



# Paradise Found

Cruising  
Grenada, the  
friendliest island  
in the Caribbean

By Mike Sweeney

There are a few cruising destinations that stand out for their ability to keep boats stationary for longer periods of time than others. George Town in the Exumas, Luperón in the Dominican Republic and Salinas in Puerto Rico are a few on the “Thorny Path” south that come to mind. Each of these locations is popular for the amenities available to the boats anchored there and for their relative safety during bad weather. But for many

cruisers—especially those carrying insurance on their boats—remaining that far north during the windy season, inside the hurricane box, is out of the question, which drives them further south. If they’re lucky like us and countless other cruisers, reaching Grenada at 12 degrees N latitude will make their insurance company happy.

## EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

At least a year before my wife Rebecca and I had even purchased

our boat, a PDQ 32 catamaran, we knew that we’d have to make it to Grenada. It was Anne Vanderhoof’s book *An Embarrassment of Mangoes* that gave us this spark, her descriptions of the island sounding exactly like the paradise we were both seeking. As you might imagine, our journey southward included many great spots, with crystal clear waters and white sandy beaches tempting us to halt our migration. We continued onward, though, much to our current delight.



Opposite: Grand Mal on the leeward side of Grenada, top; Mike and Rebecca onboard *Zero To Cruising*, bottom. This page, Carnival in July

Grenada, located just south of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and north of Trinidad and Tobago, is an extremely popular stopping point for cruisers during the months between July and October, the heart of the Atlantic Hurricane season. To hold cruisers stationary for that length of time, many of whom can hardly stand to remain in one spot for more than a week, a location has to be pretty special. In that respect, Grenada more than meets the mark.

Of primary interest to those heading to Grenada on a boat, the island offers many large and well-protected anchorages. The western, leeward side of the island holds a few, including a very popular spot located just outside the lagoon at St. George's, the island's capital. Although this anchorage has been known to develop an uncomfortable swell at times—even more noticeable to those sailing on one hull instead of two or three—the spot remains favored due to its very convenient access to the city, and the services and shops surrounding it.

It is the southern end of the island where most cruisers tend to stay put, though. The intricate—and sometimes dangerous to the unaware—reef system, which guards the entire southern coast, provides excellent protection from the prevailing winds and swell. Prickly Bay, Mount Hartman Bay, Hog Island and Clarke's Court Bay are some of the larger and more popular anchorages. Captains are advised to have up-to-date charts and guidebooks for this area so that their entry is uneventful. Most guidebooks would also caution against relying solely on channel markers, as they are typically privately maintained. Although we only heard of a few people running aground

during our time in Grenada, and only witnessed one grounding with our own eyes, always enter the bays with good visibility so that you can read the water properly. It's true—a multihuller's typically shallower draft does make this area a bit more forgiving when compared to our deeper-draft friends, but there's no sense in tempting fate, right?

#### TWO HULLS? ZERO ISSUES.

For those who prefer marinas to anchoring, Grenada has quite a few to choose from. Each of the southern bays contains at least one marina to service the area, although boaters should be aware that not all of them have fuel available (check your guide books). Back in the lagoon at St. George's, there are a couple of options, too, such as the Grenada Yacht Club and the virtually new Port Louis Marina. Although we don't typically consider ourselves "marina people," even we were tempted by the extremely-reasonable off-season rates that Port Louis was offering and took advantage of their monthly special.

Being dockside in St. George's made it easy to enjoy Grenada's fantastic carnival in July and to do some necessary boat maintenance. Catamarans in the marinas?

No problem. We saw multiple cats at each of the marinas, including a couple that I would call mega-cats at PLM. We were also not charged any additional fees because we were on a cat, a welcome change from what we have experienced elsewhere.

Speaking of maintenance, next on most boaters' list of desires—second only to a safe anchorage—is a well-stocked chandlery. Those choosing Grenada as a stopping point will again not be disappointed because this island houses not only one but two large boat-product franchises: Budget Marine and Island Water World. If one doesn't have what you're looking for in stock, there is a very good chance that either the other one will or, as a worst case scenario, one of them could order it for you. The informative cruisers' radio net, which operates daily on VHF channel 68, is always quick to remind newly-arrived boaters to take their ship's papers into the chandleries on their first visit so that they can benefit from the duty-free pricing available to vessels in transit.

