

Celebrating St Helena Island



Celebrate St Helena

Think of **St Helena** like a person. With characteristics, traits, and a **personality**. People naturally get a 'sense' of this when they interact with - or learn about - the island.

Certain **images, flavours, colours, and impressions** give people an idea of 'what St Helena is all about'.

When communication is true to this natural perception of **who we really are**, people build **trust** with the island and are **more likely to visit, live or work on-island**.

This booklet summarises the authentic perception of the island, as defined by hundreds of stakeholders.

Consistently communicating this perception strengthens promotion and development, ensuring alignment with who we are and where we want to go as an island community.

Ultimately this helps us attract people and opportunities that align with our values, goals and beliefs; and helps grow and maintain our working-age population.

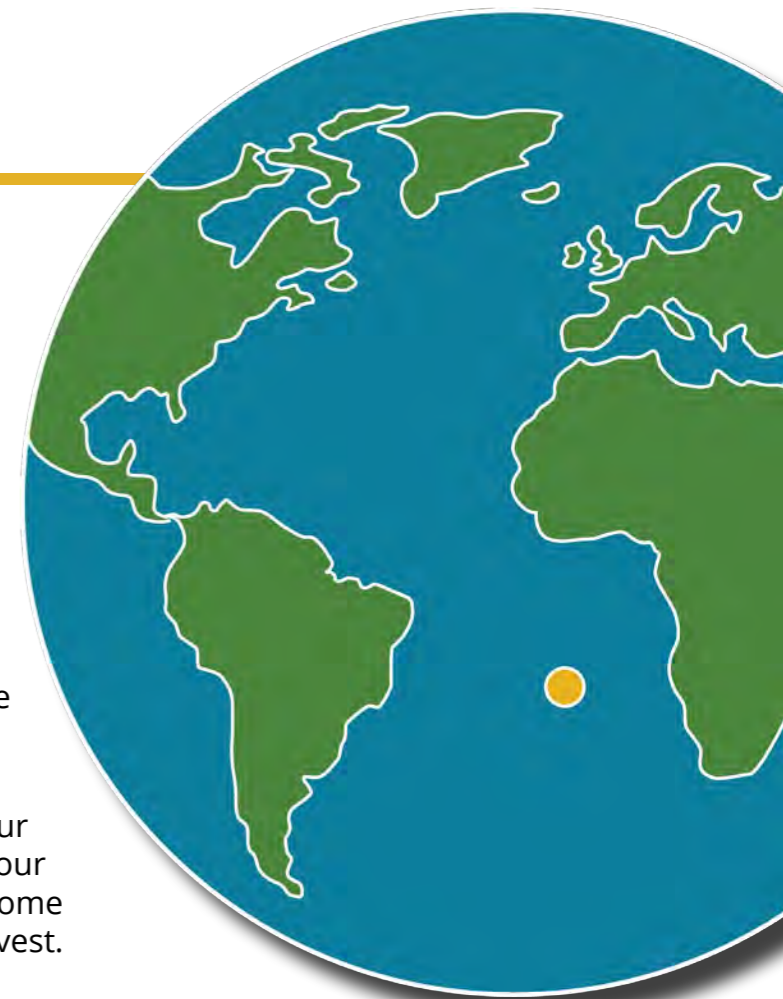
Introduction

Just look at us on the map, and you already know we're special.

Being St Helenian – Saint – is something we're all proud of at the deepest level. Our isolation has crafted a unique environment, history and culture. Our community is as close-knit as it gets. Our dialect and cuisine showcase the melting-pot heritage left by global influences throughout the centuries. Our deep-green cascading hillsides, sparkling blue expansive ocean, and stark bronze cliff sides are unforgettable and breathtaking.

We all know these things; but sometimes, with the pressures of work and bills and everyday life, it's easy to forget.

But understanding what we all love most about our island, and being able to celebrate it, helps bring our community together and move us forward to become altogether a better place to live, work, visit and invest.



"I love St Helena because it's home. It's where I grew up. It's the connectivity to family traditions and culture... That, for me, is the foundation of what makes St Helena special. I think sometimes when you go away, you realise what you miss. The community, the unity, the safety... The ability to reach out and find somebody to speak to, never to feel really alone."

