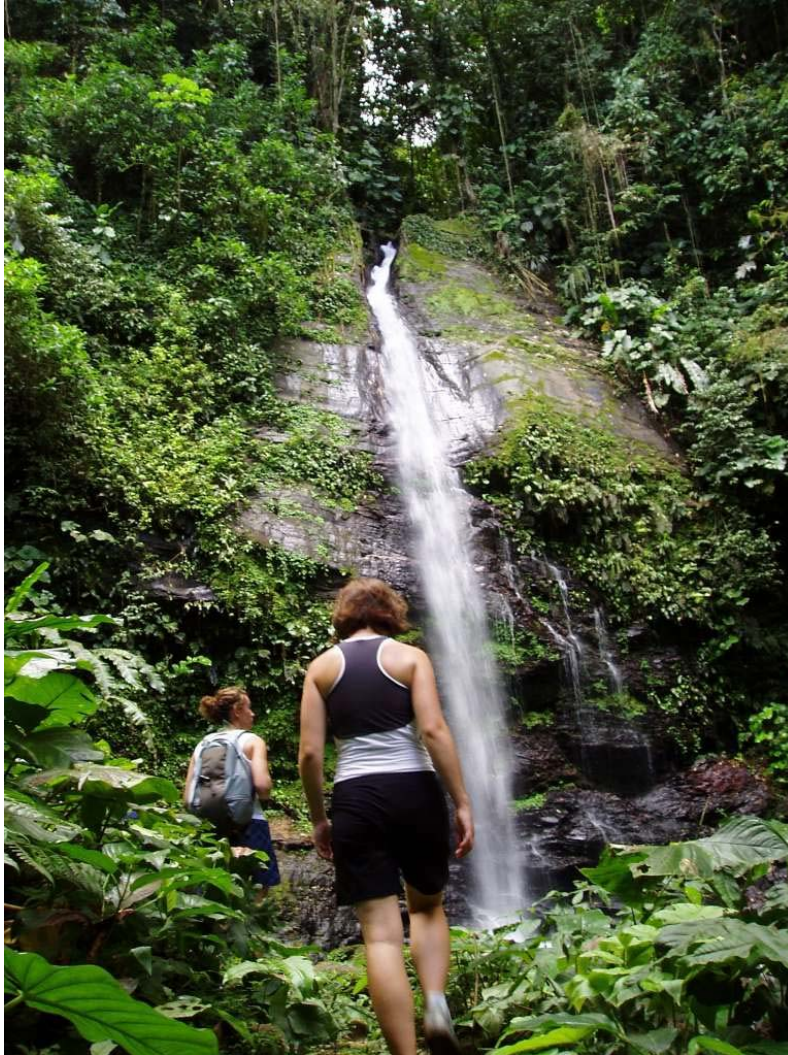


Welcome to Trinidad  
Your Guide to Getting Established  
In Petit Valley



and seeing what there is to see in TnT!

# Welcome to Trinidad

## Your Guide to Getting Established In Petit Valley

I hope these next few pages can help you get the most out of your experience here in Trinidad. As with any foreign place, it takes some time to figure out the lay of the land. Your time here is precious, so it is my hope that this Guide can get you out and about quicker and with more confidence.

An excellent source of information is the Rough Guide to Trinidad and Tobago, with lots of detailed directions and hints. Tap into the experience of teachers who have been at Maple Leaf for a few years - so much of your enjoyment in this country will rely on figuring out how things work, and personal experience is the only way to really know.



A few Must-Do's (in my opinion)...

- Find a copy of Cote Ce, Cote La to decode the local dialect and bizarre expressions! Out of print, but try Clarky, the bookseller across from City Gate.
- Get a copy of Wild T&T, an amazing DVD
- Buy the Naparima Cookbook
- Spend a night on Paria beach under a full moon during turtle-laying season
- Read The Dragon Can't Dance just before Carnival
- PLAY Carnival and J'Ouvert!!

