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COMPASS

FEBRUARY 2025 NO. 344

The Caribbean's Look at Sea & Shore

ALLONS-Y, ST. BARTS!

— SEE PAGE 28



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All is calm at Mero Beach, Dominica. That will change with the third annual PAYS Dominica Yachting Festival, a weeklong program of tours, beach parties and casual sailboat racing that takes place from March 22 - 30, 2025. For more information and a full list of activities, visit the organization's website (paysdominica.com).

HERB MCCORMICK

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On the Cover Allons-y (*Let's go*), *St. Barts*: *Behind the opulence of locales such as Gustavia Harbor, pictured here, St. Barts is much like many of the other Leeward Islands, with soft white sand beaches, nice hikes, good snorkeling, and affordable local restaurants. For more, turn to page 28.*

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Caribbean Compass

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THE CARIBBEAN'S OWN

By Theresa Nicholson



JAMES MITCHELL/WORLD CRUISING CLUB

Curtney Thomas is the only St. Lucian sailor in the 2024 ARC. "I realized I had a passion for it."

For some people, sailing 2,700 nautical miles across the Atlantic Ocean from the Canary Islands to St. Lucia might be called a lifetime achievement. For Curtney Thomas, it's called going home.

Curtney was the only Lucian sailing with the 2024 Atlantic Rally for Cruisers fleet, and one of three Caribbean sailors in the 2024 ARC and ARC+ fleets. When I first caught up with the 30-year-old in October, he was getting ready to leave Newport, Rhode Island, with the North American Rally to the Caribbean, as crew on the Swan 65 *Aurora*.

"We're jumping to Bermuda and then on to St. Maarten," Curtney told me. The weather looked promising, with 15 knots from the northwest. "We'll get through the Gulf Stream and we'll have a ni-i-i-iiice broad reach to Bermuda," he said, stretching out "nice" the way a St. Lucian sunset might stretch across the western sky.

Curtney started out boating on powerboats, fishing with his family and exploring St. Lucia's beaches and bays. Through training and professional courses, he secured the licenses needed to take tourists day sailing. From there, he joined several regattas and crewed on sailboats.



JAMES MITCHELL/WORLD CRUISING CLUB

Kishawn Harrigan, from Antigua (third from left), and Alex Slocock, from the Cayman Islands (far right), with Sizzle owners Simon Cook and Sally Bruce and Charlotte, their nine-month-old daughter.

"I realized I had a passion for it," he said. "I joined in the Bequia Regatta, then St. Maarten regattas." Now he's a caretaker to several boats during the off season and runs deliveries for the Moorings — oh, and then there's the five transatlantic crossings.

"Two times west-to-east, one from St. Maarten to Maderia, and the second time to the Azores, and on to Portugal. Two times east-to-west," Curtney said.

Last year he sailed from the Canary Islands to St. Lucia on a Swan 56.

"This is my first time doing the ARC, though," he said of his fifth crossing, as we spoke in Las Palmas before the November start of the World Cruising Club's (WCC) 2024 ARC.

The ARC sends the annual rally of sailboats across the Atlantic from Las Palmas, Grand Canary, to St. Lucia every fall. It's one of several rallies run by the WCC, which was formed by Jimmy Cornell in 1987 and is now run by Paul and Suzana Tetlow, along with a small team based in Cowes, in the United Kingdom, and a team of "yellow shirts" who support the WCC rallies around the world.

Curtney made the November crossing with yacht owner Dario Calogero and crew on the Italian-flagged Swan 56 *Why Not*. He's spent a couple of years working on the boat in Italy and part of his role on board is working with novice crew, a skill he honed while working with sailing schools in St. Lucia. He encourages new crew to limit their phone use during long crossings and pay attention to the sea.

"It's a strange feeling, where you can go off and be away from people, be in your element. It's a great feeling to be at sea," Curtney said. He never sails alone, even during short hops between the islands.

Does he consider himself a pro?

"Well I don't know if I'd say that. I move around quite a bit," he replies. "I hope to make a career of it."

He said that although he has a few friends in St. Lucia interested in sailing, it's not a big community. He smiles when asked what holds them back.

"Oh, they think people will go insane at sea, or something horrible will happen to you," he says. "You need to build up your confidence, do day sails, then longer trips, two-day, three-day-long trips, until you grow a passion for it."

Representing the Leewards and Cayman

Kishawn Harrigan, a 43-year-old-sailor from Antigua, and Alex Slocock, a 25-year-old sailor from the Cayman Islands, are in the same boat. Literally. Kishawn and Alex sailed aboard the new Outremer 55 *Sizzle*, a UK-registered multihull, during the 2024 ARC+ rally.

Like the ARC, the ARC+ fleet departs from Las Palmas, then stops in the Cape Verde Islands before continuing across the Atlantic to Grenada.

Owned by Simon Cook and Sally Bruce, *Sizzle* had the rally's youngest crew member, Simon and Sally's nine-month-old daughter Charlotte, so extra crew was important. The fast cat, one of the record-setting 27 multihulls in the 2024 ARC+, took line honors at the start and arrived second at Grenada's Camper & Nicholsons Port Louis Marina just behind Norwegian-flagged Outremer 52 *Salto*, crossing in just less than 12 days.

Kishawn said that although he has sailed with his friend Simon for many years, this was his first time in the ARC.

"We've sailed together for years. Simon bought a new boat and he called me up and asked if I had time to do the ARC with him and his better half," Kishawn said. "We've been close friends for a long time and have done a lot of sailing trips together — the Mediterranean and the West Coast of the United States — but never an Atlantic crossing. It's kind of hard to say no. It's something I've wanted to do ever since I was a young skipper, so I decided to check it off the bucket list."

Kishawn recalled that when he worked for Ondeck Maritime Training in Antigua, the company had Farr 65s do the ARC every year.

"I was a young skipper working there, I always told myself one of these days I will do that for my first Atlantic crossing, but that never happened."

He met a skipper on a 40-meter sailboat, doing daywork for him, and the skipper asked if he wanted to do a transatlantic crossing.

"We all knew what that answer would be. This was 2011. I did a super-yacht crossing, from Antigua to Palma."

Kishawn started sailing when he was five years old, with the Antigua Yacht Club in English Harbour. He watched all of the boats from around the world come through the Caribbean sailing capital during Antigua Sailing Week, Caribbean RORC 600, the superyacht regattas, the Valentine regatta and others.

"The thing that got me into sailing, as a kid growing up in English Harbour, was seeing all those big superyachts come and go, every year. I always wondered, 'What if I get on one of those boats and see the world?' So I did just that."

Channel 16

Swim 2 Sail Program Certifies Sailors

The Sint Maarten Yacht Club's Swim 2 Sail program concluded with the certification of all 28 of its participants.

The program for primary school students, begun in September, is designed to empower children who are not yet confident in the water or unable to swim. It also introduces children to the fun of sailing, and then to building confidence, fostering teamwork, and learning essential water safety and sailing skills.

In addition to their certificates, the children all received red sailing shirts with their school names on the back. These shirts are especially useful on the water, as they provide sun protection for the children.

Vincy Teen Wins Sailor of the Year Award

The 2024 Sylvester Ambrose Simmons Award for Youth Sailor of the Year went to 14-year-old Kai Marks-Dasent from the Vincy Sailing Club. A student at St. Joseph's Convent, Marriaqua, Kai was honored for his dedication both on and off the water, excelling in competition, and actively giving back to the sport, assisting at his club and mentoring new sailors.



SEBASTIAN CYRUS

Kai arrives at Bequia Head during his sponsored sail.

The award is given by the Sylvester Ambrose Simmons Memorial Foundation, honoring the legacy of the late passionate advocate for youth sailing and community engagement in Bequia. It was presented by Simmons's widow, Joan Simmons.

OECS Commission Launches Art Contest

The inaugural Watt's Art Sustainable Energy Art Contest, an initiative to promote awareness of sustainable energy through artistic expression, drew entries from eight member states. Iyondel Williams, 18, Grenada, took first prize, with the second and third prizes going to Rianna Heylinger, 18, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Nikira Sylvester, 16, Grenada.

Dominica Tourism Appoints Festivals Manager

Ayodele Andrew is the new Dominican Festivals and Events Manager. Her credits over two decades in event management, tourism, and hospitality include organizing the World Creole Music Festival, Mas Domnik, Antigua & Barbuda Carnival, and the St. Lucia Jazz and Arts Festival.



COURTESY DISCOVER DOMINICA

Ayodele Andrew

In her new role, Andrew will oversee the planning, execution, and marketing of Dominica's flagship events, with the goal of enhancing the global visibility of these festivals, further strengthening the island's tourism industry and preserving its cultural heritage.

Date Set for Women's Sailing Conference



NEW ORLEANS SAILING

Take the Helm offers an introduction to sailing for women.

The National Women's Sailing Association (NWSA) has expanded the 2025 National Women's Sailing Association Conference presented by American Sailing to three days, June 6-8 at the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg. The event welcomes women sailors of all skill levels, ages and backgrounds to workshops including Take the Helm, an introduction to sailing for women, plus a view into the marine industry and opportunities to meet accomplished cruisers and racers. Early Bird Registration begins March 1.

