

Grenada Bareboat

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The pretty little island of Grenada has been dealt many unfair blows by history and politics, to many it was just recovering from the invasion ordered by President Regan who sent in troops to put down a Cuban lead rebellion and just as that reputation was beginning to sink below the horizon Mother Nature sent one of her somewhat destructive sons to visit the island on September 7th 2004.

Hurricane Ivan hit the island in a deceitful way; he did not come from the south with strong southerly winds instead he flew in from the north bringing with him several small tornados which flew in and out of the hills choosing houses, homes and churches with abandon and selected roofs and even entire buildings and flew then into the hillside. Every house of God on the island save one lost its roof many of the churches had stood undisturbed for hundreds of years. Grenada is after all considered to be south of the expected hurricane belt, said to affect latitudes north of 12 degrees.

Grenada had lived without a hurricane for nearly 50 years and in that time the land had grown green and lush and the spices for which the island is world famous and flourished and the rain forest had achieved maturity. Ivan was not one to follow the rule book in fact he wrote a whole new one as he ripped the rain forest apart changing the scenery of the whole landscape in just 4 short hours destroying 90% of Grenada's nutmeg crop and severely damaging the country's agriculture.

The country's population sent with a will and are rebuilding what they lost and they are doing so with a lightness of spirit. Hotels were affected to varying degrees and many are now fully reopened whilst others are using the opportunity to upgrade and renovate facilities. Cruising yachts are back in the marinas and anchorages that are sprinkled around the spectacular shoreline.

We arrived on the island landing at Port Saline International airport a new modern complex serviced by the daily flights to Europe and the US. There we were greeted by the ever smiling and helpful; Mr MacDonald from Caribbean Horizons who are the land agents for Horizon Yacht Charters. He bundled our equipment and us into his small bus and off we sped for the short

journey to the True Blue Bay resort and Marina. The hotel is a colourful collection of rooms and villas set at the head of the inlet known as True Blue Bay and its peaceful Marina is the Grenada home port of Horizon Yacht Charters.

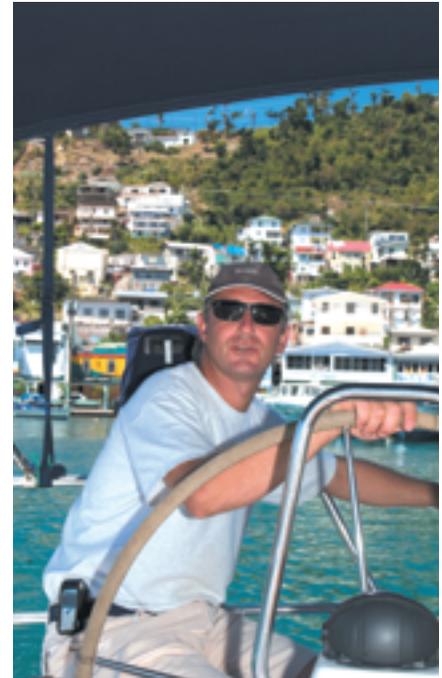
We joined My Mistress a Bavaria 46 as she lay docked stern to the floating pontoon. Built in 2005 she has 4 cabins with 2 heads and can sleep up to 8 guests we had chosen to charter with a custom provisioning package and so there was very little for us to do save receive our very thorough briefing from James Pascall one of the directors of the base.

True Blue Bay lies in the south of Grenada and as a result offers a choice of cruising locations sailing north would take in St Georges the Country's capital then on further to Carriacou and into the Grenadines which are amongst the worlds most favoured yacht cruising grounds. Sailing to the south coast of Grenada is not nearly so well thought of and looking at the chart it is easy to see why. There is hardly a mention of navigation marks and the way through the numerous reefs is not always immediately clear or apparent but the rewards for those who venture there outweigh the extra work involved with safe navigation. This then was to be our cruising ground as we explored the bays creeks and harbours of South Grenada.

The promontory of land to the east of True Blue is called L'Anse Aux Epines (pronounced Lans o peen) and the delightful stretch of water between them is called prickly bay and a happy combination makes this a very pleasant anchorage. Ashore multi colour roofs peek out from vegetation and at the head of the bay lurking behind a palm fringed beach lays the Calabash Hotel with its luxury rooms and spacious villas and Gourmet restaurant with menus created by celebrity chef Gary Rhodes.

Leaving prickly bay and rounding its southerly point and heading towards Mount Hartman Bay it is important to use eyeball navigation once inside is a deep and well protected anchorage with lots of room for us and as many other boats who would like to join. Investors from overseas have purchased the secret harbour marina here and have conversion and renovation into a port for super yachts is underway. The once pretty hotel is destined for demolition and plans are advancing for the construction of luxury villas which will be associated with the marina which with its robust piers is considered to be one of the safest marinas in the Caribbean.

Frangipani trees give healthy coverage to Hog Island their leaves fall in the dry season leaving only sweet smelling delicate flowers. Hog Island has a large and well-protected and welcoming anchorage. Ashore spiky mangrove roots stick upwards like bristles from a witches broom, their leaves brushing out in the form of a huge green afro hairstyle. A cow walks on the beach as if to





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say hello to the little blue heron who spends her days patrolling the shore watching for little flurries of fish. The heron strides forward with huge but delicate steps like a fastidious matron trying not to walk on something unpleasant. Sometimes she grabs a wriggling silver fish, other times the fish churn the water into a frightening hiss and she runs back to the safety of the sand.

