

# ADVENTURE CHARTER VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY

A 67-metre explorer that is the perfect way to cruise some lesser-known Caribbean haunts Frances & Michael Howorth







Anyone who needs proof that a shadow yacht designed to support a mothership is more than just a clunky toy carrier need look no further than the 67-metre *Allure Shadow*. Owner Tom Gonzales, who created Shadow Marine to purpose-build support vessels for superyachts, has added so many luxury features to his latest creation – hull No3 from the yard – that he has disposed of the big white yacht it was supposed to support. *Allure Shadow* is a luxury yacht in its own right with all the usual superyacht trimmings as well as a huge helicopter hangar, two landing pads, refuelling facilities and a vast garage for all her toys – and there's a lot of them. She also has six spacious guest cabins (each of which has its own balcony), a steam and sauna room, cinema, games room and swimming pool. Add in the versatility that the explorer yacht form brings with it, and you have the perfect vehicle for a charter break.

We found this out on our own voyage of discovery, sailing overnight from Antigua to Dominica and then slowly moving up northwards via the French islands of Marie-Gallante, Îles des Saintes and Guadeloupe before retuning to Antigua. The Anglo-French flavour of this string of islands in the southerly part of the Leewards chain is strong – a legacy of colonial history when they were fought over by the warring naval superpowers. After our first night under way aboard *Allure Shadow*, we went out onto our private balcony, eager to catch our first glimpse of the lush, green and mountainous island of Dominica and breathe in the sweet smell of the rain forest. Before long our anchor clattered into 10 metres of water inside Prince Rupert Bay off the town of Portsmouth in the northern part of the island. Minutes later, our island guide Martin Carriere (or 'Providence' as everyone calls him) clambered aboard. He is someone we have known for many years and is one of those rare finds – an expert who is knowledgeable, entertaining and can enthuse you with his passion.

Dominica – a British colony until 1978 – is definitely not just a place for a Caribbean beach holiday. It may be the poorest island in the area economically but it is one of the richest in natural attributes. Providence collected us from the yacht in his pirogue, a traditional island boat (though powered by a Yamaha outboard). At the mouth of the River Providence he shut off the engine because outboards are not

allowed in this national park. We glided along the rapidly narrowing waterway under the power of wooden oars, the huge swamp bloodwood trees on either side providing a natural canopy. This forest is home to many species of birds and insects, who were providing a memorable background cacophony. The massive buttress roots of these monstrous trees lie partly in the water in convoluted shapes, while their long vines that hang down from the branches to the water are still used today by the indigenous Carib Indians to weave baskets. We were alone in this natural paradise, and the sounds of the forest were broken only by the quiet voice of Providence as he pointed out some of the incredible wildlife. We watched a tiny Antillean crested hummingbird flit from flower to flower, while belted kingfishers were waiting patiently to swoop down and pluck bream from the water. At the river's side white land crabs scuttled out of the water to reach the sanctuary of their homes in the shadow of the tree roots.

Later, after a short journey by road, we went hiking to Milton Falls, a spectacular waterfall that drops 35 metres to the river below. Further on we took a short trek along another track to investigate Soufrie, an active volcano with bubbling pools of sulphurous mud – which are completely cold to the touch. Providence pointed out limes, oranges and lemons growing side by side with cocoa trees and coffee bushes. He picked grapefruit for us to eat – the juice much sweeter than we expected. His machete made short work of a coconut and we delighted in chunks of the white flesh followed up by tree-ripened bananas. On a nearby farm plot, aubergine, rosemary, parsley, green onion, cucumber, tomatoes, mint, sweet potatoes and cherries provided all the growers needed, and left some extra to sell. Here we picked sorrel, a flower that is seeped with cinnamon bark and other local herbs to become Christmas tea, so called because of its brilliantly red colour and the time of year it is harvested. It is easy to see how Dominica has become the greengrocer to neighbouring islands, which have become more dependant on tourism and have lost the art of self sufficiency.

We could easily have filled a week in Dominica, but there were more islands to explore. While we slept, *Allure Shadow's* captain Kostas Andreou weighed anchor and set a course northwards towards Marie-Galante. With little traffic, the island is easy to tour by car or scooter – a good job then that among *Allure Shadow's* extensive array



*Add in the VERSATILITY of the EXPLORER form and you have the perfect CHARTER vehicle*

Previous pages: *Allure Shadow* from Fort Napoleon on Terre d'en Haut.

