



Wingfield Estate. Photo courtesy of the Park Hyatt



Independence Square

HISTORIC Hotspots

The islands are awash with heritage. Here are the best 'must-see' sites BY CHERYL MARKOSKY

St. Kitts

National Museum

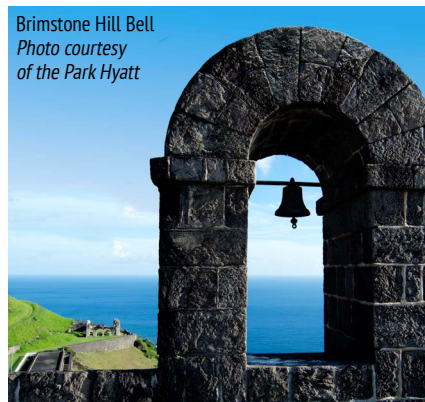
Examine St. Kitts's past at the museum in Basseterre's old Treasury Building – erected in the 19th century from volcanic stone. As well as learning about the Carib Indians and the island's colonial heritage, find out how St. Kitts and Nevis became independent in 1983. stkittsheritage.com

Independence Square

Originally known as Pall Mall, until the Federation declared its autonomy, the Union Jack-shaped square has an Italian-style fountain. Also, check out the Victorian Berkeley Memorial Clock Tower off the Circus – named after Piccadilly Circus, naturally.

Brimstone Hill Fortress

Discouraged by piles of random rocks purporting to be memorable landmarks? Well, you won't be disappointed by this impressive fort dating back to 1690 – a popular UNESCO World Heritage site



Brimstone Hill Bell
Photo courtesy of the Park Hyatt

– with its imposing stone battlements, formidable-looking cannons, and quarters that once housed 1,000 British officers and their families.

Open daily from 9:30am-5:30pm, except on Christmas Day and Good Friday. US\$10, children half price. brimstonehillfortress.org

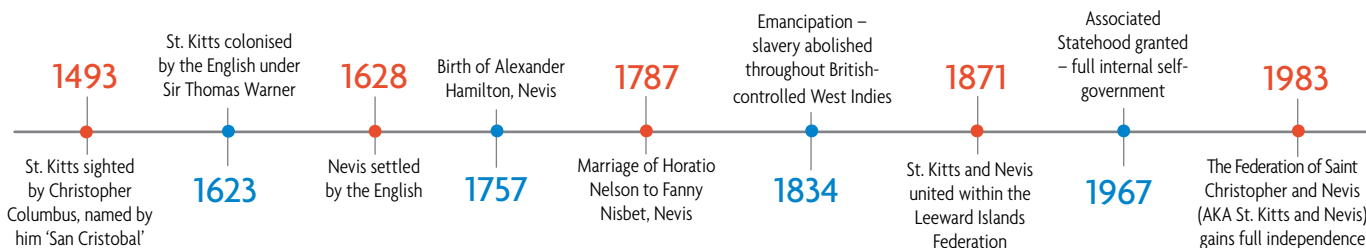
Wingfield Estate

Discover how sugar's transformed into rum at the oldest surviving rum distillery in the Caribbean, on the island's first working estate. Built in 1625, it's next to Romney Manor, home of Caribelle Batik – terrific for vibrant souvenirs. Open Monday to Friday, 8:30am-4pm. caribellebatikstkitts.com →

It Happened Here...

● BLOODY POINT, NORTHWEST OF BASSETTERE
So much blood was spilled after British and French troops killed 2,000 Carib Indians in 1626, it ran for three days.

Up to the early 17th century, islands inhabited by Arawak and Carib peoples



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Nevis

Museum of Nevis History

Fans of the phenomenally successful musical can uncover more about Alexander Hamilton, one of America's Founding Fathers, on the site where he was born in 1757 – among other displays about this diminutive island's heritage. And aficionados of Lord Horatio Nelson, the great British naval admiral, can get their fix at the Horatio Nelson Museum nearby in Bath Plain.

New River Estate

Nevis had its own industrial revolution of sorts when the old sugar mill – dating back to the early 1720s and originally powered by animals – was converted to steam at New



It Happened Here...

- **MONTPELIER PLANTATION INN, NEVIS** In 1787, Lord Nelson married Fanny Nisbet here. And upping the celebrity ante, Princess Diana and her young princes stayed at this historic hideaway in 1992. It still has plenty of right royal charm.
- **COTTLE CHURCH, NEVIS** This romantic, roofless ruin of a church, built in the 1820s, was the first place of worship on the island to welcome everyone – including slaves – and is now a symbol of the island's conviviality.
- **NELSON'S LOOKOUT, SOUTHWEST NEVIS** An easy hike up to the spot where Lord Horatio Nelson's men once kept an eye out for French warships from Martinique or Guadeloupe.

