



SEADREAM
YACHT CLUB

NEVIS, LEEWARD ISLANDS

In 1493, when Columbus spied a cloud-crowned volcanic isle during his second voyage to the New World, he named it Nieves, the Spanish word for snow, since it reminded him of the snow-capped peaks of the Pyrenees. Nevis rises out the water in an almost perfect cone and the tip of its 3,232ft central mountain is smothered by clouds. It is lush and less developed than its sister island of St Kitts. In 1607, Captain John Smith and his crew, on their way to establish the colony at Jamestown, Virginia, stopped off at Nevis to hang some mutineers; he noted: "Here we found a great pool, wherein bathing ourselves we found much ease". By 1778 the waters of the mineral springs had become so famous, that the luxurious **Bath Hotel** was built adjacent to them. This tiny 36 square mile island became known as the Spa of the Caribbean, attracting fashionable Europeans.

John Smith is not the only famous name associated with Nevis; Alexander Hamilton, who was to become treasury secretary under President George Washington, was born in Charlestown, Nevis, in 1755. His home in Charlestown has been restored and is now a museum. Admiral Lord Nelson, who was headquartered at Antigua for a time, found Nevis a convenient stop off for fresh water. This was where he met Fanny Nisbet. They were married at the Montpellier Estate (as attested to the records of St John's Church in Fig Tree Parish). The Duke of Clarence, who later became King William IV of England, stood up for the Admiral.

The island is known for both its natural beauty, long beaches with white and black sand, the lush greenery, the several mineral spas, and for the restored sugar plantations that now house some of the Caribbean's most elegant hostels. In 1628 settlers from St Kitts sailed across the two mile channel that separates the two islands of St Kitts and Nevis. Initially, they grew tobacco, cotton, ginger and indigo, but with the introduction of sugarcane in 1640, Nevis became the island equivalent of a boomtown. As the mineral baths were drawing crowds, the island was producing an abundance of sugar. Slaves were brought from Africa to work on the magnificent estates, many of them nestled high in the mountains, amid lavish tropical gardens.

In the 1950s and 1960s, St. Kitts and Nevis were politically joined with Anguilla, though all three were still British colonies. Anguilla left the alliance in 1971 as St. Kitts and Nevis moved toward independence, a status they achieved in 1983. The union was tested in late 1998, when secessionists on Nevis forced a referendum. The vote was very close, but ultimately fell short of the two-thirds majority needed for independence. (Exactly 62% favored secession.) Had they succeeded, the smallest country in the Western Hemisphere would have become two even smaller ones. The federal government since has promised more autonomy to Nevis residents.

EXPLORING THE SITES

Charlestown, the capital of Nevis, houses 1,200 of the island's 9,300 population. Founded in 1660, the buildings are now weathered, but there is still evidence of past glory, in their fanciful galleries, elaborate gingerbread, wooden shutters and colourful hanging plants. The stonework building with the clock tower at the corner of Main Street and Prince William Street, houses the courthouse and library. A fire in 1873 severely damaged the structure, and the current building dates from the turn of the century. The **Alexander Hamilton Birthplace**, which contains the **Museum of Nevis History**, is located on the water front Low Street. This Georgian style house, covered with bougainvillea and hibiscus, is a reconstruction of the statesman's original home, which was built in 1680 and thought to have been destroyed during an earthquake in the mid nineteenth century. Hamilton was born here in 1755. He left for the colonies seventeen years later to contrive his education. He became secretary to George Washington, and died in a duel with political rival Aaron Burr. The Nevis House of Assembly sits on the second floor of this building, and the museum downstairs contains Hamilton memorabilia, and documents pertaining to the island's history. Located approximately half a mile from Charlestown are the ruins of the **Bath Hotel** (built by John Huggins in 1778) and **Bath Springs**. The springs, some icy cold, others with temperatures of 108 degrees Fahrenheit, emanate from the hillside and spill into the "great pool" that John Smith mentioned in 1607. Huggins' hotel was adjacent to the waters, with the Spring House built over the springs. The hotel charged an outrageous price of six pence per night, and accommodated fifty guests. Eighteenth century accounts reported that a stay of a few days, bathing in and imbibing the water resulted in miraculous cures. The hotel was closed in the late nineteenth century. The Spring House has now been partially restored.

The village of **Fig Tree**, located approximately two miles from Charlestown, is the location of **St John's Church**, which dates from 1680. Amongst its records, is a tattered marriage certificate, prominently displayed, which reads: "Horatio Nelson, Esquire, to Frances Nisbet, Widow, on March 11th, 1787". **The Nelson Museum** (at the nearby Morning Star Plantation) contains memorabilia pertaining to the life and times of Admiral Lord Nelson, including letters, documents, paintings and furniture from his flagship. Nelson, officially based in Antigua, returned to court and marry Frances Nisbet, who lived on the sixty-four acre **Nisbet Plantation**.

