

Glorious Grenada & The Grenadines Nov/Dec 2018



Tues 20 Nov – Sandman Hotel, Gatwick

After 11 months of planning our Grenadines sailing trip the day to leave is finally here! Paul & Yolanda left last Sat for a week's diving in Carriacou. Today it was our turn to set off to the Sandman Hotel at Gatwick. Driving rain & 2°C on the M3 - looking forward to some Caribbean heat. Too cold to use the hotel pool so quiet dinner in the cold hotel restaurant.

Wed 21 Nov - Gatwick to Grenada

Taxi to airport for 10.05am flight. Met up with Pete & Mariela for breakfast after stocking up at Duty Free. 8 hr flight to St Lucia, 90 min wait in plane & short 30 min onwards hop to Grenada airport. Met up with Mr Marcus Gabriel with his rental car outside the airport. Drove towards St Georges, stopping off at a big supermarket in heavy rain. Rang Johanna our Airbnb host who showed us to our two bedroom apartment. Hot, humid, dark & tired but looking forward to the sea view in the morning.

Thurs 22 Nov - Spice Island Tour

Visited nearby beach at Grand Anse - fabulous! Checked out Grenada Yacht Club where we pick up the boat on Sat, but no one from NSS Charter about. Drove into St Georges and walked up to the Old Fort; dilapidated but still in use by the police & great views over the town and harbour. Drove up west coast passing very colourful villages. Stopped in Gouyave where a local fisherman pointed us towards a beer shop run by his sister. Checked out old nutmeg processing factory and sampled tasty grilled chicken on the street. Inland through lush jungle on winding road passing more small colourful villages. Very unspoilt/undeveloped. Back to Umbrellas bar on Grand Anse beach for cocktails & a swim. Evening meal with Ali's friends Caroline & Mathew, live-boards at Prickey Bay.

Friday 23 Nov - more local Grenadian colour

We all managed a better/longer night's sleep. Bella Blue apartment has a brilliant view over the beach & St Georges bay but really needs a car to get anywhere due to the challenging hilltop location. Drove across the interior again to the windy & rough east coast. Only 21m but very slow going. Headed north to Belmont Estate high in the hills; few road signs but found it after 1.5 hrs. Old 17C sugar plantation which now grows cocoa with an 18 mth old chocolate factory. Informative tour & good chocolate + selection of other tropical plants & animals (speaking parrot & young goat kids were highlights). Back to Grenville, Grenada's vibrant second town, bursting with local traffic & people. Loud music, lots of local stalls, friendly people & merriment. Found a very basic & busy local restaurant - great fun. Long drive via windy road at the south of the island. Stopped for ciders at a friend of Caroline's West Indies Brewery. Sunset swim & drinks at lovely Morne Rouge beach. Dinner at Umbrellas with live music.

Sat 24 Nov - busy boarding

Very noisy night with street party below us ending c6am. Relaxing morning including a last swim at Grand Anse where Pete saw two turtles. Over to the Yacht Club with first lot of bags to meet Evelyn at North Sardinia Sail Charters & sign paperwork. Quick roti from petrol station (lots of chicken bones = not a great success) then back for boat briefing with Richard from NSS. Lots of different systems etc to cover on Fary our Lagoon 450. Massive looking 2017 boat but a lot of stuff needing fixing after an Atlantic crossing & first charter the previous week. Busy with cleaners etc. On the go all afternoon also organising laundry at Port Louis marina & car return. Dropped Ali & Mariela at supermarket while Peter & I picked up our remaining bags plus CMP from airport. Lots more shopping & bag handing plus meeting Paul & Yolanda off Carriacou ferry - very hot & busy afternoon. Supper at The Spout bar at GYC with lots of sand flies & mozzies about!

Sun 25 Nov - lumpy first sail to Carriacou (33nm)

Little sleep - hot in marina, rain through hatch above berth & awake thinking about everything to be done on the boat. On deck at 7.30am checking boat inventory. NSS guys arrived at 9am to move boat onto fuel pontoon. By 9.50 am I was manoeuvring the big beast out of the marina & motoring out of St George's harbour with help from Navigator Ali. Good easterly breeze, but we struggled to get the main up with twisted halyard, lazy jacks & reefing lines. Quickly up to 8kt under sail heading north along the Grenadian west coast. Wind & waves increased as we approached the north of the island. Big seas between the islands & fairly hard on the wind but Fary took it all well. The tender engine was in the water as the slings onto the davits were too long. We re-secured it & when I double checked it at 16.00 approaching Tyrell Bay I saw a bend in the fishing rod & reeled in a large Black Fin Tuna!