This information is available for download (.pdf) or viewing on the internet:

[www.august9.net/triniguide](http://www.august9.net/triniguide)

Enjoy,  
Neil Lawrence  
neil@august9.net

## Sections

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### 1. Orientation 101

Maple Leaf International School lies on Morne Coco Road in Petit Valley. Morne Coco runs all the way up the valley, over the mountain, and joins with the Saddle Road in Maraval (a nice shortcut to the North Coast road and Maracas beach). Heading south, the road ends on the Wendy Fitzwilliam Highway -- this intersection is known as Four Roads. Starlite Plaza is just across the traffic island from this intersection.

Diego Martin is the larger town/area across the valley from Petit Valley.

**Post office** is at the pharmacy down the road (south) from the school. (\$3.75 TT for international lettermail, \$3.25 TT for postcards)

**Grocery stores:** the Hi-Lo across from the school, Starlite Plaza, and a larger Hi-Lo/pharmacy at West Mall.

**Fruit stands:** just up the road (north) at the corner of Crystal Stream/Morne Coco Rd. Great roti at Don's Roti!!!

Grab a map from the back of the binder.

## 2. Maxis, taxis and sidewalks

If you can place both feet on this sentence you should have no problem using Trinidad's sidewalks! Remember, you may have to be rather creative in what you consider a sidewalk.

The yellow-striped vans that hurtle through the narrow streets are maxis. The drivers will honk to get your attention and then begin gesturing to indicate which direction their vehicle is heading.



**Going to Movietown/Downtown**  
- *past Four Roads, along Foreshore/Wrightson Road to downtown (St. Vincent maxi stand)*

**What You Do:** point away from yourself (to opposite side of road)  
**What to Ask:** "Wrightson?" or "Independence Square?"

**Going to St. James/Savannah**  
- *past Four Roads, into St. James, around Savannah to Charlotte St.*

**What You Do:** point towards yourself (or over your shoulder)  
**What to Ask:** "St. James? Savannah?"

Maxis cost \$2 TT to go as far as the Four Roads intersection (the end of Morne Coco). After that the fare goes up to \$3 TT for any drop-off to the end of the route (for safety's sake in the evening, consider paying extra to have a drop off-route and closer to home). Try to



have small bills or the exact change. To successfully complete your maxi ride, tell the driver where you are going when you get in, push the stop button just before your stop, or call out your stop to the driver. ... and be gentle when closing the door! If you slam, the driver get vex and does cuss you out!

Red-striped maxis run east of POS (Port of Spain).

**Taxis** are cars with an 'H' licence plate for hire (as opposed to 'P' for private). Prices are \$2 to \$4 higher than maxis. 'P' vehicles often work the roads as well, but they are not licensed for passengers and could actually pose a danger to you. Stick with maxis and taxis.

For adventures further afield, take a maxi downtown, then walk one block south (towards Courts department store) where you will find **City Gate**, a large stone building where buses and maxi buses depart for all points in Trinidad. Be on guard for pickpockets when walking through the building with a backpack.

For traditional taxi service, call 627-TAXI. Cost is about \$40 TT to get downtown.

Mr. Nicholas of Sensational Tours (687-7832, 387-7832) has provided us with excellent service over the past year in arranging for airport pick-up/drop-off for guests, buses to fetes, and to arrange tours. He has a number of vehicles to accommodate various group sizes.

### **3. Internet and Telephone**

Internet Service Providers:

- TSTT
  - uses existing land line
  - 4 monthly packages: 25hrs, 50hrs, 100hrs for \$200, unlimited hours and a shared log-in account
  - To sign up you need to go in person to one of the Customer Service Offices, the closest one being on Independence Square

- **Greendot**
  - install wireless receiver in about 2-3 days!
  - unlimited bandwidth (@ 256k/s)
  - \$400TT/mo
- **TSTT Highspeed** - you may need to tell them what lamppost you're at to see if service is available in your area
- **Cable**

Land lines... take awhile to get hooked up.

