CARIBBEAN
COMPASS
DECEMBER 2023 NO. 330
The Caribbean's Look at Sea & Shore

SLEIGH RIDE TO MARTINIQUE!

— SEE STORY ON PAGE 26

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Pressed juice from sugarcane fields is the basis of Martinique's renowned Rhum Agricole, a spirit much enjoyed by sailors, including Compass *editor Elaine Lembo, who visited distilleries while on assignment. For more, turn to page 29.*

ELAINE LEMBO

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On the Cover

Darren Seltzer and crewmates of the NEEL 45 trimaran Panda Rosso *cool their feet in the Atlantic Ocean as the days get hotter on the transatlantic crossing to the Caribbean. To find out how they carried out needed repairs in Martinique, turn to page 26.*

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Caribbean Compass

Caribbean Compass is published by Compass Publishing LLC of Connecticut, USA. www.caribbeancompass.com

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Caribbean Compass welcomes submission of articles, news items and letters to the editor. See Writers' Guidelines at Www.caribbeancompass.com/guidelines.htm. Send submissions to editor@caribbeancompass.com

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ISSN 1605 - 1998

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COURTESY REGGAE MARATHON

The Bob Marley trophy

By Tad Richards

There's no secret as to the great focal points of end-of-the year celebration: Christmas/Chanukah/Kwanzaa, which mostly means staying home (on land or afloat) or going to Grandma's, and New Year's, which can mean staying onboard and watching the fireworks from a convenient anchorage, or going ashore, mingling, and celebrating with the crowds. In any event, you'll find music and various holiday festivities throughout the month.

December 1-2: Afro Fest, Dominican Republic

The organizers want you to know that "Afro Fest Punta Cana 2023 is not just about the music ... It's about celebrating diversity, unity, and the power of culture. Connect with like-minded individuals from all over the world, share stories, and forge new friendships that will transcend borders." That said, the music is a pretty strong attraction. "All over the world," on stage, mostly means Nigeria, a country brimming with talent on the world beat scene. **Burna Boy,** blending Afrobeats, reggae, dancehall, and pop, is a Grammy winner whose song, "Ye," is closing on 250 million views on YouTube. Singer-songwriter-activist **Yemi Alade** is world music all by herself, known as "Mama Africa" for her influence on all styles and countries throughout the continent. **Ckay's** haunting ballad "Love Nwantiti," with over one billion streams on Spotify, has been called the biggest hit in African history. **Rema's** mega-streamed songs include a duet with Selena Gomez. Nigeria is also represented by **Naira Marley, Asake** and **Tekno**, and, from Ghana, **MzVee**. From Jamaica, **Koffee** is the youngest person and only woman ever to win a Grammy for Best Reggae album, and Grammy nominee **Shensea** has recorded with Kanye West and Christine Aguilera. All in all, they make a strong case for the vitality of world music. At the Punta Cana Resort, Dominican Republic.



DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION BY TAD RICHARDS

Yemi Alade, "Mama Africa"

eventbrite.com/e/afro-fest-punta-cana-2023-tickets-453058328657

December 1-2: Los Rivera Destino, San Juan, Puerto Rico

This homegrown trio mixes traditional Latin rhythms with hip-hop and presents it all with a sly, irreverent sense of humor. Coca-Cola Music Hall.

ticketera.com/losriveradestino-ccmh

December 2-4: Daddy Yankee, San Juan, Puerto Rico

This has been announced as the final performances in the farewell tour of the "King of Reggaeton," arguably the biggest star of 21st century Caribbean music and an international phenomenon. Coliseo de Puerto Rico, José Miguel Agrelot, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

evvnt.com/events/?_evDiscoveryPath=/event%2FI028225895n-daddy-yankee



DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION BY TAD RICHARDS

Daddy Yankee

December 5-15: Havana Film Festival

Short films, animation, documentaries, and features from filmmakers across the Caribbean and Latin American region are shown in movie houses throughout Havana. There is a special category for Cuban filmmakers. The festival has been running since 1979.

December 7-11: Winter Pride Fest, San Juan, Puerto Rico

The website can tell you better than I can, since it's less bound by family-friendly modesty.

gaytravel4u.com/event/winter-pride-fest-puerto-rico

December 7-21: Bachata Festival and Dance, Dominican Republic

This uniquely Dominican dance form traces its roots back 400 years, so no wonder it takes two weeks to do it justice. Workshops, dance parties, concerts. Full details available at *domibachata.com/program/program.html.*

December 8-10: Marathons, Jamaica and Barbados

If running is your thing, how about running to a reggae beat? And if a Jamaica party is your thing, watch the race on December 8 — and watch the winners hoist the Bob and Rita Marley Trophies created by the great Jamaican sculptor Basil Watson. It's the party atmosphere that accompanies any Jamaica event. Also featuring a costume contest. Or... the largest Caribbbean marathon, a three-day event in Barbados featuring races over scenic and historic courses.

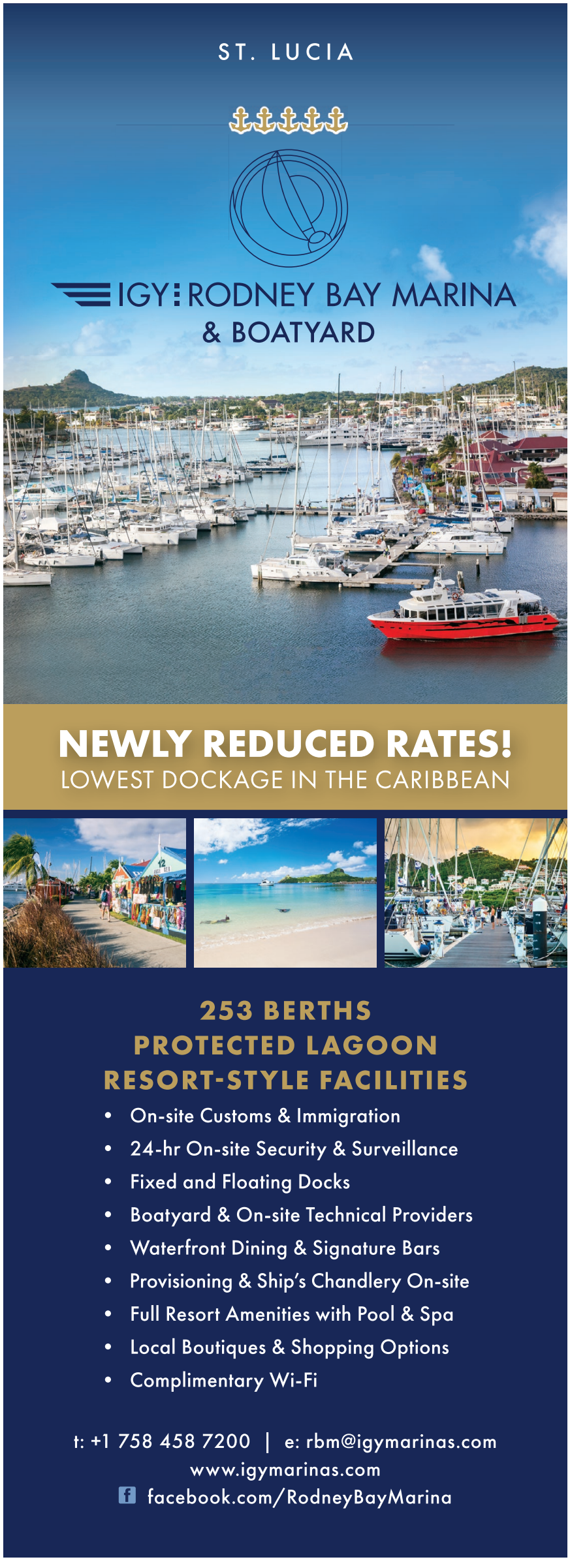
reggaemarathon.com/2023 and visitbarbados.org

December 10: René González, San Juan, Puerto Rico

There's nothing like the Christmas season for bringing out the spiritual side, and René González, one of Puerto Rico's leading singers of gospel music, may be just the person to listen to. Coca-Cola Music Hall.

www.ticketera.com/renegonzalez-ccmh

—Continued on page 7



READERS FORUM

Dear Mr. Dan and Ms. Kelly Merton,

I am pleased to greet you on behalf of the Hemingway International Yacht Club of Cuba and on my own behalf, as well as to express to you that we are very proud, honored and grateful for the fruitful relations of friendship and collaboration that for more than 20 years have united us to *Caribbean Compass*.

Thanks to the support that *Caribbean Compass* has offered us during those years, through the publication of our news and reports on its pages, we maintain a close relationship of friendship with the nautical community of the Caribbean. The *Caribbean Compass*'s readers know about the existence of our yacht club in Cuba. Our club has worked in favor of friendly relations with the international nautical community and in favor of rescuing the maritime and nautical history of the Cuban nation, since May 21, 1992, the day of its foundation. For this reason, it is considered today as a sanctuary of love for the sea and friendship and a bastion in defense and rescue of the maritime and nautical history of the Cuban nation.

For our part, we are very grateful to you and to the editor-in-chief, Elaine Lembo, and my sincere thanks for your willingness to continue supporting the continuation of the excellent relations of friendship and collaboration between *Caribbean Compass* and our yacht club.

We will gladly continue to access *Caribbean Compass* through its website (caribbeancompass.com) and we will continue to send you news of the nautical activities we carry out.

I take this opportunity to reiterate my most affectionate greetings and express to you the testimony of my highest esteem and distinguished consideration.

Best regards,
Commodore Escrich
Facebook: Cnih de Cuba

Dear *Compass*,

Just a footnote to the safety and security article in the October/November *Compass*.

I arrived in St. Thomas in November 1956. For over 50 years I have maintained that I have never heard of a boat being boarded by thieves or burglars if there was a barking dog on board.

Size of the dog did not matter. The thief or burglar would realize the crew had been alerted and might resist, so the potential thief or burglar would depart.

In the light of this, all yachts should install a sensor light and an alarm featuring the sound of a barking dog.

Donald M. Street Jr.
s/v *Iolaire*
s/v *L'il Iolaire*



COURTESY BILL AND JOANNE HARRIS

When they're not kicking back and enjoying a Caribbean Christmas, Bill and JoAnne Harris traverse the Caribbean in s/v ULTRA, *bringing year-round cheer to communities and families in need through* ULTRA *Community Projects.*

—*Continued from page 5*

December 11-13: Rasta Rootzfest, Negril, Jamaica
A celebration of the Rastafarian lifestyle, from music and art to cuisine and ganja cultivation. A highlight is the presentation of the Ganjamaica Cup, to the grower of the best product on the island.

gowherewhen.com/event/rasta-rootzfest

December 12: Gerardo Teissonnière, San Juan, Puerto Rico
The Steinway Society of Puerto Rico's Celebrity Pianist Concert Series presents this celebrated native son at The Gallery Inn. Works by Rachmaninoff, Schubert and Beethoven.

steinwaysocietypr.org

December 14-15: Potters Fair, Kingston, Jamaica
What would Christmas be without last-minute shopping? And what better place than a craft fair like this one, the longest-running art and craft fair in the English-speaking Caribbean. All the artisans in the show are Jamaicans. At the Jamaica Horticultural Society, Hope Botanical Gardens.

facebook.com/assnofjamaicanpotters

December 15-17: Carriacou Parang Festival
Christmas celebration begins with holiday music that's unique to the Caribbean. *Parang* is a form of holiday folk music that began in Trinidad, and traditionally features small string bands doing house-to-house Christmas serenading. The festival brings the best of these community bands together for a competition. Each band sings a traditional Christmas song (or their Caribbean version of the same) followed by a song of their own creation, generally a humorous recounting of the major social events of the year. *puregrenada.com/product/carriacou-parang-festival*

December 15-January 2: Sugar Mas, St. Kitts and Nevis
St. Kitts and Nevis pulls out all the stops for this multicultural event featuring "calypso shows, masquerades, talent pageants and a variety of fêtes that will test your stamina."

skncarnival.com

December 16-24: Nine Mornings Festival, St. Vincent
You'd have to get up early to participate in this uniquely Vincentian tradition of holiday music and cultural performances, and by early we mean 4 a.m. Of particular interest, the last of the nine mornings concludes with a steel band "jump-up." During the same time frame, the "Nine Nights of Lights" at the Botanical Gardens offers an array of musical and cultural events.

discoversvg.com/events/nine-mornings-festival

December 16-January 2: Montserrat Carnival
Competitions featuring the best of Montserrat's homegrown musicians are among the highlights of the Montserrat Carnival. On December 17, the calypso semi-finals. December 20 is devoted to a night of pan. December 22, a gospel concert by the House of Refuge. Christmas Day, carol singing. December 26 sees the Soca Monarch competition and a street jam. December 29 heralds the crowning of the Calypso Monarch, and December 30 the female calypso competition and the crowning of the Queen of Queens.

December 25 and 31: Holiday Festivities, Nelson's Dockyard, Antigua

A Christmas day champagne party, named in *The New York Times* as one of the five best Christmas events in the world. A New Year's-eve blowout with live music, dancing, and, of course, fireworks. Funds raised from these events will go to College of Hope, as a tribute to Team Antigua Island Girls (see Business Briefs, Oct-Nov *Compass*).

