



Branch Associations

Montserrat



Capital - Plymouth (abandoned in 1997 due to volcanic activity).

Geography

Montserrat is an island in the Leeward Group in the Eastern Caribbean. It is mountainous and volcanic, with warm springs and has an area of 18km by 11km. In 1995 Mount Soufriere began to erupt, causing Plymouth to be evacuated. Many people left the island, and the rest were moved to temporary accommodation in the north. The country now survives with a greatly reduced population and an exclusion zone which it is still illegal to enter.

History

First sighted and named by Christopher Columbus in 1493. English and Irish settlers from St Kitts started a colony in 1632. After many occupations by the French, Montserrat was returned to England in 1783. In 1962, Montserratians voted to remain a dependency of the UK.

Climate

Tropical, usually tempered by sea breezes. Most rain falls in the second half of the year. June to November is the hurricane season. Montserrat was badly hit by Hurricane Hugo in 1989 and by Hurricanes Luis and Marilvn in 1995.



Government / Legal

Montserrat is an internally governing dependency. The Governor is responsible for internal security, external affairs, defence, international finances and the Public Service. There is an Executive Council and a Legislative Council. The law is English common law together with locally enacted legislation.

Economy

Severe volcanic activity, which began in July 1995, has affected this economy. A catastrophic eruption in June 1997 closed the airports and seaports, causing further economic and social dislocation. Two-thirds of the 12,000 inhabitants fled the island. The agriculture sector continued to be affected by the lack of suitable land for farming. Prospects for the economy depend largely on developments in relation to the volcano and on public sector construction activity. There is an on-going development of "New Town" of Little Bay on the northwest coast of Montserrat. It is hoped that it will be completed in 2020, the site will be the new focus of tourism, trade and housing and will also house the seat of government. The currency is the east Caribbean dollar.

Transport / Travel Information

GMT minus 4 hours. A valid foreign driving licence may be used to purchase a temporary licence. The nearest international airport is in Antigua. Transfer to Montserrat is by ferry or helicopter.

How Guiding Started

Guiding began in 1936 when Mrs Moir, wife of an Acting Commissioner for Montserrat, spoke about guiding and the influence it could have on the girls and the community. She asked for volunteers to join, but most of those who volunteered were too old to be Guides. Undeterred, Mrs Moir formed a Ranger Unit and the 1st Montserrat Rangers were invested on the lawn of Government House in July 1936. They began an enthusiastic programme of hiking, cooking etc and when the younger girls saw what the Rangers were doing they wanted to join, so a Guide Unit was quickly started. By 1939 there was a Brownie Pack, five Guide Companies and one Ranger Unit.



- 1936** Guiding began.
- 1955** The first island camp was held. Guides visited Antigua for a youth rally attended by HRH Princess Margaret.
- 1960** Visit of the World Chief Guide, Lady Baden-Powell.
- 1974** Guides from Antigua and Barbados camped in Montserrat.
- 1978** Building of the Guide Headquarters began, and was finally completed in 1986.
- 1983** Visit of the Commissioner for Branch Associations, Mrs Margaret Banks.
- 1986** Celebration of the Golden Jubilee of Guiding in Montserrat; a week of celebrations which included a visit by the Commissioner for Branch Associations.
- 1980s** An ecological project was sponsored by the Canadian Guides. This was called "The Beautification of Our Environment" and involved planting shade trees and ornamental plants around the local park, and providing benches under the trees. The project received help from many members of the community.
- 1995-7** Volcanic activity disrupts the island, including Guiding, and many inhabitants leave.
- 1997** Guides form part of the greeting party for the visit of HRH Prince Andrew.
- 2001** 18 leaders completed Stage 1 of the leadership qualification.
- 2002** A national pack holiday was held for all the Brownies on the island at Gerald's.
- 2010** A patrol of guides from Montserrat came over with their Leaders to join in with the Centenary Camp and then onwards to "Branch Out" at Waddow for a special Centenary Branch Association gathering for Branch members.
- 2011** Work starts on a new Girlguiding Headquarters in New Town.
- 2012** A patrol joined Carricamp run by the Caribbean Link Guide association in Antigua

Guiding Today

The girls follow a similar programme and Uniform to the UK, although because of the heat many girls wear camp style dresses as their normal uniform.

Guides from Montserrat have camped in both the UK and Canada. During the celebrations in 1986 representatives from 11 different countries visited the island.

During the time of the volcanic eruptions guiding activity almost ceased, but, as soon as people were relocated into a safe area, the Commissioner restarted first Brownies and then Guides. Now they have thriving units all over the Island.

