CARIBBEAN
# COMPASS
AUGUST 2025 NO. 350
The Caribbean's Look at Sea & Shore

## THEIR GREEN JOURNEY

— SEE PAGE 11

PHOTO CONTEST IS LIVE!

— SEE PAGE 5



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*The blue tang often attract attention as they move across the reef foraging together in groups. For more, turn to page 25 and part two of "Color and Pattern in Marine Fishes" by Darelle Snyman.*

DARELLE SNYMAN

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**On the Cover** *Throughout their odyssey to resort to environmentally positive travel, Megan Routbort and Thomas (Polo) Poloniato have taken to trains, bikes, hiking, hitchhiking, and now, sail-hitchhiking to experience first-hand island destinations in the crosshairs of climate change. For the story by Heather Breaux, turn to page 11.*

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**Tangled in Their Own Lines**

Dear *Caribbean Compass*,

You can tell a lot about a country by how it treats boats it doesn't own. The Bahamas used to be a sailor's dream: clear water, warm welcomes, and anchorages that whispered "stay awhile." But in 2025, that dream nearly ran aground under the weight of proposed cruising fee hikes that ignited backlash across the boating world.

The original proposal was jaw-dropping. Entry fees, fishing permits, anchoring charges, and mandatory cruising cards pushed potential costs for the average visiting sailboat well past $1,600, with some estimates landing over $4,000. A 44-foot cruiser, once paying $300, would suddenly be staring down a $1,000 entry fee, plus $200 or $350 for anchoring and fishing each, depending on boat size.



DMADEO

*The Elbow Reef Light station in Hope Town, Elbow Cay, Abaco, Bahamas*

Then came the pushback. Marina operators reported a wave of cancellations. Sailors rerouted. Online sailing forums lit up. The backlash wasn't just about cost. It was about how little those fees seemed tied to services or reality.

To their credit, Bahamian lawmakers listened. Sort of.

The revised legislation lowered the cruising permit for vessels up to 50 feet to $500, with adjusted tiers: up to 50 feet, 51 to 100 feet, and over 100. Fishing and anchoring fees remained steep, but the overall entry cost dropped significantly for most cruisers. Even the digital cruising card, popular among Florida boaters doing weekend hops, was revised: $1,500 for boats up to 50 feet, valid for two years.

Still, questions linger.

Why was the initial plan so out of touch with the economic balance that makes the Bahamas such a desirable stop? Where was the consultation with marinas, promotion boards, and the people who rely on cruiser tourism every day? The Nassau Tribune reported dozens of cancellations at a single marina within 24 hours of the announcement. Multiply that across the islands, and the scale of damage becomes clear.

And then there's the tone. In social media spaces, some Bahamian voices echoed the Prime Minister's anti-American boating rhetoric, accusing visitors of overfishing, polluting, and failing to pay their share. Cruisers were labeled freeloaders, despite most spending hundreds, even thousands, supporting local economies. That sting doesn't fade easily.

Meanwhile, marine industry voices urged caution. Promotion boards representing the Out Islands, Nassau and Paradise Island, Grand Bahama, and others called for a pause. They recognized what was at stake: not just permit revenue, but fuel sales, provisioning, repairs, slip fees, dining, and goodwill. You lose the trust of the cruising community, and it takes years to get it back.

The Bahamas did pull back from the brink. But only just. And while officials tout the changes as compromise, most business owners can see through it: a real course correction would have started with dialogue. Instead, the rollback looks more like a political maneuver than genuine reform. The voices of the marinas, tour operators, and fuel docks, the ones who actually lose bookings when policy goes sideways, are still being drowned out. The fee reduction was less a correction and more a cosmetic patch, the kind of policy rollback that smells like damage control. The mooring balls are still questionable, the anchoring fees still steep, and the services still vague.

In short, the Bahamas pulled a page from the bank bailout playbook: they overreached, destabilized trust, and then expected the cruising community to foot the bill. Like the financial crises of years past, the ones who bore the cost weren't the ones who caused the problem.

If the government wants to keep its place on cruising routes, it needs more than a press release and a revised spreadsheet. It needs accountability. Moorings should be inspected. Services should match costs. Fees should be clear, consistent, and fair.

Because once sailors reroute, they often stay gone. Turks and Caicos for fuel. The Dominican Republic for provisions. The USVI for repairs and downtime. The Bahamas is beautiful, yes, but beauty isn't loyalty.

In sailing, as in trust, you can't charge for loyalty. But you can absolutely sink it.

**José Catstar**, currently adrift aboard S/V *Stimulus Package*

*José Catstar writes from the leeward side of logic, armed with a handheld VHF, a coffee-stained chartbook, and zero tolerance for regulatory nonsense. His boat (whose name changes frequently to protect the guilty and himself) has been denied entry to more marinas than he's willing to admit, usually for "tone." He considers this a badge of honor.*

***Editor's note:*** Caribbean Compass *content partner Noonsite offers further details and up-to-date links about the new fees that went into effect in July 2025 (https://www.noonsite.com/place/bahamas/).*




**Seas and Scenes: Love the Caribbean Photo Contest 2025 — Is Open**

Enter your photos today for Seas and Scenes: Love the Caribbean Photo Contest 2025. All photographers, amateur and professional alike, are invited to submit their most captivating images that showcase the beauty, and our connection to, the people and nature in the Caribbean — including the adventure and freedom of Caribbean sailing and yachting life.

Each year, the Caribbean reveals a thousand stories: the vibrant colors of a coral reef; the sight of a fisherman working his lines at dawn; the laughter of friends gathered beneath the shade of a breadfruit tree. Use your lens and your love for the Caribbean to raise awareness, inspire stewardship, and highlight the beauty we all work to protect. For the entire month of August 2025, Caribbean Compass and Environmental Protection in the Caribbean (EPIC) invite you to share them.

**How to Enter:** Submit photos from August 1–31, 2025 at epicislands.org/photo-contest-2025 and complete the entry form. A valid email address is required and you must use your real name and agree to the terms and conditions. Prizes will be awarded, including $1,000+ in cash prizes, gift cards, local experience vouchers, eco-friendly swag, and features on social media and partner platforms.

Awards will be given in the following categories:

- Audience Choice – Decision by popular vote
- Sailing & Yachting Adventures – Showcase the joy, freedom, and adventure of life on the sea
- Caribbean Nature & the People Who Love It — Highlighting the plants, animals, and landscapes, or the harmony between people and nature, where wild beauty is more than a backdrop — it's a way of life

Select images will also be featured in *Caribbean Compass* magazine and on EPIC's website and social media platforms.

**How to Participate:** Even if you're not submitting a photo, you can still take part by voting. You, your friends, and your family can each cast up to three votes every day during the contest. Spread the word and help your favorite images rise to the top! Vote at epicislands.org/photo-contest-2025 and like or follow on Instagram @epic.islands and Facebook Environmental Protection in the Caribbean (EPIC).

**Rules & Guidelines:** Participants must be 18 years or older and submit their original work. Up to three photos per person may be submitted using your legal name, which will be verified before prizes are awarded. Minor editing, such as exposure adjustments or cropping, is allowed, but heavily altered or AI-generated images are not accepted. Photos should be high-resolution, with a maximum file size of 10MB as a JPEG or PNG. Images should not include watermarks or text overlays. Both portrait and landscape formats are permitted. Portraits may be featured on magazine and report covers. By submitting a photo and email, participants grant EPIC, *Caribbean Compass*, and sponsors the right to use the photos for our purposes and to subscribe you to our email lists. Full terms and conditions can be found on the contest website. Direct questions and submission problems to photocontest@epicislands.org.

Photos will be judged on creativity, adherence to the theme, technical quality, and overall impact by an esteemed panel of invited judges who bring unique perspectives and experiences. Contest judge Matthew

*—Continued on the next page*





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COURTESY EPIC

Lista Light, *a gaff-rigged double ended ketch, glides along in glass-like seas*

Cohen, a nautical photographer who has over 25 years of experience capturing dynamic, action-filled images in marine settings, encourages entrants to "be bold with composition and pay attention to light — sometimes the smallest moment tells the biggest story." Contest judge Lexi Fisher, a science communicator and ocean advocate, as well as CEO of Doyle Guides, says, "I'm looking for photos that speak to the heart — that moment when nature and people meet with purpose."

The contest is a collaboration between longtime partners Caribbean Compass, committed to informing and educating readers about key environmental issues, and EPIC, which for more than 25 years has advanced conservation through Science, Education, Advocacy, and Stewardship (S.E.A.S.).

Whether you live in the Caribbean or have only visited, this contest is an invitation to reflect on what the region means to you. Photographs have the power to build connections across islands, cultures, and generations. In a time when many Caribbean ecosystems face growing threats such as habitat loss and plastic pollution, images that inspire concern and action are vitally important.

The contest is made possible by presenting sponsor and partner IGY Marinas, known for leadership and longstanding support for the mission and work of EPIC and *Caribbean Compass*. Horizon Yachts International has expressed commitment as a supporter sponsor. For more information on contest sponsors, visit the official contest website.

*Enter Seas and Scenes: Love the Caribbean Photo Contest 2025 at epicislands.org/photo-contest-2025.*

**Carnival Season: Watch Your Heart!**



TAD RICHARDS ILLUSTRATION

*Carnival season can be festive ... but watch your heart!*

Festival season can be surprisingly physically demanding. Hours spent standing, walking or dancing can put extra strain on the heart, especially for those with preexisting conditions such as heart disease, high blood pressure or diabetes, explains Gosia Wamil, M.D., Ph.D., a cardiologist at Mayo Clinic Healthcare in London.

For people with heart failure, this can lead to shortness of breath or a worsening of symptoms. For those with coronary artery disease, in which the major vessels that supply blood to your heart become narrowed or blocked, sudden intense activity can trigger chest pain or even a heart attack.

"Key warning signs of heart distress at festivals include chest pain or pressure, shortness of breath, dizziness, nausea, cold sweats, or fainting," Dr. Wamil adds. "These symptoms should never be ignored, and immediate medical help should be sought if they occur."

Noise exposure at outdoor concerts, carnivals and other events also can affect heart health. "Short term, loud noise can trigger the body's 'fight or flight' response, raising blood pressure and heart rate," Dr. Wamil says. "Long term, chronic noise exposure has been shown to increase the risk of high blood pressure and heart disease."

Overindulging in alcohol, caffeine or salty food poses another serious risk. It can trigger holiday heart syndrome, in which even healthy individuals develop an irregular heartbeat, or atrial fibrillation.

People with diabetes or heart disease should plan when attending festivals and other events, advises Dr. Wamil. It's important to take medications on time, bring medical identification and carry essential supplies, such as snacks, water and a list of medications. Keeping blood

*—Continued on the next page*



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sugar stable with healthy food choices and staying hydrated can help prevent complications. Comfortable shoes and regular rest breaks are also key.

"If you have a heart condition or other serious medical issue, staying near the edge of crowds is a sensible precaution. It allows quicker access to medical help and an easier way out if needed," Dr. Wamil suggests. "Choosing a shaded, quieter area can reduce risk. Try to balance fun with rest and include healthy foods when possible. Protect yourself from the sun, pace your activities, and keep your phone charged in case of emergencies."

**CSSN Revamps Website**

In June 2025 the Caribbean Safety and Security Net (CSSN) launched the new website, thecssn.org.

New features include:

- an updated visual interface so that users can customize and share CSSN Interactive Maps (https://thecssn.org/interactive-map/)
- Easy review of incident details
- New CSSN Incident Statistics dashboard (https://thecssn.org/incident-statistics/) with advanced search tools which allow focused analysis at the island or anchorage level, making it easy to track security trends, query past reports, check out anchorages, and dive into regional, country, or crime-type trends
- A help box on all feature pages, with examples that demonstrate how to get started and use powerful new capabilities

**Changing of the Guard at St. John Rotary Club**

The Rotary Club of St. John installed Kim Hart as its new president at a ceremony held at Kapok Villas in June 2025. Outgoing president Jennifer Stone offered these words to commemorate the event:

"Over the past two years, our club has kept up with some of our long-standing commitments to the community such as providing age-appropriate school supplies to all of our local school children every year, cleaning our adopted beach, Jumbie, twice per year, volunteering at events for other local non-profits, ringing the Salvation Army Kettle Bell during the holidays, selling orchids at Mother's Day, donating food to our local food bank during the HOPE canned food drive, giving out multiple mini grants to other non-profits to aid in their success, as well as dancing and partying in the name of recycling education down by the dumpsters. Additionally, over the last 12 months, we accomplished new goals such as adopting a planter in Powell Park, writing 250 letters from Santa to local children, and installing a Peace Pole at Our Place in Coral Bay."

