Caribbean hideaways aboard Mosaique

Frances and Michael Howorth start off our Caribbean special by rediscovering secret anchorages and forgotten corners in the sometimes overcrowded Caribbean, that are suitable for superyachts

Yacht owners and those who charter large boats can sometimes be forgiven for thinking that there is nothing in the Caribbean that they have not seen before and nothing that would make them want to return. A cruise aboard *Mosaique* might persuade them to change their minds. This 50 metre Dubois-designed motor yacht was built by Proteksan-Turquoise in Turkey and launched in 2001, and if there is a more perfect layout for a 50 metre charter boat that carries 12 guests then we have yet to find it. The ample space on her sun deck, where there is a spa pool, bar and sunbathing pads, and her secluded dining-on-deck area, are outstanding examples of a well-thought-out design that works well for chartering and is exactly what is needed when cruising in warmer climes. Her water bikes and new custom-built Zodiac tender offer fun on the water and her attentive crew and fine cuisine ensure the adventure is more than just memorable. To turn a charter aboard a perfect yacht with a well-trained and attentive crew into a superb vacation you need to add the ingredients of a sun-soaked location, and if our planned route sounds like a milk run then it is time to think again.

Antigua

We joined *Mosaique* in Antigua's English Harbour, which is often called Nelson's Dockyard and is now a living museum dedicated to all that was great in the 18th century, when the Caribbean was a stage on which sea battles for naval supremacy were played out. What were once storerooms have been converted with great care into a hotel with 14 self-catering apartments and a restaurant, and what was once the galley is now a splendid boutique crammed with everything a well-dressed traveller would want to add to a sunshine wardrobe. With the officers' quarters now an arcade of shops and the admiral's house a splendid museum, there is so much here that it was a pity to leave after only a short stay, but leave we had to – to find undisturbed anchorages. We motored out past Fort Berkley and sailed east to anchor in Nonesuch Bay, named after the first visiting yacht that dropped anchor there in 1647 after she had found her way through the narrow entrance in the reefs to this delightful and secluded anchorage off Green Island. The open ocean is just a reef away, which gives a wonderful feeling of being on the edge of the world. Ashore, the island is quiet and offers plenty of opportunities to enjoy a peaceful beach. Across on the mainland in Browns Bay is Harmony Hall, a combination of gourmet open-air restaurant and spectacular art gallery owned and run by Riccardo and Marilisa Parisi, an Italian couple who really know how to pamper their guests. Take a camera and go ashore, walk through tropical gardens full of flowers and humming birds, take a drink in the converted sugar mill that serves as a bar, then climb to the top to take fabulous photographs. The artwork in the gallery is impressive, each piece brought to the island by Marilisa, who displays the

Above: local lobsters served by *Mosaique* chef Ian Fitzpatrick
Left: *Mosaique* is the perfect charter yacht for 12 guests
Bottom left: Nonesuch Bay, Antigua, from the top of the old sugar mill
Right: On the Rocks restaurant, St Barts
Below: Marilisa and Riccardo Parisi, owners of Harmony Hall restaurant and art gallery, Antigua

work of artists from around the world on her walls. Many yacht owners who have visited the restaurant with their guests have bought pieces to adorn their vessels.