December 27-January 6: Crucian Christmas Carnival, St. Croix, USVI
The one certain thing about this annual St. Croix holiday tradition is when it ends—that is mandated by USVI law, and it ends with two parades, on the first Friday (Children's Parade) and the first Saturday (Adults' Parade) of the new year. So one counts back from that to find the beginning. Another certain thing is that the adults' parade will be more adult than the children's parade. Cultural Night, December 29, features homegrown but internationally celebrated talent. Headliners are **Stanley & The Ten Sleepless Knights**, the leading exponents of USVI's sassy and catchy quelbe style, **Spectrum Band**, **Xpress Band**, and **Cool Session Brass.** St. Croix native **Adam O** headlines Soca Night, also featuring **Pumpa** and **Patrice Roberts.** Latin Night will feature **Charlie Aponte**. Ladies Night will glow with performances from **Alison Hinds** and the "Queen of Bacchanal," **Destra Garcia**. The climactic January 6 Afro-Soca Night will be headlined by AfroBeats superstar **Davido**, with performances by **Mr. Killa, Mic Love, Bugz, Sisa,** and **Quan**. Christiansted, St. Croix, USVI.



DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION BY TAD RICHARDS

Davido

stcroixtourism.com/christmas_festival.htm

And on the horizon: January events include St. Barts Music Festival, January 15-21 (stbartsmusicfestival.org/festival); Panama Jazz Festival, 16-20 (panamajazzfestival.com); Barbados Independent Film Festival 16-21 (barbadosfilmfest.org); Havana Jazz Festival, 21-29 (jazzcuba.com); Bequia Music Fest, 24-28 (bequiamusicfestival.com); Mustique Blues Festival, 24-7 Feb (basilsbar.com/whats-on).

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Best New Year's Celebrations

By Vincent Mattiola



COURTESY FOXY'S BAR

Happy New Year from Foxy's!

Wintering in the Caribbean is a cruiser's dream, and with the holiday season quickly approaching, it's time to start making plans for where you'll ring in the New Year. Unlike the festivities of Carnival, with islands celebrating during different months, there's only one New Year's Eve, or as you might also hear, Old Year's Night! Plot a course and set your anchor for one of these countless celebrations, with options at every latitude. Whether you're looking for a rightfully raucous party or more quiet countdown, there's something for everybody in the Leeward Islands.

USVI – St. Thomas

While **Charlotte Amalie** comes alive and spills into the streets, visitors to St. Thomas can also ring in the New Year at a variety of other destinations for an immersive and welcoming celebration. **Coral World at Coki Beach** is a great place for the last sunset viewing, with a party, DJ, and brass band until the ball drops. Over at **Sapphire Beach**, there's drinks and dancing galore at **Sapphire Beach Bar** and **Paradise Pie VI**. Craft cocktails and a curated menu grace your tastebuds, compliments of **Sea Salt** restaurant, with VIP cabana rentals and bottle service on request. Keep an eye out for moko jumbie and fire dancing while a DJ energizes the crowd.

USVI – St. John

The epicenter of NYE on St. John is undoubtedly **The Beach Bar**, with live music and throngs of revelers taking over the streets of Cruz Bay as midnight approaches. Visit **Dr!nk** for a VIP ticketed experience, or "enjoy the party above the crowds" at **Lovango Rum Bar**. Down the road, **Morgan's Mango** hosts another lively party with music and prizes for fancy hats. Or, if a quieter celebration is more your desire, reserve a table for one of the many special dinner menus offered by the best restaurants on the island, such as **Ocean 362, Dave & Jerry's Steakhouse, ZoZo's at Caneel Bay, 18°64' Restaurant, The Terrace, or The Lime Inn.**

USVI – St. Croix

St. Croix takes an entirely different approach to NYE by rolling the celebrations into the month-long and historically significant **Crucian Christmas Festival** with an annual festival that should be on everybody's calendar (see Sounds+).

BVI – Jost Van Dyke

By far the most notorious NYE celebration happens every year at **Foxy's Bar** on Jost Van Dyke. This little island throws a massive party for Old Year's Night with music, food, drink, and festivities sometimes lasting 48 hours. Featuring multiple tiers of ticket options, guests are welcome to enjoy the party as a 5-star VIP with multi-course dinner, or from the beach at the cash bar. Ferry service from neighboring BVI & USVI ports typically runs on extended schedules, with hordes of partygoers flocking to little Jost.

Saint Martin / Sint Maarten (SXM)

If it's fireworks and exclusivity you're seeking, then SXM is the place to be. The town of Philipsburg comes alive for NYE with the boardwalk becoming an electric gathering. Other public spaces like **Orient Beach** and **Marigot Beach** host their own events with locals and tourists dancing in the moonlight alongside the ocean. Those looking for an intimate, all-inclusive experience can find celebrations at several of the private resorts offering ticketed events to the public. Both **Sonesta Resort** and **The Morgan Resort** feature unique dinner menus, open bars, and private entertainment overlooking the Maho Bay Fireworks, while **Sunset Beach Bar** claims bragging rights for "SXM's biggest NYE party" at the infamous airport runway beach.

St. Barts

In true St. Barts fashion, NYE brings out the decorative style of the island's local and expat populations. Yachts fill Gustavia's inner and outer harbor, decorated for the occasion and poised to view the spectacular fireworks from Fort Oscar at midnight. Private villas display their own decorations and restaurants/hotels welcome crowds for costume parties and special dinners. During New Years, it's been said that your chances of bumping shoulders with celebrities here increase exponentially, and you never know who might make an appearance. Across the island at **Nikki Beach**, performances from famous musicians can be expected with the incredible backdrop of the sea. Meanwhile, **Le Ti St. Barth** has been known to present multiple acts in a cabaret-style costumed atmosphere.

St. Kitts & Nevis

New Year's celebrations flow with the annual ***Sugar Mas*** St. Kitts Carnival running from December 15 to January 2 in the capital of Basseterre. The island celebrates in a colorful and joyful mixture of traditional and modern energy, with a formal calendar including Calypso and Soca Monarch competitions, masquerades, pageants, J'ouvert, folklore displays, a festival of lights, fete, Panorama Steel Pan competition, and the culmination Grand Parade on New Year's Day.

Montserrat

Similarly to St. Kitts, the Emerald Isle of Montserrat hosts a monthlong carnival that culminates in New Year's celebration with an explosion of color, music, revelry, and creativity to welcome the year. Marking its 61st anniversary carnival this year, visitors are often swept right into the parade itself with locals spraying water and/or powder over the crowd during J'ouvert festivities.

Antigua

English Harbour and **Nelson's Dockyard** burst with energy as superyachts for the charity Nelson's Pursuit Race on December 31. Those looking for fireworks can choose between **Jolly Beach** and **Hermitage Bay** or **Dickinson Bay** to see the annual pyrotechnic displays of the island. Meanwhile, in the south of the island, **Carlisle Bay** hosts an impressive daily calendar leading up to NYE with everything from cooking demonstrations to beach volleyball and cricket tournaments. There's a raft building competition, Hobie cat regatta, gala dinner, and penultimate live music and champagne toast before the beach fireworks.

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Channel 16

Sint Maarten Yacht Club Welcomes Youngsters, Newbies

The Sint Maarten Yacht Club has created a junior membership category, aimed at encouraging sailors aged 7 to 17 to embrace the joys of sailing and become an essential part of the SMYC community.

"The future of sailing on the island lies in the hands of our young sailors, and we are dedicated to offering them an environment where they can develop their skills, build lifelong friendships, and discover the wonders of the sport," says manager Saskia Revelman.



COURTESY SINT MAARTEN YACHT CLUB

A Sint Maarten Junior Member

Key highlights of junior membership include exclusive boat usage (junior members will enjoy designated time slots to use club boats, with each session supervised by a certified sailing instructor), discounted sailing lessons, discounts on fun sails and entry fees for club races, as well as merchandise discounts.

SMYC has also begun a series of adult classes through the spring of 2024. The classes are Saturday mornings in blocks of four, and offer instruction on the basics of sailing, tailored to each individual's level and pace.



COURTESY SINT MAARTEN YACHT CLUB

SMYC Parent/adult Opti race in the Simpson Bay Lagoon

In other news from SMYC, the sailing school celebrated its 30th anniversary in September with sailing, speeches, and a BBQ.

The day kicked off with the hotly contested 23-boat Barts Bash race in the Simpson Bay Lagoon, followed by an unusual Optimist race for parents and adults, which was won by SMYC commodore Frits Bus.

Bus and SMYC manager Saskia Revelman took center stage to reminisce about the club's rich history and discuss a new initiative – the **Sailability Project** – aimed at making sailing accessible to individuals with disabilities. The project has been made possible by Resources for Community Resilience (R4CR).

Upcoming blocks of adult sailing classes are January 20 and 27, February 10 and 17; February 24, March 16 and 23, April 6; April 13 and 20, May 4 and 11; May 18 and 25, June 1 and 8. To learn more about junior membership, visit smyc.com/membership or contact Saskia Revelman at saskia@smyc.com. Sign up for adult classes at smyc.com/adult-classes. For information about the Sailability Project or to offer financial support, contact saskia@smyc.com.

Safety Training for Fisherfolk

The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) has conducted Safety at Sea training sessions for fishermen in St. Kitts and Nevis and Dominica. The safety of fisherfolk at sea in OECS member states is a perennial concern for authorities across the region. Most fishermen in the region set out to sea in pirogues approximately 12-14 feet long, often facing harsh weather conditions, relentless waves, accidents, and boat engine failure.

A total of 108 persons took part. Mr. Sherwin S. Julius, maritime expert with over 25 years of experience, conducted the sessions in St. Kitts and Nevis. The session in Dominica was conducted by Norman J. Norris, founder and CEO of NJN Consulting Group, with over 25 years of experience in the marine space.

Belize Laboratory Receives Equipment

Fishing as a staple of the Belize economy has been hampered by restricted capacity to conduct tests to verify that the catch meets international market standards. The Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures Project of the European Development Fund has stepped in to help improve laboratory testing capacity for fishing and aquaculture in the CARIFORUM region. Training and technical guidance is provided to the Belize Agricultural Health Authority's (BAHA) Central Investigation Laboratory (CIL) -- and, most recently, a microwave sample digestion system, laboratory testing kits, diagnostic tools, and inspection equipment to upgrade CIL's fisheries monitoring and testing facilities.

"These tools will enable Belize to conduct accurate and reliable testing of agricultural and fisheries products, identify potential risks, and ensure compliance with international standards and regulations," said Anecito Rodriguez Ruiz.

UK Sailors Donate Equipment

A British sailor who loves the Grenadines has spearheaded an initiative to give sailboats to the local community. Guy Noble, after a chance meeting with Jenny Trumble, president of the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Sailing Association, realized that while he had enjoyed sailing in the Caribbean, "we rarely see the locals sailing.



COURTESY QUEEN MARY SAILING ASSOCIATION

Volunteers loading container at QMSC, UK

"I thought about all the neglected boats in my home club, Queen Mary Sailing Club near London, which could be given a second life. So I approached Tony Bishop, Manager of QMSC, and he immediately said he could help," Noble said. Soon, offers from sailors all around the UK came in, and now, with the assistance of Kestrel Shipping, who provided the container, six boats, safety equipment and spares, all were sent to SVG.

This initiative will continue in 2024. If you would like to get involved, please contact svgsailingassociation@gmail.com



COURTESY PHIL BLAKE

Mooring ball in a USVI bay

Public Moorings in U.S. Virgin Islands Waters

The first phase of a total of 200 new secure Helix-type moorings in bays throughout the U.S. Virgin Islands has begun. All 200 moorings will be ready for use by local and visiting boaters, private/recreational and commercial, with completed moorings locations during high season 2024. The installation is part of a private-public partnership between the nonprofit Virgin Islands Professional Charter Association (VIPCA) and the U.S. Virgin Islands government.

Any yacht, boat, tender or dinghy between 1-65 ft., whether local private/recreational or commercial, or visiting private/recreational or commercial, may stay for up to 14 days. *boatyball.com; VIPCA.org*

—Continued on next page

—*Continued from previous page*

SVG Race Clinic

St. Vincent and the Grenadines Sailing Association (SVGSA) welcomed Maria Torrijo and Fabien Bach, two of the world's top sailing race management experts, to the islands September 30-October 1.



COURTESY SVG SAILING ASSOCIATION

SVG race management clinic attendees

The clinic, underwritten by World Sailing, the International Federation for Sailing, included such topics as course laying, starting, and finishing sequences, scoring protocols, rules and penalties. *svgsailingassociation@gmail.com*

EPIC Changes

Environmental Protection in the Caribbean (EPIC) Sint Maarten welcomes Margot Mesnard as program manager. Mesnard served as project coordinator for EPIC's pelican conservation project and has specialized in project management around ecosystem restoration and climate change related projects, with 15 years-experience in the Caribbean and small island states.



COURTESY EPIC

EPIC strategy team

EPIC would also like to welcome board members Mareeka Dookie, who is secretary/treasurer, and Alexandra Frye, general board member. Dookie is an education, youth, and climate activist who attended the United Nations Youth Climate Summit on behalf of EPIC. Frye is an architect and operates GreenSXM.

Fleur Hermanides, board member since 2015, has stepped in as president. Founding member Natalia Collier completes the current board.