COURTESY ST. JOHNS ROTARY CLUB



*Jennifer Stone hands the torch to Kim Hart.*

**2025 USVI Charter Yacht Show Set for Fall**

The 2025 USVI Charter Yacht Show is November 7–10 at IGY's Yacht Haven Grande, St. Thomas. Hosted by the Virgin Islands Professional Charter Association (VIPCA), this premier event offers brokers and yacht crews extensive networking opportunities through meet-and-greets and island-style festivities, including a cocktail competition and vendor night.

Broker registration is free for VIPCA members and includes year-round benefits. Accommodation options include discounted room blocks at the nearby Hampton by Hilton and special rates at Bluebeards, Bolongo Bay, and Pink Palm Hotel.

With over 60 yachts and hundreds of brokers expected, the show offers efficient dockside access and strong exposure in a compact, high-caliber venue. *For more information or to register, visit usviyachtshow.org.*

COURTESY VIPCA



*Fun aboard a charter yacht at the USVI Charter Yacht Show*




EAT. DRINK. LIME.



# Weather Satellite Feed Loss: Impacts, Risks for Mariners

*By Joan Conover*

On June 30, 2025, DOGE-directed budget cuts took effect, and NOAA stopped receiving microwave satellite data from three critical microwave weather satellites. For cruisers and those living in the Caribbean, the loss of this microwave data means a serious reduction in accuracy and timing for weather events. With the elimination of these data feeds into the NOAA weather models and systems, the Caribbean and areas supported by NOAA face degraded night-time and ocean-surface weather visibility — especially critical during peak storm season.

What is lost? The Defense Meteorological Satellite Program (DMSP) satellites — F16, F17, and F18 — each equipped with the Special Sensor Microwave Imager/Sounder (SSMIS). These sensors have long played a quiet but essential role in feeding data into hurricane forecasting systems.

The forecast models chiefly affected (though all models are impacted to some extent) are the Global Forecast System (GFS) and the North American Mesoscale (NAM). These are the models that rely on data assimilation, meaning they need satellite measurements to "initialize" an accurate picture of current conditions before computing forecasts.

**GFS**

NOAA's global model is used widely in many third-party apps like Windy, Saildocs GRIBs, and other apps with weather overlays. GFS uses this satellite data to estimate moisture profiles, ocean wind speeds, and pressure systems. Without microwave input, GFS has lower accuracy over the ocean, especially where there are no buoys or aircraft reports. And for the Caribbean, that is important to know.

**NAM**

This regional model supports local Caribbean grids, especially in Puerto Rico and in the U.S. Virgin Islands. It is indirectly impacted, as its initial conditions often come from GFS.

Also deeply affected is the Hurricane Weather Research and Forecasting Model (HWRF). This specialized tropical cyclone model focuses on storm structure — eyewalls, rainbands, and pressure centers. It uses microwave data to sharpen forecasts on storm development and path. Without it, HWRF's short-term intensification tracking — critical for sailors watching forming systems — is degraded.

**Implications for Caribbean Mariners**

For sailors navigating the Caribbean, this loss creates gaps in awareness and increases risk:

- *Reduced nighttime tracking*: Microwave data allowed satellites to "see" storm cores through clouds, even at night. Its loss means late-night model runs are less reliable in identifying rapid intensification or shifts in tropical systems.
- *Poorer storm positioning*: With fewer updates on structure and central pressure, models now yield broader and less accurate track forecasts, especially in the Atlantic basin east of the Caribbean where many storms form.
- *Caution with routing software*: Cruisers using GRIB-based tools must now be more cautious. Forecast lines that used to represent confidence may now mask growing uncertainty, particularly for offshore passages and anchorages along exposed islands.
- *Increased dependence on alternatives*: Mariners should compare forecasts across multiple models — for example, GFS vs. European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF). They will need to rely more on barometric readings, visual satellite loops, and VHF or SSB nets for supplemental confirmation.

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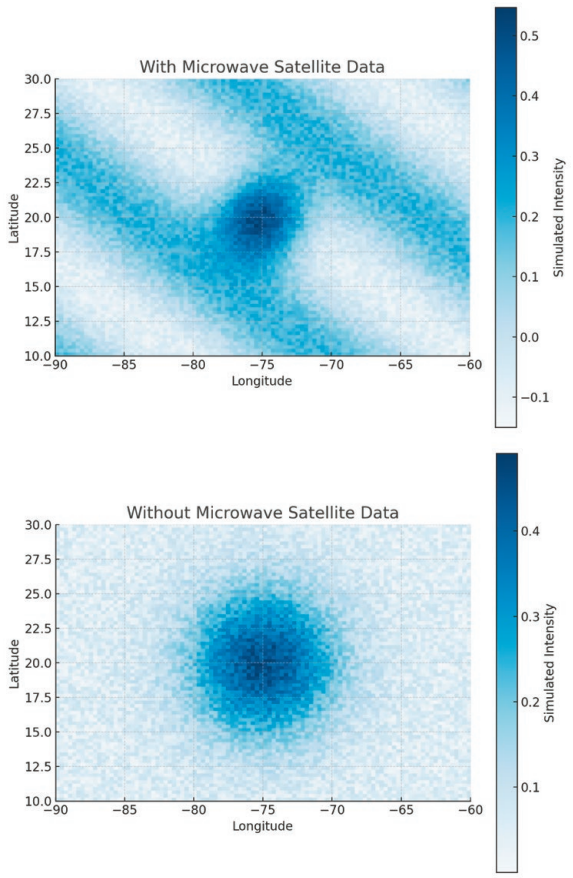
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Until replacements like the Weather System Follow-on-Microwave (WSF-M) satellite are fully operational, Caribbean mariners are advised to adjust routing and watch strategies accordingly. This loss is not theoretical. It is active now, and mariners should treat forecasts with new caution and cross-verify all overnight predictions. It is not clear why the data feeds were cut, but NOAA faces a period of time before new satellites will be online to support a similar function.




HAL-CORE

***With microwave satellite data:*** *Satellite imagery penetrates cloud cover to reveal storm structure, wind fields, and moisture patterns — even at night — providing sharper forecasts.*
***Without microwave satellite data:*** *Key features like storm centers, rainbands, and intensifying cores become obscured, leaving models with blurred or incomplete snapshots of tropical systems.*

## BUSINESS BRIEF

### Northern Lights Hosts Caribbean Dealer Training/Conference

Ten Caribbean dealerships and five dealer principals attended a dealer service training & conference hosted by Northern Lights. The conference, which took place in Deerfield Beach, Florida, in June 2025, was led by Joe Maas, the Eastern Hemisphere service manager and primary service trainer for Northern Lights, Inc.

The Caribbean Northern Lights dealer network is a unique organization that is founded on cooperation to provide the best service possible for Northern Lights customers.



COURTESY NORTHERN LIGHTS

*A demonstration by trainer Joe Maas*

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PHOTO BY LEXI FISHER

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**Saba "Hope Spot Stops" Spur Environmental Collaboration**

A citizen science initiative on the island of Saba is turning everyday snapshots into vital environmental data. "Hope Spot Stops," launched by the Sea & Learn Foundation in collaboration with the Saba Conservation Foundation, invites residents and tourists to photograph specific landscapes at designated locations to help monitor ecological changes over time.



COURTESY SEA & LEARN FOUNDATION

*Visitor uses the Hope Spot camera tray at Wells Bay, Saba*

Six Hope Spot Stops are active across the island, including at Well's Bay, Dancing Place, Thais Hill, Saba Botanical Garden, Spring Bay, and Sulphur Mine. Each station includes a custom-built photo tray to standardize camera angle and height, enabling consistent data collection over time. Beyond its scientific value, the initiative aims to deepen public engagement with Saba's natural environment and instill environmental stewardship, particularly among local youth.

Organizers are collaborating with community members to develop the project's infrastructure: Triton Saba, NV fabricates the photo stands; local workers manage installation; and the Saba Conservation Foundation advises on ecological priorities. Funded in part by the Nature and Environmental Policy Plan (NEPP) of the Caribbean Netherlands, Hope Spot Stops serves both research and ultimately, education.

*Visit any Hope Spot Stop by placing your phone in the designated tray, snapping a photo, and emailing it to seaandlearnsaba@gmail.com.*

**St. Lucia: The Wild Side**

Environmental history has been made with the airing of *St. Lucia: The Wild Side*, the island's first feature-length wildlife documentary, showcasing landscapes and wildlife, produced by Kendal John and his brother, conservation biologist Lyndon John.

This movie, a gripping, thrilling, educational and deeply emotional experience, is a world class presentation of that biodiverse reality in which we live but have little formal knowledge of. The movie presents the country with such clarity and such stunning photography that one leaves the cinema with a feeling about a St. Lucia whose bounty and beauty is new. It is the kind of feeling that the famous English poet T.S. Eliot described when he wrote: "We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time."

*Review by Danny Moonie, communications specialist, Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States*

**Tiny Heroes: Sea Urchins and Crabs Might Save Coral Reefs**

Caribbean coral reefs are in peril, increasingly dominated by algae instead of vibrant coral. The decline stems in part from the collapse of key herbivores like the black-spined sea urchin (*Diadema antillarum*), which were nearly wiped out in the 1980s. With fewer natural grazers, algae overgrowth now chokes out young coral, contributing to long-term reef degradation.

A new study led by the Elkhorn Marine Conservancy (EMC) in Antigua — published in Restoration Ecology — explores how restoring herbivorous invertebrates like sea urchins and king crabs could reverse this trend. The paper, co-authored by EMC's Dr. Margaret W. Wilson and partners from Florida, Puerto Rico, Mexico, and Saba, details multi-country efforts to reintroduce natural algae-grazers.

Restoring these "reef gardeners" is not just about tossing them into the sea. Scientists are breeding sea urchins like *Diadema* and *Tripneustes ventricosus* (sea eggs), as well as king crabs (*Maguimithrax spinosissimus*), in high-tech labs.

Challenges remain: Juvenile grazers often struggle to survive after release due to predators, rough seas, or poor habitat. Researchers are experimenting with "urchin hotels," improved site selection, and better release strategies to boost survival rates. Scientists are also harnessing 3D mapping tools to measure how well these interventions work — aiming not just to increase numbers, but to restore function without unintended side effects, like overgrazing.

*For more Eco News, turn to page 22*



# Climate Awareness in the Caribbean Islands

*By Heather Breaux*

Megan Routbort and Thomas (Polo) Poloniato are on The Green Journey, often aboard *The Green Journey*. This 20-something French-American couple are traveling the world, but only on forms of transportation that have a climate-positive effect. Airplanes and private cars are out; trains, bikes, hiking, hitchhiking, and sail-hitchhiking are in.



COURTESY THE GREEN JOURNEY

*Megan Routbort and Thomas (Polo) Poloniato*

Their mission to create a codex of places where innovative and impactful solutions to the climate crisis are being developed has brought them to the Caribbean for some classic Caribbean island hopping with a green twist.

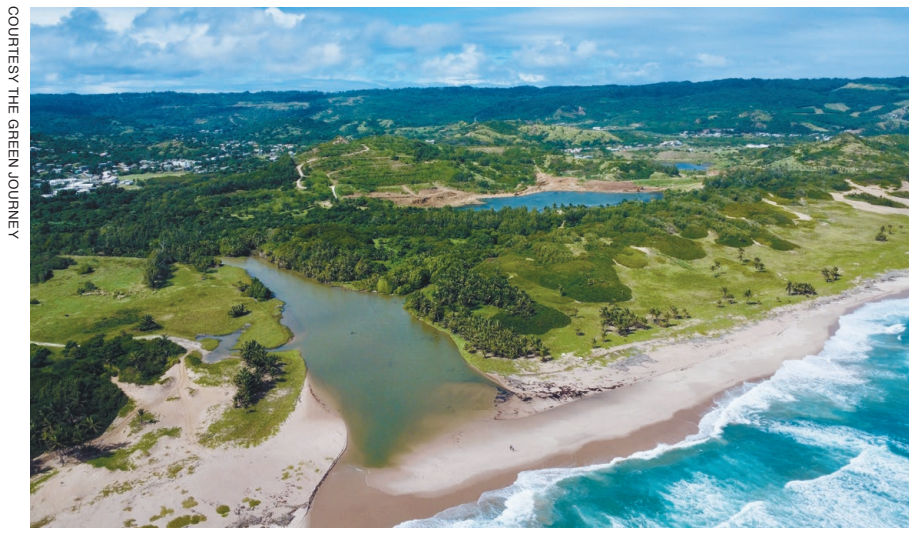
**Barbados is the Best Place to Shower**

Barbados is "the best country for taking a hot shower" as Megan and Polo put it, the number one country for solar water heaters per capita in the Caribbean, as stated by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) 2021 report on leveraging local capacity for solar water heaters.