Sign up for the NWSA eNewsletter list for updates. Details will also be announced at https://www.womensailing.org and on the conference website (https://bit.ly/NWSA2025).



By Tad Richards

Things start to liven up in February, as the relatives we see twice a year have faded back into their own lives, and those benighted souls who still think that winter involves snow and ice are busy doing … what do they do, exactly? Down here, there's plenty to do, and plenty of places to do it. You can hit February running, with excitement from the first day to the last (which, this being February, is only 28 days farther down the road).

February 1-8: Cabarete Kite Festival, Dominican Republic

Take to the air, strapped onto a sail without a mast, for kitesurfing and wingfoiling, or trust the still-not-quite-solid footing of surfing or paddleboarding, or just enjoy as a spectator. Cabarete has built a reputation as the water sports capital of the Caribbean.

3-19: Bequia International Theater Festival

David Lyman profiled Bequia's version of dinner-theater in the January 2024 issue of *Caribbean Compass* (page 8), and the company is back this year with an expanded schedule. The plays are *John Lennon "Man of the Decade"* (February 3-4), *Tuesdays with Morrie* (7-8), *Six Dance Lessons in Six Weeks* (12-13), *The Mind Reading Lawyer* (14-15), *An Act of Grace* (13-19). Find out more at tickets.bequiashows.com.



COURTESY HOLETOWN FESTIVAL

Dancers at Holetown Festival

9-16: Holetown Festival, Barbados

You were looking for music? Well, here it is! Barbados comes alive with a panoply of styles, including Gospel, Classical, Tuk Band, and Calypso, and a variety of other attractions, including a vintage car show. holetownfestivalbarbados.org.

13-16: Bonanza Festival, Magdalena, Colombia

This celebration of electronica and world music is indeed a world magnet, featuring talent from the US (**Aurora Halal**), London/Berlin (**Gwenan**), France (**Ivan Smagghe**), Italy (**Marco Shuttle**) and points east and west, as well as some hot local talent. They'll rock around the clock. Age cutoff 18+. musicfestivalwizard.com/festivals/bonanza-festival-2025/



DIGITAL PAINTING BY TAD RICHARDS

Aurora Halal

15-17: Kaaboo Festival, Cayman Islands

Keep an eye on this one, as they generally have some major acts. But none announced yet.

The other probably big festival is the **Barcelo Desalia Electronic Dance Music Festival**, a week-long extravaganza held in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic in February, billed as the largest electronic dance festival in the Caribbean. If you were going to San Francisco in the hippie days, you were advised to wear flowers in your hair. If you're going to Punta Cana, you're expected to wear white. So you can plan your wardrobe. But when should you slot it in your calendar? Sorry … as of our deadline, no date set yet.

Even more elusive is the **Santo Domingo Pop** festival. The website for the Barcelo Hotel Group says "You may have been to concerts before, but you've never been to one quite like Santo Domingo Pop." No one else seems to be publicizing it at all. I guess "you've never been to one quite like it" could also have been said of the infamous Fyre Festival, but let's hope Santo Domingo Pop is less of a will-o'-the-wisp. No info on it yet.

Carnivals are always a staple of Caribbean merrymaking, especially in the month of love and Mardi Gras. The Dominican Republic turns the entire month over to its **Carnaval Dominicano**. Valentine's Day, February 14, is celebrated in feminist circles as V-Day, with a reading of Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues*, but on St. Croix it's the **Valentine's Day Jump-Up**. Many celebrate the day by taking their love out for a special meal and a bottle of wine, and you can do that at the **British Virgin Islands Food and Wine Festival,** starting on Valentine's Day and running for a week.

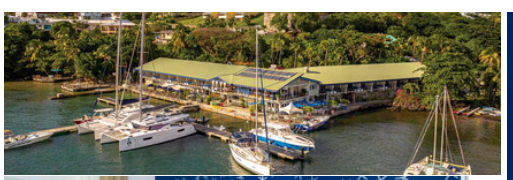
Celebration continues as the month winds down. Starting on February 21 and running through March 4, the **Carnival Ponce.** February 23-March 5 brings the **Curacao Carnival**. The hurricane-embattled Union Island continues its resurrection with its **Conch Festival** from February 24-26. And Trinidad finishes off the month with its **Trinidad Carnival Week,** February 26-March 5.

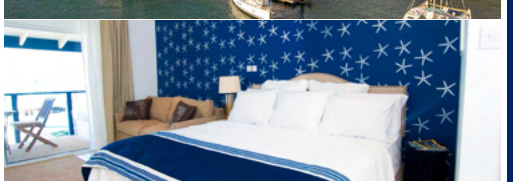
Have a happy, love and music-filled February!

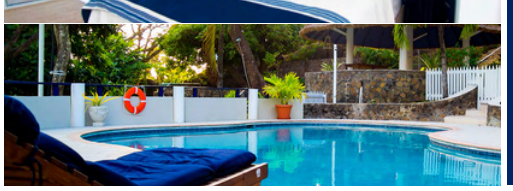
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A Thanksgiving Deed for 2025

Dear *Compass*,

My Thanksgiving good deed for the day. Probably for the year.

Heading back to my boat in my dinghy from a breakfast joint, I see this man standing straight up in his battered and old fiberglass skiff, going nowhere fast. When I got closer, I see him furiously yanking on the pull cord of a turn-of-the-century outboard engine that stubbornly refuses to fire. At first, he is too proud to accept a tow.



Thanksgiving tow

"No thanks, I'll just drift to shore."

With no wind to push him and little current to take him, where he hopes to drift to and when he expects to arrive are not at all clear.

"No, I'm not going to let you just drift."

He throws me a line, I leash him up, and off we go.

I have been helped on and off the water by different people for different things. I was thankful for the little help I could offer this unusual character.

Be thankful for every day. Tomorrow is not guaranteed. Every day is a gift.

Damian R. LaPlaca

Wrecked Fleet on Carriacou

Dear Elaine,

After Beryl, *Compass* has reported many views and news about what's happened in this nice island. My wife and I were in France on our river boat during the hurricane. Our friends Freddie and Jaqui were taking care of our two ketches, *Mikado of Sark* (66 feet) and *Lady White* (57 feet), which they charter in high season.

With Beryl approaching, a lot of boats squeezed into the mangrove area to gain protection from the swell, including a large, locally owned steel boat of around 80 tons. As was widely reported, boats were subjected to massive destruction, including my two ketches, which now have broken masts, holes in the hulls, and more. The cost of the damage is tremendous, and we carried no insurance. Consequently, the Aseri Charter (http://asericharter.com) fleet will miss high season 2025.

Best regards,

Dominique Bouquet

DOMINIQUE BOUQUET



Mikado of Sark *before and after*

Friendship from Cuba

Dear Shellese, Tad, Kelly, Elaine, Dan,

I am pleased to greet you very carefully on behalf of the Hemingway International Yacht Club of Cuba and on my own behalf.

For our part, we feel very happy and honored by the close relationships of friendship and collaboration that have united us with Caribbean Compass for many years and we are very grateful for the support provided in the dissemination of our information that has contributed to enriching our friendly ties with the international nautical community, especially with that of the Caribbean.

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

Happy holidays and prosperous and happy new year!

Commodore Escrich

Hemingway International Yacht Club of Cuba






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Superyacht Challenge Antigua
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Antigua Budget Marine 22nd Laser Open & 7th Optimist Open
7-11 APRIL
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RORC Centenary

In 2025, the Royal Ocean Racing Club (RORC) proudly marks its centenary, with a full schedule of events including two of particular interest to Caribbean cruisers:



MATT DICKENS

The RORC is housed at St. James Place in London.

January 12: The 3,000-mile RORC Transatlantic Race launched the season from Lanzarote, Canary Islands, making landfall at Camper & Nicholsons Port Louis Marina in Grenada.

February 24: The RORC Caribbean 600 challenges sailors with a high-speed dash around 11 Caribbean islands, starting and finishing in Antigua.

"The 2025 season promises not only exhilarating racing, but also exceptional social events at our elegant RORC St James's Clubhouse in London, and the beautifully transformed RORC Cowes Clubhouse on the Isle of Wight," said RORC Commodore Deb Fish.

Sixth Annual Bocas Del Toro Regatta

Ray Jason reports: The Sixth Annual Bocas del Toro Regatta will take place on Feb 15, 2025, hosted by the Bocas Marina. Bocas is part of an archipelago on the Caribbean side of Panama.



RAY JASON

Kumulani *at the Bocas del Toro Regatta*

For skippers in the Eastern Caribbean who are thinking about heading west, this is a chance to discover the "Undiscovered" Caribbean with its great surf, fine beaches and dazzling wildlife including sloths, monkeys and tiny M&M colored mini-frogs.

The regatta is like the area — laid back. Some boats go all in, but many race and chill at the same time. A few even saunter around the course with their dinghies still in their davits. Of course, that does get them to the Awards Banquet earlier.

For details contact Jason (seagypsy38@aol.com).