"You can't walk down the street without seeing people you know. You go out on a Saturday night, you wander down Jamestown and you'll see your friends. Everyone's always asking how you are and looking in on each other."

"I love the quality of life in terms of work-life balance: the priorities being family, the outdoors and the community."

"Our sights – from the cliffs and rocky edges to the green and rich inside of the island – it really is a beautiful place to live."

"I love the simplicity of life on St Helena, because it actually makes you become a lot more humble and you realise that what you had where you were before was just material stuff. And I love the Saints, I love spending time with the elderly Saints and listening to their stories."

"I love the community spirit, and I love our diversity. It's where we get our culture, from just about every corner of the world. We speak broken English [and] the dialect is distinct to different districts: you can tell where someone is from by how they speak. I love how people care for each other, and their inquisitiveness."

"I love when you've got kids running around at a community function and the whole community is looking after them, and they're not getting harmed, they're actually living like a child should live. They're not on their phones, they're doing activities and actually living a childhood. I think the world misses that now. I love it."

"I love the safety and security of St Helena. I love that freedom."

"I love the importance that is placed on the most basic things such as food, family, friendship, play and work."

"People, culture, remoteness. The sense of remoteness forms our tight-knit community. What I truly admire about our island, is the generations and generations of people who lived before us who built an amazing foundation for us to start our families in a safe and secure environment."

"The isolated nature of it – how cut off it is from everywhere else – it's just not really like anywhere else in the world."

"Trying to explain to someone that it's in the middle of nowhere, and then how to get there, that always amazes them."

"The thing that gives me a little bit of a kick is just to see little sights of little bits of history. St Helena has that in spades. You'll be walking up the street and you'll see a pillar by the side of the road, which is there to stop cars hitting pedestrians – then you realise it's a cannon. So when they made that pillar, they must have had a cannon lying about. Or you look on top of some of the walls down in town and there's cannonballs stuck on top of there... And then you'll see little coats of arms on top of things, and sometimes it's 'VR' and sometimes it's 'GR', and you just get this sense of very close history."

"I love the freedom on St Helena and how close our community is. We have a very unique culture on St Helena and it's good to come together like for the Carnival and Festival of Lights."

"The peacefulness and friendliness of the place; it's like going back in time."





These are the main words and messages to clearly describe our people, our culture, our community.

Proudly Saint

In St Helena, we all know this:

Living in such a small community, on such a small and remote island, isn't always easy. But it can also be the best thing in the world.

Saints have so much to be proud about.

St Helena is one of the **safest** places on Earth. Serious crime is a rarity. No dangerous animals exist on the island. The island is **free from** extreme weather events, major political unrest, and war. This safety offers a unique sense of **freedom**.

Our tight-knit community is also renowned for being **friendly and welcoming**. The driver of every car **waves to the other** as they pass on the roads. The sound of friendly chatter fills the streets of Jamestown each day. No one goes a day without greeting someone, giving a smile and wave and a **'how you doing'**, because in a community of fewer than 4,500, everyone knows everyone.

The community cares for a globally important and stunningly beautiful environment. The **breathtaking beauty**; the **microclimates**; the **mountains contrasting against the ocean**; the **clean, fresh air**; makes the island a little subtropical paradise.

St Helenians are **passionate about being 'Saint.'** This means intimately knowing each other's **family histories**; celebrating the rich **diversity of cultural heritage**; enjoying group **cook-ups** (BBQs) and **sundowners** and taking **Sunday drives** around the 'country.' Going **fishing** and **camping** and having a good **work-life balance**. Being resilient and **'making do'** in any situation, because when you live on a volcanic dot in the middle of the ocean, you often 'just have to make do.'

As a **British Overseas Territory**, the island also has a strong and proud base in being British. Although there's a **Saint dialect**, English is the spoken language. Pictures of British royalty are displayed visibly in many houses around the island. The St Helena Pound is pegged to the Pound Sterling and both are accepted on-island.

Why it's important

But why is it important to consistently define the reasons we're so proud of St Helena?

