

Unexpected Pleasures in the Grenadines

Unspoiled white-sand beaches, turquoise-blue waters, frolicking green sea turtles, and bays and lagoons so idyllic you have to pinch yourself just to make sure they're real—the Grenadines are one of the most celebrated and spectacular sailing destinations in the world.

One could spend a lifetime exploring this sun-splashed archipelago that stretches from Grenada to St. Vincent in the Caribbean. Of course, most of us only have a week or two to charter, so the best approach is to pick a few highlights, slow down, and enjoy what you can. It's all good.

We rented our boat in neighboring St. Lucia; Sunsail has a large base there and a wide selection of nice boats to choose from. We usually do our own thing, but this time we decided to join one of their flotillas, where a number of boats follow a similar itinerary. At any point in the sail we were free to break off and explore, but we found it nice sailing with the group, especially in the evenings when we got together for drinks and dinners.

On our first day out on the water, we sailed south along the protected west coast of St. Lucia to the Pitons and then headed across the channel past St. Vincent to Bequia, our first port in the Grenadines. As a former shipbuilding, whaling island, there's a lot of history and a lot to explore in Bequia. You can also pass customs here, and thus it provides a convenient transition to the Tobago Cays, our next stop and the focus of the trip.

The Cays are a 1400-acre sand-bottom lagoon surrounded by five uninhabited deserted islands and a 2.5-mile-long vibrant colorful horseshoe reef. This

magical, hidden oasis is a veritable paradise where lush green palm and sea grape trees gently sway over shimmering white beaches, and playful green sea turtles greet you by sticking their heads out of the water.

There are no stores here. In fact, there's no development whatsoever, not even a shack on the beach. What they do have are "boat boys." With creative names like "Mr. Quality," "More Time," and "More

amous attractions, Vanessa and Seckie's Sun, Beach and Eat Bar. Although we dined onboard that evening (I had caught a yellow-fin tuna during our sail from Bequia), we joined Vanessa and the rest of the flotilla later on for drinks, a relaxing beach bonfire, and a lively game of gin rummy.

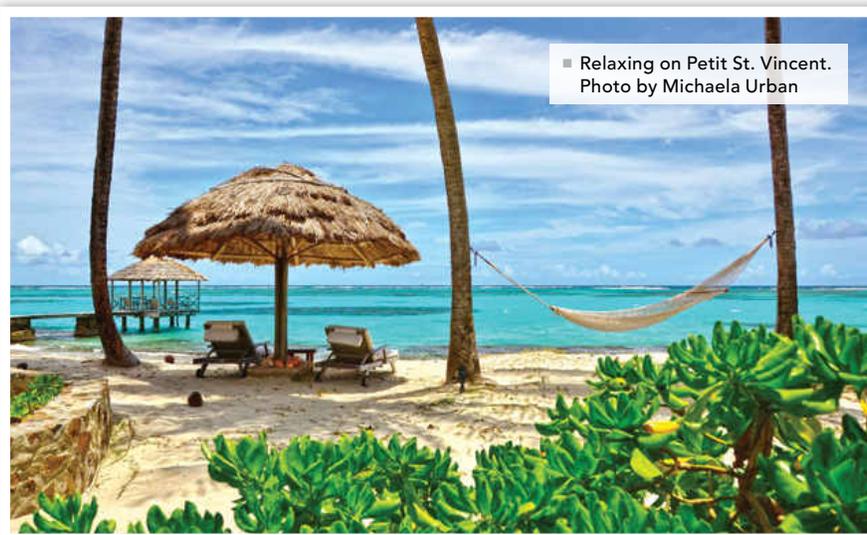
One of the unexpected pleasures on our sail was Petit St. Vincent. This island is owned and operated by a private resort and, as such, one might think it's to be avoided. However, the resort was friendly to transient charters. There are wonderful beaches, a great anchorage, and a fabulous restaurant where we enjoyed dinner while a local steel drum band played to the gentle sound of waves gently lapping the shore.

After Petit St. Vincent, we headed to Saline Bay on

Mayreau Island, which has a much more local feel: families barbecuing, kids playing on the beach, and fishermen drinking cold Hairoun (the local beer). I spent the day exploring the island's quaint village and found a little bakery that sold fresh-baked local baguettes.

This is really just a taste of the Grenadines, as there is so much more to explore. My advice is: Don't try to do it all. It's best to pick a couple of islands, take it easy, and enjoy the experience; it really is that good.

Find tips on where to stay and other details at spinsheet.com/grenadines.



Fresh," these guys provide you with fresh-baked banana bread, fish and lobster, beer and rum, shirts and shorts, and pretty much anything that's lacking.

One of the most famous boat boys, Romeo, hosts a regular beach barbeque that's one of the Cays' great traditions. Our entire flotilla joined Romeo for a candlelight dinner of fresh-caught lobster and fish served on long wooden tables nestled under swaying palms.

One of the natural highlights in the Cays is the turtle sanctuary off of Baradal Island, where you can find large numbers of these docile, graceful creatures feeding on sea grass on the sandy bottom. I also recommend snorkeling or diving the Cays' enormous horseshoe reef with its rainbow colored corals and multitudes of neon tropical fish.

Our next anchorage, Chatham Bay, is home to one of the Grenadines' more fa-

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