Trinidad and Tobago Republic Day

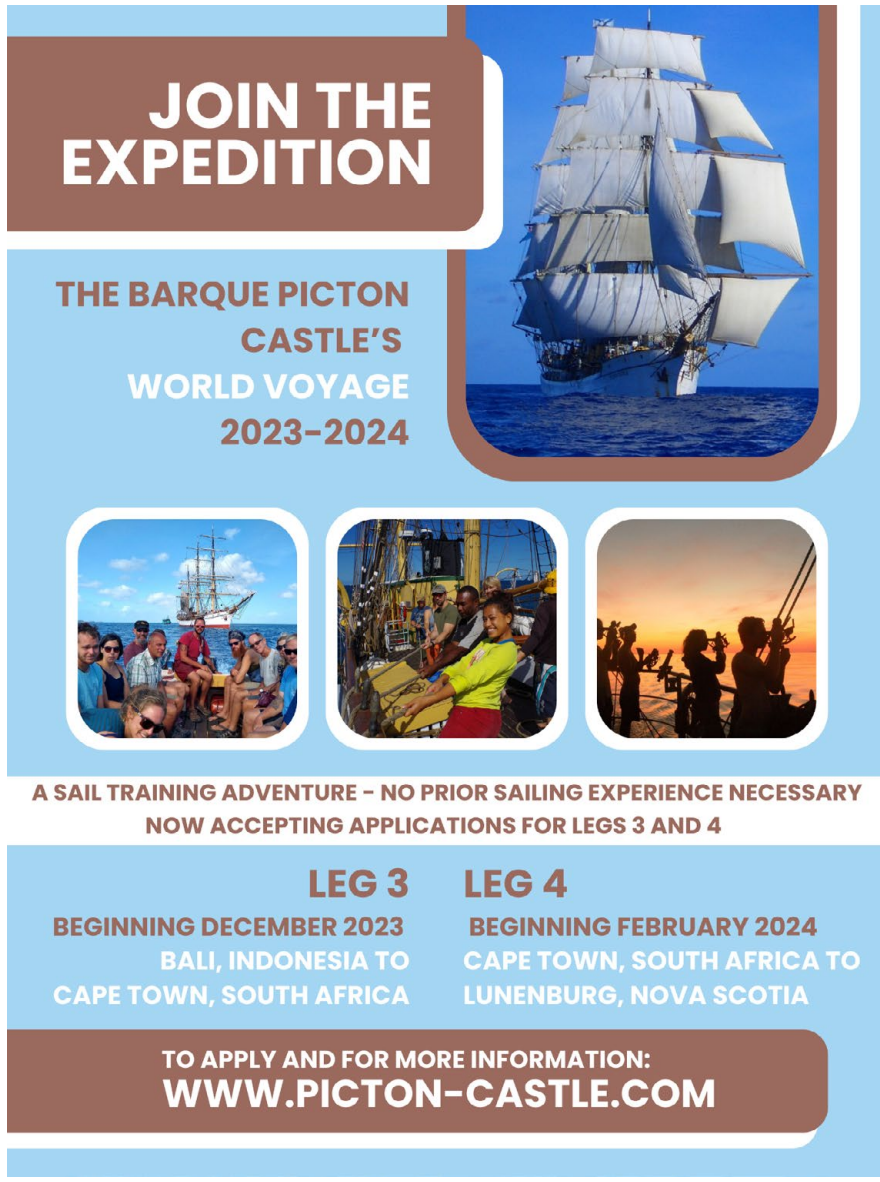
G. Renee Schramm reports: Trinidad and Tobago marked the 47th anniversary of the republic's founding September 24, 2023. Republic Day is a national holiday celebrated with parades, dances, official speeches, and as one might expect of a celebration in the home of steel pan, music. The sites, sounds, and the smell of street food culminate in a culturally rich experience for locals and visitors alike.

—*Continued on next page*



G. RENEE SCHRAMM

Trini locals welcome visitors to join in the celebration.





—Continued from previous page

Panama Canal Delays

Eric Galvez of the yacht agents Centenario and Co. reports: Last year's high season, commencing at the end of January, saw waiting time of 15-19 days, and this year the waiting times due to prolonged drought and decreased scheduled transits are sure to increase. An update from the Panama Canal Authority advises that water conservation measures projected into 2024 mean that "yachts, and other small craft up to 38.1 m (125 feet) LOA, will likely experience extensive delays. Organized yacht rallies and local tourist vessels shall take this into consideration and adjust their transit itineraries accordingly, since special lockage will not be available." Though 2024 delays may be longer, the number of canal advisors is expected to also increase.



COURTESY OYSTER YACHTS

Oyster fleet transiting the Panama Canal

Grenada Sculpture Park Expands

One of Grenada's most unique attractions, the Moliniere Underwater Sculpture Park, has grown with 31 new sculptures, joining the 75 in place. British sculptor Jason deCaires Taylor has added new carnival and folklore characters, joining the representations of Jab Jab, Vieux Corps, Pretty Mas, Shortknee, and Wild India, while local artist Troy Lewis has contributed four pieces, including a leatherback turtle.

"Every lifelike statue has been cast using a Grenadian model, and they celebrate who we are as a people. You'll be able to see these new sculptures less than 10 ft from the top of the water. It'll be a tremendous experience up close," said Randall Dolland, chairman of the Grenada Tourism Authority.

JASON DECAIRES TAYLOR



JASON DECAIRES TAYLOR



Above, left: New underwater sculpture by Jason deCaires Taylor
Above, right: Adding finishing touches, using natural pigments

Adds Taylor: "Each of the new works has been painted by local artists with natural pigments, such as squid ink and turmeric embedded in calcium carbonate."

Anti-Human Trafficking App Launched

Hope Fleet, a nonprofit organization partnered with trafficking response organization Lantern Rescue, has launched an anti-human trafficking reporting app, "Hope Watch," for Android and Apple devices, allowing concerned sailors to report suspected human trafficking activities wherever they may encounter them. *For information about Hope Watch, visit hopefleet.org/hope-watch or contact info@hopefleet.org*

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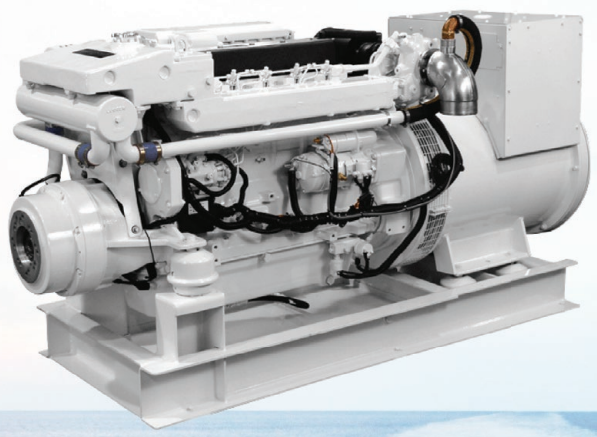
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Lightning and Fire in English Harbour

By David H. Lyman



DAVID H. LYMAN

Top: The dinghy dock at the Marina Center in English Harbor, in better times
Bottom: Yacht crews and locals used to gather at the Sea Breeze Cafe.



"We were all a little shaken up by that little storm," Libby told me on the phone, a week after tropical storm Philippe rampaged through English Harbour on the island of Antigua. Libby Nicholson grew up in English Harbour and is today the architect and hostess at Pineapple House, a cottage colony guest house for yacht crews as well as an Airbnb. It overlooks the yacht club docks. "The funny thing was," she added, "Philippe was not supposed to be very powerful or strong, so a lot of us kind of ignored it.

"'Oh,' they all said. 'it's heading east. It's going out to sea, so we're going to be fine.'

"Then it sort of began getting closer. It kind of veered into Antigua. Honestly, it felt like it was right above us. All of a sudden, the amount of rain falling from the clouds was almost overwhelming!

"The rumbling thunder was deafening and seemed to roll on for a whole minute at a time while flashes of lightning lit the whole sky blue with electricity. It was quite spectacular as well as very scary. The lightning never stopped! It felt like the earth was shaking. Is that possible?"

Philippe, downgraded from a hurricane, arrived over Antigua the night of October 2. The gale winds were southerly. The rain was intense.

"I'm not making this up," Libby said. "The thunder was so close, it was reverberating, shaking the buildings. The amount of rain falling from the sky, driven by the wind, had me concerned about a mud slide sending me and Pineapple House sliding down the hillside down into the harbor."

Libby and most of the island had retired that evening, confident the storm would bypass them. "I was lying in bed around eight o'clock, thinking," she told me, " 'Okay, everything's quiet. There's nothing happening.' But by ten o'clock, all hell was breaking loose. That's how quickly it started. And by then, it was like, 'Oh my God, where are we going with this?'

"When you're in a storm like this," she added, "you don't really know when it's going to end or how bad it will become. You are in sort of a bubble that keeps getting bigger and bigger and bigger. When will it burst?

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"It must have been around 10 p.m. when a blinding flash of lightning, with an immediate clap of thunder, shook the house. I heard a transformer on a nearby pole explode. The lights went out. I heard the generators in the nearby Antigua Yacht Club Marina kick in. That lasted only a few minutes, for another flash of lightning must have struck a utility pole nearby, and the surge of electrical power must have overloaded the generators and knocked them off.

" ' Oh, that's not good,' " I said. "But nothing was good. We were now entering survival mode. By now, I was soaking wet. The wind was blowing the rain sideways. Lightning-lit blue light filled the world in which we were living.

"In the middle of a panicked moment, I realized I was wearing all my silver bracelets on both arms. I had the sudden feeling that these coils of silver might attract lightning and hurriedly stripped off all my bracelets. I noticed two mirrors on the other side of the bedroom. You know that West Indian Caribbean myth? If lightning is reflected by a mirror, it will attract more lightning. I covered them with a towel.

"I asked Plumber, the Pineapple House handyman, to turn off our breakers, even though the power was down, for safety sake. He and I then retreated to one of the more secure rooms with cement walls in a dryer, safer place under the main house, as far away from the storm as we could get. We found and turned on a few battery-operated camp lamps so we could see.

"Sometime later, who knows how long it was, mixed in with the thunder, wind, and pounding rain, I heard the sounds of snaps and crackling coming from the harbour."

"Somewhere, there was a fire."

Fire!

By two that morning, the Antigua Yacht Club Marina Center was engulfed in a devastating fire. Flames, whipped by the winds, were sent out into the night sky and out over the harbor. Rain poured down from the heavens, but the fire was too intense for any amount of rain to put it out.

Maurice Belgrave, a local diver, along with the Antigua Fire Brigade, worked the rest of the night and into the morning to bring the fire under control. By morning, exhausted and defeated, the firefighters had lost the battle. The entire building collapsed. What was left was the mere skeleton of charred, weakened cement columns.

—Continued on next page





SHAUN FALCONE

Half the building became engulfed. *It's almost gone.*



Just the embers remain as morning arrives.



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"That next day," Libby said, "as I wandered through my village, I was met with an eerie sight. The skeleton of the center was all that remained." Cloggy's Restaurant, The Skullduggery Cafe, the Sea Breeze Cafe, the Turtle Surf Shop, BWA's offices, Ari's Fresh Fish Shop, the workout gym, and Dockside Liquors and Grocery Store — all gone in a single night.

The English Harbour community began to emerge, rally together, and bring support to one another. "We all became very close," Libby said. "As if we aren't already a close-knit group of islanders. This loss brought out compassionate support and a genuine sense of community."

Days later, with the site still smoldering, I called Shaun Falcone, the marina's manager. The story began to unfold.

"The fire started in the marina office," he told me. "Perhaps around midnight. There was a major power surge that blew out the electronic network in our office that controls the security camera systems, internet, and phone lines."

By two in the morning, when emergency responders arrived, the harbor end of the building was totally engulfed. The fire lasted all night and into the next morning. "Flames kept erupting even five days later," said Shaun.

The marine operation was unaffected. None of the yachts berthed nearby were touched. The docks still had fuel and electricity. Shaun and the crew moved the marina office to an adjacent building, into what most people call the Panerai lounge, as the Italian-Swiss watchmaker Panerai used to be there. More recently Locman, the Italian watchmaker, took over the space, next to a fabric boutique. This single-story building was spared the blaze, but one side was scorched by the fire, said. The nearby yacht club house was also unaffected. The gale-force winds were southerly, blowing the flames out over the harbor. One hates to contemplate that had the winds blown from the opposite direction, the flames would have engulfed the adjacent resort and condos on the hillside.

Shaun told me they already have plans to rebuild, although it is just a concept right now. "We hope to have something in place in time for the Antigua Yacht Charter Show in early December 2024," he said.

"I'll meet you at the Sea Breeze," used to be a common phrase in English Harbour.

Expat Alison Sly-Adams, president of Antigua Sailing Week, told me, "The Sea Breeze Cafe and Skullduggery Cafe have always been a place for locals and expats to meet and mingle." The dinghy dock is always jam-packed with RIBs; the tables on the Sea Breeze deck are crowded with locals, yacht crews, and cruisers, many of whom are busy on their laptops and phones. You can get the password for the WiFi network for the price of a beer or iced tea.

With the center gone, at least for now, people will need a new hub in English Harbour. For now, it will be the Cork & Basket in the main Antigua Yacht Club Marina building and Bar-B's & Club House, the restaurants located at Antigua Yacht Club House, next door, until the Marina Center comes back. Cloggy's has found a new home across the bay at the Catamaran Marina.



SHAUN FALCONE

An aerial view of the devastation, after and before



DAVID H. LYMAN

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Budget Marine Reports End of Shortages

Budget Marine reports: The big picture in the marine equipment world is that supply chain shortages are coming to an end. Freight prices have come down, as well. All 13 Budget Marine locations are well stocked for the coming Caribbean season. The stores offer bargain prices on many items from rope to Carib Marine dinghies.