Barbuda

Barbuda is a sister island to Antigua but has an entirely different flavour. Few yachts visit this haven of tranquillity, many captains being reluctant to visit the reef-infested shores, although their wreck-creating reputations are somewhat exaggerated in these days of sophisticated navigation aids and accurate electronic charts. Captain Brian Chick guided us skilfully into a sublime anchorage off the southern shores close by the Coco Point Lodge, so exclusive that it has its own private airstrip. Early the following morning we boarded *Mosaique's* tender to be whisked ashore, landing on the sandy beach where our guide was waiting to greet us. Lynton Thomas is no ordinary guide. True, he is the managing director of Paradise Tours, but he is a man of many talents and is also the executive chairman of the Barbuda Tourism Board. He knows everyone, and his knowledge of the island, its people and their history could fill a book. We visited Codrington, the island's only town and initially a walled enclosure. Much of its colonial past has vanished and what remains – for example, Suffolk Lynn, built in 1743 – desperately needs renovating. The highlands in the north of the island offer spectacular views and the opportunity to tour the ruins of what was the home of the Codringtons, the family of sugar planters who leased the island from Britain from 1670 to 1870. A highlight of our tour was a trip across the shallow waters of a brackish lagoon in a local pirogue to visit the Frigate Bird Sanctuary and walk along the 18 miles of unspoiled beach that separates the lagoon from the Caribbean. The protected home of the frigate bird is a visual and audible spectacle in March as the birds shriek and squawk above the mangroves. Hen birds circle looking for a likely mate, and the watching males puff up their throats in a bid to prove they have got what every female wants. Baby chicks and white-headed yearlings watch and learn for when it is their turn to join the eternal game. The hotel where we took lunch, the Beach House, is an oasis set amongst the island's expansive sand dunes. White bungalows sparkle in the tropical sunshine and the azure blue pool beckons to those seeking a cooling dip. Looking relaxed and every bit as cool as his pool, the hotel's manager, Mohammed Sallah, greeted us at the door and ushered us inside the open-sided bar and restaurant. Mohammed, who is from Ghana, visited the Beach House initially as a paying guest and enjoyed himself so much that he stayed on and now runs it for its American owners. The lunch proved what a talented chef and kitchen staff are employed there. The hotel is becoming increasingly popular and has appeared in the background of several photoraphic shoots for fashion magazines.

Above: the magnificent Coco Port anchorage on Barbuda. Below: Lynton Thomas, the island's knowledgeable and expert guide

Anguilla

Anguilla has no casinos, no cruise ships, no jet-skis, no chartered jumbo jets and almost no crime, and it is perhaps more because of these qualities that the island makes such a great place to take a large yacht. Our trip from Barbuda saw us sailing northwest overnight, a distance of around 110 nautical miles, and as we approached Road Bay we passed *Four Wishes* at anchor off Sandy Reef, followed by a circle of sand, some palm trees and a beach shack said to serve excellent grilled lobster washed down with cold beer. We shared our anchorage with *Sunrise* and *Inspiration* while their captains completed customs and immigration formalities ashore. Once we had done the same, we were off to find 'pirates', except that on this occasion our quest was for 'pirate' with a Y! Pyrat Rum is one of Anguilla's best-known exports, a nectar of the gods that is blended and bottled in a tiny factory by a handful of dedicated staff. Visit the tasting rooms during office hours and choose between three superb Caribbean rums including Cask 1623, which is aged in oak casks for 23 years. The island has some excellent hotels and restaurants, among them Cap Jalucca, which is reputed to be the only hotel for the rich and famous but is being challenged by strong rivals such as Cuisineart and the Malliouhana. Altamar offers an alternative with three fully staffed villas, each akin to the standard of a large yacht, while the restaurant is nothing short of stunning. With a cruising permit obtained from customs and immigration it is possible to anchor off and enjoy the delights the chef has to offer. For another diversion, take advantage of the local knowledge to seek out Cheddie Richardson, and be prepared to be amazed by his talent. Cheddie is a self-taught sculptor whose creations begin with his picking up driftwood from the beaches of his native island and transforming them into breathtaking works of art which he sells from a small studio in The Cove.

St Barthelemy (St Barts)

Sailing to the west of Sint Maarten we passed Simpson Bay and Phillipsberg to port, and after a trip of just 30 miles dropped anchor at the deserted island of Ile Fourchue, now a French marine park just to the north of St Barts. Many of the dry, rocky outcrops and craggy peaks are in an attractive reddish colour, with steep contours adding to their magnificence. Once overrun by goats, the island was some years ago stripped of vegetation to such a point that it became barren. As a result, the goats died off, but with the island now returning to a more lush appearance it is an excellent place to anchor far from the crowds. Ile Fourchue's greatest asset is that it is close to St Barthelemy (St Barts), the most chic of all the French West Indies. Home of The Bucket, the famous annual large sailing yacht event, the island's new superyacht docks in Gustavia offer the best port of call from which to investigate the trendy shops and Parisian boutiques. A wonderful southerly wind allowed us

Right, clockwise from top left: the pool at Barbuda's Beach House hotel; Suffolk Lynn, a relic of the colonial past; lobster for lunch; cacti on the Atlantic coast; visiting the Frigate Bird Sanctuary; frigates make a noisy display

