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JANUARY 2026 NO. 355
The Caribbean's Look at Sea & Shore

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2026 CALENDAR

— SEE PAGE 28

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A festive sendoff on the docks at Las Palmas, Gran Canaria, marked the departure of hundreds of sailors and boats bound for St. Lucia in the 40th running of the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers. For a retrospective of the ARC, one of the premier sailing events in the Caribbean, turn to page 15.

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Find *Caribbean Compass* at caribbeancompass.com/pick-up

Find the 2026 Calendar at caribbeancompass.com/caribbean-events-calendar/

On the Cover *From exciting races and rallies to carnivals, barbecues, dance performances and water sports galore, don't miss out on any of the action in the islands in 2026. Scan the QR code below or turn to page 28 for the annual calendar. Photo courtesy Paul Wyeth/World Cruising Club.*

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Caribbean Compass

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Rudder Loss Resonates

Dear *Compass*,

Heather and I enjoy browsing the *Caribbean Compass* monthly updates. Both of us wrote articles for Compass back in the 1997/1999 era. We even met former editor in chief Sally Erdle a couple of times. The article in your October 2025 issue on rudder loss especially resonates with us. (caribbeancompass.com/loss-of-steering-disaster-or-inconvenience)

At the time of the incident, which occurred in January 2006, we were part of a widely scattered flotilla making its way across the Atlantic to Barbados. The Atlantic crossing was the final leg of our circumnavigation on *ARGONAUTA* I, a Beneteau 440.

Here are two excerpts from the piece I wrote in 2021 about our Atlantic crossing, published by *Sailworld* (sailworldcruising.com/news/234594/Memories-of-a-Circumnavigation-Atlantic-Crossing).

Thanks for keeping *Caribbean Compass* coming. Yachties either active or retired really enjoy reading it and I know those many readers out there find it a great source of information.

Kindest regards,
Hugh Bacon

Excerpt #1

Following a similar rhumb line was a gaggle of about ten other yachts separated by distances of up to 1000 NM. Most had departed from the Canaries. An HF radio net had been established with a scheduled daily communication. About 1000 NM east of Barbados, a major drama began to unfold. On January 10, a US registered J/44, S/V *First Light*, lost its rudder and was wallowing out of control. The crew had reported a leak around the rudder bearing area prior to rudder departure. They were attempting to jury rig steering and had been working at it all day without success. We were the closest yacht to their position, which was about 130 NM ahead of us.

I had suggested that a train of yachts sail by the stricken vessel over the next week or so. The idea being that at some point, if steering proved impossible, a crew pick up would be available should the gut-wrenching decision be made to abandon the yacht. We fervently hoped the crew would succeed in regaining steering. Needless to say, all the various authorities had been advised of the situation. As the closest yacht, we proceeded to the position, 15 34.44N/043 04.106W, some 980 NM from Barbados. We made visual contact at 1000 GMT, January 11.



TRUDI SMYTH

On February 16, 2006, First Light *fetched up on Morgan Lewis Beach on the east side of Barbados near the town of St. Andrews.*

It was early morning. The swells were huge but the vessel seemed secure. A tow by us looked impossible in such seas. There were three onboard. The skipper evinced strong determination to devise a jury steering rig. No supplies were needed. We circled them as moral support and to assure them they were not alone. Shortly thereafter, the Net offered precise guidance for a bridle/spinnaker pole solution. The next vessel would rendezvous in about 24 hours. It was heartbreaking to sail away watching *First Light* slowly dip below the horizon.

We maintained VHF contact and learned that the drogue they had thought might work as a warp proved too large, but a bicycle turned out to be about right. By the end of the day, they had got under way making 2 knots but only in a northwesterly direction. A Mayday declaration would of course save life and limb, but it would mean abandoning the yacht. To the surprise of all, a sailing trawler with only an HF receiver appeared on the scene and offered a tow. The skipper accepted. Towing was indeed unsuccessful due to chafe and tow induced yawing of up to 90 degrees. The tow line reportedly had parted twice and by then, the crew of *First Light* was exhausted and disheartened. At 1800Z, January 13, the decision was taken to abandon ship. The crew intended to transfer by dinghy to Ros Ailither, the towing vessel. In the prevailing sea conditions this seemed life threatening! There could be no further communication as there was no HF transmitter on the rescue vessel. Silence.