Salty Dawgs: Destination Azores



COURTESY SDSA

Azores

Plans are well underway for the first-ever Salty Dawg Sailing Association Rally to the Azores in spring 2025. With planned starts from either St. Maarten or Hampton, Virginia, on May 18, the fleet will coalesce in Bermuda for final preparations and festivities, and will then prepare to depart for the Azores on June 1. The passage across the Atlantic should take about two weeks, depending on boat speed and weather. Participation will be limited to the first 25 boats that pay the rally fee ($550 per boat) and pass a general vetting by the SDSA rally management team.

The Salty Dawgs will conduct webinars for skippers and those contemplating the run. The next session is scheduled for January 9 at 17:00 EST, with a focus on the Azores as a cruising destination.

For details log on to the group's website (www.saltydawgsailing.org).

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The Enemy of Good Health in Puerto Rico and USVI? Extreme Weather

Story and photo by Pearl Marvell

Puerto Rico has seen an alarming increase in deaths in recent years caused by cardiovascular conditions, diabetes, and mental health conditions like overdose, alcoholism, and dementia. There are a number of reasons for this, but the 32-chapter Fifth National Climate Assessment, released in November of 2023, warned that more intense and frequent hurricanes and other extreme weather events caused by climate change will likely bring more illness, higher mortality, and an overall decrease in quality of life to citizens in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

"Perhaps we are among the least responsible for climate change, but we are being among the most impacted," said Pablo Méndez-Lázaro, one of the lead researchers for the chapter on Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Méndez-Lázaro is also associate professor at the department of environmental health of the University of Puerto Rico graduate school of public health.

One big complication: Many health care professionals left Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria, and the island has lost 46 percent of its practicing doctors in the past decade. Hospitals and health programs closed, and the hardship worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. One study conducted after Maria found that one in 14 school-aged children on the island had post-traumatic stress disorder due to the hurricane.

The national assessment, which was published for the first time in Spanish in April 2024, is filled with information on the effects of climate change and potential solutions in the United States. This is the first full assessment of the devastating effects of Hurricanes Maria and Irma on the islands in 2017. Chapter 23 focuses on Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, examining the climate crisis in the context of the sociological, psychological, and historical situation of this region. It paints a more nuanced and complex picture than the fourth assessment in 2018, which focused on the effects of climate change on rainfall, coastal systems, and rising temperatures.

Hurricanes Maria and Irma caused more than 4,000 deaths. Seven years later, the islands of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands were still trying to recover. Scientific studies show that global warming intensified the torrential rains of Hurricane Maria, which left some communities in Puerto Rico without drinking water and electricity for almost a year.

"Things like poverty and inequity exacerbate these external events," Méndez-Lázaro said.

The U.S. national average poverty rate is 11.6 percent, while the poverty rate in the U.S. Virgin Islands is at 22.8 percent and Puerto Rico's is 42.7 percent.

The monster storms have forced communities on these islands to incorporate climate resilience into their lives, such as building microgrids and establishing local emergency protocols should another storm hit.



Many parts of the island are difficult to access, especially after a hurricane, which has led some communities to build microgrids to ensure their residents have power even after a powerful storm.

"These extreme events have been like a game changer and have promoted unity, structure, organization with community leaders, and many organizations to seek social transformation toward sustainability, adaptation, and addressing issues of injustice," Méndez-Lázaro said,. He expressed hope that local communities and governments can continue working together to co-design solutions.

Much work remains if these Caribbean islands are to mitigate the effects of climate change.

"Although there are certain indications of political will, we lack the economic resources allocated to work with each of the courses of action or strategies identified to adapt," Méndez-Lázaro said.

In Puerto Rico, a law for the adaptation and mitigation of climate change was introduced in 2019. In December 2023, public hearings concluded for a draft of an islandwide plan to address the effects of climate change. The draft was later submitted to the Puerto Rican legislature but has yet to be brought to the floor for consideration by the legislative assembly.

Still, the government has drawn criticism for acting too slowly to make the island more resilient, like failing to crack down on illegal construction along the coast that puts residents at risk should another strong storm hit.

In 2024, the U.S. government promised $3 million to the U.S. Virgin Islands to combat and adapt to climate change. The project includes funds for temperature data collection and water resource initiatives, and will also be used to restore historical documents damaged by storms and improve the infrastructure of buildings containing these documents.

Mendez-Lázaro said the next steps will be to continue expanding communication and resilience networks among Caribbean islands. "Our intention is to work at the regional level throughout the Caribbean basin," he said.

This story was originally published in January 2024 by Yale Climate Connections and is republished in the Caribbean Compass *with permission. https://yaleclimateconnections.org/2024/01/climate-change-stresses-physical-and-mental-health-in-puerto-rico-and-u-s-virgin-islands*

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Choose the Right Bike for Your Cruising Adventure

Story and photos by Jason Spitz

When Monica, my co-captain and life partner, and I pulled away from our Florida dockside home in the spring of 2020, we sold our cars, furniture, and belongings, including our beloved carbon fiber street bicycles. After years of local and long-distance cycling, we questioned whether we wanted (and more importantly, would we use) folding bicycles aboard our 40-foot catamaran, S/V *Breathe*. Reviewing the options at that time, we decided to forgo bikes.



Monica on the trail

Fast forward to the spring of 2024. Following four years of full-time tropical cruising, we've walked a lot and concluded that 5-7 miles is the limit we enjoy walking most days. That provides a 3.5-mile maximum distance from any anchorage/dock. And for us, it's been limiting. Yes, sometimes you can rent a car/bike, hitchhike, or get a loaner. But often, it's not feasible, safe, or easy. In Nevis, we rented bicycles for a full-day island tour several years ago. Searching the internet today yielded no availability at several Nevis rental sites and bike tour prices that start at $125 per person for 2.5 hours! We've found that daily rentals throughout the Caribbean generally range from $10 to over $75 per bicycle, depending on location and type. And, of course, there's no guarantee on condition, size, or availability. We've received bicycles with chains that don't stay on and gearing or brakes that don't work.

Picturing ourselves cycling through tropical island settlements and coastal towns, grabbing provisions, and enjoying scenic rides along the shoreline, we decided the right folding bike would enhance our cruising experience and extend our adventures. But let's face it — space and weight are at a premium on a cruising boat and deciding whether to bring a folding bike along can feel like a big dilemma. With feedback from fellow cruisers, a lot of online research, and discussions with bike shops and manufacturers, we share some questions to ask yourself about adding bicycles to your boat, including the pros and cons of having a folding bicycle on board, and compare several brands to help you make an informed choice that suits your boat, budget, and lifestyle.

First, ask these questions:

1. Did you bicycle before you were on the boat? Do you enjoy biking? Will you likely use the bikes?
2. How much weight can you lift safely from your boat to the dock and/or dinghy?
3. Is biking accessible and are the roads safe for the areas you will cruise?
4. How far do you want to venture from your anchorage/dock?

If the answers lead to a yes decision, then set some parameters for your bicycle selection. These were the features that were most important to us:

- Bike weight of 30 pounds or less, inclusive of fenders and a rear rack
- Comfortable geometry and capable of at least 225-pound rider weight
- 20-inch wheels or larger
- "Rust-free" componentry and well-made
- $1,000 maximum budget per bike

These were most important to us because choosing the wrong bike can lead to frustration — think about struggling with a heavy frame while trying to get it on board or dealing with a complicated folding mechanism that doesn't work when you need it most. Not to mention the disappointment of discovering your chosen ride doesn't handle well on uneven terrain, doesn't have adequate gearing, or rusts on/in your boat and quickly becomes unusable.

Our desired features removed e-bikes from consideration due to weight and/or wheel size, as well as our desire to not add additional portable lithium-ion batteries on the boat. After reviewing "inexpensive" ($250-500) folding model features and online reviews, we also removed those from consideration. They typically are made of "carbon steel" so they are extremely prone to rust, and most utilize low quality parts overall. Beware of those models, as they will certainly rust, and many have been deemed "unsafe" by multiple riders due to poor construction, parts, and mechanisms. Full-size big box store non-folding bikes can be found for as little as $150 and can be strapped to the lifelines, but they're heavy, made of steel, and typically have only one gear. You're lucky if they last a season in a marine environment. Brompton folding bikes are unsuitable due to the small wheel size, lack of available gearing for most models, and the extremely high price for rust-resistant models.

In the remainder of this article, we'll dive into the three options that met our must-have feature list: the Dahon Mariner, the Priority Folder, and the Zizzo Marino.

Feature	Dahon Mariner	Priority Folder	Zizzo Marino
Price (list)	$949	$949	$899
Bike Weight	27 lbs	29 lbs	27.5 lbs
Size Folded	26x13x32in	31x16x30in	27x13x31in
Max Weight	230 lbs	230 lbs	240 lbs
Speeds	DAHON Custom 8-Speed Rear Derailleur	NEXUS 8-Speed internal geared hub	Shimano Altus 8-Speed Rear Derailleur
Cassette/ Chain	Aluminum cassette & YNB Chain	Gates CDN-22t sprocket & Gates Carbon Drive belt	Shimano HG 11-32T stainless cassette & KMC "rustbuster" chain
Easy/Secure Folding	Y	Y	Y
Front/Rear Fenders	Y	Y	Y
Cargo Rack & Kickstand	Y	Y	Y
Front/Rear Fenders	Y	Y	Y

On the web, find these companies at:

- https://usa.dahon.com/products/mariner-d8-brushed?variant=31293180117041
- prioritybicycles.com/products/folder
- zizzo.bike/products/marino

Overall, the specifications and costs of these three competitors are relatively similar and represent the three best choices for average-size cruising boats. The Dahon Mariner has been around for many years and has historically been the "boater bike choice." Although they are a solid brand, we have not been impressed by the Mariner bicycles we've seen on boats and at marinas and are not a fan of stainless-steel chains in the marine environment. Also, Dahon uses many custom parts, which become problematic to replace. And we know everything metal rusts and requires replacement in a marine environment. So just as in 2020, the Mariner was a "no" for us.