It was a tough bouncy first day & were pleased when a local boat boy took our lines and attached them to a mooring buoy in busy Tyrrel Bay. Some excitement (& bruises) when Pete ran over some mooring buoys at high speed in the tender and the outboard cut out again. Eventually got it started again & went ashore for cocktails & pizza at the Lazy Turtle on the sandy beach. Great setting; really feels like we're on holiday now after a busy/tough/hot couple of days.

Mon 26 Nov - Carriacou & Grenada check-out (7nm)

Fresher night than in the marina. Up early but leisurely start with a swim round the boat. Motored round the NW of the island to Hillsborough where we anchored. Tender engine playing up badly but Peter managed to get us ashore where CMP & I went to the police station to check out. Unfortunately 4 boats ahead of us so a long wait for immigration. Motored over to Sandy Island a stunning small island in a marine nature reserve. 17kt headwind as I helmed Fary onto a mooring ball with the help (perhaps!) of the Marine Park rangers. Twin motors make for great boat manoeuvrability but a lot of windage. Getting late so this was to be our overnight mooring but rather windy & too far from the beach to swim, so I moved the boat onto a closer mooring when one became free. Beautiful beach & good snorkelling off the north end of the tiny island. Lots of pelicans. Had to cut short snorkelling as ominous dark clouds appeared. The first rainstorm missed us but damp later. Tasty prawn linguine from Chef Ali on board. Very chilled out with cocktails on aft deck. A much more relaxing day.

Tues 27 Nov - Union Island, St Vincent & the Grenadines (14nm)

Headed towards Clifton on Union Island under motor as wind on the nose. Peter & CMP spotted a turtle. Alongside pontoon at Anchorage Yacht Club in the busy little Clifton harbour surrounded by reefs and crystal blue water. CMP & I walked up to the small airport to check in to St Vincent. Efficient customs & immigration in lovely air conditioned room. Water filling took over 1.5hrs to fill just one tank so CMP & I went for a snorkel & swim off the nearby beach. Lots of lambi (conch) beating etc going on. Long wait for UniTech man to look at our outboard so we walked into the small town for lunch. Colourful little town with bustling shops, a small fruit market & fish shops. Feels remote & off the tourist trail. Eventually got the outboard back so headed west under headsail towards the expansive Chatham Bay. Still 15-20 kts of wind. Anchored in the bay. Conch fritters on board. Small fire in galley (unattended kettle, kitchen roll + wind) which I managed to put out!

Fary is very comfortable with lots of seating & relaxing places - big aft deck with table & cushioned area, high flybridge that just about seats all 7 of us, seating/lounging area in front of main saloon cabin plus bean bags on the trampolines (aka the spray deck when upwind).

Wed 28 Nov - Mayreau, SVG (11nm)

Snorkelling from the boat at Chatham Bay we saw sea snakes, a conga snake plus large dried out puffa fish ashore. Lovely walk along the sandy beach watching the pelicans & other sea birds fishing. Spotted several small turtles swimming near the boat. Beautiful beach & bay with about 20 boats at anchor. Headed out under sail with a steady 15kt easterly again. After 2hrs close hauled sailing/beating we were off Saltwhistle Bay at the northern end of Mayreau. We secured the last mooring buoy in the spectacular half moon bay. Sweeping beach fringed with palm trees. Swam ashore after coffee & biscuits and walked over to the windward/eastern surf beach facing Tobago Cays. Stunning location with swaying palms hiding local shacks/shops above the pristine sandy beach.

Rum punches at the "Last Bar Before the Jungle" then swam back to Fary. Evening trip ashore in tender. Walked up very steep hill to Mayreau village. Behind the quaint old Catholic Church we looked out east towards Tobago Cays as the sun went down – glorious! Walked down into the little village and small Island Paradise restaurant with views back to Union Island. After an hour's wait a three course meal turned up including pumpkin soup, pork & cheesecake.

Thursday 29 Nov - Tobago Cays paradise (5nm)

Rocky roly night in Saltwhistle Bay. Ali & I tried out the stand-up paddle boards - tricky in the stiff breeze but we stayed on. Others went ashore in the tender for a few provisions. Short motor east towards Tobago Cays into 15kt wind and significant waves. Navigated between the small islands protected by a horseshoe reef. Beautiful turquoise water and lovely beaches – another stunning unspoilt setting. CMP took us onto a mooring ball just outside the protected turtle sanctuary area off Baradel Island. Saw 6 turtles on our first snorkel before lunch and a good selection of colourful fish. Another great lunch onboard and a nap. Spotted a further 5 turtles whilst snorkelling in the afternoon plus a large ray. Awesome tropical place! 5pm pick-up by local boat to take us to nearby Petit Bateau Island for lobster bbq on the beach. Brilliant sandy waterside location as the sun went down! Enjoyed excellent big lobsters sitting under the palm trees and stars. Top spot!