St Helena is more open to the world now than it has ever been before. For such an isolated community, that can seem scary: but that's why it's important to **come together to preserve, and to be clear to the world about, the things we love and value the most. To passionately show what it is to 'be Saint', so that our visitor, development and business opportunities may more easily align with who we recognise ourselves to be, and where we want to go as an island community.**

We all know, and are able to voice consistently as a community, our niche attractions – whale sharks, hiking, diving, built history... but really, our niche attractions are only one stone in the foundation of what makes St Helena unique, authentic and attractive. We also need to know the main words and messages to clearly describe our people, our culture, our community. This is the focus of this booklet. **This is how we preserve St Helena's authenticity, while attracting development that aligns with what makes us unique.**

This booklet impacts every one of us, as we all have an important role to play in the economic, social and cultural success of our island. This book helps everyone in St Helena clearly articulate what our community agrees makes us so special. It helps us understand how to use our most valued qualities to our advantage – how to 'stay Saint', whilst becoming altogether healthier, wealthier, and happier.

How this book helps

- Documents our community's clear, powerful, and consistent answer to the question 'What is St Helena all about?'
- Better enables individuals and businesses to develop products and services that reflect the best of St Helena and have the greatest market potential.
- Allows us to communicate who we are and where we'd like our island to go, therefore attracting the right people to live, work and visit.
- Helps us preserve our culture, traditions and values whilst attracting investors and partnerships that align with who we are and where we're going.
- Becomes a foundational stone for more young people choosing to live and work in St Helena (because, unless we demonstrate unity about the positives and goals of our island, this simply will not happen).
- Better enables people to build belief, trust and motivation to interact with us – as, without clear and consistent messaging, it's difficult to build trust or inspire people.
- Allows the island's first true brand strategies, brand plans and brand metrics, enabling increased performance and public trust.
- Helps people, here and overseas, understand who we are.
- Assists in decision-making that fits with the goals, values, and beliefs of the community.
- Reminds us, when we need reminding, of our common pride and sense of identity. Of our appreciation for the things we do have and the things that make us stand out from the rest of the world.

All findings and quotes within this booklet result directly from dedicated qualitative research (2021-2022). In all, more than 400 adults were interviewed including local residents, former visitors by air, members of the yachting community, business visitors, and Saints overseas. Plus, all the island's primary schools provided heart-warming input: Meaning that this booklet presents the community-defined, authentic perception of what we love, value and aspire toward.

Table of contents

p10



VALUES

What are the beliefs and values that Saints consistently demonstrate, as a community?

p16



POSITIONING

What makes St Helena unique, and able to 'stand out' from competitors?
How do we communicate this to certain target audiences?

p30



PROPOSITION

In the fewest words possible, how do we summarise 'what St Helena really offers'? This single idea reflects long-term aspirations, is authentic enough to stick in people's minds, and encompasses the best of St Helena today.

p12



PERSONALITY

Which human personality characteristics do we believe best capture the people of St Helena?

p20



SENSORY

One of the most powerful ways to communicate 'what St Helena is all about', is through the senses. What sights, tastes, sounds and smells best define St Helena, and paint a clear and enticing picture of what we love most about our island?

PROPOSITION

What summarises the 'real benefit' that St Helena offers? The thing that makes St Helena stand out in the world?

'A breath of fresh air'

This statement captures the essence of the island today: the spirit of its people, place, and heritage. It sums up how beautiful the environment is, and simultaneously sums up how different the island is in the world today, how refreshing it is compared to the fast-paced, technology-reliant rat race in much of the rest of the world.

The phrase 'fresh air' – or near variations – was also the most-repeated phrase amongst interviewees, across all age groups.

People spoke about the lack of pollution; the unique sense of freedom and safety; the deep connection to the natural environment, both land and sea; the ability to take life more slowly, and breathe in the pure country scents.

St Helena is a breath of fresh air.

This proposition summarises the things we love, and the things we find most distinctive, about the island.

Those representing and/or helping to promote St Helena or a product/service can convey this proposition, in order to help others quickly understand the overall essence of St Helena today. The idea of being 'a breath of fresh air' is central to what makes people want to live in, visit, or do business with the island. Therefore this proposition can also help guide future projects and decisions, ensuring recognition of the community-defined 'essence' of St Helena.

A
BREATH OF
FRESH
— air —

VALUES

What are the beliefs and values that are consistently demonstrated as 'St Helenian'? Community, sustainability and authenticity were the three values that were named the most within the research as being common amongst St Helenians.