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Zizzo, known for economical folding bikes, launched the Marino in 2024. It claims to have upgraded most of the components, parts, screws, nuts, and bolts to rust-proof/resistant materials to bring you a rust-resistant rating of 99.75 percent (based on a 24-hour saltwater spray test). We have not seen this bicycle in person yet, but we like the fact that Zizzo mainly uses Shimano and other off-the-shelf non-proprietary components. However, the bike's chain and cassette remain traditional stainless steel. And that means grease, dirt, and maintenance. Zizzo often discounts bikes substantially and of the three bikes, you'll likely find the lowest price on this model.

Finally, the Priority Folder. Spoiler Alert! It's the one we chose and have been riding for the last several months. When I began my search this year, I remembered reading about "carbon belts" and "sealed internal hubs," so I started searching for folding bicycles that might have these features. When I found Priority Bicycles, they were new to me, but it turns out it's a small New York City company that started in 2014.



Two bikes, two bikers, one dinghy

In reviewing the Priority Folder sales materials, I found the focus is on the urban commuter, and the boating community was non-existent. I located nothing online from riders who were cruisers. So, I contacted Priority to ask more questions and offer a boater's perspective on the bikes. They responded and offered to ship us two bicycles. We love the carbon drive belts and internally geared hubs. There's no grease, no maintenance, and no mess. After a recent bike ride through the mud and sand, we simply hosed off the wheels, and they look like new. We've found shifting easy and intuitive. The bikes feel steady off-road and on-road and handle bumps fine. We'll see how the Folder holds up long-term to the marine elements, but based on the quality of components, and five months of use, we believe they will do well.

According to the Priority Bicycle story, the company states: "We're committed to making the best low-maintenance bicycles in the world, period. Our strategy is simple: high-quality parts, an efficient supply chain, low overhead, and an online business model. No gimmicky bells and whistles. No frills." We've found this to be accurate, along with the Best Customer Service claim. Staff respond seven days a week to text, chat, email, and phone calls.

An example: one of my pedals was not tightened into the crankshaft and stripped out the crank on the fourth or fifth ride. In defense of Priority and all the other online sellers, they all recommend having a bike shop check and tune the bicycle prior to riding. We did not. When I sent a photo and asked to get another crank arm, they just sent me a new one the same day and stated the obvious — pedals must be kept tight or they'll do this. I wasn't charged for the replacement.

Ultimately, the best folding bicycle for your cruising boat will depend on your personal preferences, space onboard, and budget. Whichever bike you choose, having a compact and portable mode of transportation on board will enhance your cruising experience and make exploring new destinations a breeze.

Jason Spitz and Monica Schandel are co-captains of S/V Breathe*, a 1999 Manta 40 catamaran, and partners in their underwater photography business, Breathe Sail Dive, LLC. Both have held USCG master captain's licenses with sailing endorsements and have been sailing for most of their lives. Follow their adventures at www.facebook.com/breathesaildive and purchase their photography at www.breathesaildive.com*

Priority Bicycles offers Caribbean Compass *readers a 10 percent discount on Priority Folder bicycles using the discount code BREATHE (Note: The authors received their Folders from Priority Bicycles. They do not receive any additional compensation for reviews or sales of Priority Bicycles or accessories).*





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Dazzled in Dominica

Story and photos by Herb McCormick



Peter Bourke, Imagine *skipper, and his crewmate, Herb McCormick, were the winners of the fun race during the yachting festival.*

The destination was the verdant Caribbean island of Dominica, the island nation in the Caribbean Sea's Lesser Antilles chain sandwiched between the French isles of Guadeloupe and Martinique. The goal was to partake of the fun, music, food and camaraderie of last March's Second Annual PAYS Dominica Yachting Festival, a weeklong celebration to benefit PAYS, the Portsmouth Association of Yacht Security.

My ignorance regarding this entire venture was twofold: I'd never been to Dominica and I had no clue what PAYS was all about. However, when my old mate Hank Schmitt invited me to come along for the festivities aboard his sweet Swan 48, *Avocation*, I reckoned there was nothing to lose. What transpired was one of the best weeks of my sailing life.

But first, we had to get there.

It is almost precisely 170 nautical miles, more or less due south, from our departure point on St. Maarten's Simpson Bay to Dominica. We were close-hauled in the easterly trades for our entire one-tack overnight voyage, and it was a bumpy ride. But there were some definite highlights. Off St. Barts, we caught a glimpse of the impressive fleet of super yachts competing in the annual St. Barts Bucket regatta. At sunrise, we enjoyed a respite from the relentless easterlies, sluicing down the lee of Guadeloupe. The last 17 miles of open water were sporty, but exactly 26 hours after hoisting sail, we picked up a mooring in Prince Rupert Bay fronting the volcanic black-sand beach and the funky coastal town of Portsmouth on Dominica's northwest coastline.

Moments after catching a ride ashore on one of the PAYS water taxis, the first of many surprises happened when one of the locals caught a glimpse of our skipper, a dude I've known for decades. But never by this handle.

"Look!" he called to his pals. "It's Daddy Hank!"

Who's Your Daddy?

There are several good reasons that longtime voyager Hank Schmitt is a rather beloved father figure along the waterfront of Dominica. After decades of roaming the oceans under sail — and through his related business, Offshore Passage Opportunities (OPO), the networking service that has helped countless sailors realize their own voyaging dreams — with PAYS, Schmitt is continuing to pay it forward.

The tale of how a native New Yorker from Long Island Sound became a favored patron to a Caribbean island is, well, a winding one indeed.

The sailing bug bit Schmitt early, at the tender age of seven, when he started racing dinghies in junior programs at various yacht clubs on his home waters. In high school at Rhode Island's Portsmouth Abbey, he starred on the sailing team while working summers at a boatyard back home and sailing his dad's Cal 2-30. After graduation in 1977, with a one-way ticket to Florida, he finagled his way aboard a Morgan One Tonner to race in the prestigious Southern Ocean Racing Conference (SORC), the major big-boat yacht-racing series of the time.

At 19 in Houston, he hopped aboard his first offshore oil rig; it began a seven-year odyssey that took him from the US to Europe to Africa, and included his first transatlantic voyage, from Boston to Italy on a 400-foot drill ship at 8 knots. Thus, a pattern of movement was established, toward new adventures and blue water. And it turned out he was just getting going.

Back home in Huntington, New York, after the oil business cratered, he launched his own rigging and dive business, spent a few harrowing winters fishing commercially out of Montauk, and started doing yacht deliveries. Lots of them. Hundreds of thousands of miles. After one, in 1987, he landed a repossessed Tayana 37 that he renamed *Hunk-a-Schmitt* and lived aboard for 13 years. In 1992, he sailed it in Jimmy Cornell's "America 500" rally commemorating the 500th anniversary of Columbus's famous voyage, visiting 25 ports in 10 months with a pair of solo Atlantic crossings.

That led to, among other things, founding OPO and the annual North America Rally to the Caribbean (NARC), during which he eventually ran a fleet of Swans back and forth from their charter bases in Rhode Island and St. Maarten each year (and earned some extra dough selling crewing berths to fledgling voyagers). His own Swan, the 48-foot *Avocation*, always led the parade.

That annual Caribbean pilgrimage is what first drew Schmitt to Dominica. For years, after arriving in the islands, he'd do a standard circuit of charters for OPO members: the St. Maarten Heineken Regatta, a swing through the British Virgin Islands, Antigua Sailing Week. When the BVI portion started to get old, a fellow skipper offered a fresh suggestion: "Check out Dominica."

During that first visit, around 2012, Schmitt met a boat boy named Albert operating a dilapidated skiff. He tapped some OPO members for a contribution for the materials to build Albert a new boat. The next time he visited (with some cache with the PAYS locals after helping Albert out), he realized that the few moorings he'd seen off Portsmouth were missing. The OPO crew stepped up again, eventually raising more than $20,000 for several dozen new moorings.

That led to the first organized PAYS fundraisers, originally called Yachting Appreciation Week (the second one, in 2015, drew over 100 boats), which helped fund a seaside PAYS pavilion and adjacent docks. The COVID pandemic stopped the momentum (though Schmitt continued to raise and send money to help out several struggling Dominican families, and somewhere in there landed a nickname). But once normalcy returned, so did the weeklong celebration, rebranded as the Yachting Festival, with barbecues, tours, beach parties, and much more.

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For me, arriving for the 2024 PAYS party aboard *Avocation*, something was very clear right from the outset. It's pretty great showing up in Dominica in the company of Daddy Hank.