River on Nevis's east coast. Walk around the ancient stone buildings and engine equipment, and then stroll towards the sea to check out neighbouring Coconut Walk's old windmill and stone lime kiln.

Bath Hotel and Hot Springs

A double whammy, with a dip in healing waters that get up to 108F, followed by a glimpse of the 18th-century Bath Hotel on the edge of Charlestown. Once a playground for the rich and famous, you'll understand why Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Duke of Clarence came to eat, drink – and relax in the soothing steamy stream.

Eden Browne Estate

Everybody loves a good tale, and there's none better than the legend of the 1822 duel between John Huggins and Walter Maynard at Eden Browne Estate. A quarrel broke out when the two families gathered to celebrate the upcoming marriage of Julia (John's sister) and Walter. It's believed that John shot Walter and the grieving ghost of Julia – known as 'the lady in white' – haunts Eden Browne's abandoned Great House to this day. After your ghostly experience, head for Esmie's Sunrise Snackette next door for a fortifying 'Ting with a Sting' – Mount Gay rum and Ting. For more information, visit nevisland.com/historical-sites-landmarks ♥



Alexander the Great

Lin-Manuel Miranda's hit hip-hop musical *Hamilton* celebrates the US Founding Father born on Nevis BY RENEE PETRILLO

The Broadway and West End sensation *Hamilton* begins with a key question and answer: "How does a bastard, orphan, son of a whore and a Scotsman, dropped in the middle of a forgotten spot in the Caribbean by providence, impoverished, in squalor, grow up to be a hero and a scholar? The ten-dollar Founding Father without a father got a lot farther by working a lot harder, by being a lot smarter, by being a self-starter..."

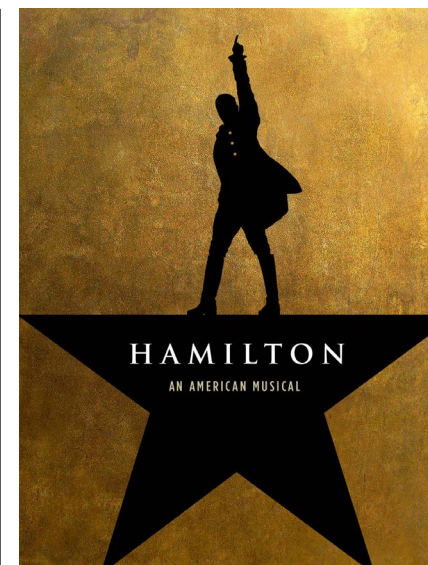
While that's a rather blunt way of putting it, it is true that Alexander Hamilton was one of two illegitimate sons of James Hamilton and Rachel Faucette, the latter still unhappily married to a man on Dutch St. Croix.

Alexander came to be born on January 11, 1757, on what the hip-hop musical describes as a "forgotten spot in the Caribbean" – Nevis – thanks to his ancestors: his maternal grandparents were married in the island's St. George's Anglican Church on June 26, 1718.

Years later, his mother and father would meet and fall in love on St. Kitts, raising Alexander and his older brother, James, on his mother's inherited Nevis estate for several years.

Alexander wasn't exactly an orphan, however. When he was around 11, his father deserted the family, then living on St. Croix. He lost his mother to fever two years later, and the cousin who adopted him committed suicide a year after that.

Luckily, his aunt, boss, and local pastor helped him along until he left for British



North America while still in his teens.

Nor was he really impoverished. His family lived modestly, and his business-savvy mother must have taught him well, because by his mid-teens Alexander was a supervisor in an import/export business.

What is absolutely certain, though, is that Alexander Hamilton was the first US Secretary of the Treasury and a hero of the Revolutionary War. And there's a lot more to the Hamilton legend.

His early exposure to slavery in the Caribbean made him a staunch supporter of abolition. In 1774, Alexander wrote: "No one man should exercise any power, or pre-eminence over his fellow creatures..." Holding slaves, he argued, appealed to the worst in human character.

He went on to found the US Mint, the *New York Post* newspaper, the US Coast Guard and the Bank of New York, before dying in a duel in Weehawken, New Jersey in 1804 – three years after his son Philip died in the same way, in exactly the same place.

Hamilton's memory lives on. He is at least partly responsible for the American tradition of eating turkey at Thanksgiving, courtesy of his proclamation that "no citizen of the US shall refrain from turkey on Thanksgiving Day".

"He went on to found the US Mint, the *New York Post* newspaper, the US Coast Guard and the Bank of New York"



The man himself – as the musical stresses – was greatly concerned with his own legacy, so he would surely be delighted that his life story is now being rediscovered and celebrated. "Forgotten spot in the Caribbean?" One favourite son of Nevis, Alexander Hamilton, would surely beg to differ.

The Museum of Nevis History, on the Charlestown property where Hamilton was born, is the place for visitors to Nevis to learn more about the life and times of this remarkable man. ♥