Documenting these community-defined, community values captures a snapshot of who we believe Saints are, today in the 21st century. Consistently articulating these values can help St Helena to attract people and opportunities that fit with these values.

These values can be used in private-sector business marketing materials, incorporated into government activities, or simply used to help explain, quickly and clearly, what it means to be Saint.



Authenticity

Life in St Helena is an authentic one. It revolves around food, family, nature, and friends. Sometimes the realities of isolation are challenging, but the lack of reliance on technology (cell phones introduced 2015) has preserved a unique, authentic way of life.



Community

In this tight-knit community, everyone knows everyone. Saints are passionate about family; friendliness; parades and festivals; gathering together to enjoy food, drinks and the environment; protecting the safety of the community; and doing charity work.



Sustainability

St Helena proudly cares for a globally important environment. Saints feel deeply connected to the ocean. Only sustainable, one-by-one fishing is allowed in the island's waters. Farming and fishing are amongst the traditional lines of work handed down through generations.



PERSONALITY

What personality traits are common amongst St Helenians? Common enough to be viewed as distinct to the island?

These four traits were repeated the most as being distinct to St Helena: resourcefulness, friendliness, kindness, and resilience. Whether as an individual, or within private-sector or government activities, we can refer to these personality traits to evidence the sort of community that we believe we are.

Having a common language for who we are as Saints can also assist in how we promote our products and services. For instance choosing to talk about a product or service in a way that recognises or showcases the community's personality traits, can help people feel that the product or service is authentic to the island. This increases how much people trust, and are willing to engage with that product or service.



Friendly

St Helenians are renowned for being welcoming and friendly. In such a small community, it's only natural.

Visitors typically recall the 'Saint welcome' as a major part of their on-island experience.

"When you come here you realise how friendly we are – always putting our hands up while driving, always waving and saying hello to strangers, always there to give a hand when you need it."



*"Jack of all trades."
"Making the best of whatever is put in front of them."*

Saints feel deeply connected to the natural environment, land and sea. That's why you'll see elaborate, handmade costumes crafted using locally sourced materials at the beloved annual parades; and why every day, whether on a boat or 'off the rocks', at least a person or two will be enjoying a session of sustainable, pole-and-line fishing.

Resourceful



Kind

The St Helenian community is best described as 'tight-knit', and this is clearly visible in daily life on the island. When things are tough, family and friends rally around each other, providing food and company and often even housing.

"Saints tend to rally when there is somebody in trouble or there's an issue. There's a lot of charitable and volunteering work that goes on."



"The ability to 'just get on with life', regardless of what occurs, is characteristic of Saints."

"You have to be really resilient, because things change all the time, or things won't be available."

"That has impressed me, the sheer resilience and ingenuity, resourcefulness. It's old-school phrases like 'make do and mend', 'just get on with it' – that's what I think sums Saints up, because you can't just get Amazon Prime to deliver tomorrow, whether its food or car parts."

"Because of the way we live our lives – not having access to everything – you have to adapt."

Resilient

POSITIONING

How do we take the broad summary of St Helena being 'a breath of fresh air', and make it appeal specifically to certain groups of people?

Essentially, doing this is called 'positioning'. The following pages give examples of how, by communicating our proposition, values, and personality in certain ways, we can increase trust and appeal with residents, visitors, businesses, and our diaspora.

While some of the messaging on the following pages can be applied to multiple audiences, messaging has been broken into four key audiences for ease of use.

Overall, the aim is to position St Helena as 'a place to connect with what truly matters in life'. This positioning connects directly to the idea of the island providing 'a breath of fresh air' away from the pressures of the modern world; but also helps to manage the expectations of the island, by positioning our isolation and complexities as a gift. Don't expect the fuel station to be open every day, but expect to fall in love with the truly unique, truly authentic, truly incomparable pureness of life on St Helena.



Residents

What is it about St Helena that people feel makes it a great place to live?