"Daddy Hank" Schmitt

Embracing "Nature's Island"

It's hard to say what was the best part of the festival, as it was all pretty damn festive. But we'll start with the people, especially Team *Avocation*: Daddy, of course; his longtime Long Island mates, Alex Hummel and Dave Evans (the latter sailed down aboard skipper Peter Bourke's Class 40, *Imagine*, a nifty yacht that added much to my own personal experience); and OPO member Don Geier, a Kansas man who in retrospect probably had no idea (like me) of what he was getting himself into. And then there was the PAYS posse, with ringleader Eddison Laville and a cast of characters as colorful as their own monikers: Cobra, Toxic, Blackie, Boy-Boy, and so many more.

A few more things stand out, especially the dazzling beauty of this rich, fertile island. Dominica has been called the Caribbean's "Nature Island," and with good reason. With its steep peaks, dense rainforest, rushing waterfalls, and abundant flora and fauna, it is jaw-droppingly gorgeous.

It's become known for eco-tourism, again with good reason. Those aforementioned black-sand beaches (which, to my eye, are nothing less than sensational) luckily deterred the arrival of Club Med-style resorts that afflict many a Caribbean island, and the overall vibe remains inviting, laid back and unspoiled. (That said, the Chinese are making massive investments, and there's plenty of new development underway, including major roads and a big international airport. My advice? Go now.)

Perhaps the best, easiest, most inclusive way to experience it is also the simplest: Take a hike. As *Avocation* was a bit crowded, Alex and I had decamped to shoreside quarters at the Mango Garden Cottages, which are run by Eddison's Swiss wife, Sylvia, who invited us on "a morning stroll." With a spirited quartet of happy pooches, we ascended an uphill trail past wandering goats and terrace gardens of cabbage and bananas to the Diablo Crater, an arresting destination near a pretty spot called Sulphur Springs (its cool water was a lovely place to dip weary toes). A couple of hours later, Alex and I were drenched in sweat, while Sylvia and the dogs appeared fresh as daisies. Much too late, Alex made an astute observation: "It's probably not a great idea to go on a steep hike with a Swiss woman." Thanks, Captain Obvious.

That turned out to be just a warmup for the next day's trek. Dominica is circled by a 14-stage, 115-mile long-distance hiking route called the Waitukubuli National Trail, and Sylvia dropped Alex, Dave and me off at the trailhead to Stage 13, the Penville section, listed on the map as a "moderate" hike of 8 kilometers, or about 5 miles. All I can say is, I'm glad we didn't tackle a "difficult" route. It was a true wilderness trail, with crazy vegetation, incredible cliffside ocean views and plenty of sharp switchbacks, on one of which I was almost knocked into oblivion on a narrow path by a burro going up while I was headed down. By the end, some five hours and a rainstorm later, we were all toast. But also beginning to understand Dominica in elemental terms.



Kenneth Gussie, guide for island tour. Don't call him Kenny G!

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The next excursion, thankfully, was back to sea level and decidedly more mellow: a float up the Indian River with Albert, a fine guide, on the oars. The "Indians" for which it was named were the indigenous island Carib people, before the colonists from Spain, France and Great Britain showed up with predictably horrible results. Dominica boasts some 365 rivers, Albert told us as we slipped beneath a dense canopy of foliage and past century-old trees, their roots deep and tangled. Along the way, he pointed out the nests of termites and hummingbirds, and coconut crabs skittered along the shoreline. What's left of the original Carib clans now live in villages to the north, but this was a serene place. Their spirit was still there.



PAYS base in Portsmouth

We didn't get a true sense of how vast and diverse Dominica was, however, until we piled into a van for an overland tour with another knowledgeable local named Kenneth Gussie. (He spelled it out in my notebook and said, "Don't call me Kenny G," though unfortunately for him, everybody does.) By any name, Kenneth was a passionate, knowledgeable ambassador for his homeland, which he called "the island of dreams. What are you looking for? Rivers and mountains? Caribbean culture? Fresh organic food? Eco-tourism? Where you can just be yourself without worries, and have great times?

"I'm going to make Dominica smile," he said. "That's what I'm going to do." He was as good as his word. It actually took us two days to take it all in, and that we did.

Kenneth spoke of the place's rich history: the different and lasting influences of all those earlier European colonizers (Columbus, on his second voyage, gave Dominica its name, the Latin for "Sunday," on the day he sailed past); and its tumultuous break for independence from Great Britain, in 1979. He had fond


Hank aboard Avocation

comments for the recent influx of the Chinese: "Very good friends. They teach us farming techniques, fishing techniques." He also waxed poetically on the perfection of curried goat.

We drove from the top of the island to the bottom, all 29 miles. We took in the national parks, including the one called Morne Diablotins, home to Dominica's highest peak (4,747 feet).

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Herb and Peter, winners of the Race to Mero

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We had a look at the banana plantations, the fishing harbors and the botanical gardens in Roseau, the country's busy capital. We stopped in the Indian reserve and picked up some crafts and souvenirs. We swam in the Titou Gorge and paid a visit to the Trafalgar Falls, where Hank and I scrambled up the boulders and had a refreshing soak in the waterfall's cool, rocky pools. Everything was amazing. Thank you, Mr. Gussie, you did a wonderful job. All smiles.

Lastly, there was the one activity that put me firmly back in my more natural element: racing sailboats. The midweek "Race to Mero" was as casual as could be, and meant to showcase the new set of PAYS moorings installed off the beachfront of Mero Beach. There was no start or finish line, you could motor for five minutes at the outset, and the whole idea was just to go sailing and have fun. Which I'm always up for.

And that's precisely what transpired aboard Bourke's *Imagine*, aboard which he'd invited me to sail as a double-handed entry. Bourke had originally planned to do the Global Solo Challenge singlehanded round-the-world race aboard the boat, but an untimely bout with COVID sidelined those plans. Now, he was cruising the islands. His well-prepared 40-footer was a joy to sail, and even with fitful breeze, we managed to make 8 knots at one point and had a fine time slipping down Dominica's coastline in the company of another half-dozen racers. And Mero Beach was a sweet spot to pick up that mooring.

In a related aside, it must be noted: Cannabis is legal for the residents of the Nature Island, and if you happen to enjoy an occasional puff of weed (like me), the beach party on Mero, with a crazy street parade in the middle of it, was a good place to be. My new island brothers were more than happy to share.

Peter and I had another cool sail back to Prince Rupert Bay. I might've still been high, for at the very end of it, by virtue of the fact that we were the only boat to complete both light-air legs entirely under sail, Imagine was declared the winner. At the awards ceremony that evening, Peter even got a trophy! More smiles.

With that, my work in dazzling Dominica was complete.

Award-winning journalist and author Herb McCormick is an editor-at-large with Cruising World *magazine, which originally published this article in October 2024. It is reprinted in* CW *content partner* Caribbean Compass *with permission.*





2025 PAYS Festival

By Hank Schmitt

By private boat: If you are cruising in the Caribbean in 2025 make sure you visit Dominica. Juxtaposed between two very domesticated French islands, interior parts of Dominica are Jurassic Park without dinosaurs. Anything and everything grows in the verdant soil. Unchecked, it takes over, which is why it is not uncommon to see Dominicans, male or female, carrying machetes, locally called cutlasses. Parts of the *Pirates of the Caribbean: Part II* were filmed on the island.

Also, Dominica is very safe — it's much closer to a garden of Eden, rewarding cruisers with abundant free water. With nary a dock or finger pier to tie up to, you must jug water from public taps in town. While there are no docks on the island, the Portsmouth Association of Yacht Security, known as PAYS, maintains moorings, a welcome center, a party pavilion with showers and restrooms ashore.

If you haven't already made contact ahead of time online, hail the group on VHF channel 16 and you will be directed to a mooring. If it's your first time visiting, take them up on their offer to bring you to customs since it's not easy to find. By Caribbean standards this is a very friendly customs experience. It is also very inexpensive. Make sure you ask about clearing in and out at the same time; a bonus of the island is you can often clear in and out simultaneously.

New this year is that you can go onto the PAYS website and reserve a mooring, which only cost $12 daily. Of course, anchoring out is free. In 2025, the moorings are free for the PAYS Dominica Yachting Festival March 22-30. Reserve a free mooring with a $100 PayPal payment, which will be applied to socials or tours during the week. Consult the website for the full event schedule (https://paysdominica.com).

Unlike more popular Caribbean charter sailing destinations, where you will shuttle between snorkeling day-buoys and beach bars, you'll want to get off your boat in Dominica and spend the entire day exploring the rainforests and hiking trails, as Herb did. Veteran cruisers never leave their boat for the day if they think there's poor holding ground, poorly maintained tackle, or security issues. Not only is the PAYS mooring field updated each fall, money raised by Sunday and Wednesday $25 barbecues goes towards a nightly security boat patrolling the anchorage. The PAYS office can sell you the dinner tickets, park passes and answer questions. Two park sites are within walking distance of the PAYS anchorage. Plan to stay for a few days and have them book a tour of the interior and explore the culture and history of Dominica. The PAYS office can arrange a guided tour up the Indian River to the elusive Bush Bar. Experience the "Heart of Darkness" for $25. Park passes are $5 for one site and $12 for a full week. You will need park passes to visit most of the island's many parks so it makes sense to buy a week pass for $12.

