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# What are the Top 5 Things that Could Go Wrong while in the Caribbean?



So you finally made it. You're in the Caribbean! The brilliant sun is beating down on you and you have sand beneath your feet. It's tropical heaven and you're loving it. But hold on just a minute. Have you thought about all the things that could go wrong during your stay? Because believe it or not, without proper planning and prevention strategies, there's every chance your "dream" vacation might turn out to be not so dream-laden at all.

So here are some of the factors that you need to consider when on the road and how to deal with them.

## **No. 1 Cultural Expectations and Culture Shock**

Many people arrive in Puerto Rico, Antilles, Antigua, Jamaica, or St.-Martin with what can only be described as wildly romantic expectations about its people, only to feel completely let down that everyone is dressed in Western clothing and if ever there are indeed people dressed ethnic, it's only because they're selling you something.

This sort of disillusionment is most common in the more populous parts of the Caribbean, such as Barbuda, Antilles, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, and Guadeloupe, although that's not saying that these countries really have nothing to offer of Caribbean culture you've come to expect.

One good tip is to let go of all your pre-conceived ideas of what the Caribbean culture should and should not be and let personal experience be your guide.

Traveling alone will give you a better chance at intermingling with ordinary citizens. By its very nature alone, you can already tell that independent travel does have its perks when it comes to experiencing an exotic destination such as the Caribbean.

Backpackers especially are very fortunate to stumble upon a rural village and discover that most natives, even the poorest, are disarmingly open and hospitable. Some of them might even treat you to a glimpse of how the life of a real, full-blooded Carib is really lived, and you'll be amazed.

So if you really want to learn more about the Caribbean culture and its native civilization before time, then head on to the isolated parts of the region where commercialization has yet to make its mark. The region of Antigua is as good as

place as any to visit for a diverse cultural experience and cultural sights around the islands.

If not, you can always go island hopping. The Cayman Islands and the U.S. Virgin Islands seem to be the perfect destinations for such a cultural adventure. Charter boats are available almost anywhere around these parts, with a usually jovial crew ready to point out to you the sights and some itty bitty stories and myths about them.

As with culture shock, that part is often overstated in the Caribbean. All you have to do is allow a few days to adapt to the overall vibe of the islands. Expect that in less developed countries, there is a much higher level of dirt and noise than you have at home. Expect that you might not be able to follow the language – something that can be recompensed by studying the language before leaving home.

And if you feel somewhat like a target for crime, most people are. It's normal. It helps if you try not to be too conspicuous as a tourist.

## **No. 2 Moving Around**

That's why it's called traveling. And in the Caribbean, where the tourist destinations and sights are vast and widespread, you might find that you'll be doing a lot more of that than in other places. Buses, trains, and taxis - these are luxurious compared to night buses, back of pick up trucks, or below-par boats, and there's every chance you might end up in one of these if you're the more adventurous type.

You will be surprised by how far distances are and how bad roads can be in hard-to-reach areas. Some areas don't even have roads, yet that's what makes it perfect for hiking and camping! So really, it all depends on what you're looking for when traveling to the Caribbean.

In the Caribbean, the variety of choices you have is amazing – hiking, rappelling, rainforest gliding, paragliding, camping, mountain trekking, mountain climbing, mountain biking, etc. Plus, there are the activities you can do in or on the water – scuba diving, snorkeling, skinny dipping, swimming, body surfing, windsurfing, water skiing, whale watching, boating, cruising, and more.

You will most certainly need a means of transportation in order to get to the places where these activities take place. Some, like hiking, biking, boating, etc., already provide the means by their nature. But others, such as mountain trekking, camping, gliding...you will need to get to the rainforest first where the campsite for the gliding team awaits. Booking a tour with this kind of activity will greatly help.

### **No. 3 Looking after your Things and Avoiding Crime**

It's a little difficult to write about crime when traveling to the Caribbean. If we emphasize the subject, first time travelers will have trouble swallowing the pill and end up getting paranoid about the whole thing. And yet, if we don't talk about the thing at all, inexperienced travelers will think that it's virtually risk free.

So, let's simplify the whole thing into three things:

- First, the Caribbean is not ground where crimes fester and encroach into society. The crime rate is pretty high, which is true especially in those

territories encompassing Latin America, but not dramatically high as in most other countries.