Friday 30 Nov – Bequia, SVG (28nm)

Up early for turtle patrol at 8am. Over to Baradel reef where we swam with 6 turtles and 3 big rays. Lots of big colourful fish but unfortunately timed out as we needed to leave early for Bequia. Peter skippering & RTP on Nav for the long open water passage. Sad to be leaving stunning Tobago Cays. Headed west to clear the reefs off Mayreau then north under sail by 9.50am making 7-8kt SOG in 17kts of wind. Fast passage but big seas & wind increased to 30kt apparent so we reefed the main & headsail. By 12.35 we were 2nm west of West Cay off the west coast of Bequia. Wet & roly 5nm motor into headwind & waves to the wide Admiralty Bay. By 14.00 we were alongside at Bequia Marina YC to take on water (& late lunch). Moved to a nearby mooring.

Cloudy all day, which was ok while sailing, but big rainstorms as we sheltered ashore (others less lucky with shelter!). Belated WhatsApp birthday phone call to DGP in Sydney from the dock at the Whaleboner. Ashore again later for dinner at Fig Tree restaurant - long wait as no chef so owner Sherrell had to cook for all. Music from three old guys so we took to the dance floor whilst waiting. Great seafood grill.

Sat 1 December - Chillin' in Colourful Bequia

Woke to see a TUI cruise ship at anchor. Delightful sunny morning as we watched all the comings & goings during breakfast high up on our flybridge. Several ferries coming in & out plus French warship departing. Port Elizabeth is full of colour in the sunshine. Caught local (mini)bus to Friendship Bay where we walked down to the picture perfect beach and along the shore past fisherman gutting barracuda & red snapper. Followed the road round to the old whaling museum at La Pompe. Museum was closed (no longer PC?) but we went in and looked at the old exhibits. Small offshore islands including Petit Nevis with an old whaling station. The road took us to a fishing harbour & processing plant at Paget Farm where Ali bought rockfish. Masses of lobsters in tanks. Lots of locals "liming". Introduced to whaling harpooner Bentley Ollivierre who told us more about the industry (the islanders are licensed to catch 4 humpback whales pa but none caught this year). Joined the locals for refreshments in a shack & hopped on local bus back to town with Bentley. A great morning's outing.

The girls headed off for provisioning at Doris'. Moved Fary over to an anchorage off the long sandy Princess Margaret Beach about half a mile away. Swim to beach was interrupted when we had to re-anchor as Peter & Paul discovered that our chain was caught under a large discarded ship's anchor.

Supper ashore at nearby Jacks Beach Bar - lovely position just above the sand & great food, though we missed Happy Hour because of anchor shenanigans. All very quiet pre holidays.

Sun 2 Dec - Bequia to Blue Lagoon, St Vincent (16nm)

Lots of rain overnight but woke to blue skies again. Dinghy-ed across in rough water to the northern side of Admiralty Bay for snorkelling off the Devil's Table shelf. Good coral & lots of smaller fish. Very wet in dinghy returning to Fary. Rather frustrating passage to St Vincent - first half motoring directly into the swell & wind, then trying to beat under jib only; slow going! However ended up off Kingstown where Cunard's Queen Victoria was alongside. I saw a shark off Fary's beam in the Bequia Channel (honest!). Blue Lagoon is surrounded by a circular reef with a narrow & shallow (I saw 1.6m depth) entrance, but it is clearly marked by posts. Inside it was much calmer & plans changed from stern-to onto the end of the pontoon to much more straightforward alongside. I brought Fary in but a stiff crosswind made for tricky crew rope-work. We had a belated snack lunch ashore at the marina restaurant before a swim off the nearby black sand beach. Busy at the marina pontoon with other charter cats coming & going, but little sign of life on the large number of moored boats in the lagoon.

Mon 3 Dec - St Vincent to exclusive Mustique (15nm)

Early morning paddle-boarding with CMP off Fary in the lagoon (managed to tip her in). Then we caught the local "dollar bus" to Kingstown town with the locals. Very busy in town. Walked along from the "bus station" to the fish market where we admired a wide selection of fish & chatted to local fishermen & vendors. Caught another bus up to the Botanic Gardens (founded by the British in 1765) and tagged onto a tour. Lovely selection of different trees & plants, many from the East (via Kew Gardens), plus breeding programme for the highly colourful but endangered St Vincent Parrot. Shown round by very enthusiastic (& camp) guide for an hour. Back into bustling town to wander through the stalls lining the Main Street (lots of fruit & spices) before returning to the boat. Wow quite an experience - three hours of full-on real Caribbean life and music (especially on the mini-buses).