Megan and Polo met George Connolly, CEO of Solar Dynamics in the capital city of Bridgetown, who showed them around the company's manufacturing headquarters. In 2003, it was estimated that the domestic solar thermal industry saved Barbados 180,000 barrels of oil a year, and by 2009, there was one solar water heater system for every six people. "At Solar Dynamics, we learned that older, proven technologies are sometimes just as effective as futuristic ones to cut emissions," Polo said. Connolly credits the company's success in part to the government support, but noted that today, Solar Dynamics operates profitably across Barbados and other Caribbean nations without tax credits.

Next, the Green Journey connected with Elize Rostant, managing director of the Walkers Institute for Regenerative Research and Design (WIRRD). For more than 50 years, the Walkers Sand Quarry has mined high-silica sand in Barbados. But as the construction industry exhausts the sand supply, a new story is emerging — one of biodiversity, ecological health, and regeneration. "What really struck us about the ongoing project at Walkers Reserve is the immediacy of the action," Megan and Polo write. "We've visited several regenerative sites on our world tour, but this was the first where we saw the property's original owners taking initiative and responsibility for restoring the land."

*—Continued on page 14*



COURTESY THE GREEN JOURNEY

*"Barbados is the best country for taking a hot shower."*

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—*Continued from page 11*

**A Thing of Beauty in St. Lucia**

Megan and Polo hitch-sailed from Speightstown, Barbados, to Soufrière, St. Lucia, with Danielle and James, two full-time cruisers, aboard their Beneteau Oceanis 361, *Nayru*. Wasting no time, they hopped on the local minibus network to explore the island and discover climate changemakers — and discovered the public transport system itself, which almost functions like a carpool system, with low-cost, high-frequency minibuses at $0.50USD per ride.

They interviewed Skeeta Carasco, the first in-country advisor for the Rocky Mountain Institute's Climate Finance Access Network. Skeeta's job is to help St. Lucia access grants and loans that can build the country's climate resilience, whether through solar installations to promote energy independence or funding to rebuild hurricane-damaged infrastructure to be more resilient.



COURTESY THE GREEN JOURNEY

*Green Journey is welcomed by the Walkers Reserve team.*

"Skeeta grew up for the first 16 years of her life without electricity, and often saw her hometown be struck by hurricanes and landslides," Megan said. "It was moving to speak to someone who had experienced the direct impacts of climate change and was motivated to work in the sector."

**Martinique and Research Vessel Energy Observer**

Another sail-hitch brought them to Martinique on a breeze, where they interviewed captain Jean Baptiste of *The Energy Observer*, and learned that although sailing is a low-carbon way to cross oceans, many modern sailboats still rely on fossil fuel products for things like cooking and driving dinghies to and fro.

But *The Energy Observer*, a research catamaran, has spent the last six years sailing around the world truly carbon-free: It runs entirely on renewable energy, including solar, wind, hydropower, and perhaps most importantly, self-produced green hydrogen, now under development by the likes of Toyota and AirLiquide. "Being onboard *The Energy Observer* feels like being on a ship from the future," according to Polo. "The whole boat is futuristically and luxuriously designed, proving you don't have to make a trade-off for comfort or functionality when choosing sustainable energies at sea."

**Last stop: British Virgin Islands**

What's the first thing these travelers noted upon arrival to the British Virgin Islands? Fees! They paid a $10 Environmental and Tourism Levy to the immigration officer. This tax took effect in 2017 and is set up for tourists entering the BVI to make a contribution to the protection of national park areas and help build island-wide resilience to climate change. Sounds all right, and it's only 10 bucks.

Except, nothing is perfect. Cruise ship passengers are exempt from paying this tax. The Green Journey rates this "a good start, but insufficient" to protect the BVI's natural, sunny beauty for the future generations.



COURTESY THE GREEN JOURNEY

*Megan and Polo with Captain Jean Baptiste of* The Energy Observer

They've said a farewell to the Caribbean — for now. "The Caribbean is one of the most beautiful regions in the world, but it's also one of the most vulnerable to climate risk," Megan said. "We're hopeful that by sharing our adventures in the region, we can inspire more people to take action to protect this amazing archipelago."

*If you're curious to learn more, follow along with The Green Journey travels on Instagram @thegreen.journey or subscribe to The Green Journey blog on Substack to read up on the other fascinating climate hotspots they discover around the world! A version of this story originally appeared in* Latitude 38 *magazine.*






# Crossing the Atlantic on an Electric Motor-Powered Sailboat: Lessons Learned, Part Three

*Story and photos by Keith Dickey and Rebecca Frontz*



Vagari *at anchor with Flores waterfalls in background*

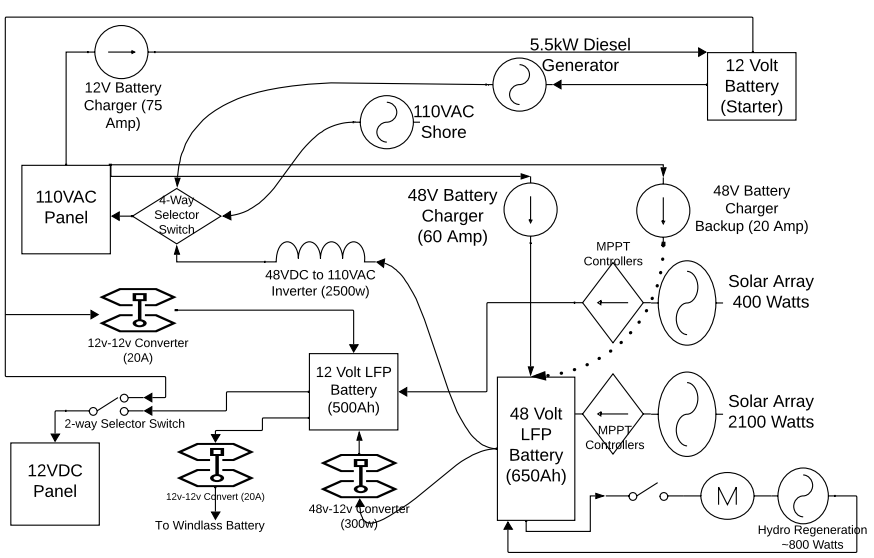
Crossing the Atlantic with an electric propulsion system is more than just a technical challenge — it's an exploration of sustainable offshore sailing. Our passage from St. Martin to the Azores demonstrated the potential of electric cruising to blend efficiency, reliability, and comfort. Yet, as with any long offshore passage, it also revealed areas for improvement and important lessons for anyone considering electrified ocean crossings.

While much of our journey was characterized by calm seas and idyllic conditions, the crossing was not without its challenges. Reflecting on our experience and comparing it to the other boats that departed around the same time highlights the unique advantages and limitations of electric propulsion. These insights are invaluable for sailors curious about embracing this innovative technology for long-distance cruising.

**Preparation and Planning: A Foundation for Success**

The groundwork for our successful passage was laid long before we left St. Martin. Thoughtful preparation was key, and every element of our system was scrutinized to ensure reliability. Carrying spare components, such as a backup throttle potentiometer, proved invaluable when unexpected equipment failures occurred.

Energy management was another cornerstone of our preparation. With 80 gallons of diesel reserved for the generator and a solar array optimized for Atlantic conditions, we carefully calculated our energy budget. This foresight allowed us to navigate confidently through a variety of conditions, from glassy calm seas to brisk trade winds.




Vagari *system wiring diagram (Overview)*

Tools like Starlink and Windy were indispensable, giving us up-to-the-minute weather updates and allowing for precise micro-weather routing. This planning ensured we maximized solar efficiency in the high-pressure zones while avoiding squalls and adverse seas in the latter part of the passage.

**Electric Cruising in Practice: Strengths and Challenges**

Our crossing highlighted the potential of electric cruising to enhance both sustainability and onboard comfort. For the first two weeks, the conditions were nothing short of idyllic. Light winds and calm seas allowed us to rely heavily on solar energy and motor-assisted sailing, maintaining a consistent 105 nautical miles per day.



*630Ah @ 48v Capacity. 32 314Ah REPT Cells*

The quiet operation of the electric motor transformed life onboard. Without the roar of a diesel engine, the passage felt serene. Gourmet meals, relaxed evenings, and playful moments with our boat's companions, Bosun the dog and Scupper the cat, became defining features of the journey. Hydro-regeneration during the trade winds in the final week further demonstrated the system's capacity to support a sustainable cruising lifestyle.

A throttle potentiometer failure early in the passage temporarily disrupted motor control. Our redundancy planning ensured a quick repair, but the incident underscored the need for sailors to carry spares and be prepared for hands-on troubleshooting. We would have been unable to use the entire electric propulsion system without that spare potentiometer.

Toward the end of the trip, one of our 48V batteries began to fail, reducing our overall energy capacity. This required careful energy management and a recalibration of our usage patterns. The experience highlighted the importance of robust battery design and the need for continued innovation in energy storage technology for electric cruising.

*—Continued on the next page*

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*Becca after a hike to the waterfalls in Flores*



*Bosun enjoying the sun on Pico, with* Vagari *at anchor in background*

**Comparing Routes: The Experience of Four Boats**

Our direct rhumb line route was chosen specifically for its compatibility with electric propulsion. It offered calm conditions, clear skies for solar generation, and the shortest distance to our destination. While this route served us well, the experiences of the other boats (powered with traditional diesels) on the crossing underscored how dramatically different passages can be based on routing decisions.

**The Bermuda Route**

A catamaran following the Bermuda route faced a more traditional Atlantic crossing experience. After a week of uncomfortable NNE sailing, the crew transitioned to brisk trade wind conditions for the remaining two weeks, arriving in Horta with a mix of relief and satisfaction. Their journey was about the same time (20 days) as ours, but it came with the price of more demanding seas and wind angles.