COURTESY SMYC

Sailors looking to haul out and work on their hulls should be aware of discontinuations in some anti fouling paint brands as a result of increased regulations. Find these options at Budget Marine: Interlux, Sea Hawk, Petit, Seajet, including Seajet 038.

In other Budget Marine news, the company has become the new official title sponsor of the Sint Maarten Yacht Club (SMYC) Optimist Championship. This collaboration sees the region's most promising young Optimist sailors competing under the banner of one of the Caribbean's most renowned marine retailers. The championship kicked off on November 25 in Simpson Bay.

For more on the Seajet 038, read this antifouling paint test by Chris Doyle from the Compass August 2017 issue: caribbeancompass.com/painttest_2017.html

For more about the Optimist Championship and other events organized by the Sint Maarten Yacht Club, please visit smyc.com/optimist-championship.

Paint Discounts Offered at Virgin Gorda Yacht Harbour

Virgin Gorda Yacht Harbour Chandlery, in Spanish Town, Virgin Gorda, BVI, is celebrating post-hurricane recovery with an ongoing grand re-opening. The yard offers an extensive range of products and services for dinghies, operational vessels, and yachts. Cleaning supplies, line, fasteners, and electrical connections are available at the chandlery, as are fenders, boat hooks, a variety of flares and safety equipment for scheduled vessel surveying.



COURTESY VGYH

Boat hauled out for maintenance? The yard at Virgin Gorda has pumps, sealants, epoxies, fiberglass, zincs, and thru-hull fittings, including a selection of Sea Hawk and Hempel anti-fouling paints and primers. Enjoy a 10 percent discount when purchasing four or more gallons of paint.

For more information, check out vgyh.vg.

Blue Heron Li-ion Batteries featured at Horizon Yachts Grenada

Horizon Yachts Grenada has become an authorized dealer for Blue Heron Li-ion batteries. Since Li-ion batteries normally require a complete upgrade of the power management systems on each boat, Horizon Yachts Grenada has a team of experts who can provide installation.

Horizon now also offers solar panels of different sizes and power ratings to fit all arch or solar frame designs. A partnership with Welding Tec makes possible the design, manufacture, and installation of an arch or frame for an individual yacht. HYG also offers maintenance and repairs of any make and model of fridge, AC system, or generator, along with comprehensive yacht management services.

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CURAÇAO CRUISERS DIVE FOR GARBAGE

Story by Karen Erens and Jean-Marc Claes
Photos by Karen Erens

September 17, 2023 — International Clean Up Day — did not go by unnoticed by the cruising community in Curaçao.

Because Curaçao is nicely positioned outside the Caribbean's hurricane zone (so designated by many boat insurance companies), many sailors seek shelter here during the season, and many are particularly attracted to Spanish Water, a 360° protected anchorage in the middle of the islands. Its lagoon-like qualities make it a superb place for passing the hurricane season. Add to that the island's many amenities for quality living for sailors, including supermarkets, restaurants, a plethora of activities for adults and kids alike, good marine services provided by several marine supply shops (Budget Marine, Freedom Machine), also haulout services from Curaçao Marine, and even dry storage, and you get a recipe for a wonderful time — and perhaps some garbage.

So on September 17, we (Karen and Jean-Marc of s/y *Blowing Bubbles*, a specially equipped scuba charter sailboat on hurricane break in Spanish Water), took the initiative to organize an underwater cleanup. Together with fellow cruisers and scuba divers, we would clean up the ocean bottom surrounding our boats.

Organizing this event was a handful. Not only did we need to get permission from the local government (as we would be scuba diving in the navigational waters of the anchorage, controlled by the harbour master) but for safety reasons, we consulted with the Coast Guard about the diving activities. Cleaning up garbage is important, but so is keeping it all safe.

In preparation, we organized a group of cruisers who would be scuba diving, and trained them to safely use special recovery air-lifting balloons to lift heavy objects from the bottom. This training would be helpful in their regular sailing adventures — for example, when an anchor gets stuck or a heavy object gets lost from the boat.

This course in search & recovery was offered for free by ScubaBiz.help, a company that does what its name says: Helping within the scuba business. We were grateful for the much-needed help to get this project from idea to reality.

These well trained cruisers/scuba divers also gave us an inventory of the objects to be recovered, in order to prepare all needed gear for the cleanup day itself. It was a challenging list:

- 2 sunken dinghies
- 1 outboard
- Several big boat batteries
- Several truck tires
- etc...

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With a heap of salvaged trash at their feet, the Curaçao cruisers community takes pride in its handiwork.



—*Continued from previous page*

This required several air lifting balloons and multiple dive tanks for inflation.

The list of needed equipment was handled by us, s/v *Blowing Bubbles*. A local dive operator, Curious 2 Dive, gave a special discount on dive tanks and dive gear so more people would be able to join in on the cleanup, as smaller trash would also be collected from the bottom.

After about three weeks of preparation, C-Day was approaching. One day before, marker buoys were attached to the large objects to be lifted from the bottom. This could not be done further in advance as the risk for outboards/boats getting entangled into these buoys would be too great.



Spanish Water organizers Jean-Marc and Karen

C-Day was a reality, with 29 people showing up at the start of the event, bringing dinghies, dive gear, ropes, masks, snorkels and most of all, a lot of positive energy!

Even a team from the Coast Guard and the airport fire department came out to help!

During what became a five-hour cleanup event, a total of 2,400 pounds (1200kg) of garbage, rubbish, and litter were collected from the bottom.

An impressive amount was piled up in front of Uncle J restaurant. It's next to Spanish Water and the perfect place to deposit the heavy objects but also, because of Uncle J, the place where a large container would be placed, to make sure all the collected garbage would be taken away to get recycled.

A special moment during this day was the recovery of a large dinghy (15ft/5m) filled with sand and water, pulled out with the help of many sailors — and the discovery and rescue of an octopus living within the sunken hull of the dinghy!



Lifting up a dinghy from the bottom

So, no animals were harmed during this cleanup event!

At the end of the day, the beautiful moments, the positive energy and so much more were celebrated with a cold beer for all those of legal age. Don't get me wrong, young cruisers did their share of cleanup, too, and they were rewarded with cold soft drinks.

This was truly a unique example of teamwork, community work and excellent spirit spanning ages, gender and nationalities — 16 nationalities were present during this international cleanup in Curaçao, making it a truly international cruisers event!

Are you joining us next year?

Karen Erens and Jean-Marc Claes, professional scuba divers, have voyaged aboard the Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 50 Blowing Bubbles *since June 2021. Watch the YouTube video of the cleanup: youtu.be/nX4ZZKcm3uk. Find out more about ScubaBiz at scubabiz.help — you can even download the monthly scuba magazine for free.*



REGATTAS & RALLIES

Antigua Takes 2023 Caribbean Dinghy Championships

Tough competition and shifty winds, varying between 8 and 15 knots, made for an exciting final day of racing of the 2023 Caribbean Dinghy Championships in Martinique, as the three races led to changes in standings in almost all classes as the October 29 races concluded.



COURTESY SMYC

The top three of the Caribbean Dinghy Championships Nations Cup 2023: In third position Team Sint Maarten, in second Team Martinique, and in first place Team Antigua

The championships are known for their individual ranking per class and the Nations Cup, combining the best results.

In the ILCA 7, Shanoy Malone, representing Antigua, remained unbeaten and completed the series with 3 wins. In second place was Bruno Aglae representing Martinique, followed by Josiah Alexis representing Trinidad and Tobago.

The ILCA 6 class was won by Ozani Lafond (ANT) with 8 points out of 10 races; he remained unbeaten as well. Stefan Stuven from Trinidad and Tobago took second place, followed by Marius Malody representing Martinique.

In the ILCA 4 class, Martinique took the win. Luk Moreau Dhallenne finished in first position with 11 points, followed by Emily Gaillard from Antigua in second. Rio Stomp from St. Maarten finished third.

The Fusion Class was won by Sevan Nicolas and Sosa Camilio representing Martinique with 9 points out of 10 races, followed by Veronica Destin and Oskar Jarrett Versteegden from St. Maarten. Elijah Gibston and Zev Bowman from Trinidad and Tobago finished third.

Patrick Greensmith from Antigua took the win in the Optimist class with 10 points out of 10 races. Luka Rose Eloise, representing Martinique, came in second place, followed by Nathan Sheppard from St. Maarten in third.

In the Nations Cup Ranking St. Kitts and Nevis placed 6th, Barbados 5th, Trinidad and Tobago 4th place, Sint Maarten 3rd, Martinique 2nd. Antigua took home the Nations Cup trophy in first place. The trophy was presented by the Caribbean Sailing Association representative Saskia Revelman and the mayor of Schoelcher. This is the third win in a row for Antigua, following 2019 and 2022 victories.

The CSA thanks CN Schoelcher for their hospitality, organization and a very warm welcome.

RBVIYC Kicks off Season

Sailors took to the racecourse on September 16, kicking off the Royal BVI Yacht Club's new season on a gorgeous race day with the 2023 Back to School Regatta and ILCA Masters Championship.

© MATACK



BVI racing season begins

The seven-boat Opti fleet included regatta first-timers who all did themselves proud. With a clean sweep, Aerin Westlake took the title while Phoenix Steer took second place in each of the six races to finish second overall. The youngest Opti competitor, nine-year-old Arun Bissoondutt, finished in third place in three of the six races, ending in third position overall.

Eight-year old Rosie Wooldridge, in her first dinghy event, teamed up with her cousin Nathan Haycraft for a clean sweep in the RS Feva event. The race for second was close, with Ashley Brockbank and dad, Eddie, edging out new pair James Tucker-Davis and Lochlan Geyser. William Barnes and Sansa Nieh, who began to learn to sail with the RBVIYC adult training program in January nine months ago, finished fourth (with a third place in race 3).

© EBURATTI



Back to School Regatta entrants

The ILCA fleet was smaller than it has been in recent years, but still competitive and challenging, as Gilbo Simpson, normally found at the helm of *Flying Pig*, got back in a dinghy to take the win and the ILCA Masters title. Marentia de Villiers finished second. Rhiannon Jones competed in every race and improved throughout the day.

Grant Thornton Dinghy Season Begins in Sint Maarten

The Sint Maarten Yacht Club's Grant Thornton Dinghy Season commenced on September 30 with its Soons Series, attracting competitors from Saint Martin Voile pour Tous, MDA, St Baths Yacht Club, and the Sint Maarten Yacht Club.

Winners of the RS Quest class, in which two boats competed, were SMYC new members Jorick Houwer and Rianne Visser. Pieter and Paul Soons also competed in this race named for their father, Michel Soons, commodore of the SMYC from 2018-2020.

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First day leader in the Optimist class out of 16 participants was Thomas Magras, followed by Sarah Michaux in second place and Tao Carmona in third.



COURTESY SMYC

Grant Thornton Dinghy Season begins.

In the ILCA fleet, 12 boats competed, with Emilien le Normand taking first place, Rio Stomp second, and Frits Bus third. It was a beautiful day for racing, with the wind relatively steady at 12-15 knots, with occasional gusts reaching 19 knots.

On the horizon …

La Course de l'Alliance, which started November 29, will run through December 3. Its course includes St. Barths, Anguilla and Sint Maarten. *smyc.com/la-course-de-lalliance*

The BVI West End Yacht Club's Gustav **Wilmerding Memorial Race** is scheduled for December 2.

The **Caribbean Foiling Championships**, December 8-10 on St. Martin, is open for entries and welcomes wind, wing and kite foilers (recreational and professional). The event includes two days of course racing and a long distance race around the island. It caters to a wide range of participants, from adventure seekers to professionals. *caribbeanfoiling.com*

Nelson's Pursuit Race, an Antigua Yacht Club event, will start from below Fort Charlotte outside English Harbour on December 31. The race was conceived as a re-enactment of Lord Nelson's famous pursuit of the French fleet. The slowest boat to enter the race starts first and carries the French flag, with the remainder of the fleet representing the British in hot pursuit. All boats are assigned a start time based on the size of the boat and its anticipated speed around the course. Entrants should be sure to attend the skippers' briefing, at which time they will be assigned their start time and provided with a detailed explanation of the course.

Looking ahead to January: This won't be something you can see from the waterfront, but the **Viking Explorer Rally, ARC Rally,** and the **RORC Transatlantic Race** all depart the Canary Islands early in the month, heading our way.