TRUDI SMYTH

A witness at the beach described First Light *as broken in two with gear scattered about the beach, a total loss.*

Excerpt #2

To the huge relief of all, on January 21 *Ros Ailither* appeared in Carlyle Bay, Barbados, with *First Light* crew safely onboard. They immediately departed by air for the US. On February 16, 2006, *First Light* fetched up on Morgan Lewis Beach on the east side of Barbados near the town of St. Andrews. Evidently she had drifted with the current and wind some 800 NM over a period of 33 days. Clearly, she was intact throughout and progressed to Barbados. A witness at the beach with whom I spoke described *First Ligh*t as broken in two with gear scattered about the beach, a total loss.

Ties of Friendship

Dear *Compass*,

I am pleased to greet you very kindly on behalf of the Hemingway International Yacht Club of Cuba and on my own behalf, and to reiterate our sincere thanks for keeping us updated, through *Caribbean Compass*, on nautical life in the Caribbean.

For our part, we are deeply honored that *Caribbean Compass* is the media outlet with which we have maintained ties of friendship and collaboration practically since the foundation of our yacht club, a sanctuary of love for the sea and friendship and a bastion in the defense and preservation of the maritime and nautical history of the Cuban nation. Our ongoing gratitude to Sally Erdle, who helped make these ties of friendship and collaboration a reality.

I take this opportunity to reiterate my warmest regards and wish you and the entire *Caribbean Compass* team excellent health, peace, prosperity, and well-being.

Comodoro Escrich
Club Náutico Internacional Hemingway de Cuba

—*Continued on page 5*

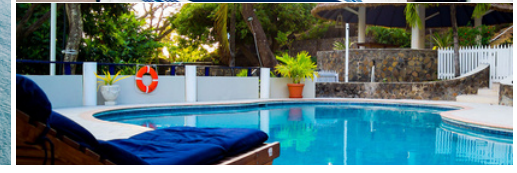
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—*Continued from page 4*

***Freedom's Child* Brings Back Memories**

Dear *Compass*,

Just been reading Chris Doyle's article about *Freedom's Child* (October 2025, caribbeancompass.com/caribbean-reminiscences-freedoms-child) which was extremely interesting and brought back many happy memories, including sailing across Grand Anse on her at great speed and catching a barracuda that took great exception to being chucked in to the bottom of the boat; having a dentist appointment, only to be told on arrival by a sorry-looking dentist, Pete Stransky, that I had better come back another day as due to being my drinking partner the night before, he didn't have very steady hands!!



DIGITAL CREATION BY CHRIS DOYLE

Young Chris Doyle on the beach at Grenada

With regard to our friend Ron Smith, whom you mention in your article, I was driving into town one sunny morning and on reaching the roundabout just behind the yacht club found Ron in his car sound asleep on the steering wheel with a policeman directing traffic round him as he didn't want to disturb him!!

Lovely times.

I am really glad to see that Chris is getting lots of articles published and I find them all fascinating.

Give my regards to all who knew me in those halcyon days,

Best regards,

Tony Powell

We Love Chris, Too

Dear Tony,

There's more to the *Freedom's Child* story — Part Two appears in this issue of *Compass*. Every Caribbean sailor knows and relies on his Doyle Guides, considered essential reading for anyone sailing in the Caribbean since the 1980s and now available as an app (doyleguides.com/app). Chris and Lexi Fisher, who is now Doyle Guides CEO, supply our always-popular monthly "Island Spotlight" feature. And we always look forward to when Chris mines his inexhaustible trove of memories of halcyon days of Caribbean sailing life.