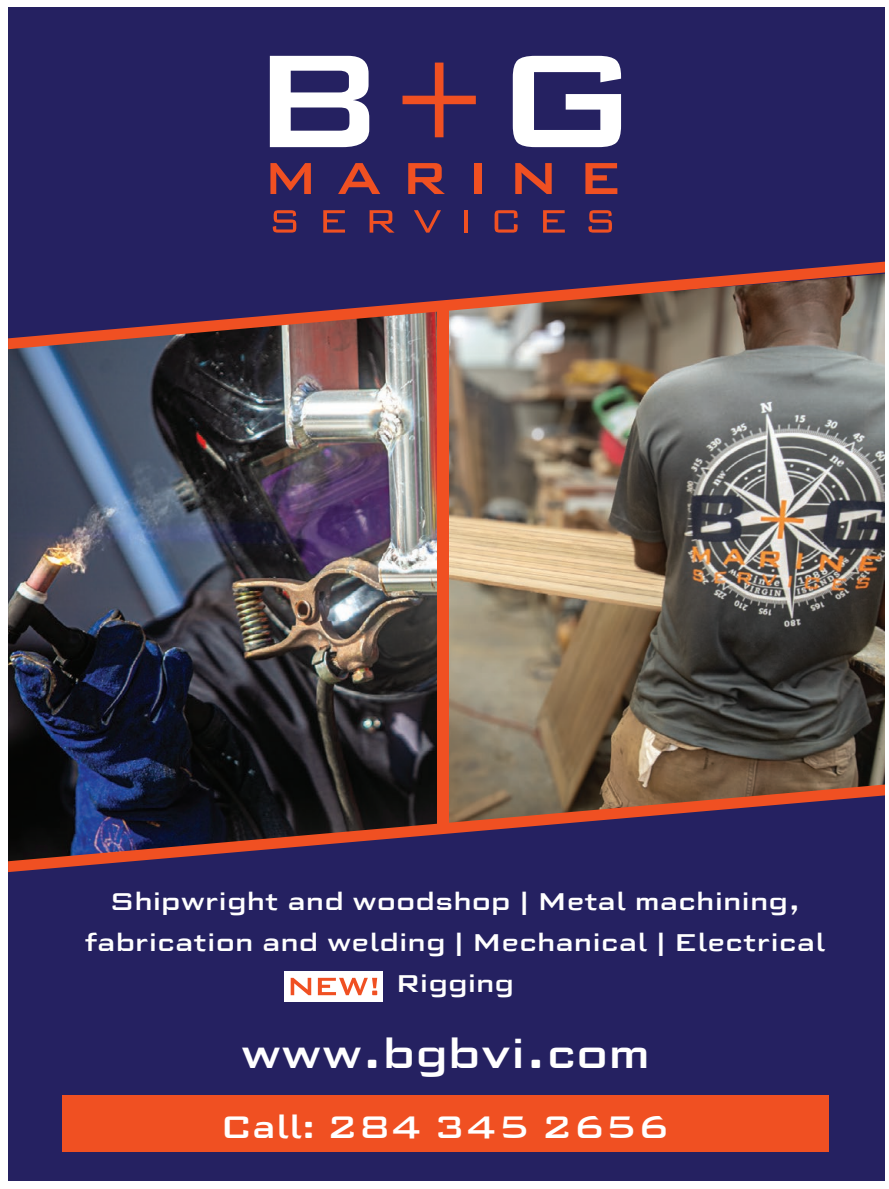
**The Direct Rhumb Line**

Our own experience on the direct rhumb line stood in sharp contrast to these tales of hardship. By staying within the high-pressure zones and avoiding the more dynamic weather patterns to the north, we enjoyed a smoother, more efficient crossing. This comparison not only validated our route selection but also highlighted the importance of tailoring a passage plan to the unique strengths and limitations of an electric propulsion system.

—Continued on page 20





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47' 2021 Fountaine Pajot Tanna 47'
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# Stories From the Sea: Trust, Preparation, and Offshore Sailing

Offshore sailing isn't just a test of seamanship, it's a lesson in resilience, planning, and trust. Trust in your crew, in your preparation, and in your gear.

In this roundtable-style feature, we speak to four crews who've taken on major offshore passages, including three competitors from this year's Osaka Cup, a grueling 5,500 nautical mile doublehanded race from Melbourne, Australia to Osaka, Japan:



OCEAN RACING CLUB OF VICTORIA/@ORCV

*Peter Dowdney onboard* Joker x2



©SAILINGNAKAMA

*Team Fika during M2O Race*



©WHITESPIRIT

*Lillian and Cyrus enter the Solomon Islands region onboard* White Spirit.



©SAILINGNAKAMA

*Sophie Snijder onboard* Fika *sailing up the Australian coastline*



ELISA MANGANI/@SAILINGYACHTYORU

*Elisa onboard* Yoru *with crew during ARC*

- **Peter Dowdney** — sailing the J/133 *Joker x2* in the Osaka Cup alongside co-skipper Grant Chipperfield, Peter is Ronstan's Australasian sales manager and a veteran of 17 Sydney-Hobart races. Peter brings extensive experience and technical expertise from both the professional sailing circuit and the marine industry.
- **Annette Hesselmans and Sophie Snijder** — a mother-daughter team sailing their Najad 490 *Fika* in the Melbourne to Osaka Race. A Royal Yachting Association offshore yachtmaster and yachtmaster instructor, Annette was competing for the second time in the Osaka Cup, but for the first time with her daughter Sophie as her co-skipper! Sophie may have been the youngest competitor in this year's race, but she has logged a few miles of her own, having circumnavigated Australia with her partner Slim on their Duncanson 34 *Nakama*.
- **Lillian Stewart and Cyrus Allen** — also competing in the Osaka Cup, onboard their Beneteau First 50 *White Spirit*. Cyrus and Lillian each brought a unique connection to the race. In addition to their mutual association with the Ocean Racing Club of Victoria (ORCV), for which Cyrus serves as commodore and Lilian as sustainability lead, Cyrus's race was a homecoming of sorts, having previously lived and worked in Japan. For Lillian, the Osaka Cup presented a unique opportunity to sample and promote clean oceans as she continues her PhD research on marine and plastic pollution in ocean ecosystems.
- **Elisa Mangani** — Originally from Italy and a Ronstan employee for the past ten years, Elisa now resides in Palma and has raced on the Vismara-Mills 62 *Yoru* since 2019. Unlike the others who all raced the doublehanded Osaka Cup, Elisa brought a different perspective to our roundtable discussion as part of a ten-person crew onboard *Yoru* for the 2021 Atlantic Rally for Cruisers ARC. A true team effort was required for this passage as, at the time, none of the crew had ever crossed the Atlantic.

Whether crossing the Atlantic Ocean or sailing from Australia to Japan, these sailors weren't just navigating oceans, they were navigating sleep schedules and the emotional highs and lows of extreme distance racing. Each experienced different conditions, challenges, and triumphs, but all shared consistent themes of meticulous planning, careful gear selection, shared trust, and a relentlessly positive mindset.

### Safety Isn't First, It's Always

The ocean doesn't hand out second chances easily. For all four teams, safety wasn't just about compliance — it was a core philosophy.

Dowdney, of *Joker x2*, highlights some of the safety equipment that is critical for any offshore voyage: "We carried EPIRBs, a backup GPS, personal AIS beacons, and a fully serviced life raft. Equally important is hardware that stays on deck when things go wrong. We rely heavily on Ronstan soft attachment snatch blocks for this. They're light, compact, and don't become dangerous projectiles if a line blows. We run them on preventers and downwind guys."

Annette from *Fika* wrote an emergency procedures manual before departure, which identified the action plan for any possible scenario. After the manual was written, Annette and Sophie went down the list preparing each bit of kit and gear on the boat so that, hopefully, they would never need to *use* the manual.

One particular system Annette highlighted was the preventer for their mainsail, which was frequently deployed on their sail to Osaka. "The preventer system is two parts: set as far back on the boom as possible and set as far forward on the bow as possible to distribute the shock load if there were an accidental gybe. When sailing, we set the preventer from a broad reach to a run. It is also invaluable in light winds to prevent slatting of the mainsail."

Elisa reflected on her Atlantic crossing: "*Yoru* has always been set up for sailing shorter distances, so the whole configuration of sails, deck, and underdeck needed a review to accommodate ten sailors for at least 15 days."

Onboard *White Spirit*, Lillian and Cyrus pointed to one of the many modifications they made in preparation for the Osaka Cup: side-mounted bilge pumps. "Our boat isn't perfectly waterproof, so another consideration is installing bilge pumps on the sides of the bilge in addition to the central one," Cyrus said. "Basically, on long journeys on one tack, water often doesn't get sucked up by the central bilge pump. So you need side pumps to avoid water sloshing up into electronics and cabinets."

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Without exception, every team emphasized the importance of MOB drills and training, first aid certifications for all crew, and backup steering systems in case of rudder damage or failure.



©WHITESPIRIT

*Chafed halyard line with embroidered Neptune manifestations onboard* White Spirit

**Expect the Unexpected**

Despite careful planning and preparation, every ocean passage carries surprises. In addition to having redundancies in place for critical systems, it's important to have spare hardware and line that can be used to jury rig a fix in a pinch.

Both *White Spirit* and *Fika* experienced failures on their hydraulic boom vangs shortly after departing Melbourne (only one hour into the race for *White Spirit!*), but both were able to successfully rig up a solution with spare line and extra Ronstan blocks they carried onboard. "We believe we recovered about 80 percent of the vang function," Lillian said. "From a particularly challenging issue straight off the bat, our confidence in problem solving had begun to grow. The lesson from this: Have more versatile spares than you think you will ever need, account for the heaviest load that you can fix on the boat, and supply equipment accordingly."

"Thirty-plus days at sea will find your weak links," Dowdney agreed. Much as with *Fika* and *White Spirit*, the crew of *Joker x2* found themselves challenged much sooner than they anticipated after the start of the race. "About 100 miles offshore, after being battered for 24 straight hours, we hit a tipping point. The crew (the two of us!) were exhausted, and the boat was showing it: a crack in the bow section had opened up, and water was pouring in around the base of the spinnaker pole with every wave. Watching bucket-loads of water rush in and not having an immediate fix is a deeply unsettling feeling when land is a distant thought. We made the call: abandon the offshore "buffalo girls" route and tack toward the coast. It was the only smart move. Closer to shore, we had the option to dive in for repairs if needed and give the boat, and ourselves, a fighting chance to regroup."


@RONSTANSAILING

*Trusted 45QT Orbit Winch™ onboard* Joker x2

Onboard *Yoru*, Elisa's crew had to adapt on the fly after an unforecast squall broke their furling sail early in the race. "Without it, we were forced to sail the rest of the race using either the gennakers, which were rigged with snuffers or a simple jib configuration for downwind sailing. Everyone reacted incredibly well to any problem or difficult situation that occurred — the collective teamwork and calm disposition of the crew were critical to keeping the boat up to speed and safe."

**Trust in your crew — and your equipment**

It came as no surprise that, in addition to all the safety planning and preparation, most boats underwent a significant overhaul in hardware and rigging before heading offshore. The objectives? Equipment and systems that were simple and easy to maintain and operate in less-than-ideal conditions, whether that be heavy wind and storms, exhausted crew operating in the dark, or both.

Annette and Sophie on Fika prioritized the ability to put in a reef while under sail, swapping their old boom-furling mainsail for a conventional system, using the stock batten cars and an Andersen electric halyard winch, but had more upgrades in mind given more time and resources. "The system is foolproof, but we'd like to upgrade the batten system to a Ronstan mast track and cars, as we find the existing cars require constant attention and tend to come loose with components falling to the deck and overboard (despite using Loctite). I'd also like to reduce the stack height of the mainsail to prevent having to climb up onto the 'granny bars' to reach the head of the mainsail."

Elisa shared a similar sentiment about the importance of a reliable, low-friction batten system, "the most important thing is to be able to handle the sails in strong winds and sea state, so a reliable reefing system on the mainsail is fundamental to guarantee safety. Our mainsail was equipped with Ronstan Series 30 Captive Ball batten system and three reef points." The setup proved critical for their race, allowing them to quickly and securely reef the main when conditions rapidly deteriorated, leading to 48 hours of nonstop heavy winds and large sea states.

In another important pre-race upgrade, *Joker x2* replaced winches with Ronstan Orbit Winches™ prior to departing Melbourne. "For such a long race, we really valued the ease of maintenance in the event we had to open up a winch in the middle of the ocean. The ability to remove the drum without any tools and not have to worry about any loose bearings or components inside was really appealing. Not to mention, being able to ease the main with one hand (while driving with the other hand) using the QuickTrim™ self-tailer was pretty special in a race where you are often alone on deck."

**The Human Element — Persistence and a Positive Mindset**

To combat the immense psychological toll of long offshore journeys, crews found creative ways to maintain a positive attitude despite long days and constant frustrations.

For *White Spirit*, a persistent halyard chafe issue nearly pushed them to their wits' end. "Nothing seemed to work, as we couldn't identify the culprit despite inspecting the masthead, wrapping any potentially abrasive surfaces and staring at halyards with binoculars for what seemed like hours," Lillian described. "Each time we inspected the halyard on a sail drop and it was chewed, frustration grew. I can't exaggerate enough how important it was to stay optimistic during repeated trial and error, time and time again. Get creative, try something unconventional. We went as far as embroidering manifestations to Neptune of "please work" in the halyard when we felt we were nearly at a breaking point. Bizarrely, it seemed to help!" Lillian and Cyrus made sure to keep the mood lighthearted throughout the race, whether it was staying comfortable in their Ugg boots, capturing wildlife and sunsets on a Polaroid, or singing and dancing to playlists their friends had made for them to pass the time.