Left: The only way to arrive is by helicopter.

Below, from the top:

Providence rows down Indian River; a lizard climbs a swampblood tree; the local seafood goes straight from sea to pot; you'll see all sorts of flora, including this porcelain rose.

Facing page, far left:

Dominica's Milton Falls.

Facing page, right: Splendid isolation in Pain de Sucre on the west coast of Guadeloupe.







Above, from the top: Toys you can trust – the 31ft Contender; the helicopter beats the tender any day; open the garage – the fun starts here; a mini-sub means you can explore the undersea world.

Top right: The main saloon in the sky lounge on the yacht's heli-deck.

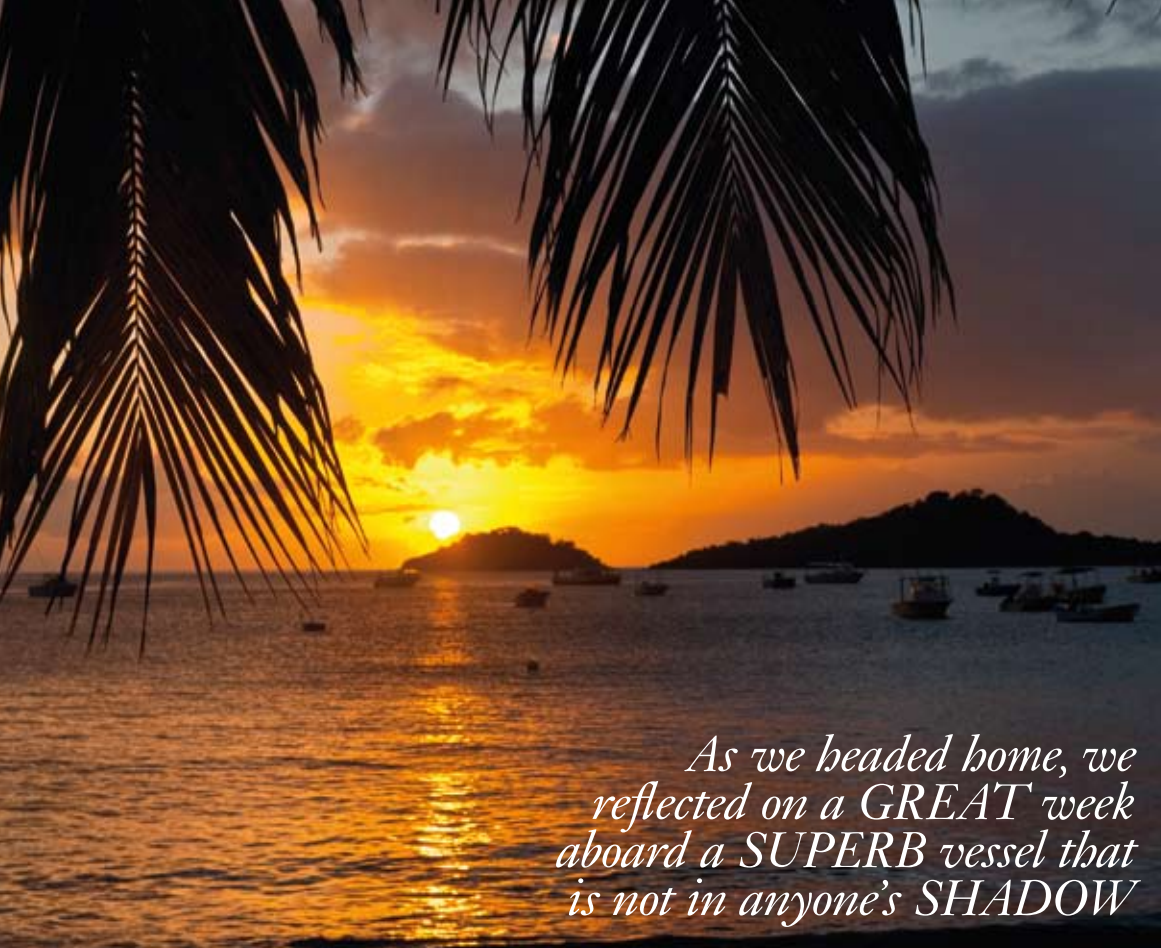
Above right: Each of the six guest suites has its own balcony.

