

Montserrat's Soufrière Hills Volcano

The below Stamps illustrate how the life of a small island in the Lesser Antilles of the West Indies was completely devastated by the unexpected eruption of a volcano previously thought to be dormant.

In 1493 Columbus named Montserrat after the Virgin Mary and the Monastery of Montserrat. The island has largely remained under British control since the 1660's (1871 to 1958 as part of the Leeward Islands administration). 1932 postage stamps (e.g. SG 88) show the capital city and main port, Plymouth, with the Soufrière mountain range behind, and 1951 stamps show the Government House (SG 137) and St Anthony's church (SG 130) in the capital.



Between July 1995 and 2010 the Soufrière Hills volcano erupted several times. Pyroclastic flows buried Plymouth and the whole southern half of the island was rendered too dangerous for habitation. Roughly sixty percent of the island's population lost their homes and chose to migrate to the United Kingdom. This miniature sheet SG 1046a illustrates the active volcano, along with endangered bird species of the island. It was part of a 1997 fundraising effort.

The below stamps (SG 230, 259) with "afterwards" overlays, give an insight to the aftermath of the eruptions. The War Clock Tower is almost submerged by lava ash and an exclusion zone restricts movement across the whole south of the island. Government House, and St Anthony's church had to be abandoned.

The positivity of the remaining Montserratians is impressive. They are rebuilding an economy based on volcanic sand and geothermal energy. A replacement seat of government has been established at Brades, where a new port is being constructed, and the John A Osbourne Airport was opened in 2005. Whilst the exclusion zone remains in place, certified guides are able to take tourists on tours of "Pompeii in the Tropics". A tourist industry, based on the volcano and the abundant wild life of the island, is emerging. Survival for this island remains in the balance...the volcano could blow again at any time; Montserrat lies in the path of the main annual hurricane season route...and now the Coronavirus Pandemic has placed everything on hold. The Montserratians deserve some good fortune in the future after all they have endured, let's hope it works out for them.

MUSIC FOR MONTERRAT
IN AID OF THE VICTIMS OF SOUFRIERE HILLS VOLCANO

<p>ACTIVE VOLCANO 1995-97</p> <p>HEADLINE ERUPTION, PLYMOUTH 1995</p> <p>\$1.50</p> <p>MONTERRAT</p>	<p>ACTIVE VOLCANO 1995-97</p> <p>FIRST PYROCLASTIC FLOW ENTERING THE SEA</p> <p>\$1.50</p> <p>MONTERRAT</p>	<p>ACTIVE VOLCANO 1995-97</p> <p>DOUBLE VENTING AT CASTLE PEAK</p> <p>\$1.50</p> <p>MONTERRAT</p>
<p>ACTIVE VOLCANO 1995-97</p> <p>ENDANGERED SPECIES MANGROVE CUCKOO</p> <p>\$1.50</p> <p>MONTERRAT</p>	<p>ACTIVE VOLCANO 1995-97</p> <p>NOCTURNAL LAVA FLOW SOUTHERN HILLS 1996</p> <p>\$1.50</p> <p>MONTERRAT</p>	<p>ACTIVE VOLCANO 1995-97</p> <p>ENDANGERED SPECIES ANTILLEAN CRESTED FLAMINGO</p> <p>\$1.50</p> <p>MONTERRAT</p>
<p>ACTIVE VOLCANO 1995-97</p> <p>ASH CLUDY EREILING PLYMOUTH</p> <p>\$1.50</p> <p>MONTERRAT</p>	<p>ACTIVE VOLCANO 1995-97</p> <p>LAVA SPINE EXTRUDER SOUTHERN HILLS 1996</p> <p>\$1.50</p> <p>MONTERRAT</p>	<p>ACTIVE VOLCANO 1995-97</p> <p>NEW LAND CREATED FROM PYROCLASTIC FLOW</p> <p>\$1.50</p> <p>MONTERRAT</p>

ACTIVE VOLCANO 1995-97 AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