But what about serious maintenance requiring haul-outs? Although narrow monohulls can often find haul-out locations easily, those sailing on wide-beamed cats





sometimes have a tougher time. Multihullers should fear not. Spice Island Marine, located in Prickly Bay, has a travel lift that can haul cats up to 25-foot wide, while Grenada Marine at St. David's can haul boats with a beam of 32 feet!

#### PLACES TO GO...

Okay, all this maintenance talk is boring. What are we going to do once all the work is done? Here is where Grenada really starts to shine, especially if you like the outdoors. This volcanic island is a hiker's paradise—that is, if you like hills. We joke that it is uphill just about everywhere you want to go, but it's probably because even going down the steep hills is challenging.

The island is covered with countless trails of varying degrees of difficulty. You can climb mountains, including Mount Saint Catherine,

the highest peak on the island at 840 meters, walk through the rainforest to spot one of the aloof monkeys, and visit numerous waterfalls (we recommend finding someone to guide you to Upper Concord Falls for a refreshing swim in a pool that you'll have all to yourself). If all that sounds like too much work, you could simply lounge around on beautiful Grand Anse beach, enjoying a cold Stag or Carib, the local beers.

Really want to get out there and see the island, and meet a bunch of cool people in the process? Seek out the Grenada chapter of the Hash House Harriers ([www.grenadahash.com](http://www.grenadahash.com)), a group that describes themselves as "drinkers with a running problem." We were first made aware of the worldwide group known as "hashers" by some friends we cruised with back in the

United States. It just so happens that Grenada has one of the most well-supported hashing groups in the world, with weekly walks/runs typically drawing 100-200 or more participants, young and old, athletic and sports-challenged. Although the majority of participants in the "hashes" are locals, there are generally 20 or more cruisers who take part each week, too. They are great social events.

How do cruisers get around to all these places, especially if their boats are located in one of the southern anchorages? Quite easily, actually. For a grand total of about \$3.50 U.S., several enterprising drivers will take you and a van load of other cruisers on a shopping trip, departing from one of the marinas and traveling to all of the typical shopping spots (banks, chandleries, grocery stores, markets). What about special events? The same drivers generally look after cruisers' needs here too, with times and fees discussed on the radio net.

For those feeling a tiny bit more adventurous—and we strongly suggest this option—jump on a local bus. The bus system in Grenada, run by private drivers, is a model of efficiency. Seldom will one wait more than a moment or two on one of the main routes before an eager driver and his conductor sidekick will pull over to encourage you to take their bus. For less than \$1 U.S., these buses will quickly get you to the main town, or with a bit more work, anywhere on the island. Consider the loud music on the buses an entertainment bonus!

#### ... PEOPLE TO SEE

While all of the above is extremely appealing in its own right, what keeps people coming back to Grenada, and staying here for such extended periods of time, are the people who live here. We have visited many places on our trip south, and without a doubt, have met friendly folks everywhere. It is, however, not all that uncommon to also find people who are seemingly just acting friendly because they see you as a tourist and thus are looking to part you from

Opposite, a beautiful waterfall spotted during a Hash House Harriers run. This page, from top: local boats and dinghies sharing the Hog's Island beach; climbing Diamond Rock; cruising kids playing in the anchorage

your money. I can assure readers that if Grenadians appear friendly, it's not an act. It is simply the way they were brought up.

When you get on one of the local buses and hear new arrivals call out "Good morning, good morning," to those already seated on the vehicle, it is because that's just what they do. When people smile and greet you as you walk down the street, it's because they genuinely are that friendly. And if they're making their living by selling some produce or other goods and you're not interested in what they're offering, simply responding once with "No, thank you," will end the pitch right there.

Yes, although we loved the island's mountains, beaches, rainforest and waters, and tried our best to see as much of it as we could during our time there, the real gem of Grenada is her people. The island really does continue to live up to its reputation as "the friendliest island in the Caribbean." ■

*Mike Sweeney and his wife Rebecca are full-time cruisers, currently exploring the Caribbean on their catamaran. They departed Canada in the summer of 2010 after divesting themselves of virtually all of their land-based possessions. You can read a step-by-step account of how, in two years, they went from being self-employed martial arts school owners, with absolutely zero sailing experience, to live-aboard cruisers on [www.ZeroToCruising.com](http://www.ZeroToCruising.com).*