Best regards,

***Caribbean Compass* editors**

Another Regatta Highpoint

Dear *Compass*,

The recent annual Caribbean Dinghy Championships in Antigua in October 2025 were another high point in the development of Caribbean sailing. And by Caribbean sailing, I mean sailing by Caribbean people (as distinct from the sailing by extra regional parties in regional sailing events).

The Antigua event showed a high level of competition. The event enjoyed medium breezes and flat water in Falmouth Harbour. The onshore social experience was superb and will likely lead to inter-island friendships as has occurred in the past.

The event has two components. One is individual scoring, and the other is the Nations Cup, which is awarded to the country with the highest combined team score across four dinghy classes. Antigua dominated as has become the custom, but I dare to say with increased competition.

Experience has proven that the presence of coaches makes a big difference to the quality of sail racing performance. They are essential to any territory wanting to achieve anything in sailing. There are now more coaches than ever before in the Caribbean and their quality is higher than before (no reason to stop, though). There is a close relationship between success in the CSA and coaching effort, as can be seen in the results of the 2025 event.

The race classes inevitably include Laser/ILCA and Optimist, the most prevalent equipment in the Caribbean. The two-man boats are likely to vary as the equipment choices available tend to vary. For the first time ever, sailing boats adapted for the disabled were on the line, and if disabled sailing gets more developed, that would be a great addition to this event.

Many years ago as CSA president I struggled to keep the event going. The challenges were to find a host nation and to get different territories to use their limited budgets to travel. This last event in Antigua proved that the event has solidified its following, probably also in good part due to the online communications managed by the CSA, which has made equipment easier to access.

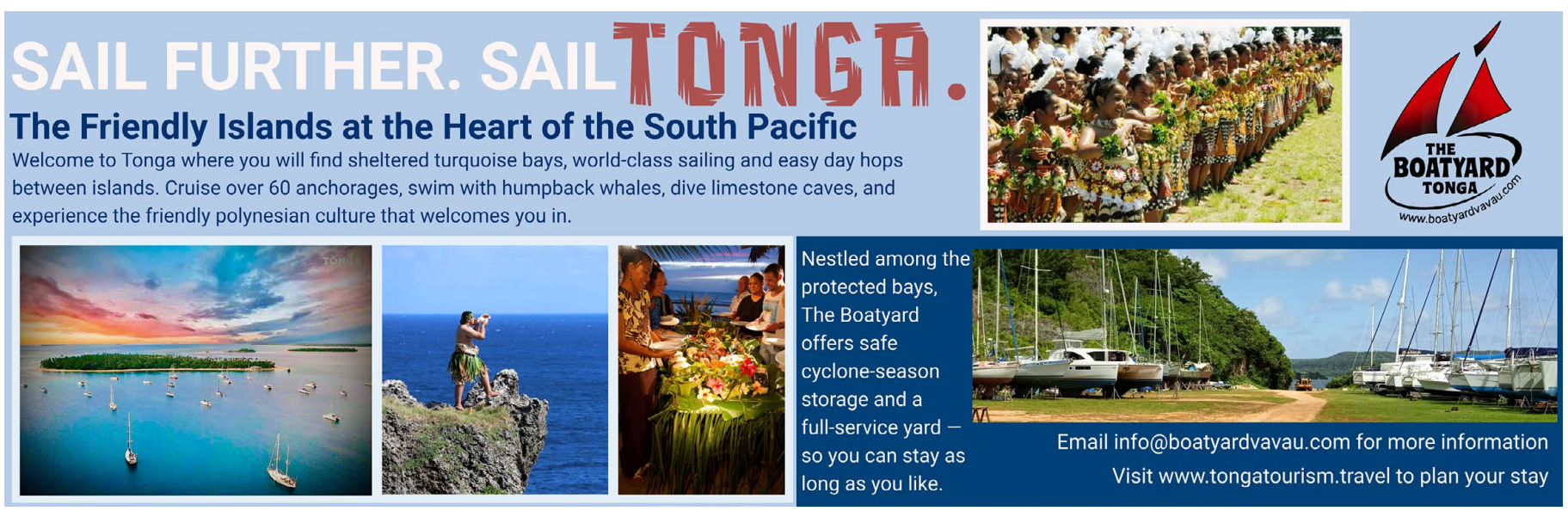
Many territories in the Caribbean would have liked to host the event in the past, but few had the equipment and/or the infrastructure and organization. The last few years Antigua has hosted, and that island is blessed with some of the best equipment, although Barbados and Trinidad cannot be ruled out. All US territories are limited due to the difficulty of Caricom citizens obtaining visas.