Right: A bar area to starboard in the main saloon.

Far right: Watch a movie from the bridge deck pool.







*As we headed home, we reflected on a GREAT week aboard a SUPERB vessel that is not in anyone's SHADOW*

**Below:** *Allure Shadow* anchored in Anse du Bourg near Îlet à Cabrit on Guadeloupe.  
**Left:** Sunset over Pigeon Island off Guadeloupe.



of toys are two scooters and a Smart Car. We visited Gueule Grand Gouffre, a huge gulf through the cliff with an arch open to the sea. Hiking is straightforward, and there are a series of easy-to-follow trails. Beaches are wide and golden, and in season French holidaymakers in the know come here to escape European winters.

An hour away is Îles des Saintes, a group of pretty Gallic islands that are small and somewhat sleepy but still chic, and with a feel perhaps of how St Tropez used to be. The largest of the group is Terre d'En Haut, where we went exploring on the motor scooters. Our first stop was Fort Napoleon, with its commanding view across the bay where *Allure Shadow* was at anchor. The restored fort houses a museum but it is the garden that most delighted us with its array of cactuses and – surprisingly – some enormous iguanas. Back in the pretty seaside town of Bourg des Saintes, the only conurbation of any size on the islands, we admired the picturesque houses with red roofs. The locally made, hand-painted silk-screened clothes make retail therapy a must.

The Îles des Saintes come under the jurisdiction of Guadeloupe, the next island to the north across a channel some 11 miles wide and our next destination. Like Dominica it has a mountainous interior and has much to offer those chartering in the area, but here the similarities

end. It is still part of France and the French government have designated their islands as Departments of France, pumping in a fortune to build their infrastructure (it's technically part of the EU). Post independence, the British generally told their formerly-dependent islands to get on with life and make the best of it! Though sugar cane is still grown in Guadeloupe and, of course, fine rum is distilled, the investment from mainland France definitely helps. Pigeon Island, half way up Guadeloupe's leeward side, is the location of the Jacques Cousteau National Park – an amazing spot if diving takes your fancy. Should your charter not be well equipped there are plenty of dive shops around; snorkellers will have plenty of fun, too, and for those who don't want to get wet, there are glass-bottomed boats with informative commentaries in French and sometimes in English.

North of Pigeon Island is Dehais, the most northerly of the safe anchorages in Guadeloupe and a good place to stop if you are en route to Antigua (just 36 miles away). The deep fjord-like gash between the mountains is very difficult to spot from seaward but it is a great location to drop the anchor. This fishing village is just the place if you want to eat French seafood served Creole fashion.

From here it was back to Antigua. We had started the charter from Green Island, in a splendid little anchorage tucked away behind the reef. It was a great location to enjoy the yacht's superb collection of water toys – which include an 8.5-metre Nautica catamaran hull landing craft with twin 300hp outboards, a 9.4-metre Contender centre-console tender with 250hp outboards (and equipped for fishing), four Waverunners, four kayaks, two Laser sailing dinghies, six underwater scooters, snorkel gear, a host of towable toys, and, of course, the waterskis and wakeboards. It's safe to say this isn't a yacht you'll get bored on.

For our final destination we had chosen to drop anchor in Hermitage Bay off the very special and wonderfully accommodating hotel named after the location. As a destination harbour, it is a perfect choice being close to the customs and immigration services in either Jolly Harbour or the island's capital St John's. This meant our captain could set us safely ashore for our onward taxi journey to VC Bird international airport, and our flights back to the UK and a Christmas in the cold. We reflected on a great week aboard a superb vessel that is not in anyone's shadow. **SYW**

## Charter facts

**Length** 67.06m (220ft 1in)  
**Beam** 12.20m (40ft 0in)  
**Speed** 12 knots  
**Engines** Twin 1,830kW Caterpillar D399  
**Cruising range** 10,000 nautical miles @ 10 knots  
**Guests** 12  
**Crew** 13  
**Charter rates** \$239,000pw  
**Contact** Terry Hines. International Yacht Collection.  
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