Like any place in the world, St Helena has its challenges as a place to reside, mainly due to remoteness; but it also has amazing qualities that make it wonderful and unique. In the community research, people named the following as the things they love about St Helena, and the things they want to protect in order to maintain the best aspects about life on the island:

- Strong family values
- A good work-life balance
- A love for food and get-togethers
- Deep connection to history and heritage
- A love for parades and festivals
- Diversity of landscape
- Ocean freely at your doorstep
- Astounding walking and hiking
- Serious crime is a rarity
- Sundowners at the seaside
- Ocean views all around
- Local sports
- Being surrounded by family and friends
- Enjoying subtropical weather
- Being free from dangerous animals and severe weather
- Connection with what truly matters in life

Connection with what truly matters

A world apart from the pressures of the modern world



Visitors

These points can help us speak with potential visitors, whether by sea or by air, in ways that recognise key qualities and facts about the island that they commonly seek to understand. Using these topics and facts in private sector and government activities can help encourage visitors that are interested in the products and services that St Helena is able to provide.

- St Helena provides a great level of safety compared to other locations. Serious crime is a rarity. The island is free from extreme weather events and dangerous animals.
- Built heritage dating back to the 17th century is yours to explore in freedom and tranquility.
- St Helena exists in the uniqueness that its isolation has crafted. A world of its own.
- A world's diversity of landscapes and climates, all within a short drive.
- An authentic focus on nature and sustainability.
- A true melting-pot culture, unique in the world. Today's population of fewer than 4,500 was crafted over 500 years of human history, with influences from Europe, Africa, and Asia.
- This subtropical island is one of the world's newest travel destinations, as the island's first airport only opened in late 2017, decreasing travel time from South Africa to St Helena from a five-day ship voyage to a six-hour flight.
- Whatever you do here, you won't have to wait in giant queues, travel miles or be surrounded by masses of other visitors in order to do it.
- Our summer occurs during the northern hemisphere's winter; making it a perfect place to escape the cold, dreary weather.
- The perfect mid-Atlantic stopover.
- Warm, high-visibility waters filled with shipwrecks, dolphins, rays, whale sharks, turtles and fish.
- A wealth of bucket-list adventure, including hiking.
- The fact that the island has always been a step behind in terms of modern technology – for instance there aren't any ATMs – is a gift to the culture, which demonstrates an honest focus on people and nature.

Off the beaten track

Bucket-list adventure

Comfortingly familiar yet heartwarmingly different



Business

These are main messages that are highly relevant to people doing or considering business, investment or research on the island.

These messages help evidence why St Helena is a good place to do business, based around it being 'a place to connect with what truly matters in life'. A place that may naturally appeal to those with adventurous spirits, wanting to establish good relationships with key local stakeholders, and to have direct positive impact on the community.

These messages can be used by for local or international purposes. For instance when working with areas identified in the *Sustainable Economic Development Strategy (2023-2033)*, whether in the government or private sector, recognising and mentioning how St Helena has these assets, can strengthen the impact of activities and promotion.

Business

- GMT year-round
- English-speaking
- Currency pegged to GBP
- Free from extreme weather events
- Affordable ocean-view properties
- Tax and duty incentives
- Stable S&P credit rating
- Modernising company registry
- Small, friendly community
- Incredible natural environment
- Subtropical paradise nestled in the South Atlantic
- Politically stable
- Low levels of crime
- Lack of corruption
- Opportunity to be an early mover in a number of sectors, and create a legacy

Research

- Globally important environment
- Small, developing island
- Socio-economic research opportunities
- Protecting the last natural cloud forest on British soil
- Home to more than 1/3 of the endemic biodiversity in all the UK and its territories
- Caring for a Category VI Marine Protected Area nearly the size of France
- Developments related to the fibre optic cable should make remote working and business easier
- Unique geology, archaeology, heritage, history
- Great location for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions (MICE) activities

Safe, unique, British, stable

There's nowhere else like it



Diaspora

Many young Saints venture overseas for employment, often for decades, in order to earn more money. They return for holidays but choose not to yet return to the island to live, as they're enticed by the opportunities and variety available in the outside world. Whilst overseas, many still tend to send money home to support family or build homes. Diaspora members also remain deeply connected to the island, and their family and friends, and many move home around retirement age.

The points below can help speak to diaspora members considering returning home to visit. But St Helena's population also needs its young people living and working on the island in order to remain healthy. So what did people most commonly name in the research, as things that could be enhanced or improved in order to make St Helena better in the long-term for the diaspora and the younger generations?