Cell phones - Digicel and bMobile (TSTT)

International - between \$1 - \$2TT/minute from a landline. Just dial 1-(area code) 123-4567. Trinidad's area code is 868. For international calls, I've found the Net2Phone services offered through 2M Calling Centre excellent and about the cheapest (34 cents TT/min). The calling center is located in City Gate and after you purchase an account with them, you can top-up with any amount as you need it. (see the cards enclosed)

#### 4. Tobago

Travelling to Tobago can be done by ferry or by plane. Buy a ferry ticket in advance from the ferry terminal (right across the street from the St. Vincent maxi stand). Cost is \$100 TT return per person. A driver can take a car across for \$100TT (includes driver). The Lynx and The Cat are fast ferries, requiring 2 ½ hours to cross to Scarborough. The Panorama is the slow ferry, requiring twice that time.



Flying BWEE Tobago Express costs \$300 TT. The flights between Piarco International and Crown Point leave every hour, on the hour. Phone 625-0321 for reservations.

Almost all of us stay at **Johnson Apartments (639-8915)**, adjacent to Crown Point Hotel. Cost is about \$420 TT per night per room (double occupancy) or \$460 TT per room (4-persons). Kitchenette, one bedroom, small balcony, two day-beds, cable, a/c, and you have the use of Crown Point Hotel's facilities (pool, grounds). Johnson's is a 3-minute walk from the airport and is right on Store Bay..... check out the snorkeling at either end of the bay.

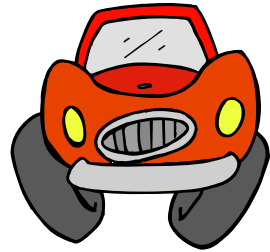
## 5. Travelling directions to...

- *Asa Wright* - drive along Churchill-Roosevelt Highway east until it becomes 2-lane (currently under construction to 4-lane). Go past turn-off for Arima. Once you pass the 2 stone pillars (about 2 kms beyond Arima), take the next left (200m from pillars) - Demerra Road. This will cross the Eastern Main Road and become Bye Pass Road. Keep going straight - you'll find paradise at Asa Wright about 8 kms into the mountains. 667-4655
- *Caroni Swamp* - drive east along Churchill-Roosevelt Highway, turn right (south) towards San Fernando. Exit the highway approx. 3 minutes drive and follow the signs. Nanan's has good guides, cost is \$40 TT local, \$60 TT default price. Leaves every day at 4pm.
- *Fort George* - take the road into St.James, left on Patna Rd., then another left just past the cemetery. Visit during daylight hours and with a group ideally.
- *Mount St. Benedict* - drive east along Churchill-Roosevelt Highway, turn north (towards the Northern Range) at the Curepe intersection (you'll see the Kay Donna drive-in theatre on your right). Turn right (east) on the Eastern Main Road (EMR) - be mindful of the Priority Bus Route! You'll have to cross this and then turn onto the busier EMR (aim for the Royal Castle sign, then the KFC sign). Drive 1.7kms then turn left on St.John's Road at the Scotia Bank, and follow this until you see the faded sign (on the left) for Mt.St.Benedict's at the bottom of the hill. \$21 TT for afternoon tea (Pax Guesthouse 3:00 - 5:30pm) - call first - 662-4084.
- *Paramin* - turn onto the North Coast Road heading towards Maracas beach. Turn left after 4.1 kms onto a very steep concrete road. Talk nice to your car. Real nice. You'll have to make one more turn (to the right) to get up to the highest point and the look-out. Quite spectacular view.
- *Tamana Bat Cave* - a spectacularly dirty experience, this bat cave reportedly has the second largest bat colony in the Caribbean. Take the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway east and turn south just before Wallerfield at the blue sign for "Tamana and Cumuto". 6.3kms take a left at the 5-way intersection. Another 15kms you will make a left turn at LP (lightpole) 374 onto the unmarked Carmichael Road. About the best landmark in the area is the Carmichael Public Cemetery about 0.5km before the road. Drive straight through the 4-way intersection at the 2.5kms mark and watch for the WASA water

pumping station on your right another 2.3 kms on. The hiking trail is just past the station on the right. Hike approx. 10minutes, watching for a trail heading up on your left (just as the track you are following levels out). The lower entrance to the cave is another 10 minutes hike or so.