Caribbean dinghy sailing is organized by a regional association called the Caribbean Sailing Association. Globally, sailing is organized and regulated by World Sailing. The smaller Caribbean territories do not fit well into the structure of World Sailing, and the CSA is a suitable and responsible solution to this gap. It does mean, however, that events like the Caribbean Dinghy Championship are not a stepping stone into the wider world of global sailing competition. The stepping stones currently demanded by World Sailing for Caribbean sailors, however, are excessive, and a pragmatic and decisive leadership in World Sailing would see that they should quickly create a structure whereby the Caribbean Dinghy Championship, even though it is out of their orbit, would have some connection with the qualification process toward Olympic competition.

Next year the event is scheduled for Trinidad. A Trinidad-hosted event can boost the event to yet a higher level.

Robbie Ferron

Antigua



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2016 Lagoon 380
$268,000
Luperon, DR



2014 Leopard 39
$299,000
St. Croix, USVI



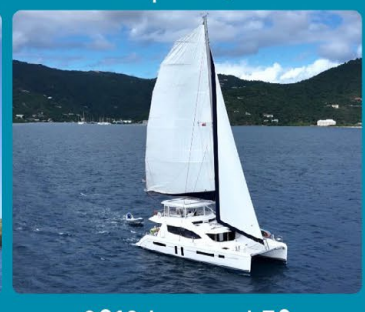
2018 Lagoon 630MY
$1,699,000
Tortola, BVI



2018 Jeanneau JY51
$539,000
Grenada



1989 Taswell 49
$228,000
Trinidad & Tobago



2016 Leopard 58
$899,000
Tortola, BVI



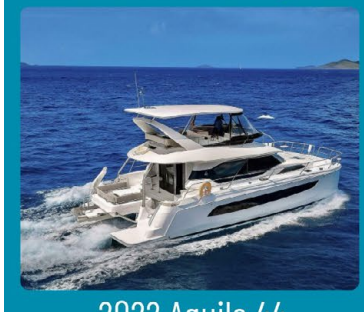
2011 Beneteau Oceanis 43
$99,500
Virgin Gorda, BVI



2016 Jeanneau 519
$290,000
Antigua & Barbuda



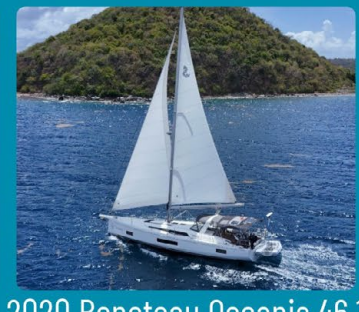
2021 Fountaine Pajot Tanna 47
$950,000
Saint-Thomas, USVI



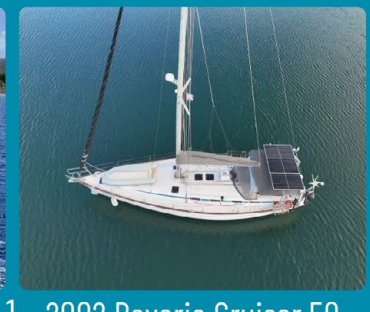
2022 Aquila 44
$649,000
Virgin Gorda, BVI



2023 Hanse 510
$899,000
Tortola, BVI



2020 Beneteau Oceanis 46.1
$485,000
Tortola, BVI



2002 Bavaria Cruiser 50
$115,000
Dominican Republic



2014 Beneteau Oceanis 48
$239,000
Saint-Martin

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"IGNERI" Honey Box Celebrates Caribbean Apiculture

The Association of Caribbean Beekeeping Organizations (ACBO), in partnership with the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission, has officially launched the IGNERI Honey Box Set, a premium curated collection celebrating the natural biodiversity, flavour, and craftsmanship of Caribbean honey.