Government or private sector can use these as a reference point for basic things that position the island in the minds of our people overseas, as an attractive place to reconnect with what really matters. These themes can be applied to anything from government strategies to private-sector vacancy advertising. Fostering a strong sense of community, and a positive idea of where St Helena is heading, is an important foundation to encouraging people to remain or return home.

- Emphasis on the sense of home and community
- Updates on digital connectivity
- Updates on private-sector and business opportunities
- Success stories of young community members
- Positivity about the safe, tight-knit community of family and friends
- A preserved natural environment with increased sustainability
- Increased and equitable opportunities, especially in terms of career
- More affordable access to and from the island
- Increased variety of activities, products and services
- Parades and festivals, Christmas time, St Helena's Day
- Family heritage research and heritage sites
- Warm weather, beautiful views, hiking, ocean, and safety
- Positive and unique aspects of the island and community
- A better relationship between government and St Helena's public

Proud to be Saint

This is home



Sensory

Describing the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes that remind us most of St Helena is one of the best ways to connect with people on a deeper level. It paints a vivid picture in people's minds, helping them understand what it's like to truly enjoy St Helena.

For potential visitors and investors, this entices them to find out more about the island.

For overseas friends and family, this is a powerful and emotive reminder of what they miss about physically being in St Helena: the sounds of friends and family chatting in the streets; the smells of cooking oil, onion and curry powder emanating from kitchens; the sight of the bright orange sun setting behind the boats moored in James Bay as you enjoy the taste of a sundowner – maybe a 'shipwreck' – at the seaside.

Sensory words and descriptions, as well as imagery that supports these, can help strengthen the impact of communications especially well in areas like the tourism and hospitality sectors.





"That gentle lapping of waves against the hulls of boats."

"Yes uh'... 'Hey lahvey, how you doin?' I love the accent, the slang, the nicknames, everyone shouting to each other in the streets against the noise of cars going up and down Jamestown."

"My favourite sound is the seabirds nesting in the evening on the cliffs."

"Not hearing any traffic – the quietness – means you're really able to hear the birds."



Sounds

Birds
The ocean
'Saint chatter' in Jamestown
Quietness

Sights

The ocean
Diversity of landscapes
Jamestown
Sunsets



"The view of the ocean, particularly when you're driving to work and get to take that in every day... that's quite special."

"I find myself just falling in love with the simple things: the countryside hills; the rocky cliffs and their jagged edges; the trees with the scenery in beautiful harmony; the blue-green sea smashing against the rocks and the beautiful night sky. I'm reminded every day how beautiful this island is."

"I love the blue skies; the ocean; and driving out of town and its dark brown rock, then you hit an ocean of green."

"The ocean, sunset and countryside is all in one view."

"My favourite sight is the ocean. It's very calming and conjures up memories of seeing fish being landed and the livelihoods of fishermen. That whole pastime... people always go fishing, and there's the tradition of going to the rocks and making pots of plo and swimming."

"I love seeing the ocean from my home."



"In the morning when you first wake up, it's fresh, it's clean, no vehicles going... you won't get that elsewhere."

"The best smell is of the traditional foods. When you smell it, you can taste it. It's curry powder, or when you're cooking up it's that BBQ grill smell."

"My favourite smell is that fresh country air, with its lack of pollution."

"My favourite is the smell of the sea, with the smell of a fish fry."

"It's tradition to have curry on a Sunday, so you get the feeling of family and togetherness. Onions, oil, curry powder, that kind of thing."

"When you go round somebody's house in the afternoon, very often they will have fishcakes or something like that cooking with fresh parsley and onion and herbs, and that is a lovely smell, it really smells good."

"Sea breeze."



Smells

The ocean
Fresh air
Home cooking

Tastes

Curry and plo
Fishcakes
Local fruit
Fish




"100 percent my favourite taste would be our fish, Bullseye to me is the best fish I've ever tasted."

"You can taste the difference between our fruit and others, their freshness and that sweet taste."

"When you eat local fish you can taste the difference because of its freshness, like you're tasting the sea."

"St Helenian curry is comfort food."



[I love] the uniqueness of the island in terms of history, and the fact that it's relatively unchanged, not just nature but in general development as well."

"The beauty, the people, the friendliness and hospitality.."