## 6. Driving

Your International Driver's License is technically only valid for 3 months in TnT. If you go home at Christmas, that license would be good for yet another 3 months. If you decide to do things properly you can get a Trini license, but you'll probably need to take a day off to do this! The Ministry of Transportation office is located on Wrightson Road just past the National Flour Mill as you head downtown on the right side. Arrive by 8:00am. Go across the street, above the restaurant/bar, to Suzanne's and get 4 passport photos (\$25 TT), then head back to the Transport office (front building) where you'll get a form and pay the cashier to write the test (\$200TT). Then head around the right side of the building to a long building in the back where you'll wait to write the multiple choice test (booklet can be purchased for \$15TT or find enclosed copy). Then you'll wait yet again for the results, after which.... You guessed it, you'll have the opportunity to wait again in the front building to get an official photo taken and, after a short wait, you'll be handed your brand new laminated license card. Congratulations, you're done! Expect this to take anywhere from 4 hours to 2 days! (I think I hold the record, requiring 3 half-days to get my motorcycle license).



## 7. The Great Outdoors

One of the easiest and safest ways to see the natural wonders Trinidad has to offer is to hook up with one of the three hiking clubs. These clubs organize weekly hikes, meeting at different places on the island. Hikeseekers, Hikers' World, and Hikers Inc. all place notices in the newspapers for upcoming hikes.

TnT is host to an extremely rich diversity of flora and fauna. Be sure to spend a night at



Asa Wright, an economical and serene getaway (local rate is \$400TT/night with 3 meals). Leatherbacks lay from March until June, and hatchlings scurry across the beaches from May until September. Permits cost \$5TT, and the obligatory guide costs \$10TT/person local rate or \$10 US foreign rate. Permits can usually be bought at the beach, or from the Forestry Division across from Long Circular Mall. Call Nature Seekers for any other info/questions: 668-7337 or natseek@tstt.net.tt

Beach Houses are a great way to spend a weekend with some friends. Lots advertised in the classifieds. Stay away from Harry's4U - very dirty and poorly run.

Here are a couple we have used in Mayaro:

Howard      \$1000/night, sleeps 8, 15 seconds from the beach  
682-4584    353-4594

Sastri        \$950/night, sleeps 6, overlooking the beach, ask for the  
apartment on the east side of the road (closer to beach)  
753-1397

## 8. Mistakes I've Made



Who would have thought getting a hair cut could go so wrong? If a barber asks you if you want your hair "marked", know that this means shaving your hairline back to some new frontier! Works for some people I guess, not for me.... Hairdressers in West Mall are apparently good, or go downtown to my favourites, Marksmen Barber Salon at the corner of Independence Square and Charlotte St. (upstairs) for a good, honest \$20TT hair cut (they had nothing to do with the photo at left).

## 9. CONTACT NUMBERS

Maple Leaf School	632-9578	FAX: 633-3068
Asa Wright Nature Center	667-4655	
Mt. Plasir Estate (Grande Riviere)	670-2216	
Le Grande Almandier (G. Riviere)	670-1013	
Johnson's Apt (Tobago)	639-8915	
Treasure Queen Tours (Pier2)	634-2576	
<a href="http://www.treasurequeentours.com">www.treasurequeentours.com</a>		

Econo Car Rentals (WrightsonRd)	622-8074
BWEE Tobago Express	625-0321

Tenderheart Veterinary Hospital	645-3883
Dr. Wade Seukeran - Government vet for animal health certificates	

### Tour Guides

Mr. Nicholas	687-7832, 379-7832
Carl in Brasso Seco (hikes)	798-5198, 718-8605
Clive (Blanchisseuse boat)	669-3993 or 494-0482
Caribbean Discovery Tours	624-7281 (Steven)

### Emergency Numbers

Police 999 or Four Roads Station	637-3860
St. James Station	622-3695

Ambulance 990 or 625-3222

Fire	Four Roads	637-9222
	Headquarters	625-2671