Nature lovers find much to like on this small, green island—lovely seashores, rain forests and spectacular views. The **Hamilton Trail** and the **Zetlands Trail** lead up to the summit of Mt. Nevis, and the hike up the 3 232 ft/985 m high peak is fairly strenuous. A more moderate alternative is **Saddle Hill**, a 1,250-ft/380-m volcanic peak in the southern sector of the island. On the way, the trail passes Nelson's Lookout and at the summit there is panoramic views of the Caribbean and the Atlantic. The **Nature Walk Trail** at the Golden Rock Estate, southeast of Mt. Nevis, winds through typical Nevis vegetation and provides labels to identify the various plants.

A short walk south of the town center is a small and largely forgotten **Jewish cemetery**, which consists of a grassy field with horizontal gravestones. The oldest stone dates from 1684 and quite a few others date from the early 1700s, when an estimated 25% of the non-slave population on Nevis was Jewish.

BEACHES

On of the most beautiful beaches is **Pinney's**, on the west coast of the island. It's a long (4 mi/7 km) stretch of golden sand, lined with groves of palm trees. Its reef-protected waters are ideal for swimming and snorkeling. Pinney's is also the sight of **Fort Ashby**, which was built around 1702. It's the last of eight small fortifications that once extended along the coast north of Charlestown, but not much remains other than a few cannons and some partially reconstructed walls. North of Pinney's Beach is smaller and more laid-back **Oualie Beach**. It has the best water-sports facilities on the island.

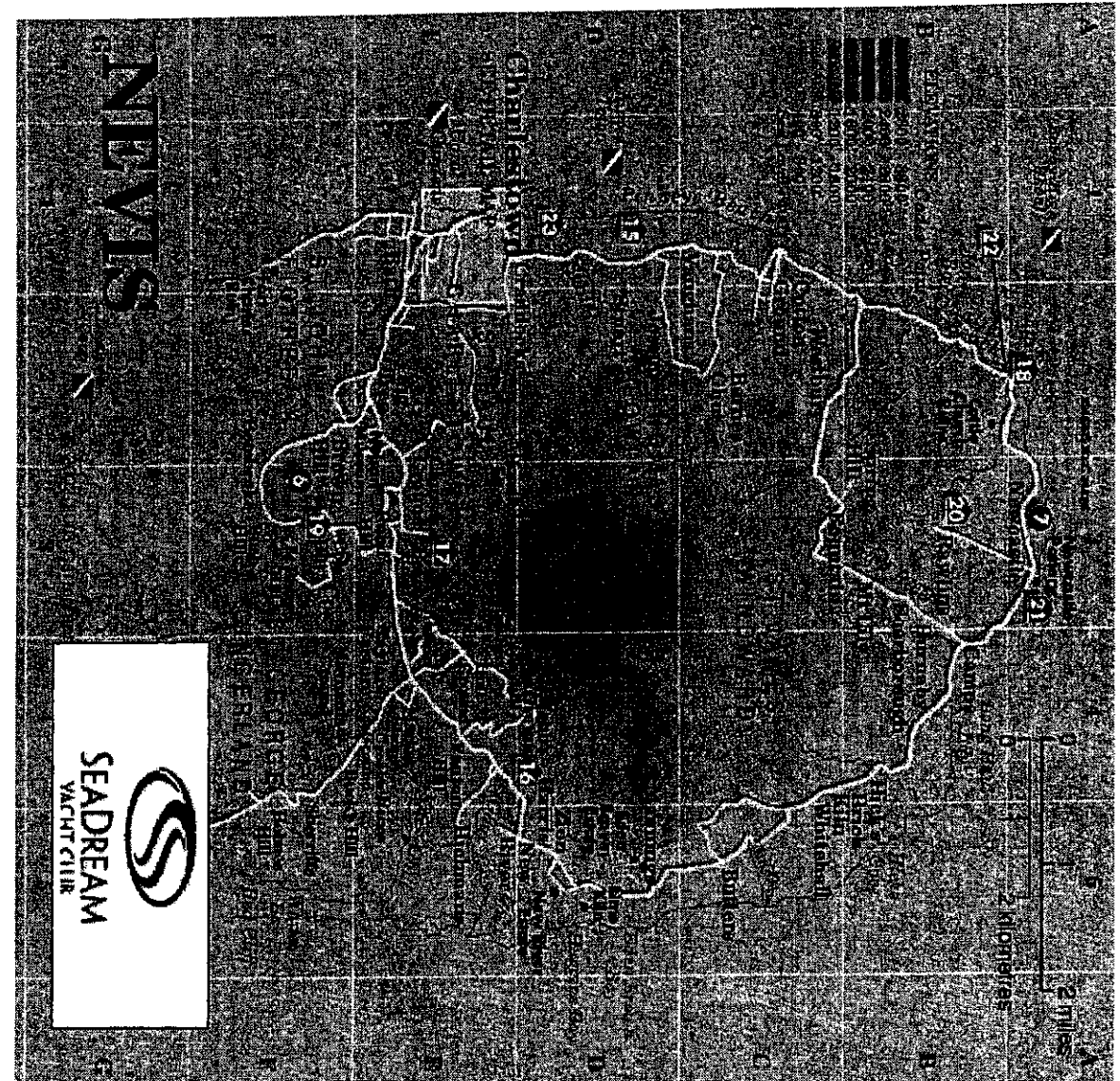
GOLF

The Four Seasons course straddles Main Road, giving an exclusive country-club feel to parts of the Pinney's Beach area. The 18-hole course, par 71, designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr., is rated among the best in the Caribbean and provides a dramatic view of the Resort, the Caribbean and the neighbouring island of St. Kitts.