COURTESY ACBO

For the indigenous First People of the Caribbean, honey symbolized life, sweetness, and harmony with nature.

The IGNERI Honey Box Set contains six (80-millilter) jars, each sourced from a different OECS Member State: St. Kitts and Nevis, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Grenada. Together, they capture the unique floral signatures and microclimates of the region, offering consumers a true taste of Caribbean biodiversity.

The name IGNERI represents the native language of the Indigenous First People of the Caribbean, for whom honey symbolised life, sweetness, and harmony with nature.

The Igneri Honey Box Set is priced at XCD 150, plus shipping and handling. *For ordering information, go to acboonline.com/2025/10/26.*

Nanny Cay Marina Breaks Ground for Expansion

Nanny Cay Marina, the British Virgin Islands' premier marina and boatyard, officially broke ground in October 2025, launching a major expansion project. The development included installation of a custom-designed marine travelift for 60-to 80-foot catamarans, one of the largest in the region, and construction of 112 new slips for catamarans, private sail and power boats, and mega yachts up to 165 feet. Yard space was also set to increase significantly.


ALEX TURNBULL

Nanny Cay Marina at sunrise, preparing for BVI Spring Regatta

The expansion responded to rising demand, and will unfold over three years, with an investment of $30–40 million. It expects 91 new jobs and a marine training hub in partnership with H. Lavity Stoutt Community College. Plans also include upgraded boatyard facilities, a new beach, restaurants, a luxury pool, a beach bar, and a retail village. Spaces for youth sailing programs have been incorporated.

Nanny Cay will host the annual BVI Spring Regatta and Sailing Festival, with the 53rd edition scheduled for March 23-29, 2026.

USVI Charter Show Showcases Luxury Yachts

The USVI Charter Yacht Show in early November 2025 was hosted by the Virgin Islands Professional Charter Association (VIPCA). Brokers from the Caribbean, the U.S., and Europe toured the fleet, showcased what's new in luxury chartering, including multihulls and monohulls, power and sail, and vessels up to 141 feet.


COURTESY VIPCA

Award-winning yachts at the USVI Charter Show

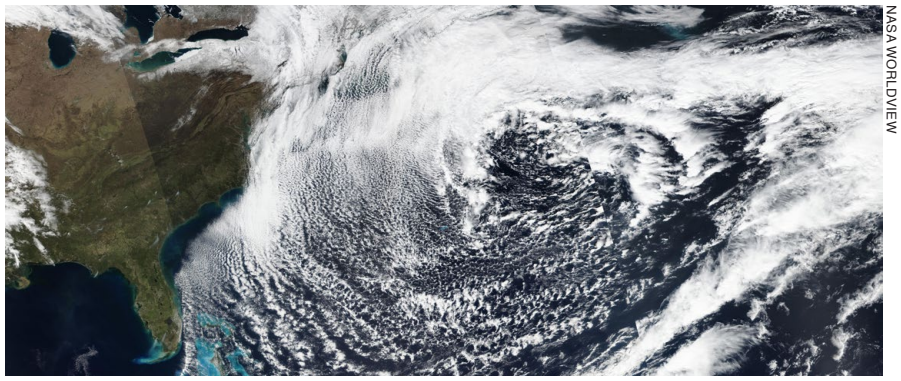
The 10th USVI Charter Yacht Show is November 14-17, 2026. Find registration information at www.usviyachtshow.org.