Charter options: There are no charter bases in Dominica. Your best bet is to charter from a charter company or through a charter yacht broker out of Guadeloupe. Marina Bas du Fort in Pointe-à-Pitre on Grande-Terre island, which is considered one of the largest marinas in the Caribbean and a popular starting point for yacht charters in the region, is on the south side of the island and a day sail to Portsmouth.

Among charter companies with a base in Guadeloupe is Dream Yacht Worldwide. Bareboat charters are available starting at 39 feet length mono/multi for 2-4 qualified bareboat crew and up to 48 feet length mono/multi for a max of 12 qualified crew. Rates range from $1,330 to $14,906 for one-week charters depending on boat type and season. For information consult the company website (www.dreamyachtcharter.com).

Crew changes and arrival by air: New nonstop service from Miami on American Airlines is available Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays. You can also book flights on Silver Airlines from San Juan, Puerto Rico, Tuesday through Sundays directly with American, Delta or Jet Blue. Winair, a small Dutch Airline, has flights between St. Maarten and Dominica.

Sail with OPO

While Hank Schmitt is scaling back on his own voyaging, his Offshore Passage Opportunities networking service is still connecting sailors and skippers for mutual oceanic adventures. Log on to the website for details (sailopo.com).

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Compass Winter Reading

By Caitlin Richards

The House of Plain Truth, Donna Hemans, Zibby Books, NY, United States, 2024, 269 pages

"Pearline knows well the uncertainty of an elder's memory." So starts The House of Plain Truth. Pearline has left her home in Brooklyn to return to Jamaica to attend her dying father. Each morning, she asks him to tell her the names of his children, each morning he ignores her. Then one morning he complies, with the exhortation "Find them for me. You are my memory now." So begins Pearline's journey, against the wishes of her two sisters, to find her long-lost siblings who were left behind when the family left Cuba when she was a young girl.

Through alternating timelines and perspectives, Hemans paints a multi-layered portrait of family trauma and healing. Themes of displacement, identity, and the impact of immigration on familial ties highlight the emotional costs of seeking a better life in another country, and what happens to those left behind. Hemans's prose is evocative and lyrical, bringing to life the vibrant culture and landscape of Jamaica, while also conveying the emotional weight carried by each character. The novel's exploration of what is left unsaid within families, and the struggle to find one's voice, is heartbreaking and resonant. *This tale is for someone who loves novels steeped in history.*

When Life Gives You Mangos, Kereen Getten, Delacorte Press, NY, United States, 2020, 189 pages

This young adult novel is part coming-of-age story and part mystery. 12-year-old Clara is struggling with being abandoned by her best friend, Gaynah, who has turned into a mean girl. She is creating a new friendship with Rudy, a new girl in her village, and she is struggling with the loss of her memory from the previous summer. As Clara navigates friendships and family secrets, she gradually uncovers the lost memories. Getten masterfully captures the essence of childhood, community, and the complexities of emotions. With evocative prose and a strong sense of place, this novel is a tender exploration of healing, self-discovery, and growing up. *Any teenage girl or woman who once was a teenage girl struggling to find out who she is will relate to this story.*

Village Weavers, Myriam JA Chancy, Tin House, Portland, United States, 2024, 333 pages

Alternating between Port-au-Prince in the 1940s and Phoenix, Arizona, in the present day, *Village Weavers* follows Sisi as a young girl and as an old woman. This is another novel about family, friendships, and secrets, and how relationships we form as children can impact our whole lives. It is also a story about politics, race, and sexuality and Chancy doesn't shy away from these themes, though Sisi isn't always as brave. It starts with Sisi's grandmother, Momo, telling her stories as they sort beans. "Do you want to know more?" Momo asks Sisi. The answer, of course, for Sisi and the reader, is yes. *A reader over the age of 45 will feel all its nuances.*

Passages: Cape Horn and Beyond, Lin Pardey, Paradise Cay Publications, Bluelake, California, United States, 2025, 277 pages

"Writing is magical…The words are free, just waiting there for you to grab as many as you like," says Pardey at the start of *Passages*. She starts and finishes her narrative with David, her new partner, but the meat of the book recalls her travels with Larry, with whom she sailed, wrote, refurbished boats, and adventured for 47 years. Pardey recounts how she got started with the sailing life and never looked back, about friends met along the way, and, heartbreakingly, about Larry aging and his dementia, which dramatically changed her course, and her rebirth with David and new adventures. The words may be free but figuring out which words to use and how to use them takes a special skill. Pardey has that in abundance. *Anyone who loves adventure or has ever longed for a life at sea will love this.*

Islas, A Celebration of Tropical Cooking, Von Diaz, Chronicle Books LLC, San Francisco, CA, United States, 2023, 297 pages

I love cookbooks. I especially love cookbooks with luscious pictures and stories about the recipes; *Islas* does not disappoint. Diaz has put together "125 Recipes from the Indian, Atlantic, and Pacific Ocean Islands" each boasting fresh, local ingredients, information about the regions, and profiles of people from each region who supplied recipes. The photos will make you drool. From simple to complex there is something here for every level of cook. *Anyone who loves to cook or eat will gobble this up.*

Our Ocean's Broken Heart, Doina Cornell, Cornell Sailing, Brockworth, U.K., 2024, 269 pages

Our Ocean's Broken Heart is an evocative memoir, reflecting on the environmental and personal impacts of climate change and ocean degradation. As part of the Blue Planet Odyssey, a global sailing event created by her renowned voyager father, Jimmy Cornell, to raise awareness about these issues, Cornell recounts two journeys — through the Northwest Passage with her daughter and a southern route with her son. While the prose can be overblown, excerpts from her daughter Nera's log provide next-generation perspectives. The northern voyage's reliance on diesel engines raises questions about the contradictions in their mission, which Cornell herself acknowledges. "We cannot make one step in this world without ourselves contributing to the mess." *Gift it to your environmentally conscious sailing friends.*





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View Our Current Listings

February Sky

Story and Photos By Jim Ulik

Detractors show "a greater fondness for their own opinions than for truth ... they sought to deny and disprove the new things which, if they had cared to look for themselves, their own senses would have demonstrated to them." — *Galileo Galilei, excerpt from a letter to the Grand Duchess Christina of Tuscany (1615).*



Monthly close approach of Venus and the crescent Moon

"My dear Kepler, I wish that we might laugh at the remarkable stupidity of the common herd. What do you have to say about the principal philosophers of this academy who are filled with the stubbornness of an asp and do not want to look at either the planets, the moon or the telescope, even though I have freely and deliberately offered them the opportunity a thousand times? Truly, just as the asp stops its ears, so do these philosophers shut their eyes to the light of truth." — *Galileo Galilei's letter to Johannes Kepler (1623).*

The physicist, mathematician, astronomer and philosopher Galileo Galilei sparked the birth of the scientific method and modern astronomy with his observations of the Moon, phases of Venus, moons around Jupiter, sunspots, and the news that seemingly countless individual stars make up the Milky Way galaxy. The ideas he put forward, though correct, were met with large amounts of controversy and resistance from the Church. The Church thought it was heresy to propose the Earth revolving around the Sun. The Church's answer was to imprison Galileo. With his improved design of the telescope for use in astronomy he discovered that the Moon had mountains. His disbelievers refused to acknowledge his discovery or even look through his telescope at the Moon.

Saturday, February 01

There are two degrees of separation between the Moon and Venus as they merge in the constellation Pisces. The pair can be found low in the western sky just after sunset. The bright object a few degrees below the Moon is Saturn. Follow the setting Moon as it approaches the horizon. Note that it angles towards the horizon to eventually intersect at the cardinal mark of 270 degrees.

The Moon has also reached its closest approach to Earth. The Moon's influence on tidal forces will be at its maximum over the next few days.

Tuesday, February 04

Jupiter appears to reverse direction in reference to its current position in Taurus. Its slow apparent approach to the Seven Sisters stopped, then reversed direction. The orbital speed of Jupiter didn't change. Earth caught up to Jupiter only to pass it, leaving it to appear like it has reversed direction.

Wednesday, February 05

The lineup of planets from the western horizon toward the east this evening is Saturn, Venus, Jupiter and Mars high overhead. In the mix between Venus and Jupiter is the Moon, which is just past the first quarter phase. Even though the Moon is very bright during this phase you may be able to spot Pleiades or the Seven Sisters a few degrees off its dark side.

Thursday, February 06

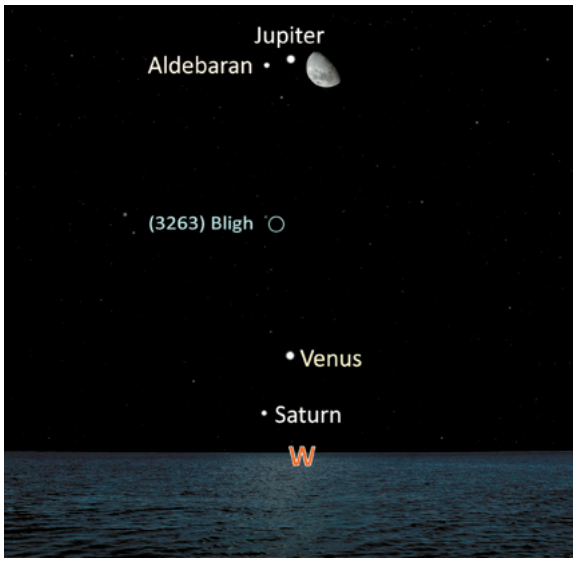
The Moon and Jupiter haven't quite reached the "Bull's Eye" tonight. In any case they almost made their target as they are in close proximity to Aldebaran in the constellation Taurus.