"[The small community is] something you have to adjust to; it can be quite overwhelming socialising that much, but at the same time it's nice because it's easier to fit in, you get to know people quickly, and you don't really feel like an outsider."

"[In] the middle of the island, looking toward the Peaks... It's just so calm and beautiful. It's got lots of spots I'd happily sit and while away the day."

"One big tradition is fish fry, that brings everyone together. Come along and we'll deep fry some conger. That's when people really unwind and get together."

"We're in the middle of nowhere. You go to the top of the middle of the island, and you look round, and all you can see is ocean. You just get hit by that feeling that there's nothing, there's literally nothing, anywhere. And that's hard to find in other places."

"The busy outside world is not for me. I love that we are somewhat 'safer.'"

"I remember when I very first came [here], you just think, how does this place function? How does it exist? Then you learn about the history of it and actually it's fascinating when you start to understand how it came to be and how the people here come to be here."

"Everybody's always trying to feed you."

"I love our pristine oceans, beautiful landscapes, laidback lifestyle and family."

"The unique dialect - it can be hard to understand, but I love it."

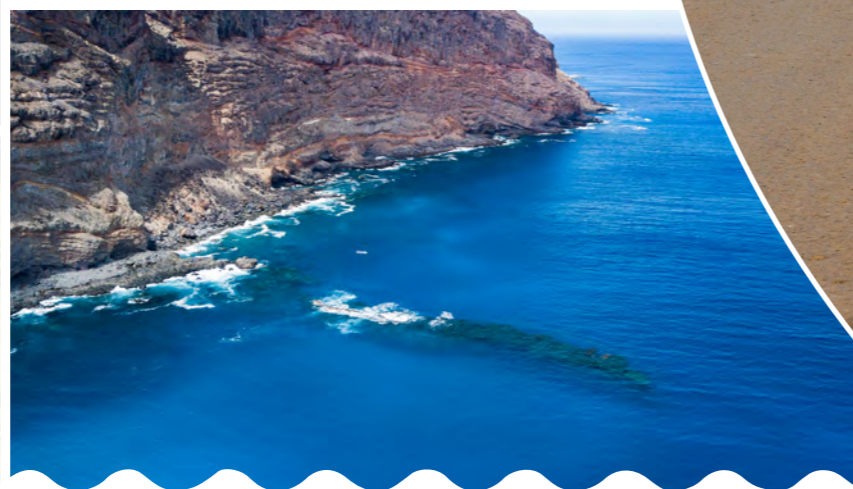
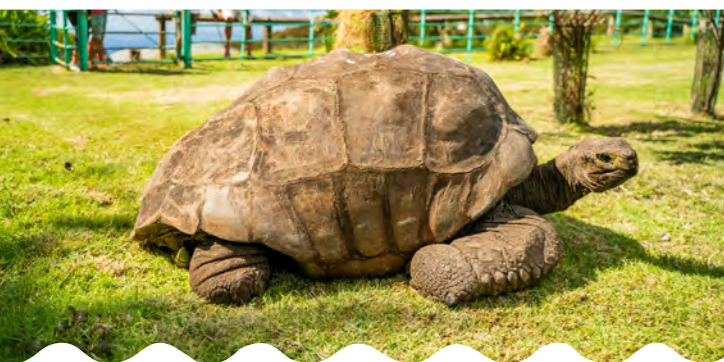
"[I love] the clean air, the freedom to move around."

Background

This booklet is focused on capturing a community-defined 'common language' for St Helena. This common language serves as a snapshot of the island and its community today in the 21st century, and also helps better equip the community as a whole to create ways in which this common language can help ensure a better and more sustainable St Helena. Work behind this booklet included creating research methodology; interviewing more than 400 adult stakeholders; collating submissions from the island's primary school students; compiling and analysing interview responses; turning the analysis into the elements outlined in this booklet; and taking this work through government approvals. This work was carried out by local employees under the normal annual Marketing budget, with external review then sought under an existent PR firm contract. Creating and enacting Celebrating St Helena has been amongst the recommendations of recent reports, and a high priority for the current government, because, when a community very clearly understands and consistently communicates the things that are most important to them, greater potential is unlocked for building a healthier, wealthier and happier society, together.

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St Helena Island
A breath of fresh air



St Helena
Government



Celebrating St Helena Island