—Continued on page 27



North Swells: Sure Sign of Winter in the Caribbean

By Amanda Delaney



NASA WORLDVIEW

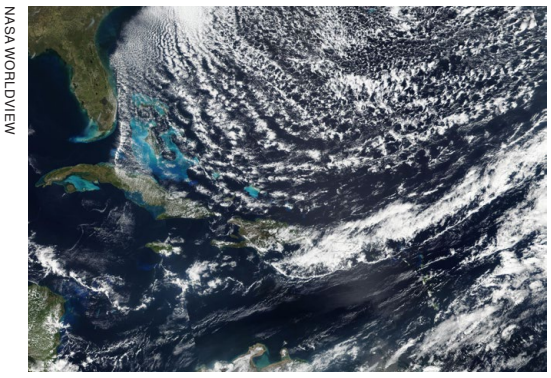
Visible satellite image of a large storm over the northwest Atlantic on March 4, 2018. The large band of clouds extending over the northeast Caribbean Sea is a strong cold front. Behind this front, large north-to-northwest swell reached the Caribbean later that day.

Most sailors and cruisers are making their progress to the Caribbean Sea or have settled into their destination by winter. It's time to enjoy the trade breezes and warm air temperatures. Then, occasionally, Mother Nature decides to remind everyone that it is indeed winter when large northerly swells barrel down from the northwest Atlantic Ocean to the northeastern Caribbean Sea.

Be aware of signs in the weather over the western Atlantic Ocean that indicate when these large northerly swells will develop and head toward the Caribbean Sea. These factors may give you a heads up to reposition your vessel to a more sheltered location from the north and northwest.

Localized seas versus swells

Just to clarify the type of waves that we are discussing here, wind-driven seas are more localized and wind based. This means that they usually come from the same direction as the wind and are generally shorter in duration.



NASA WORLDVIEW

Satellite image of a strong cold front moving through the northeast Caribbean Sea associated with a storm over the northwest Atlantic Ocean on March 4, 2018.

A swell is a wave formed when winds from a distant gale or strong high pressure system blow steadily across a wide stretch of ocean, sometimes 1,000 to 2,000 nautical miles away. The swell is generally larger, but waves coming from so great a distance usually arrive as longer period rollers of approximately eight seconds or more.

Why does this usually occur in the winter?

The northerly swells can develop at any time of the year. They usually occur when a strong low or tropical cyclone develops to the north of the northeastern Caribbean. During the winter months (December through March), the Atlantic gale/storm track is the most active, strongest, and farthest south. Therefore, these systems are more likely to produce these larger swells due to their proximity and strength in winter towards the northeastern Caribbean.

—Continued on page 9





Dock your dreams in Roatán! This turnkey waterfront home in Roatán blends modern comfort with island charm—listed at just $396K.

A one-of-a-kind Caribbean property is now available for purchase, offering buyers the chance to own a piece of paradise in the Bay Islands. This turnkey waterfront home is located in the safe, calm waters of Jonesville Bight on Roatán's East End—an area renowned for its natural beauty and strong American and Canadian expat community.

Features:

- Spacious 2-bedroom, 2-bathroom upper-level home with panoramic water views
- Bachelor suite on the middle level, perfect for guests or rental income
- Massive 30ft x 40ft covered dock with 7.5 ft water depth—ideal for yachts, solar installation, or hosting events
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The property is perfectly situated for those who value both seclusion and community. With off-grid potential and direct dockside access, it serves equally well as a private retreat, income-generating rental, or charter-tour base.

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—*Continued from page 8*

Why does this happen periodically over the northeastern Caribbean?

Not every gale or storm tracking over the western Atlantic generates large north-to-northwest swells that will reach the northeastern Caribbean. Most of the time, the gales or storms move too quickly across the northwestern Atlantic, or these systems do not strengthen until over the central North Atlantic. Therefore, the larger swell remains to the north and east of the eastern Caribbean.

However, several developing factors may allow the larger swell to build from the storm and reach the Northeastern Caribbean. These include:

- **Gales or storms** that generally develop south of the Canadian Maritimes or along cold fronts farther south between Bermuda and the northeastern Caribbean Sea, and just east of this region.
- **Strong high-pressure systems** that block the gale or storm's progress and keep it over the western Atlantic Ocean for 2–3 days longer than normal.
- **Rapid strengthening of low pressure**, intensifying from a gale into a storm within 1–2 days.