For *Fika*, sailing as a mother-daughter team added a unique crew dynamic. "Luckily for Mom and I, sailing together comes natural," Sophie says. "We're in sync with each other and can read each other like a book." Sophie also emphasized the importance of meals in maintaining morale. "Regardless of the conditions, we'll always prepare a hot meal. It may be as simple as an 'egg in a hole', but this can be so welcome when you are cold and wet."

Whether it's a family bond, a long-time sailing partner, or a newly forged crew, trust lies at the heart of every successful voyage. In the most remote parts of the world, it's the human connection that carries you through.

**Final Thoughts**

From meticulous preparation to quick thinking when conditions changed, these sailors exemplify what bluewater sailing truly demands: resilience, teamwork, and trust in each other and their gear. Reliable equipment lets them focus on what matters most: staying safe, sailing well, and returning with stories worth sharing. And after these passages, they certainly have a few more.

*This article brought to you by Ronstan International. Acknowledgements: @sailingnakama, @whitespirit, @joker_yachting, Elisa Mangani*

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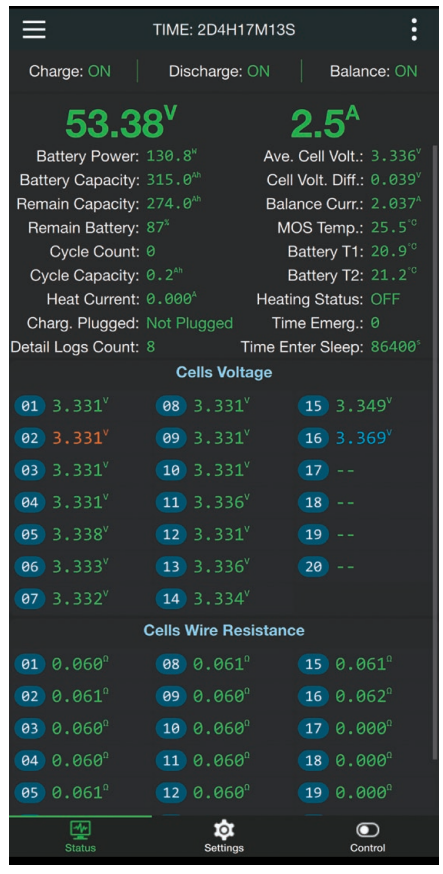


*The shore on the rarely visited Flores Island*

**Key Takeaways**

1. *Redundancy is essential*

Sailing with an electric propulsion system benefits from a high level of replacement redundancy, perhaps more so than traditional diesel setups. Carrying spare components, like our backup throttle potentiometer and an entirely redundant 10 kW motor, ensured we could address issues without compromising the passage. The fact that we had three independent 48V batteries allowed for us to continue when a cell failed within one of the batteries. In hindsight, we absolutely should have replaced the batteries on *Vagari* before making the crossing. We were fortunate not to have more issues, mostly due to improper use (by us) shortening the life of the batteries. One of the first tasks once we got to mainland Europe was to buy new cells and build our own. *Vagari* now has two 315Ah @ 48V / ~32kW of battery power.




*Graphic User Interface for new JK BMS. Note the wire resistance, which can tell you if you have a loose lead wire.*

2. *Energy management is a dynamic process*

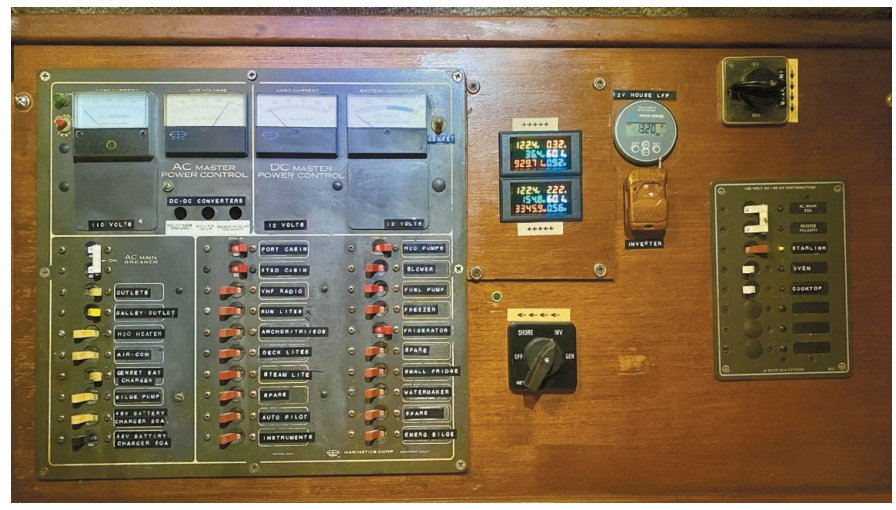
While our pre-departure energy budget was helpful, real-time adjustments were crucial as conditions evolved. Hydro-regeneration during the trade winds was a game changer, allowing us to arrive with ample battery reserves despite the loss of one battery. There is substantial room for innovation, specifically AI and machine learning, to assist in this energy management. (Keith was fortunate enough to attend the METS marine trade show in Amsterdam in November 2024 and software-supported energy management was a big topic. An article series about that trade show and technical innovation in the energy management space is planned.)

3. *Routing matters — a lot*

The differences between our passage and those of the other boats underscore how critical routing decisions are. Electric propulsion benefits from routes that emphasize calm conditions, solar efficiency, and minimal distances. Avoiding the squalls and adverse seas that plagued the modified rhumb line boats made our passage not just easier but also far more enjoyable.

4. *The human element cannot be overlooked*

The quiet, emission-free operation of the electric system transformed the passage into a more tranquil experience. Beyond the technical and logistical benefits, this enhanced the morale and well-being of everyone onboard, reminding us that cruising is as much about the journey as it is about the destination.




*Updated electrical panel to include remote On-Off for all DC converters*

**Conclusion**

Our Atlantic crossing was more than just a test of technology; it was a demonstration of what's possible with modern, sustainable cruising systems. From the champagne sailing of the first two weeks to the brisk trade winds in the final stretch, the journey showed how electric propulsion can redefine the offshore sailing experience.

While challenges like the throttle potentiometer failure and battery malfunction reminded us of the need for vigilance and preparation, the overall success of the passage underscored the viability of electric systems for long-distance cruising.

The stark differences in experience between our route and those of the other boats further reinforced the importance of matching the passage plan to the vessel's capabilities. For us, the direct rhumb line route was not just a path across the Atlantic — it was a gateway to discovering the future of sustainable sailing.

As we look forward to sharing more about this crossing in the context of lessons and innovations, one thing is clear: Electric propulsion is not just a viable option for offshore cruising — it's a transformative one.

*Forward questions and discussions about sailboat electrification to sail. vagari@gmail.com.*

### Antigua Yacht Club hosts 2025 Caribbean Dinghy Championship


JASON PICKERING

*Defending champions Team Antigua*

The Antigua Yacht Club (AYC) will host the 2025 Caribbean Dinghy Championship (CDC), sanctioned by the Caribbean Sailing Association (CSA), from October 24–26, 2025. The 2025 CDC will feature competition across six classes, including youth, senior, and inclusive sailing: Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6, ILCA 7, the Topper Fusion (double-handed), and the RS Venture (double-handed/adaptive).

Team Antigua will enter the 2025 championship as the defending Nations Cup champions.

### Salty Dawgs Plan 2025 Rally

Plans are well underway for the 15th Salty Dawg Sailing Association Caribbean Rally. Vessels can choose to depart from either Hampton, Virginia, with an anticipated departure date of November 1, 2025 (weather permitting), bound for either Marsh Harbor, Great Abaco, Bahamas or Antigua or Newport, Rhode Island, bound for Antigua, with an anticipated departure date in late October. Vessels destined for Antigua will also have the option to stop briefly in Bermuda.

The passage to Antigua should take about 12 days while the passage to the Bahamas should take about 5 days.

The Salty Dawg Sailing Association lists the benefits of participating in the rally:

- Pre-departure education and support from the SDSA team, outside experts and sponsors
- Leadership by seasoned sailors who volunteer their time and knowledge to help cruisers realize their sailing dreams
- Twenty-four-hour tracking and SDSA shoreside emergency support services to help ensure a well-run and safe rally for all
- Emergency "concierge" style 24/7 medical support by George Washington Maritime Medical Services
- Pre-departure and daily en-route weather forecasting and routing by Chris Parker at Marine Weather Center
- Position tracking map
- Pre departure and arrival social events and camaraderie



COURTESY SDSA

*Salty Dawg fleet members are identified in this aerial photo of English Harbour, Antigua.*

*To register or for more information go to https://www.saltydawgsailing.org/caribbean-rally*

### St. Thomas International Regatta 2026

The St. Thomas International Regatta (STIR) is taking a tack toward tradition by moving the event's date to Easter weekend, April 3-5, 2026. The St. Thomas Yacht Club (STYC) aims to honor this tradition in 2026 with a combined holiday and quintessential beachfront Caribbean vibe. STIR invites CSA Bareboat, IC24, VX One, Hobie Waves, and One Design classes with a minimum length of 19 feet to enter. The Notice of Race will be available in the early fall when registration opens.

*—Continued on page 23*




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# HOW HOT IS THE WATER?

*by Bill Woodroffe*



BILL WOODROFFE

*Our daughter enjoying the warm waters of Nonsuch Bay, Antigua*

Some once said — I think it was me — that the amount of fun you can have is inversely proportional to the amount of clothing you must wear. Sliding down a snow-covered mountain wearing five layers of clothes, two hoods, goggles, extra thick mittens, boots of Spanish leather and plastic, where the sun only shines on the tip of your nose, is not my idea of fun. Beaches and the warm soothing water of the ocean are my cup of tea. Minimal clothing, maximum fun.

There is no mystery why cruisers and visitors come to the Caribbean in the winter. Freezing temperatures and even snow in Florida are really good reasons! We are no different, although our cutoff for low temperatures is higher, close to 21 C (70 F). Temperatures below that, we go south.

This is why for the last 13 years my wife and I have been in the Caribbean in the winter. We also keep our boat, *Kalunamoo*, in Trinidad for hurricane season in the summer. We leave Trinidad in November and spend the rest of the season in the eastern Caribbean between the Virgins and Grenada. The warm weather is the draw, but of course, there are also many other reasons to visit or stay in the Caribbean.

Given the cold snaps and reports of record snows up north, some skeptics question the notion of a worldwide warmer climate. The argument against the reality of climate change is hard to make. However, given my preference for warm water, I ask, "how warm is the water?"

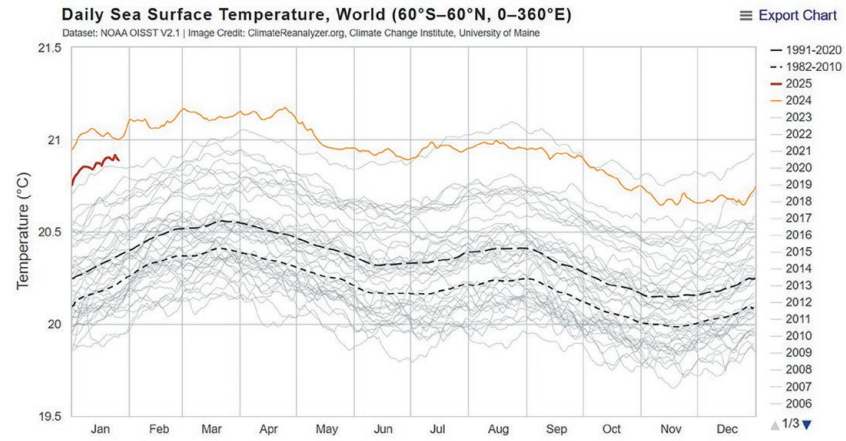
When we sailed up to Antigua in November we definitely noticed how unusually warm the ocean and air seemed compared to the last few years. Trinidad is hot and by November even we look forward to the "cooler" temperatures "up north" toward St. Martin. Since all the islands sit in this big pool of ocean water, air and water temperatures are firmly coupled to each other. And so I took a closer look at water temperatures here in the Caribbean to verify our observation.

The topic of climate change is not new and many articles and reports of its evidence and effects have been published and are easily found on the web. Here in the Caribbean, these concerns include: the effects of sea level rise and how that will affect shorelines; how warmer sea temperatures will affect sea life and corals; and what effects changing energy production brings.

Of particular interest to cruisers is how hurricanes and storms may change due to changes in climate.