Long time Caribbean sailor and old friend Chris Doyle has written a wonderful book entitled the sailors guide to the Windward Islands. It is full of great stories on where and what to eat and how to find the best restaurants ashore. We use this great guide to open up the area for us. You need it to locate the passage into Clarkes Court Bay another stunning anchorage off the town of Woburn. Here in years of old sailing ships would drop anchor off the town and load rum brought down river from the distilleries. The rum plants are still in action but the anchorage is bereft of ships and is home instead to the Clark Court Bay Marina which nestles in the near perfect position to shelter the boats a beautiful natural bowl in the hillside of Mount Hartman Park which is a sanctuary for the rare Grenada dove. The waters of the bay are calm with its south entrances partially protected by the Hog Calivngny Islands. The Marina has 50 ships with more planned and it was here what we docked for safety to make our trips inland.

Yachting is great and it is easy to enjoy it so much that you ignore what is ashore. To do so in Grenada would be a tragedy. How else would you get to see the way nutmegs are grown, harvested and processed if you did not visit Goave and how it is to grate your nutmeg over your rum punch in the evening sitting in the

cockpit of the yacht. Our day ashore included Goave and also took in the Grenada Chocolate Factory and the Rivers Rum distillery on the San Antoine estate.

The Chocolate factory high in the hills of Hermitage uses locally organically grown chocolate to make high quality produced in a quaint solar powered factory reminiscent of Willy Wonker. The chocolate is so good that it is exported to specialist stockists in both London and New York by devotees who make it available selling it over the Internet. Not so very far away is the River Antoine Estate, a rum factory dating back to the year 1785 and still operating today. What is truly phenomenal is the fact that the water powered crushing machine built way back then by Fletcher and Co of London and Derby continue to turn and crush using all the original components. Sugar cane still grown on the estate and harvested by hand and the production methods here clearly have no changed over the centuries. The resultant fiery liquor is highly sought after by locals who enjoy the slightly over proof product.

Across the bay from the marina is the village of Woburn and very much the traditional style of Grenada with its houses clinging precariously to the hillside. Just off the road is Little Dipper a restaurant run by Joan and her taxi driving husband Rock. This cute cabin has a covered deck with tables large enough to seat a total of 12 persons. This intimate little setting ensures that Joan cooks on a very one to one basis locally captured spiny lobsters being one of her signature dishes at prices everyone can afford.

Calviving harbour is a hive of activity as we sail past the privately owned island, it is undergoing a metamorphosis and will emerge as a world class luxury villa resort complete with super yacht dock. The early signs are already there the islands owners super yacht lays alongside a new dock and his villa ashore is nothing short of fabulous to look at. We are bound for Port Egmont, Chemin Bay and Westerhall Bay which is our destination for the night. Port Egmont is an almost completely landlocked harbour meaning that it is an almost perfect hurricane hole. We pass Fort Jeudy keeping our eyes open for reefs that lie near the shore. Prosperous looking houses with well laid out grounds cling to the steep sided hills and we anchor off a sandy beach and swim from the boat ashore and back before taking lunch under the shaded bimini that covers the yachts spacious cockpit.

Waves are breaking on the reefs that guard the entrance to Chemin bay yet inside the bay and the deep waters look wonderfully smooth and inviting. The placing of buoyage of the coast would be such a simple operation and



the resultant opening of these cruising grounds would bring so much enjoyment to many to say nothing of adding prosperity to the local economy. We drop anchor in Westerhall bay in the afternoon and shortly after doing so a local fishing boat stops alongside, his catch of tuna flapping in the bottom of his craft. Bartering complete, the still wiggling fish is taken down to our galley and within hour lay smoking on the BBQ for our supper served with a bottle of well chilled chardonnay and green salad simplicity at its very best.

Our lunch time stop the next day is an idyllic little bay full of flowers and palm trees. The bay is called Petite Bacaye and ashore a micro hotel shares its name. It has a few thatched roof rooms a small friendly bar and restaurant that makes self-catering aboard our yacht a little unnecessary.

St Davids harbour is not far to the east and marks the turning point in our voyage although never the site of a town it was always an important harbour and remains so today. In years gone by sailing ships would arrive here load up cargoes of spice, sugar and rum bound for



Europe. Today it is a thriving yachting haven with many local shipwrights services providers based at the boatyard ashore.

Our needs on the land are nowhere near as essential we are on an excursion to the Laura Herb and Spice garden a few miles down the road. It is part of a herb and spice marketing cooperative that sells Grenadian herbs and spice worldwide. Helpful guides lead us around the cultivation which extends to some 8 acres along well laid out trails with signposted plants. It is an education and yet at the same time tranquil and peaceful experience enhanced by birds singing in the trees.

The distance we have travelled from our home base port is negligible yet in the four short days we have experienced so much that this island has to offer. We clear St Davids the next day and with the wind astern and our sails billowing ahead of us we set a westerly course straight home. ☘

About the Writer/Photographer

Frances and Michael Howorth are a freelance photo-journalist team who specialize in travel features on the ultra large yacht and boutique cruise ship market. They are regular contributors to Yacht Vacations and Charters and have been traveling together for the last twenty five years initially working aboard cruise liners then as crew aboard luxury private and charter yachts. Their voyages of discovery have taken them to Africa North and South America, the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, India and plenty of islands in between with such variety as to include Tristan de Cunha, St Helena and the Maldiv Islands.

Michael is a member of the British Guild of Travel Writers and is a qualified Captain certificated to command large luxury yachts up to 3000 tons. Photographs taken by Frances have featured on the covers of travel magazines and in the pages of the yachting press as well as other quality periodicals. The couple have written several books mostly about yachts, yachting and survival at sea.

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