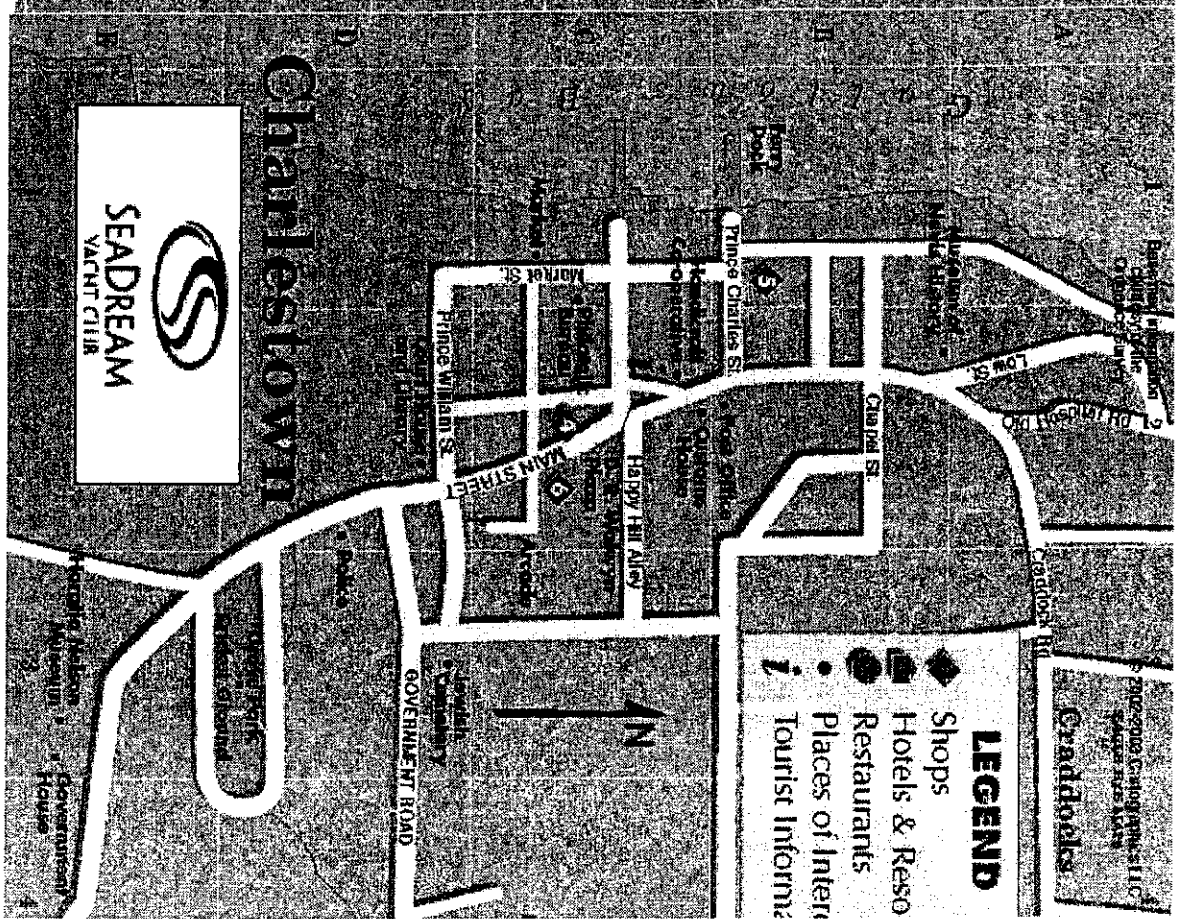
SHOPPING

Shopping is duty-free on Nevis. Charlestown has an eclectic selection of small shops that have gone more upscale since the Four Seasons resort opened. Sand Box Tree on Main Street sells everything from postcards and swim rafts to antiques. The similarly all-purpose Island Hopper, which carries Caribelle Batik's art and clothing, is in the TDC Plaza arcade on Main Street. Try the Yellow Shutters, also in the arcade, for T-shirts, beauty supplies, straw hats and jewelry. Shops sell everything from local art to tacky souvenirs in the Cotton Ginney, a waterfront complex where Nevisians once gathered to sell cotton. The Gallery of Nevis Art near the Hamilton Museum shows folk art, ceramic sculptures and paintings by local artists. For truly lightweight souvenirs, pick up some of the colorful Nevis stamps, prized by collectors, at the Nevis Philatelic Bureau on Market Street, about two blocks from the pier.

Shopping Hours: Monday-Friday 8 am-4 pm, Saturday 8 am-6 pm. Some smaller shops close for lunch from noon-1 pm or 2 pm.



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- ◆ Shops
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