A look back to 2024 is interesting. The 2024 season, by most projections, including by the U.S. National Hurricane Center, projected an "above average" season. The reasons given were multiple, as no one single parameter can be used to predict future weather or climate. But one major factor was the warmer ocean temperatures. Worldwide ocean temperatures have been in the news and so a closer look at that and the impact of that in the Caribbean is warranted.

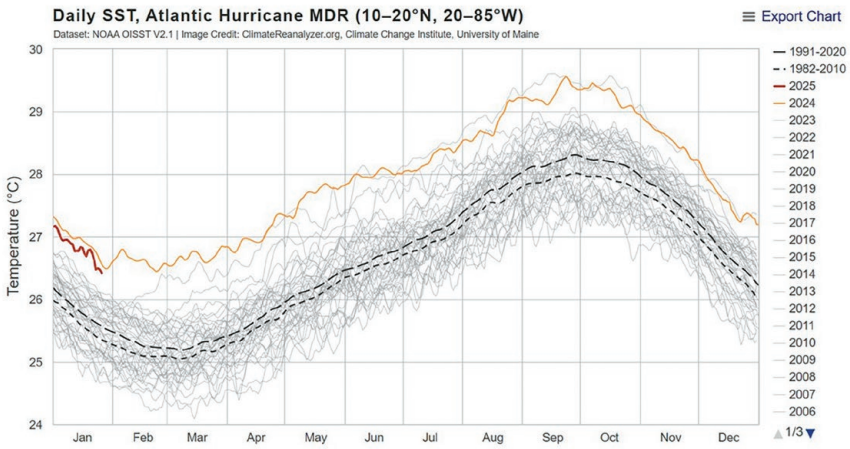
Both the surface, near-surface and deep-sea temperatures are monitored worldwide in a variety of ways. NOAA's Global Ocean Monitoring and Observing program (GOMO) measures ocean temperatures with direct multiple sensors and vessel reports. NASA records surface temperatures continually via satellites. https://svs.gsfc.nasa.gov/5101. The results of these measurements clearly show the warming of the oceans, including the tropical Atlantic and Caribbean Sea. These two areas are directly east and west of the Lesser Antilles. These confirmed our own observations.




https://climatereanalyzer.org/clim/sst_daily/?dm_id=world2

When we left Trinidad, in November, the water temperature as measured by our Raymarine speed transducer was 30.8 C (87.5 F). When we arrived in Antigua mid-November, and along the way, it was about the same temperature. That was much warmer than I remembered in previous years. Even the air temperature seemed warmer than in years past. In December, the water temperature slowly dropped and by mid-January it was 27.9 C (82.3 F) in Antigua. These anecdotal temperature readings did confirm our feelings of much warmer conditions than previous years.

As seen in the accompanying temperature graphs, the average temperature for all oceans (60N to 60S) in 2024 was about 0.5 C higher than the recorded records since 1981. The Atlantic Main Development Region (MDR) for hurricanes was about 1.0 C higher than the recorded records (last 43 years). The average absolute temperature differences don't seem impressive. One degree C (1.56 F) seems inconsequential. But the additional energy or Ocean Heat Content (OHC) that is represented in that small temperature difference is tremendous. It is that additional energy that is available to hurricanes and storms that keeps hurricane predictors up at night.




https://climatereanalyzer.org/clim/sst_daily/?dm_id=atlhmdr

Why are the oceans warmer? The simple answer is that the air is warmer because the oceans act as a reservoir of atmospheric heat. It is a complex relationship, as any climate scientist will tell you. But there is no mistaking the recent trends. The oceans, including the Caribbean waters, are getting warmer.

That sounds like good news to me. I love warm water! However, as with much in life, too much of a good thing may not be good. Will the oceans become like the waters off Bouillante in Guadeloupe? You don't need a hot tub there! Just step into the ocean waters warmed by the thermal spring that powers the electric generating plant there!

In the meantime, I'll enjoy the Caribbean waters and leave my heavy clothing to others.

Compass *contributor Bill Woodroffe holds a BS degree in meteorology from the State University of New York Maritime College, sailed as a deck officer in the US Merchant Marine, and now sails with his wife aboard their 47-foot ketch SV* Kalunamoo *throughout the islands of the Eastern Caribbean. He can be reached at whwsailboat@gmail.com.*

—Continued from page 21

Caribbean Regatta Logistics, owned and operated by St. Thomas native Ben Beer, can assist owners and teams in bringing their boats to race. Contact Beer for details (benbeer13@gmail.com) or the regatta website (stthomasinternationalregatta.com/faq/caribbean-regatta-logistics).



INGRIDABERY.COM

*UK's Germaine Williams helms Sail Racing Academy's Beneteau 40.7, Escapado, in STIR 2025.*

The STSC (stthomassailingcenter.com/racing/st-thomas-international-regatta) has limited Hobie Waves and IC24s available for race charter for STIR 2026.

Additionally, UK-based companies Sail Racing Academy (www.sailracingacademy.org/tour/st-thomas-international-regatta-2026) and LV Yachting (lvyachting.com/events/st-thomas-international-regatta/) offer race charters for STIR 2026.

*For more information, contact Regatta co-director Pat Bailey (simpleislandboy51@gmail.com) or visit www.stthomasinternationalregatta.com*

### New CMC Race Format Promises More Fun

The Caribbean Multihull Challenge Race for January 2026 will add a new feature to its distance races, with podium spots determined by CSA ratings. The new awards will recognize vessels winning based on speed over a specific course.

Interviews with multihull owners and skippers have indicated that racing to a rating is fun; but racing with respect to flat-out speed adds a new dimension, which will be even more fun.

"Multihull design development is roaring forward with innovations in hull forms, build materials, foils, sails, etc. meaning that owners of the most modern design yachts can reach speeds unheard of in previous years," says CMC chair Petro Jonker. "The CMC wants to encourage entries from owners of these builds who delight in their ability to race from point A to point B. We expect that this feature will create an even more diverse and impressive entry list."



LAURENS MOREL

*Fujin: Racing with respect to flat out speed adds a new dimension.*

### New Events Highlight New Look for AYC Racing Program

The Antigua Yacht Club has begun a plan to revamp its club racing program with a new events committee under the leadership of well-known racer Sandy Mair, with a brief to tighten up on procedures, including advance publicity, exposure for sponsors, and race organization at a proper professional level.

Mair has produced a new program. The traditional pre-Christmas Budget Marine Jol Byerley Hightide Series (now in its 25th annual edition), the Boxing Day Barrel, and the Sandy Island Race will be joined by two new events — a Small Boat weekend (in mid-January) which will feature the Antigua National Championship for the RS Elite Class, and the West Coast Cup held between the Antigua Yacht Club and Jolly Harbour Yacht Club, culminating in a final event in Carlisle Bay in March.



JASON PICKERING

*Budget Marine Joi Byerly Hightide Series*

All yachtsmen in the region are encouraged to include these events on their schedule.

*For more information, please contact 460-1799 or events@yachtclub.ag.*



# NORMAN ISLAND, PART 2

*By Valerie Sims*

*The stories of Norman Island, of Valerie's great-grandfather Henry Osmond Creque and pirate treasure he may have found on Norman Island, continue to fascinate Valerie. Here, she starts to get closer to the secret.*

When I was a young girl, my grandmother entertained my sister and I with fascinating tales of buried treasure that delighted and intrigued us. I remember *The Legend of El Cid*. She told us that her mother's family were descendants of El Cid, a Castilian knight and national hero in medieval Spain, and when they emigrated from Spain many centuries ago to the island of St. Thomas, they left an enormous wealth behind. [*Editor's note: Charlton Heston played El Cid in a 1961 movie.*]

When I pleaded with her to tell me more, she recounted the following story once in the early 1970s, and never spoke of it again.

One day, she said, her grandfather noticed a schooner in front of the cave that the locals called *The Bat Hole*. Becoming suspicious, he went to inquire, but by the time he arrived, the vessel was far in the distance. When he entered the cavern, he found the remnants of what had obviously been hidden.

There, on the cave floor, strewn between the rocks, were pieces of eight and gold doubloons! He couldn't believe his eyes! When they adjusted to the darkness, he noticed a huge black hole near the ceiling.

When she paused, I asked her, how did they find the location?

She told me, "*They discovered a map tucked between the pages of a book in a library in London.*"

A million more questions came to me, but that was all she willingly shared.

Many years later, while browsing through a newspaper from 1889, I was surprised to find a treasure tale that was surprisingly similar to the one my grandmother told me! Could there be some truth to this legacy? Searching further through the locally archived newspapers led me to a cryptic clue in *The Sanct Thomae Tidende*, September 11, 1880:

> *Gossip has it that treasure has been found on Norman Island, one of the Virgin group.*

Two weeks later, the St. Croix Avis referred to this as just a rumour, not a fact. That was all. Nothing was ever published after that brief notice until nine years later when I found this article in the *Nashville American Newspaper,* published in 1889. It described how a fisherman had chipped away at a concealed hole in one of the caves and made a tremendous discovery.



DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION BY TAD RICHARDS, INSPIRED BY N. C. WYETH

**Wealth Supposed to Have Been Hidden in a Cave**

One morning about thirty years ago (1859), a fisherman arrived in Road Town, Tortola, with an interesting story.

He said a large schooner was anchored off the coast of Norman Island, one of the British Virgin Islands, and that her boats were moving along the shore. The island being uninhabited, there could be no question of smuggling. The circumstance was so extraordinary that an expedition was at once organized to investigate. On arrival off the point, the schooner was, sure enough, in sight, but was already far off in the distance, making all sail to the westward.

A dim suspicion of the real facts induced the party to extend their investigations into the black hole, a deep-sea tunneled cavern extending far into the bowels of the island. It bore the reputation of having been the treasure vault of pirates in the olden days.

They entered the cavern despite the protest of thousands of bats that rushed around their torches. After a search of up to half an hour or so, they came to a spot where the solid wall of the cavern had recently been attacked with a pick. On closer inspection, the debris was found to consist of mason work, and to have formed the walling of a vaulted chamber sunk into the rock, about four feet square.

Scattered about the fragments of masonry were found a few pieces of old Spanish gold and silver coin, and a jeweled sword hilt, together with a piece of paper. Written on the paper were explicit instructions for the finding of the vault on which it was said that Captain Kidd had stored away a vast quantity of treasure. Attached was said to be a chart of the island, but this was not found.

*Did Henry Osmond Creque find treasure in a cave at Norman Island?*

Not only did the 1889 account in the *Nashville American* newspaper mirror the story my grandmother told me, but it provided further details. Could Henry have penned the article, alluding to date much earlier to keep his identity hidden?

If Henry became rich overnight and found his money in the shape of Spanish doubloons, then what did he do with the money? As luck would have it, I might have found the answer when I was looking through old property records at the *Department of Land Registry in Tortola*. My first clue!

There before me was an 1872 deed to Wynn's Carrot Bay Estate, a 33-acre tract of land whereby Henry was the highest bidder, paying 33 pounds sterling. Because he was a minor, his father placed the bid for him. Henry was 14 and a half years old!

No one in the family today was aware of this early transaction.

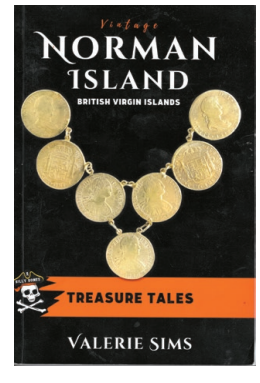
The following year, when Henry was 15, he purchased *Richmond and Ross' Cane Garden Bay*, an estate of 242 acres, at the Marshall's office in Tortola. He paid five pounds, ten shillings and five pence sterling money. Again, Henry was too young to bid himself.

Over a span of 25 years, from 1874 to 1902, Henry acquired additional wealth by dividing and selling portions of Cane Garden Bay Estate, ranging from two to ten acres.

Curiously, there were no other deeds in the names of his siblings of which he had seven, five brothers and two sisters. Why would his father, a soft-spoken Christian man with a large family, purchase lands for Henry and not his sisters and brothers for two consecutive years? It had to be that those funds belonged to Henry. And how does a 14-year-old boy from Anegada have the hard currency needed on an island where most bartered with goods?