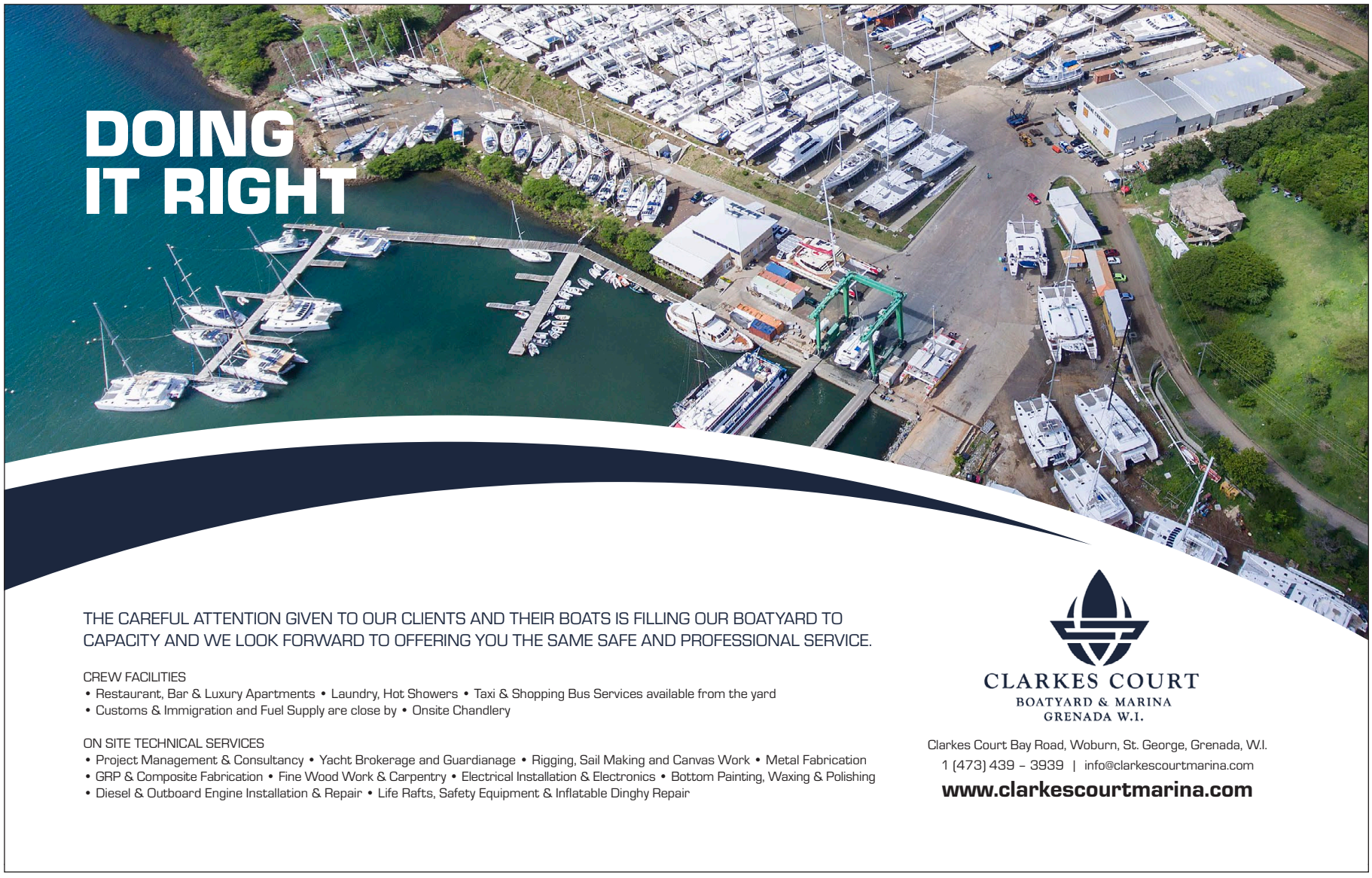
Race Day Two of the **Keelboat Season Championship**, St. Maarten, January 7. Day One was in November, Day Three not till May. *smyc.com/keelboat-season-championship*

Midmonth will be a busy time for regatta followers. **Barbados Sailing Week** begins January 13 (*roundbarbados.com*), and the **Latitude 18 Halyard Challenge Race**, Tortola (*royalbviyc.org/calendar.html*) goes off on the same day.

On January 14, the **Oyster World Rally** (*abyma.ag/events-calendar*) starts off from Antigua, and the **Martin Luther King Regatta** is held in St. Thomas (*stthomasyachtclub.org/sailing/regattas/mlk-regatta*).

January 20 is another busy day, catering to a range of tastes. **The Painkiller Cup**, Tortola, BVI, is for paddleboarders, a 14-mile downwind team race and the 2.5 **Mini-Painkiller** solo race (*painkillercupbvi.com*). **The Sandy Island Race** (*antiguayachtclub.com/calendar*) encompasses Jolly and Falmouth Harbours in Antigua (you might catch a glimpse of Falmouth Freddy). **The Multiclass Dinghy Regatta** (*smyc.com*) is raced over January 20-21 in Sint Maarten, and the **Caribbean Midwinter Laser Regatta**, Cabarete, Dominican Republic (*caribwind.com*) is January 20-22.

—*Continued on page 24*



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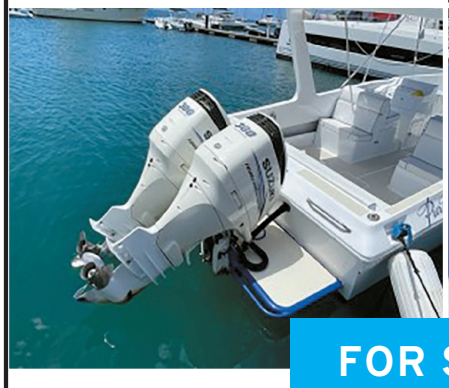
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AVAILABLE FOR VIEWING AT BLUE LAGOON

—Continued from page 22

And the next day, January 21, there's the **Mount Gay Round Barbados Race** (*roundbarbados.com/round-barbados*) and the start of the **Martinique Cata Raid**, five days of coastal regattas around Martinique, contested in F18 and F16 sports catamarans (*martiniquecataraid.com*).

Sometime in January, the finishers of the **Talisker Whiskey Atlantic Challenge** will arrive in Antigua. *Compass*'s Niamh McAnally immortalized two middle-aged British lads who finished the course against all odds in her prize-nominated book Flares Up, reviewed in April 2023 *Compass* (*caribbeancompass.com/online/325-April-2023.pdf*).

The **Antigua Yacht Club Mini Regatta** is also scheduled for January, date yet to be announced. Registration is now open (*antiguaclassics.com/boat-registration*) for the **Antigua Classic Yacht Regatta**, Nelson's Dockyard, Antigua, April 17–22, 2024.

St. Maarten Heineken Regatta, its 44th edition set for February 29 – March 3, has always been known for its Maxi class year over year, and 2024 promises to be more maxi than ever. Already entered is David M. Leuschen's *Galateia* (Wally 100), a combining a modern carbon fibre performance design with vintage design elements. Michael *Slade's Leopard3* (Farr 100) is expected to be the co-favorite with *Galateia*. Wendy Schmidt's *Deep Blue* (Botin 85) is among the other top performers expected to join the competition.

COURTESY TIM WRIGHT PHOTOACTION.COM



Hypr, *a Volvo Ocean Race 70, was available for charter in the St. Maarten Heineken Regatta in 2023.*

Registration is now open for the 2024 **St. Thomas International Regatta** (STIR) (*yachtscoring.com/emenu.cfm?eid=16227*), set for Easter Weekend, March 29-31, 2024. You may register also for the **Round the Rocks Race** (RTR) (*yachtscoring.com/emenu.cfm?eid=16226*), which will circumnavigate the neighboring island of St. John on March 28. RTR is a terrific opportunity to tune up for STIR and provides an additional chance to land a podium finish. Early bird registrants can enter a drawing to win customized long-sleeve high-performance team shirts.

Over half a dozen outfits are offering vessels to charter for STIR 2024. One of these is the St. Thomas Sailing Center, which has a fleet of IC24s, and also offers training with a professional coach who will race with the team in STIR.

For more information, go to stthomassailingcenter.com/st-thomas-international-regatta. To reserve a vessel and coach, Email: info@stthomassailingcenter.com or call (340) 690-3681.

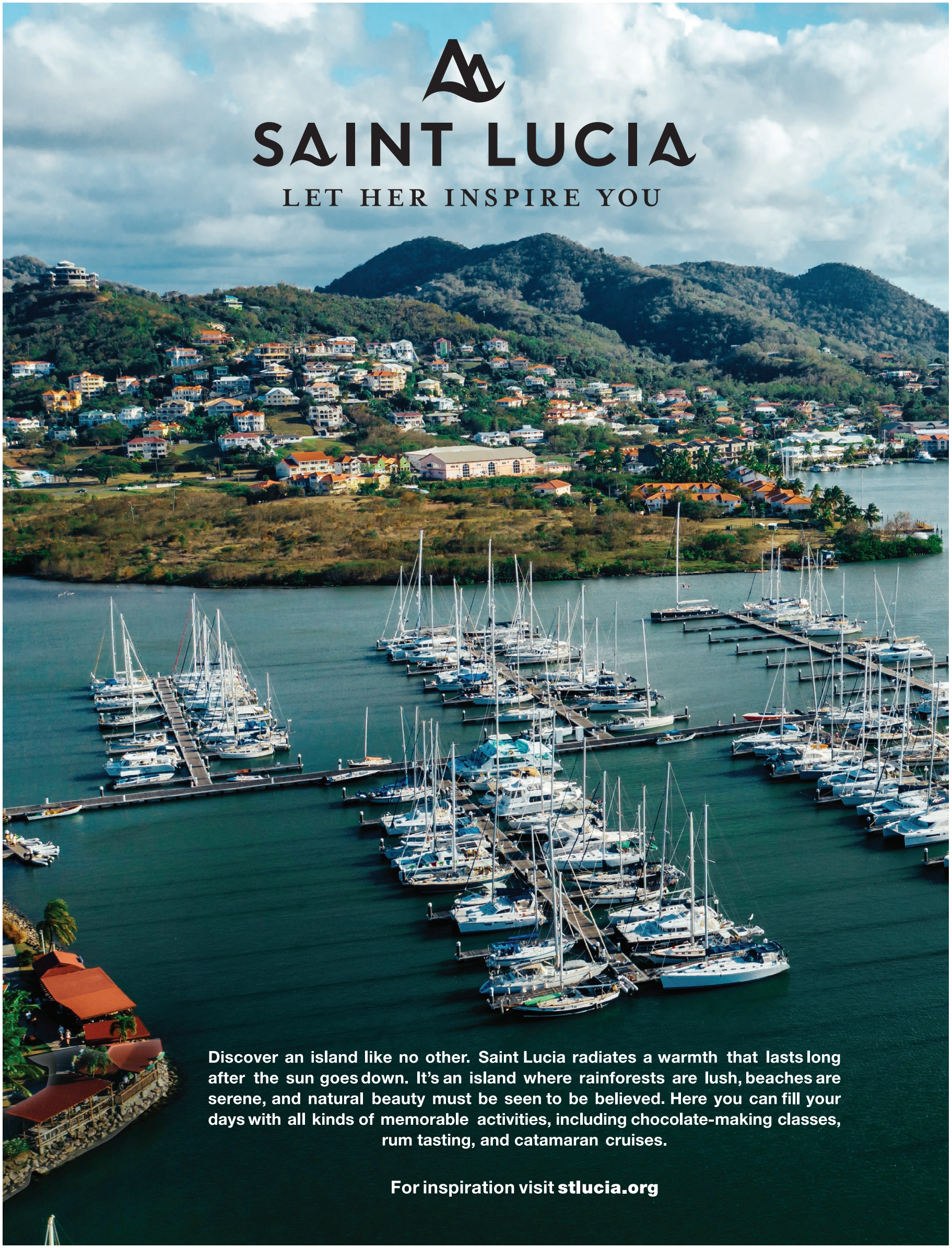
The **BVI Spring Regatta and Sailing Festival**, scheduled for April 1-7, with five days of racing over a unique combination of marks and islands, has begun registration for the event. *To get details, and to register, go to bvispringregatta.org/#bvisrregistration.*

The St. Maarten Yacht Club announces the formation of two official racing teams, Optimist class and ILCA (formerly Laser) class. They will be competing in the **Curacao Youth Championships, Schoelcher Week** in Martinique, and the **Mini Bucket** in St. Barts.

Antigua Sailing Week (ASW), the longest running international regatta in the Caribbean, celebrates its 55th regatta from April 28-May 3. A wide range of racing classes will compete, including CSA classes, multihulls, cruisers and racer-cruisers, pocket rockets, bareboats and charters.

The schedule starts April 26 with the first day of the Antigua Wingfoil Championship. The stand-alone Peters & May Round Antigua Race April 27 showcases rivalries between high performance monohulls and multihulls.

Antigua Sailing Week has followed the Sailors for the Sea Clean Regattas program since 2013. *For the Notice of Race and online entry to Antigua Sailing Week, plus regular updates, go to www.sailingweek.com*


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Transatlantic to Boatyard Paradise

by Amanda Seltzer

"The mechanic said he would not come out to the boat," Darren relayed as we grimly weighed our options, looking over our to-do list before an Atlantic crossing to the Caribbean. The major outstanding item glared back at us from the top — saildrive repair. "Well, good thing we have a sailboat!" I replied.

After our first passage from the south of France with our "new to us" NEEL 45 trimaran *Panda Rosso*, we were safely anchored on the south side of Lanzarote in the Canary Islands, getting ready for the next leg of our journey across the Atlantic Ocean.





ROXY SEARS

Above, left: Darren and Amanda Seltzer experience their first passage on the NEEL 45 trimaran. There's nothing like crossing an ocean to learn your new boat. Above, right: Finally escaping the Med, no orcas in sight and out in the Atlantic Ocean, Darren sets the tweaker on the headsail as they prepare to run downwind.

Unfortunately, the extent of the saildrive repair was beyond Darren's mechanical engineering and race car background. After many attempts at diagnosing and fixing at sea, we were still experiencing issues engaging forward gear. Without reliable propulsion, we were not keen on maneuvering this beamy boat through a narrow channel and into a marina for the mechanic's inspection with the possibility of getting delayed due to the scope of work or availability of parts in the islands. We were determined to not let this stop our passage or momentum for the miles ahead to the Caribbean and beyond. We had quite an ambitious schedule to ultimately get us to the United States where we were launching our first voyages with Outer Passage, an adventure-charter company that specializes in providing sail-training and offshore opportunities.