Set sail after lunch for Mustique, for the first time with the wind aft of the beam. Quickly passed the distinctive (nutri)Bullet Rock off the north of Bequia but ran into a very wet 30kt squall off the east coast. Spotted big mansions as we approached Mustique and headed for Britannia Bay. Harbourmaster Sean helped us onto a mooring though only half a dozen other visiting yachts. Sunset drinks then ashore to Basil's Bar - lovely place right on the water. Great decor including a small stage, but very quiet & no sign of Mick Jagger apart from his guitars. Dinner back on Fary followed by boat party with Rolling Stones music. Lots of cocktails, deck dancing & merriment!

Tues 4 Dec - Mustique to Tobago Cays - two very special places! (22nm)

A hot night at anchor; less breeze than other spots, plus hatches closed for rain & mozzie in cabin = not a great night's sleep! Watched 7am ferry leave for Kingstown. Early swim as Peter & Mariela headed ashore for croissants from Sweetie Pie's bakery. Watched turtles swim past boat as we breakfasted in this exclusive location. We met up with Boom Boom for our taxi tour of this private island with 95 "money houses" and a small village for staff & employees of The Mustique Company who manage the island. All neatly manicured with boutique shops, library, thatched airport & resident tortoises. Boom

Boom pointed out houses owned by Mick Jagger, Bryan Adams, Tom Hilfiger, Shania Twain, Guinness's etc. Island very quiet pre-Christmas holidays. Dropped off at beautiful Macaroni Beach on windward east coast. No one else around as we swam in the big surf - great until Ali lost her sunglasses & I was spear-tackled into the ground by a breaking wave.

Set sail for Tobago Cays - speedy downwind past Canouan Is. Back to our favourite mooring spot by Baradel Is. Bought our Tobago Cays tee shirts from Ali's old friend Mr Quality. Swam round back of island to the reef. Lots of turtles, rays & colourful fish.

Wed 5 Dec - Tobago Cays to Clifton, Union Is to Palm Island to Petit St Vincent, SVG (13nm)

Very windy overnight & a bit rough for snorkelling in the morning, but a refreshing swim before we set off from Tobago Cays via southern channel for Union Island. Speedy downwind sail under jib. Busier at Clifton than a week ago, but the same prompt & air conditioned check-out service at the tiny airport. Took on water and motored across to Palm Island which is a small exclusive resort. Anchored just outside the swimming area off stunning translucent turquoise water & perfect palm fringed sandy beach. Chef's special salmon fish cakes for lunch before we swam ashore. Mariela told off for using guests' hammock but Ali managed to negotiate supply of indulgent expensive ice creams - delicious!

Off to Petit St Vincent (PSV), another fancy secluded private resort island. Anchored off the beach. Sundowner drinks at Goaties Bar by the beach & ashore again for supper. Fabulous setting in the sand & lovely meal (the group treated Chef Ali).

Thurs 6 Dec - PSV to Tyrrel Bay, Carriacou (14nm)

Short motor across to Petite Martinique where we anchored. A real contrast; a very remote Grenadian outpost with a village of small wooden houses, many fishing boats & few vehicles. Walked around this very quiet village & watched Island life - people make a living fishing or working at nearby PSV Resort. I spoke to a local teacher and we watched the school children take on an obstacle course during their break. Lambi & lobster were being landed as we went back to the pier.

Fast downwind sail to Gun Point at the northern tip of Carriacou and down the west coast (at up to 9.5kts!). After a couple of hours we were alongside the Sister Rocks & turning into Tyrrel Bay. Dinghy from our mooring to Carriacou Marine where we were able to quickly check back into Grenada. We went for a swim off the boat to cool off before CMP & I took the dinghy up into the large mangrove lagoon/marine park. We saw a few pelicans en-route but had to imagine the oyster beds, iguanas, herons & other birds! Spotted turtles in the water near Fary. Another excellent dinner ashore, this time at The Slipway at Tyrrel Bay.