The asteroid named after Vice-Admiral William Bligh is also sailing through the night sky above the water constellations of Pisces, Cetus and Aquarius. Asteroid (3263) Bligh will remain adrift in this area of sky for a few more months. This asteroid was discovered in 1932.

—Continued on the next page



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Venus and Saturn below the Moon and Jupiter at 1930h on February 06

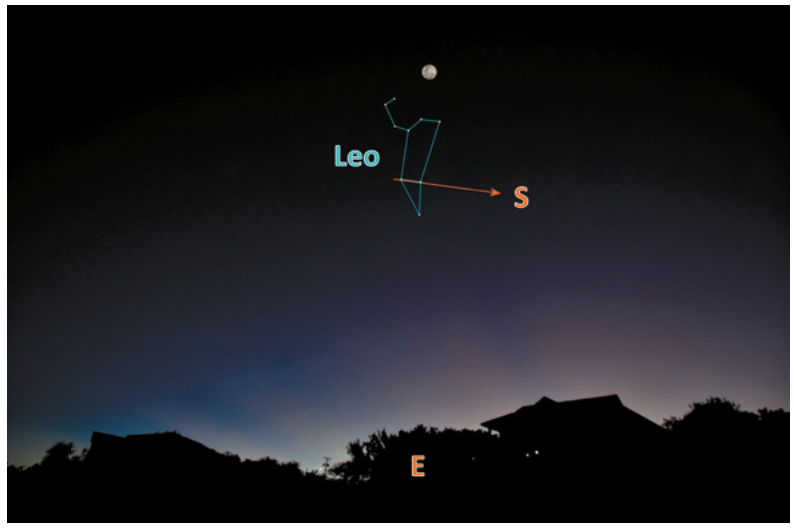
Saturday, February 08

The annual alpha Centaurid meteor shower peaks in the early morning hours. The total number of meteors is variable from year to year, possibly producing from five to 20 shooting stars per hour. The radiant is located east of the Southern Cross. The total number will increase approaching the lower latitudes. The shower is active January 29 — February 19.

The Moon and Mars make a close approach in the constellation Gemini. The Moon is positioned east of Mars near the head of the twin Pollux.

Wednesday, February 12

The Moon is located on the opposite side of the Earth as the Sun reaches its Full Moon phase. The Moon is located near Regulus in the constellation Leo tonight. Star alignment in constellation Leo can be an aid in finding directions. Extending a line from the stars Chertan and Zosma will point directly south at certain times as shown in image 02 but will otherwise always point toward a southerly direction. Leo can easily be identified other nights by looking for the appearance of the sickle formation of stars.



Finding direction using the constellation Leo around 2300h on February 11

Saturday, February 15

Today is Galileo Day. He was born 461 years ago on February 15, 1564. His contributions include developing a solution to the longitude problem based on the positions of Jupiter's moons, the telescope and plans for a clock that could be used at sea.

Sunday, February 16

Venus is only in a crescent phase but it will shine at it brightest at nightfall because it is closer to Earth. The Moon would be the only object to outshine Venus, but it will rise long after Venus has set. The exception, of course, is the Sun.

Friday, February 21

The Moon is one day past third quarter. Two and one half hours after rising it will make its closest approach to Antares. The terminator line will point north directly towards the "heart of the Scorpion." The line separating the light and dark sides of the Moon also points directly towards true south.

Sunday, February 23

Mars will reach the end of its retrograde motion, ending its westward movement through the constellations. It will slowly exit the winter circle asterism over the next few weeks making way east toward Cancer "the Crab."

Thursday, February 27

The Moon is located on the same side of the Earth as the Sun and will not be visible in the night sky. This is the best time of the month to observe faint objects because there is no moonlight to interfere.

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

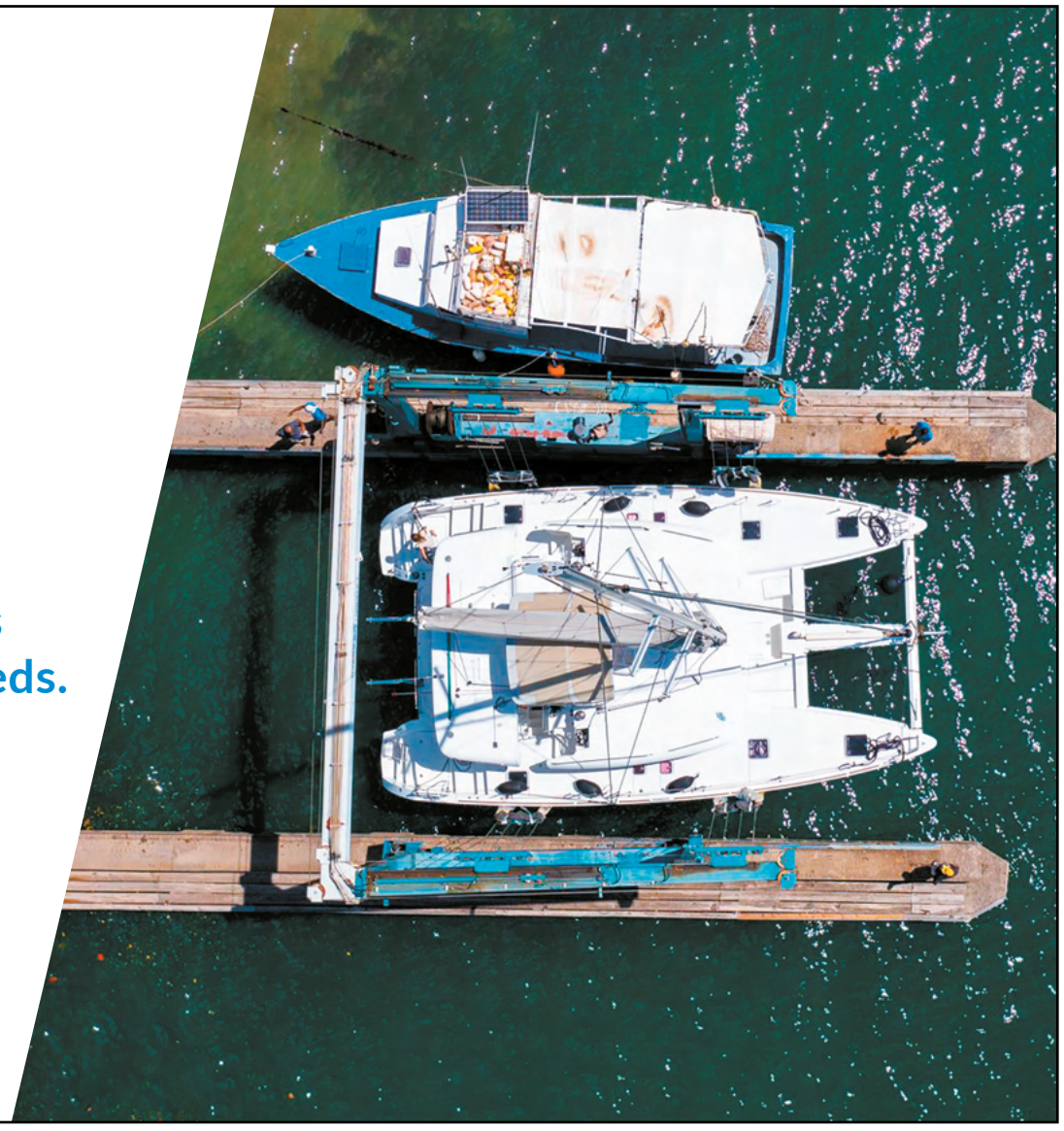
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CALENDAR