Useful information

Anguilla

ROAD BAY: Lat. 18° 2' N, long. 63° 06' W
DEPTH OF WATER: 6 metres
SANDY ISLAND: Lat. 18° 13' N, long. 63° 07' W
DEPTH OF WATER: 8 metres
BEST HOTELS: Cuisineart, www.cuisinartresort.com
Malliouhana Resort and Spa, www.malliouhana.com
BEST RESTAURANT: Altamer, www.altamer.com
RUM TASTING: Pyrat Rum, www.patronspirits.com
WOODWORK ART: Cheddies Carving Studio, www.cheddieonline.com

Antigua

CARLISLE BAY: Lat. 17° 01' N, long. 61° 50' W
DEPTH OF WATER: 10 metres
BEST HOTEL: Carlisle Bay Hotel, www.carlisle-bay.com
ENGLISH HARBOUR: Lat. 17° 00' N, long. 45° 46' W
DEPTH OF WATER: 8 metres in channel
BEST HOTEL: Copper & Lumber, www.antigua_and_barbuda.wheretostay.com
SHOP AT: Galley Boutique, Tel:+1 268 460-1333
MUSEUM: www.antiguamuseums.org/nelsonsdockyard.htm
FALMOUTH HARBOUR: Lat. 17° 00' N, long. 61° 47' W
DEPTH OF WATER: 10 metres in channel
BEST RESTAURANT: Antigua Yacht Club Marina Restaurant, www.aycmarina.com
GREEN ISLAND: Lat. 17° 03' N, long. 61° 39' W.
DEPTH OF WATER: 10 to 20 metres
RESTAURANT AND ART GALLERY: Harmony Hall, www.harmonyhall.com

Barbuda

ANCHORAGE OFF COCO POINT: Lat. 17° 33' N, long. 61° 47' W
DEPTH OF WATER: 6 metres
BEST HOTEL: The Beach House
Web: www.caribbeanclubs.net
GUIDE: Lynton Thomas, Tel:+1 268 460 0081

Ile Fourchue

Lat. 17° 57' N, long. 62° 55' W
DEPTH OF WATER: 5 metres

Montserrat

Lat. 16° 48' N, long. 62° 12' W
DEPTH OF WATER: 10 metres
LOCAL LUNCH: The Attic, Tel:+1 664 491 2008
LOCAL GUIDE: Slym Tour & Taxi Service, Roy 'Slym' Daley, Tel:+1 664 492 2878
MONTSERRAT VOLCANO OBSERVATORY: www.mvo.ms

Redonda

Lat. 16° 56' N, long. 62° 22' W

St Barts

GUSTAVIA: Lat. 17° 54' N, long. 62° 52' W
DEPTH OF WATER: 5 metres
RESTAURANT: La Vela Tel:+1 590 27 51 51
BAIE ST JEAN: Lat. 17° 55' N, long. 62° 50' W
DEPTH OF WATER: 10 metres
BEST HOTEL: Eden Rock, www.edenrockhotel.com
BEST BEACH BAR: Nikki Beach, www.nikkibeach.com

Note: All latitude and longitude positions are given as rough guides for identification only and should not be used for navigation. Depths of water in anchorages vary and are given only as a guide and should be checked.

Above: a drifwood carving of a fish by Cheddie Richardson, who works in a small studio on Anguilla
Right: a splendid beach on Anguilla with the Pimms and Kernia restaurants in the background
Below: Kenroy Herbert, quality assurance manager at Pyrat Rum

to anchor inside Baie de St Jean on the island's north coast. This bay is home to Nikki Beach, a trendy beach bar more famous for who goes there than what it serves, and the sublime Eden Rock Hotel, an oasis of old-fashioned luxury, now extended in a multi-million-dollar revamp that has taken over the adjoining premises and created select beachside apartments. The original Rock remains home to two of the most splendid suites, each completely individual and unlikely to be copied anywhere else in the world. It is one of those hotels that just has to be stayed in. Other great anchorages around the island include Anse de Grande Saline and Anse de Colombier.