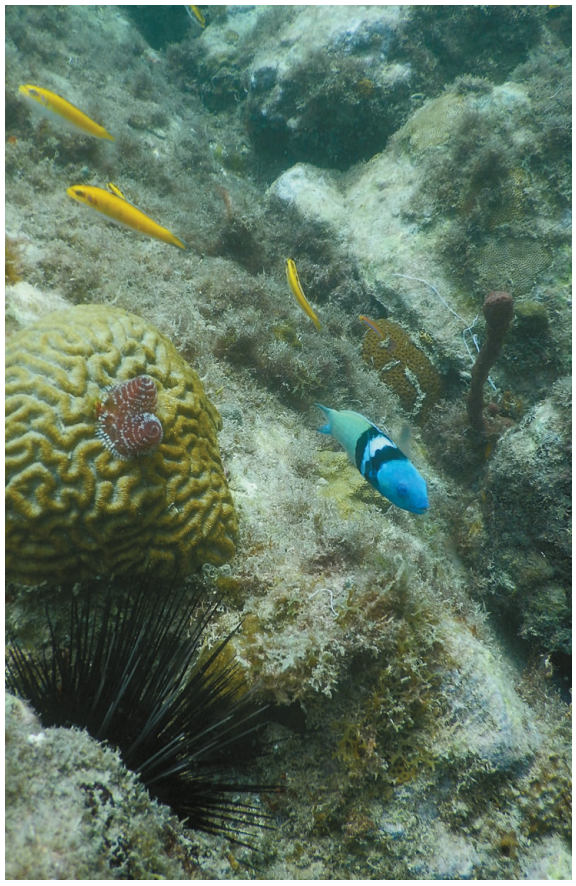
Digging deeper through the records at the *Department of Land Registry* in Tortola and the *Recorder of Deeds* office in St. Thomas, it soon became apparent that Henry continued his spending spree, opening businesses and purchasing additional lands.

*Condensed from* Vintage Norman Island*, by Valerie Sims (NormanIslandbook.com).*



# MORE THAN SKIN DEEP: COLOR AND PATTERN IN MARINE FISHES, PART TWO

*Story and photos by Darelle Snyman*



*The bold color pattern of the terminal phase of the bluehead wrasse clearly reflects their social status.*

In the previous article (*Caribbean Compass* November 2024, page 24; https://caribbeancompass.com/more-than-skin-deep-color-and-pattern-in-marine-fishes-part-one) we saw how color and pattern variations assist reef fishes to blend into their surroundings, either to avoid predators or to increase their chances of snaring a tasty meal. Beyond the important function of camouflage, color patterns also serve as a sophisticated communication system that allows species to interact and reproduce.

Many coral reef fishes view similarly colored or patterned fish as direct competition for food, territory, and reproductive opportunities. Color patterns can help fish establish territories and maintain social hierarchies within a group, thereby reducing direct competition for scarce resources and mates. This could explain why the juveniles of so many reef fishes look significantly different from the adults. In some species this shift in color pattern can be so dramatic that it is easy to regard these juveniles as a different species when first encountering them. It is believed that looking nothing like the adult members of their own kind is a way to help them avoid conflict with territorial adults, allowing them to access resources within the confines of the adults' range.

This disparity in color and pattern between adults and juveniles is well established among the icons of reef fishes, the angelfishes and parrotfishes. For the juveniles of the commonly encountered French angelfish (*Pomacanthus paru*), looking strikingly different from their adult counterparts holds several benefits. Juvenile French angelfish are predominantly black, but catch the eye with their bright yellow vertical stripes. As they age, these stripes gradually disappear, transforming them into the elegant adults with dark scales edged in bright yellow that we so often encounter on the reef. For these adults, this color change signals their readiness to mate. Adult French angelfish mate for life and occupy a large range where they can be fiercely territorial. It thus benefits the young to not look like their aggressive kin to avoid conflict situations. It also helps that the young have a different diet from that of the adults.

Juvenile French angelfish might not look like the adults of their own kind, but they do show a striking resemblance to the juveniles of the equally common Gray angelfish (*Pomacanthus arcuatus*). The easiest way to tell them apart is to take a look at the tail fin, which is edged in yellow in the case of the juvenile French angelfish, while the edge of the tail fin of the Gray angelfish juvenile seems transparent. The juveniles of both species are in the cleaning business, so their similar look could be a way for them to be recognized by their clients as cleaners, making them less vulnerable to predation during the delicate juvenile stage. It never gets old watching these industrious juveniles hanging around their cleaning stations, giving you that wary sideways stare, often displaying their flank as they turn to give you a second stare, which is probably their way to say get out of here, you are chasing my meal tickets away.

Color patterns also play a pivotal role in the intricate dance of mate selection, and many Caribbean fish depend on this visual language to find their perfect mate. Some use it to identify mates of their own kind, crucially important to prevent hybridization with similar looking species. For others bright colors combined with intricate patterns may be an indicator of good health, genetic quality, and dominance, and a female may be more attracted to males that possess these desirable traits.

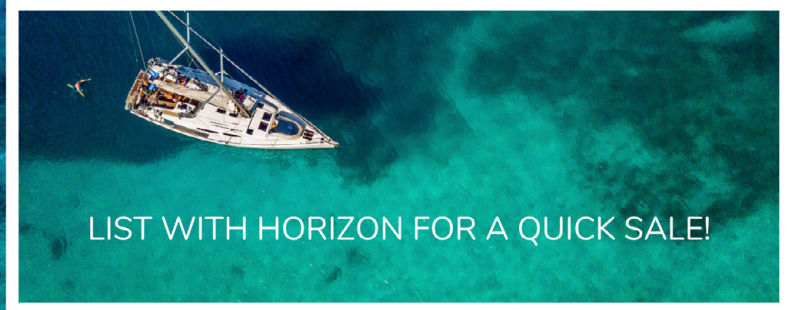
A little Caribbean fish whose mating behavior has been well studied is the busy bluehead wrasse (*Thallasoma bifasciatum*), a species known for its multiple color phases. During the juvenile phase, the body typically has a dark mid-lateral stripe; interestingly, those that associate with reefs are yellow above this stripe while those that live offshore are white, and both are white colored below the stripe. As they age into young or initial phase males and females, the stripe becomes broken up into a series of blotches. The most notable color phase, however, is that of the super males or the terminal phase males. In this phase, they stand out with showy blue heads, yellow-green or blue-green bodies, and white collars flanked with black stripes. This bold color pattern that gives them their common name clearly reflects their social status and distinguishes them from the initial phase or subordinate males. Studies have shown that the terminal males exhibit rapid and frequent changes of body color from bright green to opalescent during courtship. The opalescent color is flashed while courting a female, while green is associated with aggressive chases of other fish getting in their way. During courtship the dominant male stakes out a prominent spawning site from where he courts the females by flashing his courtship colors while displaying a dashing motion. Studies have shown that female bluehead

*—Continued on the next page*



*An adult French angelfish, elegantly adorned with dark scales edged in bright yellow*

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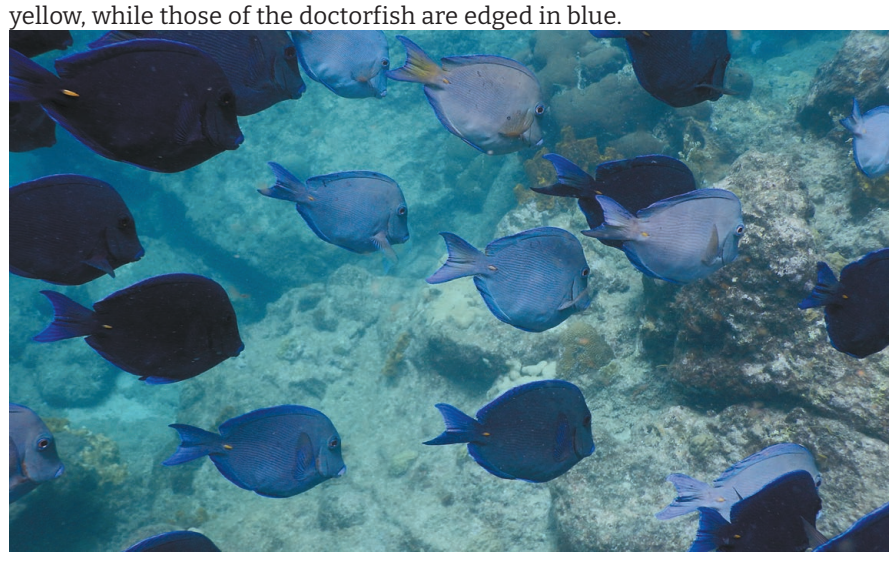
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*Juvenile French angelfish, with characteristic yellow-edged tail fin*

wrasse actively select males with larger and brighter white bands, a feature associated with more dominant males. A female receptive to the male's advances will join him in a dash for the surface where they release their gametes.

Another common Caribbean resident that relies on color to indicate its readiness to spawn is the beautiful blue tang (*Acanthurus coeruleus*). These fish often attract attention as they move across the reef foraging together in large groups. At first glance it is easy to confuse them with their close relative the doctorfish (*Acanthurus chirurgus*). As members of the *Acanthuridae* or surgeonfish family, both species bear the sharp, scalpel-like spines at the base of their tails. In the case of the Caribbean blue tang the spines are yellow, while those of the doctorfish are edged in blue.



*The blue tang often attract attention as they move across the reef foraging together in large groups.*

When ready to spawn, the Caribbean blue tang can gather in aggregations of over 100 fish. They usually choose sandy areas between reefs, and before mating the uniform deep blue color of the male changes to a pale blue on the front half of its body and a dark blue on the rear half to attract females. The female may reciprocate with her own color change by becoming lighter blue. During this mass spawning a number of males and females may break off from the group and release their gametes into the water. This is called a spawning rush. The two-toned color change is more noticeable among males actively courting females during the spawning rush. Studies have shown that color changes continue to play a role in maintaining the relationship once a pair bond has been formed. The fact that pairs often display synchronized color changes is suggestive of the role visual cues play to help strengthen the bond between mates.

This article just gives a small glimpse into the wonderful use of color patterns by many reef fish to seamlessly blend into their surroundings, exhibit dazzling displays to attract mates, and intimidate rivals. By understanding the role of color in these fish's social behaviors, we can gain a deeper appreciation for these fascinating reef residents.

## CALENDAR

# August 2025

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Public holiday in many places (Emancipation Day) |
| 1-5 | Dream Weekend, Negril, Jamaica. instagram.com/dreamwknd/ |
| 1-12 | Petite Martinique Whitsuntide Regatta |
| 1-12 | Grenada Carnival, 'SpiceMas.' spicemasgrenada.com |
| 2-3 | Caye Caulker Community Sailing Club Regatta, Belize |
| 4-6 | BVI Emancipation Festival |
| 5 | St. Kitts and Nevis Culturama Day. nationaltoday.com/culturama-day |
| 7 | Foxy's Hermit Crab Races, Jost Van Dyke, BVI. foxysbvi.com |
| 8-10 | Baccha Music Festival, Martinique. azmartinique.com/en/events/baccha-festival |
| 9 | FULL MOON (Sturgeon Moon). |
| 11 | World Steelpan Day. thereisadayforthat.com/holidays/various/world-steelpan-day |
| 14-16 | San Pedro Classic Fly Fishing Tournament, Belize |
| 15 | Feast of the Assumption |
| 17 | Great Race, Trinidad to Tobago. visittobago.gov.tt/festivals-events |
| 25-31 | Carifesta, Barbados |
| 28-1 Sep | Caribbean Fest, Aruba |
| 30 | Kallaloo Festival, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas |
| 30 | La Rose Flower Festival, St. Lucia |
| 31 | Public holiday in Trinidad & Tobago (Independence Day) |
| All month | - Keegan's Seafood Fest, Bequia. Keegansbequia.org |
| All month | (weekends) North Leeward Breadfruit Festival, St. Vincent. discoversvg.com |
| TBA | Jambalasee Festival. puregrenada.com/events/ |