First and foremost, we reminded ourselves that Panda Rosso is a SAIL-boat, the engine is auxiliary, and what better passage is there for sailing than in the tradewinds? Lucky for us, we only needed the engine for charging the batteries every few days and possibly maneuvering us into the anchorage once we made landfall in Martinique. So we thought maybe we could get the work done in Martinique instead. Sure enough, we found a Volvo Penta mechanic at Carenantilles boatyard in Le Marin.

We made a quick call to describe the issue and check the availability of a mechanic and parts, and they told us it was no issue at all to come out to the boat on anchor, especially since the engine access is a lot easier on the NEEL 45 compared to most sailboats. We were elated by the prospect of this seemingly quick solution!

Sixteen days of downwind sailing later, we found ourselves greeted by sea turtles surfacing in the crystal-clear Caribbean waters, the familiar smell of earth and palm trees dotting the horizon as we brought up the lush island of Martinique. What a postcard-perfect landfall!

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ROXY SEARS

A boat with a view; a glimpse of sunset falling on the volcanic landscape of Playa Blanca on the island of Lanzarote in the Canary Islands.

Fingers crossed, we shifted into forward gear and maneuvered our trimaran into the crowded bay of Le Marin, anchor ready to drop in case of propulsion failure at any moment, and carefully found a spot among the hundreds of boats. Finally, the hard part was over. I felt like a weight was lifted, we made it to the Caribbean, the mechanic would come out the next day to fix the saildrive and we could enjoy exploring the island before we had to leave for the United States.

Once on the boat, the mechanic quickly and quietly went to work. Darren stayed aboard while I went ashore to provision fresh produce and get a local SIM card for internet. Luckily, both stores were close by. In fact, this modern seaside town was not what I expected. It resembled more of a kind of mini-southern France in the Caribbean. I was delighted with the familiarity of the French bakeries, good wine and European food brands in the grocery store after our recent months in France; a taste of France in the Caribbean, what a treat! I could definitely see ourselves enjoying it here and I looked forward to finally trying the Ti' Punch everyone raved about.

By the time I got back to the dinghy, I noticed the mechanic at the dock and greeted him enthusiastically. He did not share the same emotion. He went on to express his concern in broken English that "saildrive no good, need new one" as he held pieces of our transmission in his hands. My heart sank into my stomach. This guy just took apart our engine, leaving us dead in the water. All those awful stories of boatwork gone wrong started rattling around my brain. Were we being scammed?

When I got back to the boat, Darren looked defeated, but told me there was a plan! Feeling apprehensive, we followed the mechanic into the shop with the pieces of our transmission laid out on a table. After further inspection, Darren confirmed the mechanic's diagnosis. He explained the mechanism in the saildrive which contains a forward and reverse clutch set for engaging forward gears had seized to the extent that servicing wasn't possible. Most likely in the boat's history perhaps a rope had wrapped around the propeller; the clutch discs slipped, heated up and ultimately failed. I guess this was a good lesson for us on pre-purchase inspections as this was the first saildrive boat we owned.



DARREN SELTZER

Light wind is where this lightweight trimaran really shines, magically gliding along at 3 knots in 4 knots of wind.

Since the saildrive was deemed unserviceable, the best course of action, albeit the most expensive, was to install a new one. Luckily, they had one in stock and it would come with a warranty, the most guaranteed way to have a reliable transmission for our future miles ahead with our sailing business. This option also presented us with the opportunity to fix a few things on that growing to-do-list while we were hauled out.

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We coordinated a tow in the early morning before the tradewinds woke up. A small but powerful tender between the port ama and main hull easily pushed our lightweight trimaran all the way to the haulout slip. Once there, we realized it was going to be a tight fit for our 28-foot beam. The yard had assured us that our NEEL 45 could fit, but this looked sketchy. Slowly, we inched her in with the line handlers, carefully adjusting the fenders within only a foot of space between each ama and the concrete until the slings of the boatlift were in place.

AMANDA SELTZER



Left: It's never good news when your transmission bits are in a bucket. Right: Up, up and out of her element, Panda Rosso is lifted for an emergency haulout at Carenantilles boatyard in Le Marin, Martinique to replace the saildrive.

We took some comfort knowing that this boatyard had lifted NEEL trimarans before, but there's always trepidation seeing your boat lifted out of the water. It's simply unnatural when a boat is being suspended in the air. However, these guys were truly professional, and as soon as the boat was blocked and secured, the mechanic got to work on removing our saildrive.

Honestly, having only gone as far as Puerto Rico on our previous journey, we had no idea what to expect from the Caribbean as far as boat supplies and facilities. We soon found out what the French know well: Martinique is one of the best places in the Caribbean for European boat parts and getting boatwork done. Somehow we had stumbled upon an island with fully stocked chandleries, rigging facilities, sailmakers, mechanics and boat repair companies accompanied by very friendly people eager to assist. This was the silver-lining to our mechanical disaster story.

In addition to gathering spare boat parts in this plentiful paradise, our brief time in the yard gave us an opportunity to work on unexpected projects like repairing our boot stripe. After sailing 5,000 nautical miles, we soon found out vinyl wrap at the waterline doesn't work on fast boats. It's not exactly how I planned on celebrating our fifth wedding anniversary, but we spent this time working productively in all the precious daylight hours to sand, prep and paint the boot stripe on all three hulls.



Not even out of the boat lift slings and the mechanic was hard at work removing the old saildrive.

It wasn't all work and no play during our stay. When we weren't in the yard, we enjoyed nice date nights in town, Caribbean Creole cuisine with Ti' Punch aplenty, and walks along the beautiful beaches and hiking trails. We absorbed as much as we could from this little slice of paradise during our pit stop for boat repairs.

And although we didn't get to explore the whole island of Martinique, we can't wait to visit again under better circumstances. We left the boatyard with a little less cash, but a lot more knowledge and experience. That's what cruising is all about, right?

Sailors Darren and Amanda Seltzer are owner/operators of Outer Passage, a passagemaking and American Sailing Association ambassador school, aboard Panda Rosso, *a NEEL 45 Trimaran (Outer-Passage.com).*

Salon Nautique Martinique: The Little Boat Show that Can

The early summer event, including environmental preservation initiatives, is part of a comprehensive strategy to fortify the marine sector and expand the profile of the windward Caribbean island

Story and Photos By Elaine Lembo

A sip of the warm, smooth, and spicy Rhum Agricole named Clément L'Elixir had just settled in my belly, a pleasant, soft landing like an anchor snuggling into the sand of a crystal-clear harbor. On the French windward island of Martinique, a tour of Habitation Clément — and rum tasting — means sailing just as much as busted heads and broken rigging do.



Show exhibitors include friendly business owners like these, from La Marina des Trois Ilets at Pointe du Bout.

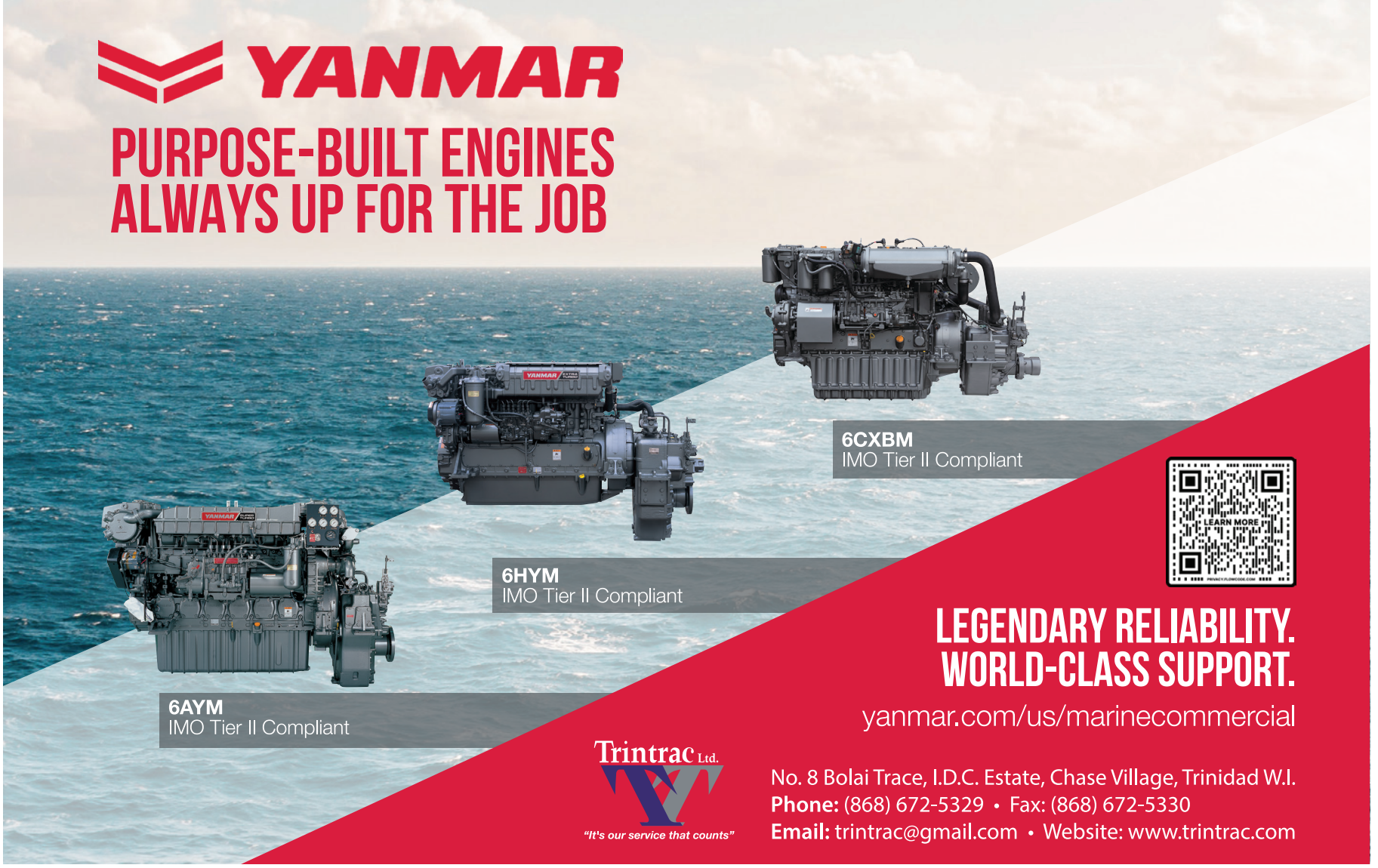
I've no doubt that gaining a well-rounded view of all the spectacular features of Madinina, "Island of Flowers," as the Caribs called it, was the goal of my gracious hosts as they wined and dined me on a multi-day tour of highlights both nautical and landlubberly.

Called the Cluster Maritime Martinique (CMM), this association was created in 2013 by professionals to unite all sectors of the island marine industry. From fabrication to services, the CMM is composed of companies of all sizes and types (www.cluster-maritime-martinique.org/membres-du-cmm). The group, which has merged with the Martinique Yachting Association (MYA), strives to unite marine businesses spread throughout the large (43 miles long 19 miles wide) island.

"An industry is best defended by its members, and once regrouped, they project a voice that the authorities consider a valid representation of the industry," said Douglas Rapier, MYA president, adding, "it is the foundation of what both MYA & CMM achieved and what their continuation in the form of the CMM intends to achieve."

Indeed, the CMM is intent on showing sailors whose hailing ports lie beyond its borders that it's taking the lead in growing the island's marine sector on a regional and global level. It may not compete with the export of agricultural products like bananas and sugar, of which rum is a part, but marine products and services fall neatly within the second leading economic category, tourism and the service industry.

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"After some 10 years of major effort, it's increasingly becoming achievable," Rapier said. "It just requires persistent focus and effective action." As progress, he cites government's official recognition of Martinique's marine sector, reduction in a variety of taxes that compelled mariners to take business to other islands, as well as the recent relocation to the island of the finish of the famous doublehanded biennial race, the Transat Jacques Vabre.

Another highly visible centerpiece of this multifaceted mission is the CMM's showcase product, the three-year-old Martinique boat show, held at Marina of Etang Z'Abricots, Fort-de-France. While the Caribbean basin in general is renown as a leading global chartering, cruising (power and sail) and racing destination, with Martinique earning recognition for its outstanding supporting technical role in the maintenance of French-constructed sailboat models, as well as service to others, particularly multihulls, there's a big disconnect.

"It is estimated that Martinique only captures 10 percent of the flow of boats that sail in the Caribbean," the 2022 CMM report states, adding that this presents an opportunity for "development … and attracting a wider public from the Caribbean, France, Europe and North America." That low percentage is calculated by the Institut d'Émission des Départements d'Outre-Mer (IEDOM), a subsidiary of the Banque of France charged with oversight of economic and monetary strategies for the French Overseas Territories, which in the Caribbean includes Martinique, Guadeloupe, St. Barth's, and St. Martin.

Boat Show Ambitions

So it was that I found myself invited to the island in early June 2023. The hard-working organizers of the boat show, who'd at the eleventh hour pushed the date back a month so as not to compete for attendees with the popular St. Lucia Jazz Festival in May, kept me on a jam-packed daily itinerary to help them spread the word about the show as a platform for a broad and deep range of services available for sailors' every need and want.