Bottom left: the port of Gustavia on St Barts
Below: motor yachts *Ticonderoga of Greenwich*, *Noble House*, *Te Manu*, *Charade* and *Illusion* at the Capitainerie Dock, St Barts

Redonda

From St Barts, Captain Brian Chick set *Mosaique* on a course south, passing St Eustatius (Statia) to starboard and then sailing down the leeward side of St Christopher (St Kitts), whose capital, Basseterre, is expanding its port facilities for large yachts and now has a marina named Port Zante. We sailed on, keeping Nevis, sister island to St Kitts, to port and passing the famous Four Seasons on Penney's Beach, which is a wonderful anchorage much neglected by larger yachts. Further southeast and almost midway between Nevis and Montserrat, our destination, lies the kingdom of Redonda, the ultimate island retreat. Once mined for its phosphates, this 1.6 kilometre-long rock protrudes 305 metres above sea level and offers only one somewhat perilous anchorage that is best attempted in calm weather. Officially part of Antigua and Barbuda, the rock became a kingdom in 1865 and has been reigned over by a king ever since. Most have been literary figures – for example John Galsworthy became King Juan I in 1947 – and today there is a right royal row about who is the rightful heir to the title. Since it would be remiss of us to take sides we will leave this fascinating story there, but information is available for those who are interested. Anchor 30 metres off the ruins of the old dock in the southwest of the island in 10 metres of water.

Montserrat

This is an island of 104 square kilometres and it is still expanding! Poor old island – it has been in the wars for so long now. Once the place to be seen in, it attracted many high-profile rock band legends in the early 1990s and Sir George Martin had a music recording studio there. All that changed in 1995 when the volcano Mount Soufriere rumbled into life and blew, just as Jimmy Buffet had predicted it would in his hit song *Volcano*, which was actually recorded on the island. The volcanic ash wiped out Montserrat's tourist trade in a single swipe and went on to devastate the capital, Plymouth, engulfing it in pyroclastic flows. If ever there was a Caribbean island where it is best to bring your own hotel with you, then this it. We anchored ours in Little Bay, the new capital and port. The island and her people are clawing back their lives as they endeavour to regain what was lost in a demonstration that the true spirit of the

Caribbean is alive and beginning to kick back. Eco-tourism is starting to flourish and, of course, there is the opportunity to view the devastation created by nature. We employed Slym, a local and knowledgeable guide, to take us through the lush northern half of the island into the deserted south. On our way we drove across the remains of the golf course, now a solid lump of grey lava rock. We toured the Observatory and got as close as possible to the still-smoking crater. From St George's Hill, high above Plymouth, we viewed with awe the results of the volcanic activity that engulfed the town, burying many of the properties so that now only their roofs and upper storeys protrude above the ash. Our trip into the Caribbean of yesteryear was completed on the way back to the comfort of our yacht when we stopped at The Attic in Alveston for lunch. Yvonne Reiley cooked local chicken rotis for us, which we washed down with her excellent ginger beer and sorrel drinks.

Antigua

It is just a short hop back to Antigua, and for our last day aboard the floating splendour of *Mosaique* we anchored in Carlisle Bay before returning to Falmouth. Our companion in the anchorage was on this occasion the mighty *Leander*, resplendently flying her white ensign. This bay is devoted to hedonistic pleasures both on the water and ashore. Sprawling luxuriantly along the beach is perhaps the finest hotel on the island. The Carlisle Bay is a clever combination of stunning subtlety and style, staffed by a well-trained workforce that really understands the meaning of pampering. From tennis pros to therapeutic spa consultants, they are all expert at doing what they do, just like our crew aboard *Mosaique*.

Time and tide wait for no man, even in this land of sunshine, and after a 24-hour turnround our yacht was about to do it all again for other some lucky guests. It was time to sail back to Falmouth, the harbour next to English Harbour. Captain Chick and his crew aboard *Mosaique* had proved without a doubt that there is more to bring home from a Caribbean charter than a T-shirt. ❑

Getting there

Frances and Michael Howorth were guests aboard *Mosaique*, a yacht that charters for up to 12 people at €200,000 per week on MYBA terms in high season through Nigel Burgess Ltd. She sails the Mediterranean in summer and the Caribbean in the winter season.
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Top: pyroclastic lava flow on Mount Soufriere seen from St George's Hill lookout, and Plymouth buried under ash (above far left)
Centre: Yvonne Reiley and cook Sarah Jeffers at The Attic restaurant
Above right: Carlisle Bay, Antigua