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



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# Guadeloupe

***Story and photos by Lexi Fisher & Chris Doyle***

*Le Gosier, on the south side of Grande-Terre*

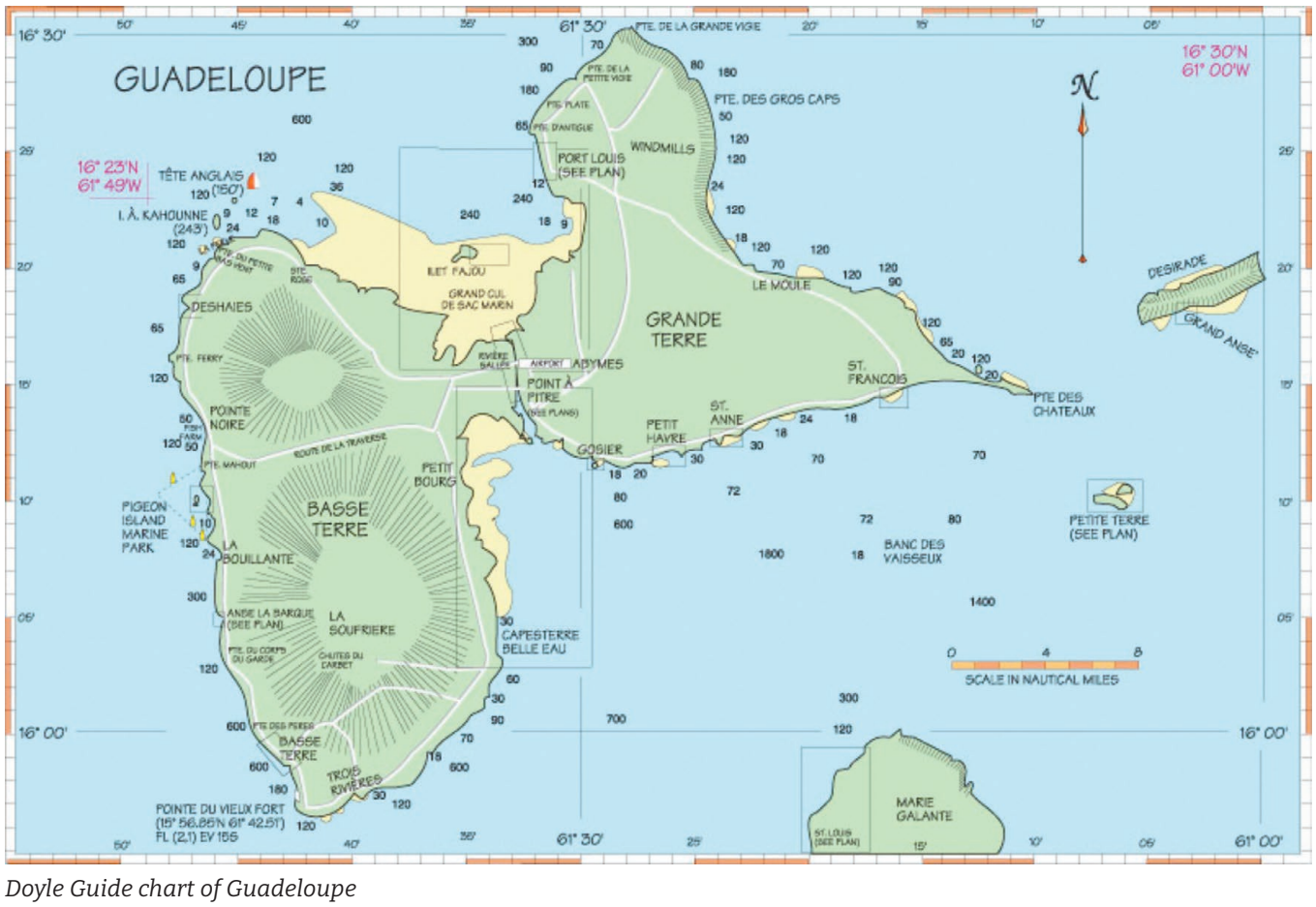
Within the Southern Leewards, north of the verdant, precipitous hills of Dominica and south of the historic harbors of Antigua, is Guadeloupe, known by the Caribs as *Karukera* (Island of Pretty Waters). The island has a population of about 375,000 and is part of France. Marie Galante and Les Saintes are offshore islands that are also part of the country but are far enough away to feel like an adventure and are not covered in this spotlight.

Guadeloupe is partly agricultural, with an emphasis on sugar cane, and the local rhum is highly valued in France. Tourism is also important and it is a popular destination for French nationals. Guadeloupe is composed of two islands in the shape of a lopsided butterfly, with a narrow mangrove channel separating them. Whoever named the islands had a sense of humor, because the larger mountainous one is called “Basse-Terre” (low land) and the smaller, low one “Grande-Terre” (large land). Grande-Terre is a much older island. It once looked more like Basse-Terre, but over millions of years its mountains have eroded. Basse-Terre is a younger volcanic island. Boats of up to 1.8 meters draft and 12 feet mast height can fit under the bridges and navigate between the two islands on the Rivière Salée.

Most cruisers will love visiting the interior, at least in mountainous Basse-Terre, which has some exceptional views and sites. Route de la Traversée runs through the national park, smack in the middle of Basse-Terre. The Crayfish Waterfalls are well worth a visit and swim but make your way to the upper part to encounter fewer tourists. If you are driving yourself, take the detour to Morne à Louis for the spectacular view from the top, overlooking Pigeon Island. Some buses that run between Pointe à Pitre and Pointe Noire take Route de la Traversée.

The most dramatic destination is the 350-foot Carbet Waterfalls in the south of Basse-Terre. If you rent a car, it is easy to find the car park and reach the second falls by a beautiful 30-minute walk on a trail through the rainforest. But this is just the beginning, as many good hiking trails have been built in this area. Try the one-hour hike up to the first falls. This takes you above the rainforest and into cloud forest. These first falls, which are as tall as the second falls, are red from the volcano. Whichever falls you hike to, remember to take your bathing things: they all have good bathing pools, though hiking is sometimes restricted due to landslides.

Other attractions in this area are several crater lakes, including Étang As de Pique, shaped like an ace of spades. By contrast, Grande-Terre has a pleasant countryside of rolling hills, especially the northern part, with lots of sugar cane and picturesque, ruined windmills. Pointe à Pitre, the largest city, has a big marina, excellent chandleries, and you can get all kinds of boat work done here.




*Doyle Guide chart of Guadeloupe*

Most French post offices have ATMs, and these are sometimes easier to find than a bank. I had no problem getting cash from my debit card but it frequently failed in restaurants, many of which seem to exclusively use cards that require a PIN.

**General Navigation**

In addition to the IALA-B buoyage system, yellow buoys are used in the French territories to mark many different things. I have seen them used for no anchoring areas, fishing limits, an area where sand is being dredged, underwater pipelines, waterskiing runs, and as navigation buoys. If the buoys are in deep water, there is usually no problem navigating through them. If they are placed near a beach or resort area, it is unwise to anchor inside them. Yellow and black buoys are always navigation buoys on the IALA-B system.

*—Continued on the next page*

—Continued from the previous page



*Cloud forest vegetation*

**Guadeloupe's Northern Coast**

Guadeloupe's northern coast has a massive sheltered area called Grand Cul-de-sac Marin that is protected by an outer reef that extends up to four miles from Rivière Salée. If sailing outside the reef, be aware that shallow water (three to seven feet) extends a mile and a half west of the obvious outer reef and breaks in most seas. To avoid this, it is best to stay outside the red and white channel buoy that marks the entrance to the small commercial port of Ste. Rose. This is at approximately 16°23.5' N, 061° 44.3' W.

You can pass inside Îlets à Kahouanne and Tête à l'Anglais, though the water is only 12 to 14 feet deep, so it is best avoided in large swells or rough conditions. Watch out for shoals close to shore as you turn down the west coast.

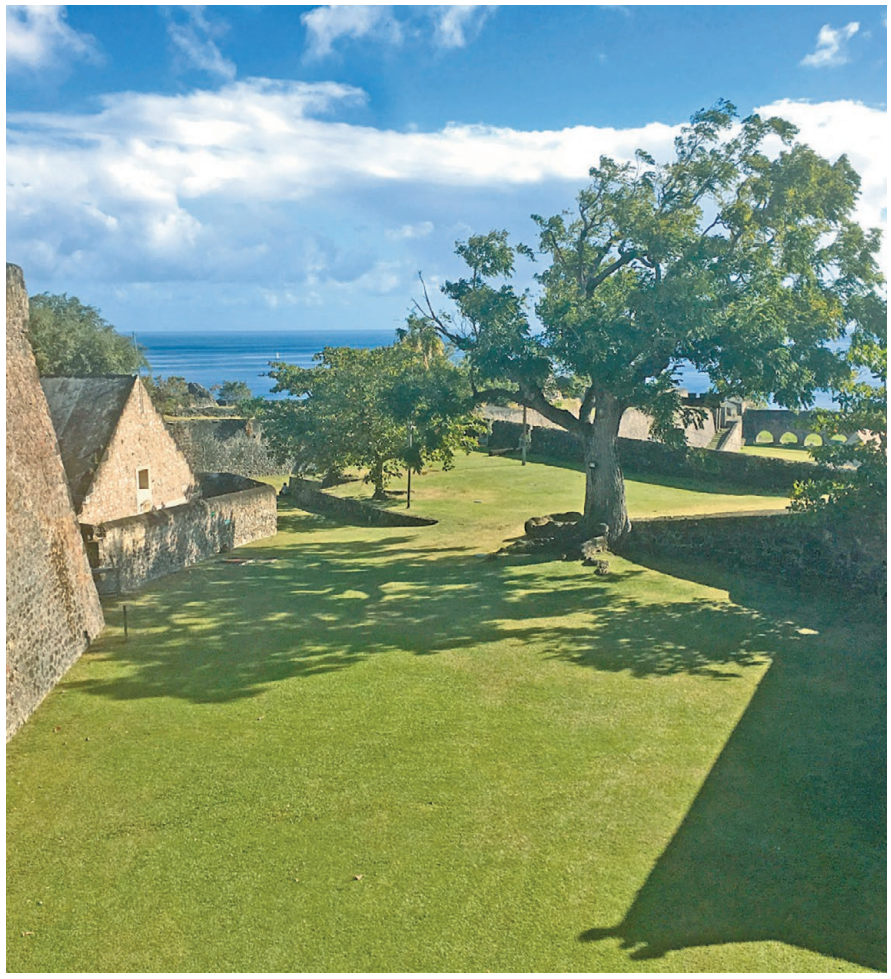
**Western Coast**

Guadeloupe's western coast is mountainous enough that winds on the lee side can be light and fluky, and there may be a wind acceleration effect at the ends of the island, particularly the north end.

From Deshaies south to Pointe Du Vieux Fort, the coast is steep-to, but a quarter of a mile offshore clears all dangers. You can pass either side of Pigeon Island, which lies halfway up the coast. A shoal called La Perle lies about a quarter of a mile offshore, two bays north of Deshaies. In heavy surges it breaks dramatically. There is another shoal off the hotel to its north.

Watch out for fish farms as these come and go. Four anchorages are spaced along the leeward coast. In calm weather you can tuck in almost anywhere else that appeals to you.

*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).*



*Fort Delgrès Memorial, on the slopes of a volcano in Basse-Terre, commemorates the leader of an anti-slavery uprising.*

## Guadeloupe
## Entry and Exit Procedures

**Advance Paperwork:**

Customs and Immigration clearance in the French Antilles can be completed online. This **Noonsite French Antilles Clearance Guide** explains the process. https://www.noonsite.com/report/french-antilles-clearance-for-yachts/

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

**Entry Process:**

Yachts that complete online clearance are free to explore Guadeloupe, with no further steps required. For yachts unable to complete formalities online, in person clearance remains available at customs computers in approved establishments at the ports of entry.

**Ports of Entry (POE):**

There are six ports of entry for Guadeloupe: Basse Terre, Deshaies, Les Saintes, Marie Galante, Pointe-a-Pitre and Saint Francois. See Guadeloupe main ports for more details on the ports of entry. https://www.noonsite.com/place/guadeloupe/- mainports

**Exit Process:**

The same options as entry apply. Yachts requiring a departure stamp should plan to visit an approved clearance point for endorsement. Departments of France (St. Martin, St. Barts, Guadeloupe, and Martinique) all require yachts to clear out of one, before sailing to another.

**Rates:**

There are no customs and immigration fees. There is a small admin fee (3-5 Euros) for use of clearance point computers.

noonsite.com

*Check https://www.noonsite.com/place/guadeloupe/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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