When these rapidly developing storms sit over the northwestern Atlantic, this allows time for the large swell to propagate from the storm down toward the Northeastern Caribbean.

Sometimes, when a gale/storm develops over the central North Atlantic, a strong high will build over the western Atlantic Ocean. If the gale/storm remains in place, the interaction between these two weather features can generate gale-force northerly winds that generate large northerly swell that will spread toward the northeastern Caribbean Sea.

How long do the large swells last over the northeast Caribbean?

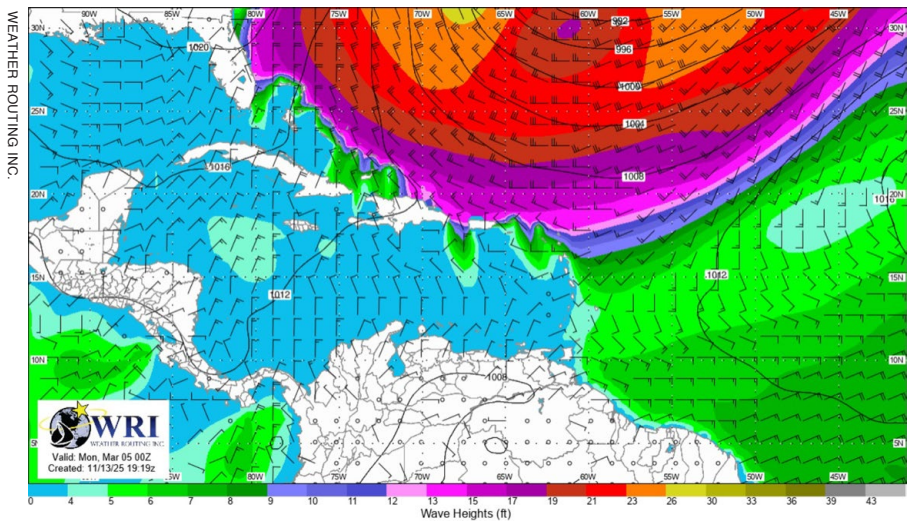
This depends on how long the gale/storm remains over the northwestern Atlantic but, at times, the swell will last two to three days, and in more significant events (or if there are multiple gales/storms to the north) these events can last as long as a week.

How can we avoid the northerly swell?