Fri 7 Dec - Carriacou to St Georges, Grenada (35nm) - Total trip 214 nm

Slipped our mooring lines early for our last day's sail down to Grenada. Fast downwind in 15kt breeze & much flatter seas (unlike the washing machine encountered two weeks ago on the way north). Speedy 7kt progress crossing the channel between Carriacou & Grenada. Lots of flying fish. Slower as we ran into the wind shadow off the western Grenadian coast - had to gybe out for more breeze & a

better wind angle. Anchored up in Dragon Bay at 13.50pm and dinghy-ed around to the Underwater Sculpture Park. A special place for snorkelling with lots of brightly coloured fish as well as a series of different unusual sculptures. Great fun finding them them. By 16.15 I was manoeuvring Fary onto the fuel dock at Grenada YC at the end of a fantastic trip. Great boat, lovely company & spectacular islands! We were all tired after a long day but after packing we eventually got a taxi bus to Umbrellas off Grand Anse beach.

Sat 8 Dec - All Inclusive Ashore

An early start to get the boat tidied up etc. NSS staff turned up at 8am to inspect/work on the boat. Mariela, Peter, Yolanda & Paul taxied to the Rex Grenadian Resort for a day pass & breakfast. CMP ventured into St Georges to explore. We waited for Richard the Base Manager to go through the handover & defect list I'd sent him. NSS were very understanding & apologised for the standard of some of Fary's equipment (especially the tender & outboard) and refunded us EC\$600 for the water we'd had to buy plus repairs.

Ali & I took Mr Yellow's distinctive taxi over to the Rex to join the rest of the crew. Resort a bit tired but great beachside location and big room right above beautiful Magazine Beach. CMP joined us for lunch before her flight back to Miami. The others had a chilled out day by the pool with complimentary drinks, lunch, afternoon tea etc before leaving for the nearby airport for their BA flight. We felt very lucky to be staying on for 4 more days. The resort is quiet before the Christmas onslaught and we had dinner by the pool before liqueurs listening to the steel band.

Sun 9 Dec - Another day in Paradise!

Afternoon Hobie cat sailing at the Dive Shop on Grand Anse Beach. Hotel rather dead with few guests. No hot water etc - awaiting refurbishment. Singer after dinner but hardly any audience. Staff very friendly. However much better than full to capacity with 400+ guests as it will be in two weeks. Noisy at night being so close to the waves on the beach!

Mon 10 Dec - Off to St Georges

Morning trip on a busy local bus into St Georges with a "door jockey" scooping up passengers on the way. Walked around the Carenage harbour with old buildings & local boats. Through the historic Sendall tunnel into the centre of town. Very busy with buses, cars & people - glad not to be driving this time. Very smart Royal Grenadian Police officers directing traffic. Bumped into Kate, daughter of Ali's friend Caroline & joined them for a fruit smoothie. Up a steep hill to Church Street with large old stone churches overlooking the town, harbour & bay. Back down to fish market via narrow streets with small wooden houses. Lots of colour noise & heat. Back onto no 1 bus towards airport & our hotel. Very hot & slow trip picking up & dropping off all around town. Good music!

Tues 11 Dec - Prickly Bay perhaps

Looking out over the beach from our room before breakfast I can see P&O's Azura (according to marinetraffic.com) heading for the St Georges cruise terminal and the 4-masted (pretend sailing yacht) Club Med 2 at anchor. So glad we were able to see the smaller Caribbean islands under our own steam. Leisurely morning with snorkelling off the reef between the two hotel beaches- reasonable coral & "nemo" fishes. After lunch Caroline picked us up & we went over to Prickly Bay Marina - Ali's spiritual home in Grenada! Cocktails in the tiki bar overlooking the bay which was pretty full of yachts. Back to the Rex for a Chinese meal in the smart Oriental Restaurant.

Wed 12 Dec - last day in Grenada

Long snorkel following the coral reef off the hotel beach. Lots of colourful fish but no turtles. Relaxed afternoon by/in the lovely empty pool enjoying our last complimentary cocktails, beautiful & quiet Magazine Beach below and lovely temperatures. Transfer to reception via the Golf Buggy & taxi for the last half mile to the airport. 25 mins from our room through check-in, customs & security; stress-free travel! BA to Gatwick via St Lucia left a little late at 18.40 but made up time during St Lucia stopover.

Thur 13 Dec - Home for Christmas & planning next trip

Minus 3°C at Gatwick but quickly on the road via Meet & Greet parking service. Cool but sunny in Poole and fortunately Ruth had turned on our heating. Oh no, back to Brexit (Theresa May just survived Conservative Party vote of no confidence). Time to plan our next sailing trips!



Richard Popper 18/12/18



NSS

CHARTER
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GRENADA & THE GRENADINES

SAILING GUIDE