- Second, thieves will be present in your trip, as they are everywhere else. It's a normal occurrence. If you don't want to be a victim, don't give these criminals the occasion to make you one. In a word: beware.
- Third and last, it doesn't hurt to be a little paranoid about it. At the very least, it will help you take better care of your things and avoid getting into trouble during your trip.

It's an accepted rule that you exercise a degree of caution when you travel to the Caribbean, but only a degree. More is bordering on paranoia. Believe me, you don't want that kind of stress while you're in your supposedly "dream" vacation.

Just bear in mind that people with a criminal intent make up a tiny fraction of less than 1% of the population, so don't be overly suspicious of every person you meet.

#### **No. 4 Getting Ill**

This kind of trouble can strike at anytime and at any place you happen to be. Getting is an unfortunate caveat when traveling. It doesn't happen always so it's a mystery when it does happen. We're talking about normal stomach problems here, like food poisoning and diarrhea, not the more serious kind (e.g., malaria, yellow fever, dengue, hepatitis, etc.).

In most cases, it has to do with contaminated food. Maybe the chef at that lovely, out-of-the-way restaurant you checked out didn't wash his hands when he tossed your salad, or maybe the food just wasn't cooked that well.

The travel adage, 'boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it!' will apply in the Caribbean. Watch out for those cold salads, ice cubes in drinks, and hand-made ice creams, raw food, and buffet warnings, because really, they aren't called 'warnings' just to look pretty.

Don't let this kind of thing bother you too much. Don't get paranoid about food poisoning. It's probably not going to happen to you anyway, but it's best if you prepare for it. Over the counter drugs will probably do it for you and as for dehydration, Gatorade type sports drinks are much easier to drink than water and will replace sugar you have lost.

As for bottled water, they are generally available in the whole region. If you've decided to spend most of your time on a Caribbean beach, you will most likely have no problems of this sort. However, if you want to go hiking or mountain trekking in remote areas, be sure to bring Iodine pills (not even chlorine) with you to put in your water. Chlorine just can't do what Iodine can with those really nasty bugs.

Some of the commonest illnesses you will get while on a vacation in the Caribbean include:

- Diarrhea
- Dehydration
- Constipation
- Insect bites
- Skin irritations

- Colds, flus, and sore throats

Diarrhea is easy to handle with non-prescription drugs. Or you could just wait it out and let whatever got into your digestive tract flush itself out. Be sure to drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration and try slicing apple very thin and leaving them until they turn brown. The bacteria related to diarrhea and other symptoms normally die after 36 hours. If the symptoms grow worse in your case, consult a doctor about it.

Dehydration is the reason you feel awful during a bout of diarrhea. You can take dehydration salt sachets to solve the problem and/or drink lots of liquids. If you're hungry, stick to dry biscuits, boiled potatoes and rice.

The frequency of constipation is rather unusual, considering how many travelers expect to get diarrhea. Again, drink plenty of water, eat fruit, and have some natural laxatives at hand. Coffee and herbal tea could also help.

Colds, flus, and sore throats are common after long haul flights. They are also easily activated in the Caribbean's damp climate. You might get skin irritations somewhere in your Caribbean vacation, either due to certain elements in the air, something you ate, or all those exotic plants surrounding you. But they can be easily dealt with Hydrocortisone cream or other travel sized remedies. If they get really bad, you can try anti histamine pills.

## **No. 5 Bargaining**

Well, this doesn't exactly fall under the "things that could go wrong" category as it could be really fun, once you get the hang of it. Don't go thinking stars though

when we say it's easy enough, because the reality is: it's a they win, you lose situation. Try to be sporty about it and buy only the things that you really want.

Don't be fooled by the charms of a smart seller whose goal is not massively inflate the price for ignorant tourists. You aren't one of those, are you? So don't fall for any of it. The actual price from starting prices can be up to ten times less so keep that in mind when you haggle with the vendor for a seashell bracelet or a flowy, tie-dye wrap around skirt.

And so these are basically the top 5 things that could go wrong when you go on a Caribbean vacation. We've taught you how to deal with them. Now it's time for you to apply them. So go on ahead and leave your work and the tension associated with it for a month's stay at a dream Caribbean destination.

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