February 2025

1-2	Grenada Workboat Regatta. puregrenada.com
1-8	Cabarete Kite Festival, Dominican Republic
2	World Wetlands Day. ramsar.org/activity/world-wetlands-day
3-19	Bequia International Theater Festival
7	Public holiday in Grenada (Independence Day)
7-9	Jolly Harbour Valentine's Regatta, Antigua. jhycantigua.com
9-16	Holetown Festival, Barbados. visitbarbados.org/the-holetown-festival
12	FULL MOON (Full Snow Moon)
13-17	Bonanza Festival, Magdalena,Colombia
14	Valentine's Day Jump-Up, St. Croix
14-21	British Virgin Islands Food and Wine Festival. bvifoodandwine.com
15	Bocas del Toro Regatta, Panama. Bocasdeltororegatta.com
15-16	Sweethearts of the Caribbean & Classic Regatta, BVI www.westendyachtclubbvi.com
15-17	Kaaboo Festival, Cayman Islands. fetebookit.com/kaaboo/2025/
16-21	ProCigar Festival, Dominican Republic
17	Public holiday in Puerto Rico & USVI (Presidents' Day)
18-21	RORC Nelson's Cup Series, Antigua. caribbean600.rorc.org
21	Antigua 360 RTI Race, Antigua Yacht Club. antigua360race.com/
21-4 Mar	Carnival Ponce, Puerto Rico
24-28	RORC Caribbean 600 race, Antigua. caribbean600.rorc.org
24-3 Mar	Oyster World Rally stop in Grenada. oysteryachts.com
22	Public holiday in St. Lucia (Independence Day)
22	Dinghy Championship Hoedemaker Series Day 1, St. Maarten. smyc.com/dinghy-season-championship/
23	Public holiday in Guyana (Mashramani Carnival)
23-5 Mar	Curaçao carnival
25	Public holiday in Suriname (Liberation Day)
26-5 Mar	Trinidad Carnival week. caribbeanevents.com/event/trinidad-carnival/
27	Public holiday in Dominican Republic (Independence Day)
28-4 Mar	Semaine Nautique Internationale de Schoelcher, Martinique. cnschoelcher.net
Entire month	Carnaval Dominicano, Dominical Republic
TBA	Barcelo Desalia electronic dance music Festival, Punta Cana, Dominican Republic
TBA	Union Island Conch Festival, St. Vincent & Grenadines caribbeanevents.com/event/union-island-conch-festival/

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



ECO BRIEF

DCNA Receives Extra Financial Boost

The Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA) has received a €1.7 million financial contribution from the National Postcode Lottery, in addition to the annual €500,000 multi-year contribution. The extra funds are crucial for DCNA's work and will be used for the protection and restoration of nature areas in the Caribbean part of the Dutch Kingdom such as coral reefs and mangrove forests, which have experienced a rapid decline in both quality and size over recent decades.

With the additional funding, DCNA can focus on multi-island projects, including initiatives aimed at restoring mangrove forests and terrestrial vegetation, in collaboration with local alliance partners on the six Dutch Caribbean islands.



Receiving the contribution from the National Postcode Lottery, from left to right: Leslie Hickerson (Nature Foundation St. Maarten), Kai Wulf (Saba Conservation Foundation), Manfred van Veghel (CARMABI, Curaçao), Tineke van Bussel, Arno Verhoeven and Hellen van der Wal (DCNA), Tyson Lopez (Aruba Conservation Foundation), Kerenza Rannou (STINAPA Bonaire), Erik Boman (STENAPA St. Eustatius).

MERIDIAN PASSAGE OF THE MOON
FEBRUARY – MARCH 2025

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. For more detailed information enabling the sailor to calculate the direction and strength of the current, check the tidal section in the booklets that come with Imray-Iolaire charts A27 or B1.

FEBRUARY 2025

DATE	TIME
1	1450
2	1538
3	1627
4	1718
5	1812
6	1909
7	2009
8	2109
9	2207
10	2301
11	2352
12	0000 FULL MOON
13	0038
14	0120
15	0201
16	0241
17	0320
18	0401
19	0444
20	0530
21	0619
22	0712
23	0808
24	0905
25	1001
26	1056
27	1148
28	1239

MARCH 2025

DATE	TIME	
1		1329
2		1419
3	1511	
4	1606	
5	1704	
6	1803	
7	1904	
8	2002	
9	2057	
10	2148	
11	2234	
12	2318	
13	2358	
14	0000 FULL MOON	
15	0038	
16	0117	
17	0158	
18	0240	
19	0324	
20	0412	
21	0503	
22	0556	
23	0651	
24	0747	
25	0841	
26	0933	
27	1024	
28	1115	
29	1205	
30	1258	
31	1353	

St. Barts: Not Just for Uber-Rich

By Lexi Fisher and Chris Doyle, photos by Chris Doyle



A megayacht in the harbor

St. Barthelemy, affectionately known as St. Barts (or St. Barths), is most often known as a destination for the uber-rich looking for a Caribbean escape. Multimillion-dollar megayachts line the harbor facing designer storefronts and fine-dining restaurants; contemporary villas dot the hillsides. But behind the opulence, St. Barts is much like many of the other Leeward Islands, with soft white sand beaches, some nice hikes, good snorkeling, and affordable local restaurants.

For the sailor, St. Barts has the allure of a small island whose economy and well-being have always been intricately bound up with its picturesque port. The island itself had little to recommend it for settlement in the early days, as the rainfall is insufficient to support agriculture. However, St. Barts is strategically placed in the middle of the Lesser Antilles. Its fine small harbor and several sheltered bays made it important enough to be fought over by the British, French, and Spanish. It prospered under the French in the late 1600s when it was used as a base by pirates who came here to spend their quickly-gained fortunes. The most famous of these was Captain Montbars, a Frenchman who was so horrified by what the Spanish had done to the native populations that he decided to avenge them, prospering while he did good. He took on an indigenous crew who, no doubt, felt somewhat bitter, and did so well he became known with some terror as "Montbars the Exterminator." He finally disappeared in a hurricane and it is thought that his treasure is still buried on the island, though it is more likely that it was spent on the island.

In 1784 the French gave St. Barts to the Swedes in exchange for free port rights in Gothenburg. The Swedes made it a free port, which it remains today. It had a second period of prosperity as a trading center during the American war of independence, after the sack of nearby St. Eustatius by the British admiral George Rodney, which destroyed the infrastructure of St. Eustatius and ended its dominance as a favored trading port. Strategic location and a favorable business environment meant that American rebels came here for supplies.

During the hundred years following 1852, its fortunes fell, owing to changing trade patterns and several hurricanes. The Swedes sold St. Barts back to France in 1878 and today it is a commune of France, though an overseas one, which means it is free from many European laws.

Over the last 40 years, this free port status has resulted in an astonishing economic recovery. At first, it was mainly inter-island trade. Small motorless sailing sloops would arrive here from down island and load themselves to the gunwales with alcohol and cigarettes to be smuggled back home. Although the customs officers in their home ports were properly taken care of, the return journey was nonetheless a long and hazardous sail to windward. The smugglers' biggest problem was to evade the customs men in St. Kitts and Nevis who would happily confiscate their cargo, no matter its destination. To keep out of their way, many would sneak by night through The Narrows, the reef-filled passage between St. Kitts and Nevis.

—Continued on the next page





—Continued from the previous page



A panoramic view of Shell Beach

The upshot is that today St. Barts is in an unprecedented renaissance. With its sharply contoured rocky hills, a picturesque port, and gorgeous beaches, it has become a world-famous chic destination and the favored hot spot for the good looking, well-to-do "in" crowd, seasoned with a sprinkling of acting, singing, dancing, and sports stars, plus a Russian oligarch or two: the Riviera of the Caribbean. It has happily managed to keep some integrity of architectural style and is still quite charming.

It hosts excellent cultural events, including a music festival (classical, jazz, and sometimes ballet) in January, and many art shows, as well as carnival (visitors are welcome to join in). The day after carnival there is a mock funeral when effigies representing evil are paraded and burned.

The Caribbean Film Festival in April is excellent, and November has Swedish Week (music and dance) and Gourmet Week with visiting chefs. November 1 is All Saints, when everyone decorates the graves. Sociability reaches a crescendo around the New Year's holiday when a hundred or more superyachts arrive for festivities that include a spectacular fireworks display.

St. Barts is surrounded by a host of small islands and rocks — some large and obvious, and others just awash. You can pick your own deepwater channels between these rocks, but study the charts well and keep a good lookout. Do not try to go between groups of islands that lie together, such as Groupers and Petite Groupers, or Boulanger and Ile Pelé. The southeast coast can be very rough, so it makes sense to stay outside Red Rocks and Ile Coco.

Marine protected areas are marked by yellow buoys. These are large and a collision with one would probably ruin your day. Being yellow, they are easy to see by day; at night they have flashing yellow lights. However, the lights have been known to go out, and the buoys move.

When you're full of French wine and fine dining, Saba, Statia, St. Kitts & Nevis, and St. Martin are all a short, pleasant sail away.

Doyle Guides contain the Eastern Caribbean's most comprehensive and reliable sailing information, available in hard copy and online through a free mobile app, website, and Facebook group. (www.doyleguides.com).

Saint Barthélemy (St. Barts) Entry and Exit Procedures

Ports of Entry:
The sole port of entry is Gustavia on the west coast. https://www.noonsite.com/place/st-barts/gustavia/

Advance Paperwork:

There are two online clearance forms to complete, up to 24 hours prior to arrival: the new French Antilles Customs clearance form and a form specific to the port of Gustavia.

For visitors from many countries, a visa is not required.

Entry Process:
Call the Port Authority on VHF Ch. 12 two hours prior to arrival. Check-in formalities are completed at the port captain's office. You will need your clearance number, password for the Gustavia-specific form and your departure zarpe from your last port of call.

Exit Process:
Same as the entry process. For very short (1-2 day) stays, clearing in and out at the same time is usually possible.

Rates:
There is a small administrative charge for use of the clearance computer in the port captain's office, if unable to complete the forms in advance (3 – 5 Euro). There are anchoring fees in St Barts.

noonsite.com

Check https://www.noonsite.com/place/st-barts/view/clearance/ for more detailed information and updates. This information is provided by Noonsite.com, specialists in worldwide formalities for yachts, and was accurate at press time.



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