the PMA. The surrounding rough topography and local traditions have favored diversified medium-sized estates and small hill farms in the region where 1,500 people live within the terrestrial

multiple use zone of the management area. However, real state development is threatening the area.

## Legal

**Designation** Legally designated

### Year established

Established under the Physical Planning and Development Act, 2001.

### Primary responsible institution

Forestry Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

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## General information

Outstanding natural beauty, spectacular geological features and highly productive biological ecosystems. The land component presents generally mountainous topography with lushly forested terrain (sub-tropical wet and tropical moist forest, with areas of tropical dry forest near the coast), while the marine coastal belt is one of steep submarine shelf, supporting areas of well-developed fringing reef. Marine reserve zone (part of SMMA) comprises reefs at Petit Piton and Gros Piton. PMA is an Environmental Protection Area and a World Heritage Site.