It was also their opportunity to share the island's agendas around sustainability and the preservation of marine ecosystems in the face of ocean acidification and warming, reduced biodiversity, rising sea levels, anchoring impacts, and the presence of plastic waste.



A red carpet is rolled out dockside for attendees, who are encouraged to then step aboard an array of charter and brokerage multihulls.

Bulking up that 10 percent yacht traffic statistic and raising the profile and participation in the boat show so it strengthens financially and gains regional and international status is an ambitious effort. To Rapier's summary of a decade of CMM victories, show organizers point to Martinique's central location in the Caribbean islands chain, the technical expertise of its workers, as well as the strength of its youth training programs, as reasons they ultimately expect to accomplish their goal.

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Daily from June 1–4, as I strolled the grounds — 5,000 square meters of exhibition space on land, 200 linear meters of exhibition space afloat — I took in everything from a Volvo Penta engine dealership to rigid inflatables, water toys and chandlery goods; from contemporary catamaran models for charter to artisan soap makers and bimini installers.

Over a Saturday lunch that included a few of the island's signature local provisions—Pork Colombo and Bière Lorraine — I also had a chance to catch up with key show staff, including chief organizer Eric Vasse, and chief administrator Maryse Pagnano.

The show is the manifestation of the CMM goal to gather all of Martinique's diverse nautical activities, whether power or sail and watersports, in one location, Vasse said. "Another goal with this show," Vasse added, "is to have a show within a show. The show itself, and within it, an international show for buying and selling catamarans."

This would logically build upon Martinique's reputation as a hub for all aspects of multihull sailing and maintenance. "We are a top spot globally for catamarans," Pagnano said, "and it's time to build on this."

While Vasse, also a Nautitech catamaran dealer, is a veteran participant in the global boat show circuit, Pagnano focuses her efforts on enticing nautical businesses from throughout the region to participate in the Martinique show. "As we bring in more of the marine industry from other islands, people will pay attention and join in," she said.

That's the plan, though obstacles inevitably creep up: political clashes in various island municipalities over the direction of the nautical sector, the aforementioned jazz festival (whose leading audience share comes from Martinique), and last but not least, the pandemic, which shut down the show for two years immediately after its debut in 2019.

"This year felt like starting all over again," Pagnano said. Nonetheless, the 2022 show's rebound in attendance, a spike of 40 percent over 2019, with an exhibitor increase of 35%, fueled optimism, and organizers anticipate that with the 2023 show, its contract will be renewed for the next four years.

Growth in a Blue Economy

Aside from ongoing support from the government and private sectors, promotion of the boat show and the blue economy also comes from initiatives by individual marine industry players and CMM members, particularly from La Marina du Marin and its next-door neighbor, Carenantilles shipyard.

While about 30 anchorages are available to sailors making landfall at Martinique, key harbors with organized mooring fields include Marin, Fort de France at Etang Z'Abricots, and at Les Anses d'Arlet.

As one of the Caribbean's largest marinas, and Martinique's biggest marina, with an array of yacht services and technicians, du Marin, while by no means the only place to get excellent boat work done on the island, holds a position of high visibility. It's also the base of 12 charter companies and a port of entry.

A stone's throw or dinghy ride away is Carenantilles, offering yacht owners complete marine refit services that comply with European Union environmental standards. Included among sought-after activities are travel lifts with 80- and 440-ton haulout capacity, able to lift boats with 28-foot-plus beams out of the water. The day I visited, a monohull was slung in the 80-ton travelift, while a cat straddled the 440-ton lift.



Travelifts at Carenantilles shipyard easily accommodate both monohulls and multihulls.

Given the steady global growth of the multihull segment over the decades, with French builders Fountaine Pajot as well as Lagoon, which is part of Group Beneteau, the dominant brands, it follows that multihulls are a focus of the island's marine industry.

"Martinique is the first place in the world where catamarans gather," Simon Jean-Joseph, du Marin managing director, told me, adding "it's important to have the boat show, because people from the United States and all over the world come to buy multihulls here, and I think there's an opportunity for us not only to sell used boats but also show our knowledge and our maintenance expertise. Our marinas, our facilities, and our knowledge about boats make our island attractive.

The 2024 Martinique Boat Show runs from May 30 to June 2.
www.martinique-boat-show.fr

"We are lucky to be a part of France and Europe in the Caribbean," he said. "It brings attractive incentives to us, as well as security and stability. We are a gorgeous island, but we still need to work hard to keep it safe, clean, and do our best to continue to attract people here."

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The marina has placed high priority and visibility on environmental preservation. Its buildings are powered via solar panels, which also supply electricity to yachts at the docks. Its pumpout boat, M/V *Siyack*, collects oil, black and gray water from boats, and supplies fresh water. Recycling is mandatory. The marina also abides by the European Union sustainability initiative and hosts an artificial nursery to promote marine species biodiversity.

A major focus of the marina and its subsidiary, Société Antillaise d'Exploitation de Ports de Plaisance (SAEPP), are mooring field upgrade projects intended to protect boat owners and the environment. These include installation of 250 moorings in Marin's harbor and additional moorings at Les Anses d'Arlet, planned for completion by 2025.

At St. Pierre, another port of entry in the northwest corner of Martinique, SAEPP plans include installation of 130 moorings in three zones by December 2023. Boats will be required to use their holding tanks and can obtain free pumpouts. Other services include online clearing in, wifi, dinghy dockage, water taxi, and garbage collection. The goal is to entice visiting sailors and liveaboards with services that will entice them away from anchoring in vulnerable and protected areas.

In St. Pierre, the protected area includes the site of shipwrecks left behind by the 1902 eruption of Mt. Pelée volcano. The tragedy is superbly documented at the Musée Frank A. Perret, which I visited on the Sunday morning of the boat show. This visitor was overwhelmed by the collection's 432 components, which include grains of rice, a loaf of bread, coffee beans, pasta, including countless everyday business and personal items — clumps of scissors, nails, combs and other toiletry items, as well as pottery.



Carenantilles shipyard also stores hundreds of power and sail vessels on the hard.

"Overall, our attempt is to get organized," Christian Rapha, the mayor of St. Pierre, told me as he escorted me through town. "We want to provide the needed water and waste services to sailors, as well as welcome others."

The town, known as the Paris of the Caribbean until the horrific 1902 eruption, has enjoyed a long rebound as a cultural and tourist attraction. Rapha said that plans are under way to open a duty free port in time for the arrival of an expected 31 visits from *Club Med 2* over winter 2024. The five-masted schooner has 184 cabins, a crew of 200, and can accommodate nearly 400 guests.

Our jaunt included brief stops at the remains of the theatre and the prison, as well as to the waterfront market, which bustled with activity and produce. And no visit around any town on this island is complete without a stop at a distillery. We next drove to the grounds of the Depaz distillery, nestled at the foot of Mount Pelée. I eagerly stepped out of the car to have my photograph taken against the backdrop of its peak. "It's a rare occurrence to see it without cloud cover," Rapha said, "and very special."

Of course, as was my sip of Rhum Agricole, among countless special, memorable delights awaiting any sailor fortunate enough to make landfall in Martinique.

Montagne Pelée, Northern Pitons Named UNESCO World Heritage Site



Montagne Pelée

The volcanoes and forests of Martinique's Montagne Pelée and the northern Pitons have been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site by the 45th UNESCO World Heritage Committee, which met in Saudi Arabia in September 2023.

There are now 1,184 World Heritage sites in 166 countries across the globe, with three situated in the Caribbean region. The Pitons Management Area in St. Lucia and Morne Trois Pitons National Park in Dominica had previously been designated. Two other sites in the OECS are inscribed under the cultural category—Antigua and Barbuda's Naval Dockyard and related archaeological sites and St. Kitts and Nevis's Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park.

Didacus Jules, OECS director general, has long advocated for Montagne Pelée's inclusion in the World Heritage List. "OECS member states have a rich, diverse, and unique history that reverberates through our mountains and valleys, and therefore, we are happy that Montagne Pelée and the Northern Pitons have joined the Pitons in St. Lucia and Dominica's Morne Trois Pitons National Park inscription under the natural category, along with the other sites around the world to share our stories," he said.

According to UNESCO, the global importance of Pelée and the Pitons du Carbet is based on the representation of volcanic elements, materials and processes. The eruption of 1902-1905 is considered a key event in the history of volcanology which had dramatic consequences for the town of St. Pierre, resulting in the tragic loss of lives and a heritage which is part of the culture of Martinique. Globally threatened species are found in this property, including the Martinique allobate (*Allobates chalcopis*), the Lacépède's ground snake (*Erythrolamprus cursor*) and the endemic Martinique oriole (*Icterus bonana*).

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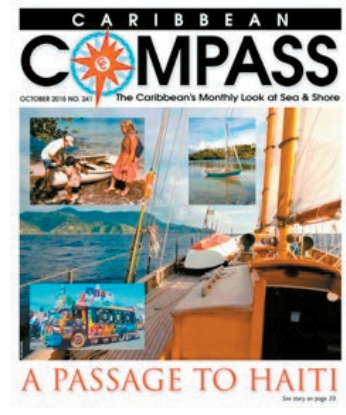
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Caribbean Multihull Challenge Registration Grows

PETER GUNN



Catalyst, *a Balance 482, glides off the wind in Anguilla Channel in the 2023 CMC Cruising Rally.*

The CMC alerts all multihulls – cruising and racing – to join in on what has become a must-do multihull regatta and festival February 1-4, 2024. The event offers flat out racing for CSA classes, destination time trials for cruising multihulls, and a sweet laid-back rally encompassing international overnights at Dutch St. Maarten, French St. Martin, and St. Barth's. As the CMC continues to develop, it's expanding to also include a larger one-design fleet of French built, VPLP-designed Diam 24s racing in their own class.

Instrumental in this effort is Pierre Altier, the Diam agent for the Caribbean who's succeeded so far in getting nine Diams for the 2024 event. Altier's enthusiasm for this French-built VPLP designed open trimaran is expected to result in more Diam 24s sailing not only in St Maarten, but also in Guadeloupe and the BVI, where fleets are already forming.

After the successful introduction of the cruising rally in 2023, the CMC is innovating again with a parade start time trial competition for cruising multihulls who have a CSA rating. This is for sailboats seeking a timed event from point A to point B that includes a rally overnight destination for each of the four days.

Early 2024 registration indicates a racing and rally fleet in excess of the 32 that turned out in 2023. Highlighted is the return of Todd Slyngstat's HH66 *Nemo*, absent in 2023. New this year is an Alibi 65 Surprise, a Thailand built cat featuring a hybrid electric drive. *CaribbeanMultihullChallenge.com; entries YachtScoring.com*

CALENDAR

December 2023

30 Nov-3 Course de L'Alliance, St. Maarten, St. Barts & Anguilla. www.smyc.com
1-2 Afro Fest Punta Cana, Dominican Republic
1-2 Los Rivera Destino, Coca-Cola Music Hall. San Juan, Puerto Rico
2 Gustav Wilmerding Memorial Race, BVI. westendyachtclubbvi.com
2 Book Launch, St. Martin Sea Life by Mark Yokohama, Amuseum Naturalis, St. Martin. amuseumnaturalis.com
2-4 Daddy Yankee, Coliseo de Puerto Rico, San Juan, Puerto Rico
4 Christmas Souk, Ana's Restaurant and Art Gallery, Antigua.
4-9 Antigua Charter Yacht Show. Antiguacharteryachtmeeting.com
5-10 Raid des Alizés, women's sports competition. raiddesalizes.com/en
5-15 Havana Film Festival, Havana, Cuba
7-11 Winter Pride Fest, San Juan, Puerto Rico
7-21 Bachata Festival and Dance, Dominican Republic. domibachata.com/program/program.html
8 Reggae Marathon, Negril, Jamaica. Reggaemarathon.com/2023/
8-10 Run Barbados Marathon. visitbarbados.org
8-10 Caribbean Foiling Championships, St. Martin. caribbeanfoiling.com
10 René González, Coca-Cola Music Hall, San Juan, Puerto Rico
10 Clean Coast Bonaire
11-13 Rasta Rootzfest, Negril, Jamaica. gowherewhen.com/event/rasta-rootzfest
12 Parade of Lanterns, Castries, St. Lucia. stlucia.org/en/experiences/festivals-events/
12 Gerardo Teissonnière, pianist, The Gallery Inn, San Juan Puerto Rico
13 Public holiday in St. Lucia (National Day – Festival of Lights and Renewal)
14-15 Potters Fair, Kingston, Jamaica. facebook.com/assnofjamaicanpotters/
15-17 Carriacou Parang Festival. puregrenada.com
15-2 Jan Sugar Mas 52 Festival, St. Kitts and Nevis. Skncarnival.com
16-24 Nine Mornings Festival, St. Vincent. discoversvg.com
16–1 Jan Year End Carnival, Monserrat
21 Winter Solstice
25 Public holiday in many places (Christmas Day)
26 Public holiday in many places (Boxing Day)
27 FULL MOON
27-6 Jan Crucian Christmas Carnival, St. Croix, USVI. stcroixtourism.com/christmas_festival.htm
31 Nelson's Pursuit Race, Antigua. antiguayachtclub.com.
31 New Year's Eve/Old Year's Night: Fireworks in many places. Public holiday in Cuba (Year End Celebration)

January 2023

1 Public holiday or 'recovery day' in many places (New Year's Day)
6 Public holiday in some places (Three Kings Day/Epiphany)
6 Viking Explorers rally departs from Canary Islands (approximate date). vikingexplorersrally.com.
7 RORC Transatlantic Race departs Canary Islands bound for Grenada. rorctransatlantic.rorc.org
7 Keelboat Season Championship, Race Day Two, St. Maarten. smyc.com/keelboat-season-championship/
8 International Women's Day
12-15 Virgin Islands Boating Exposition, Yacht Haven Grande Marina St. Thomas. visitusvi.com/press-release/vipca-launch-boating-exposition-january-2024
13–22 Barbados Sailing Week. roundbarbados.com
13 Latitude 18 Halyard Challenge Race, Tortola. royalbviyc.org/calendar.html
14 Oyster World Rally, Antigua. abyma.ag/events-calendar/
14–15 Martin Luther King Regatta, St. Thomas. stthomasyachtclub.org/sailing/regattas/mlk-regatta
15-21 St. Barts Music Festival. stbartsmusicfestival.org/festival

See the entire calendar of events at caribbeancompass.com/caribbean-events-calendar

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Crossing the channels between Eastern Caribbean islands, an ebb tide carries you off to leeward and a strong flood tide creates lumpy seas, so crossing with a favorable tide is faster and more comfortable. The table below, showing the local time of the meridian passage (or zenith) of the moon for this month, will help you calculate the tides.

Water generally tries to run toward the moon. The flood tide starts running eastward soon after moonrise, continues to run east until about an hour after the moon reaches its zenith (see TIME below) and then ebbs westward. From just after the moon's setting to just after its nadir, the tide runs eastward; and from just after its nadir to soon after its rising, the tide runs westward.

The first hour after moonrise, the westerly current is barely negated. The second hour the flood tide is stronger, the third and fourth hour it's strongest, then it eases off in the fifth and sixth hours. The maximum tide is three or four days after the new and full moons.

December 2023	
DATE	**TIME**
1	0306
2	0356
3	0443
4	0526
5	0607
6	0647
7	0726
8	0807
9	0850
10	0836
11	1027
12	1123
13	1224
14	1327
15	1429
16	1527
17	1622
18	1713
19	1801
20	1848
21	1935
22	2024
23	2125
24	2208
25	2304
26	0000 FULL MOON
27	0000
28	0055
29	0147
30	0236
31	0321

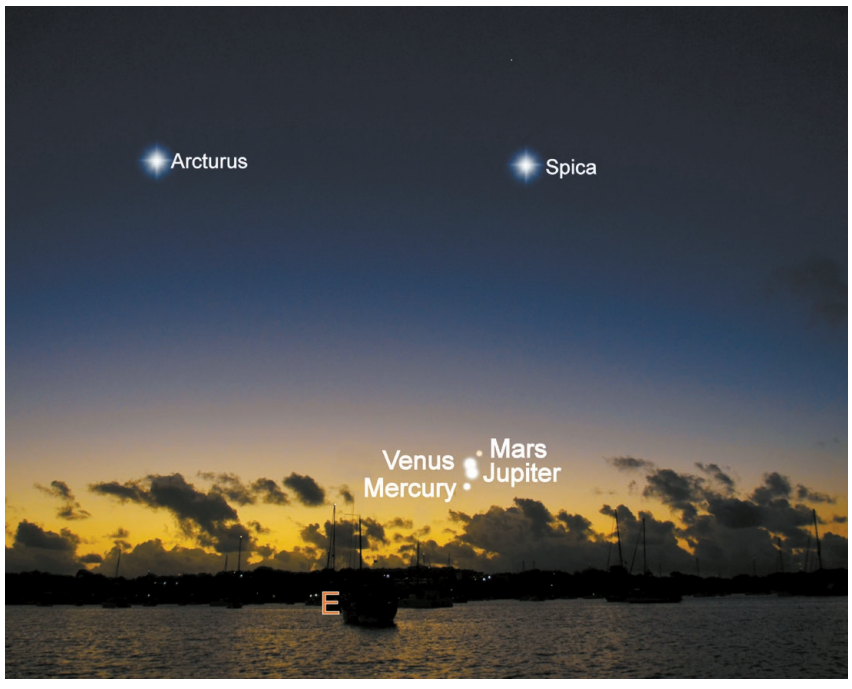
January 2024	
1	0403
2	0442
3	0521
4	0601
5	0642
6	0726
7	0814
8	0907
9	1005
10	1108
11	1212
12	1314
13	1412
14	1506
15	1557
16	1645
17	1733
18	1821
19	1911
20	2003
21	2058
22	2153
23	2248
24	2341
25	0000 FULL MOON
26	0030
27	0116
28	0159
29	0240
30	0319
31	0358

December Sky

Story and Photos by Jim Ulik

The December or winter solstice is approaching, and people are gearing up for the holiday season. Was there a notable celestial event that ancient civilizations associated with a god, gods or spirits, such as the Christmas Star? The actual date of this event is not documented. The movements of celestial objects were also thought to be connected to the weather and seasonal events. Infrequent astronomical events like eclipses, visible comets or the conjunction of planets were often considered religious manifestations. The natural procession of Venus and Jupiter in their orbits has these planets occasionally lining up creating bright apparitions.

Another event that took place about 2,022 years ago probably attracted a lot of attention. Look at Image 1. There was a conjunction between Jupiter, Venus, Mars and Mercury. To the naked eye the planets combined must have been a spectacular sight and shown very bright in the eastern sky. That natural event was sure to have religious significance for some believers. This close pairing of planets occurred in the year 0001 CE. Note that the year zero does not exist.



The conjunction of planets in the year 0001. How was this planetary grouping interpreted?

December nights may be filled with holiday lights but the night sky also has a light show of its own. Besides all the stars that can be seen on a clear and dark sky away from light pollution, there are 27 active meteor showers this December. The four major showers are the Quadrantids, Leonids, Geminids and Ursids.

Saturday, December 02

Out of the dark of the southern sky fly the Phoenicids. This is a variable meteor shower that may produce up to 100 meteors per hour. Earth is passing through a comet's debris field from November 28 – December 9. The meteors appear to radiate from the constellation Phoenix, named after the mythical bird that rose from its own ashes. The constellation was introduced in the 16th century by Dutch navigators.

Monday, December 04

Mercury reaches greatest eastern elongation of 21.3 degrees from the Sun. This is the best time to view Mercury since it will be at its highest point above the horizon in the evening sky. Look for it in the southwestern sky after sunset.

Wednesday, December 06

The December Phi Cassiopeiids meteor shower peaks tonight. These slow traveling meteors will appear red/orange in color. They can be seen radiating out of the northern sky from the area near the constellation Cassiopeia.

Thursday, December 07

This is the peak night for the Puppid–Velid meteor shower. The velocity of these meteors is approximately 82,770 mph (133,200 km/h). The maximum number of meteors expected to be visible from a dark location is around 10 per hour. These fast-moving meteors will appear blue/white in color.

Saturday, December 09

Orion has risen in the east followed by Monoceros, the constellation representing a unicorn. This faint pattern of stars holds the radiant of the Monocerotids meteor shower. This shower peaks tonight yet is active December 04 – 20. In keeping with the season this December constellation contains the Christmas Tree Cluster. The stars in this cluster appear pink and red. They form a cone shape looking like Christmas tree lights.

Thursday, December 14

The Geminids meteor shower peaks tonight. First appearing in the mid-1800s, this shower has become one of the best and most reliable events. The shower is expected to produce around 120 meteors per hour. They will appear yellow in color, shooting quickly across the sky. The Geminids is active December 04 – December 17.

Saturday, December 16

The list of meteor showers continues with the appearance of the Comae Berenicids. Meteors radiate out of an area east of the constellation Leo and west of Coma Berenices (the hair of Queen Berenice of Egypt). This shower is active December 12 – December 23.

Sunday, December 17

The waxing crescent Moon moves in close to Saturn. Both objects reside in Aquarius as they sink toward the west southwestern horizon. Tomorrow the Moon shifts into the stream of water that is being poured from the jar of Aquarius.

Wednesday, December 20

North or left of Leo is the area of sky where the December Leonis Minorid meteor shower originates. The area of sky can also be identified by an arc of stars known as the asterism (a pattern of stars within a larger constellation) Sickle. Both star formations rise around 2300h. This shower is active December 04 – February 04.

Thursday, December 21

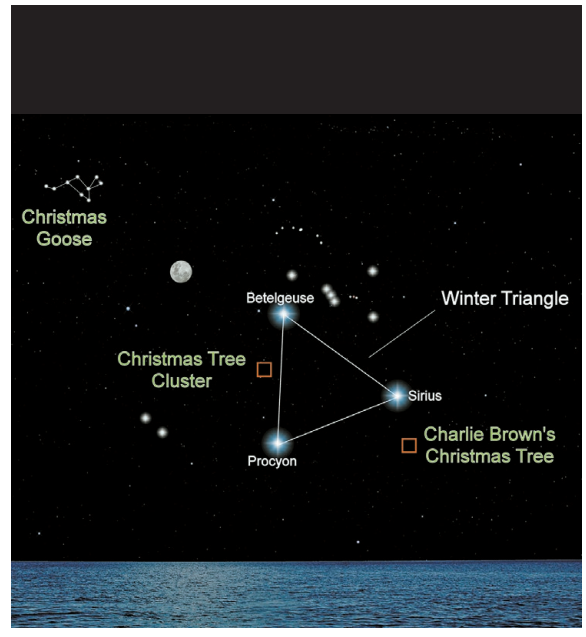
The Sun is shining directly over the 23.5 degrees south latitude. The Sun rises at 114 degrees and sets at 246 degrees on this first day of winter.

Friday, December 22

The Moon and Jupiter make a close approach tonight. They are currently positioned within two degrees of each other. North of this pairing is the constellation Perseus. Appropriate for the season there is an asterism named the Christmas Goose within the Perseus constellation.

Saturday, December 23

The Little Bear (Ursa Minor) pivots about Polaris in the northern sky. Tonight's peak meteor shower, appropriately named the Ursids, radiates out of this famous constellation. Shooting stars passing toward the south can be long-lived meteors crossing a wide area of the sky. The ones raining down northward are quick to disappear.



The eastern holiday sky on December 25 reflects the winter season.

Monday, December 25

With the exception of the Christmas Goose asterism, Image 2 shows two of the seasonal names approved by The International Astronomical Union (IAU). The Charlie Brown's Christmas Tree designation is NGC 2367. The Christmas Tree Cluster's designation is NGC 2264. The NGC (New General Catalogue) was first published in 1888. The list was a compilation of all known deep space objects.

Tuesday, December 26

Need to get your bearings? The Full Moon is setting in the west northwest at 299 degrees this morning as the Sun begins to rise. About 10 minutes after sunset the Full Moon rises above 61 degrees. The actual Full Moon moment is at 2033h.

**All times are given as Atlantic Standard Time (AST) unless otherwise noted.*

Jim Ulik sails aboard s/v Merengue.

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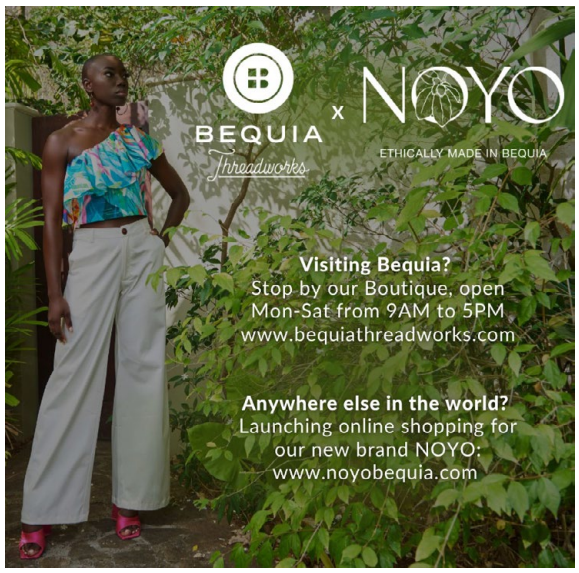
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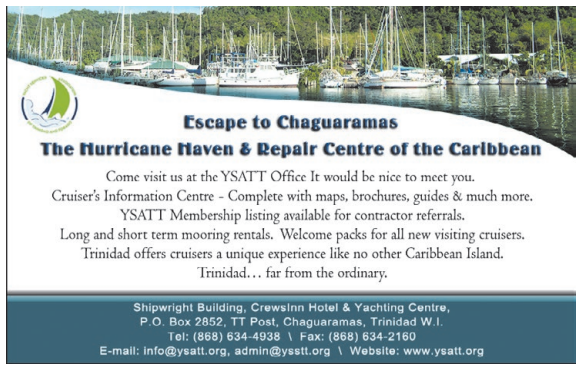
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by Jim Hutchinson



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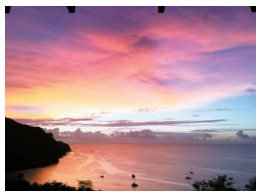
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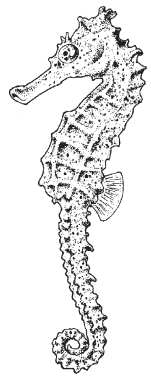
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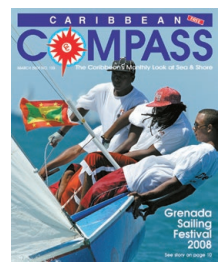
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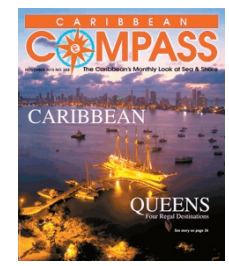
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