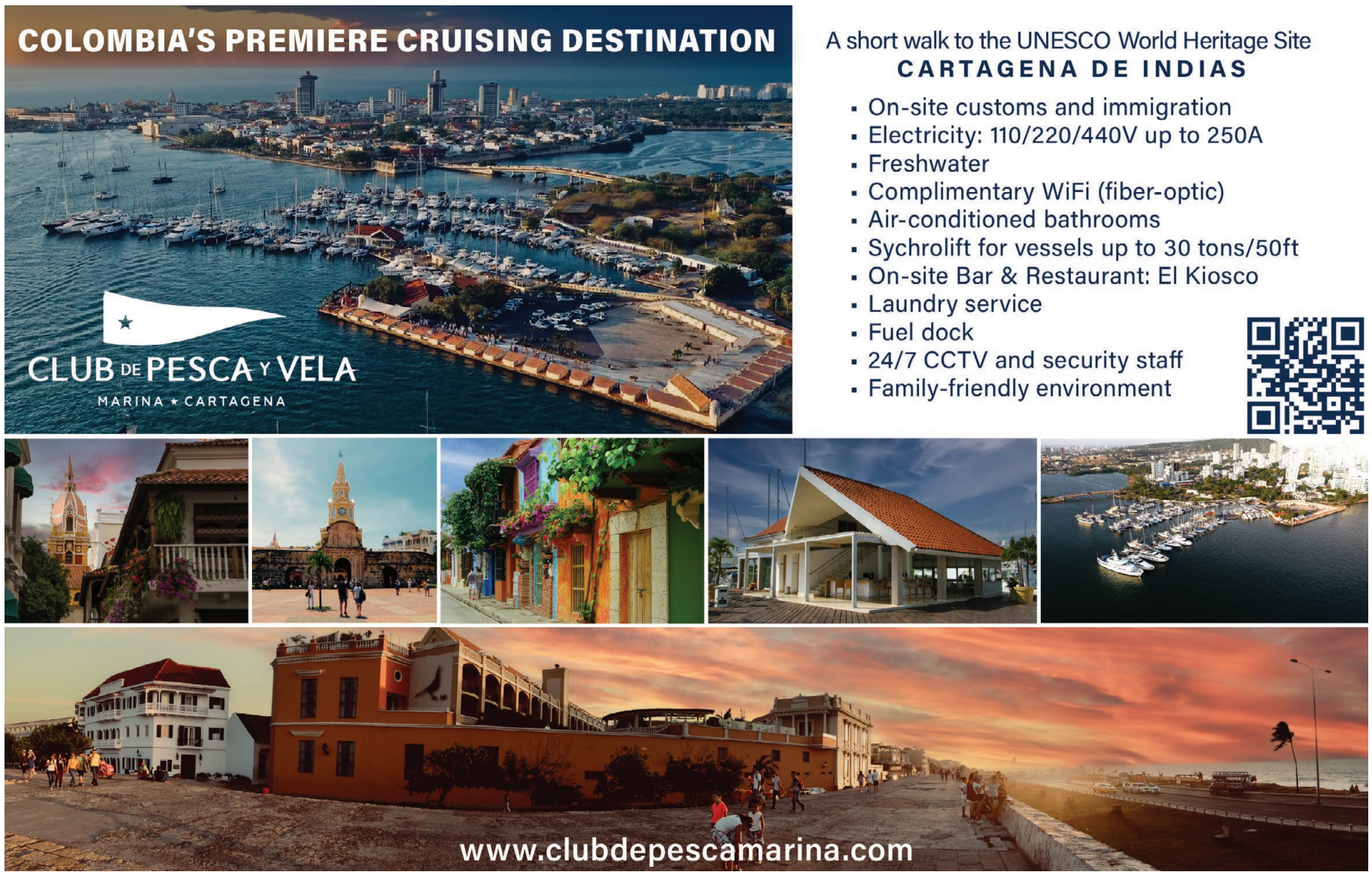
As always, it is good to remain vigilant on the latest weather patterns, not only for the Caribbean Sea but also for the western Atlantic Ocean. If you use a weather app or another online weather source, be sure to view not just the Caribbean Sea but the western Atlantic Ocean to see the gales/storms forming offshore the US East Coast and potentially the large swell building down towards the northern Caribbean Sea. A weather provider can also give you detailed information on when exactly the large swell will reach the area you will be traveling in, so you know exactly when you'll need to arrive into a port/sheltered location ahead of time.

Research your protected anchorages ahead of time in the area you will be traveling in. When you start to notice the swell building on your weather charts/app, then it is time to head to your protected anchorage to stay ahead of the rough swells.

Caribbean Compass *contributor Amanda Delaney is a senior meteorologist with Weather Routing, Inc.*



The large swell that reached the northern Caribbean from a large storm over the northwest Atlantic Ocean on March 4, 2018.



U.S. Virgin Islands Native Returns to St. Croix to Support Environmental Changemakers

By Luis Alexis Rodríguez-Cruz

Chickens were roaming the sunny waterfront of Frederiksted, located in the west of St. Croix, the southernmost island of the U.S. Virgin Islands, as I walked under the scorching but beautiful sun to meet Olivia Walton, an environmental educator native to the historic town.

That same waterfront saw her enjoy snorkeling as a child with her mom. Now, for her work at St. Croix Environmental Association (known locally as SEA), a nongovernmental organization focused on environmental conservation, stewardship, and education, she takes students to the spots that cemented the love she feels for her island.

"I'm really proud of the work that I've been able to do so far, and I feel even more connected to my home than I've ever really felt," said the 33-year-old environmental educator when asked how things were since she moved back to her native St. Croix.

Like many residents of our Caribbean islands, Walton left to seek opportunities, graduating with a degree in natural resources from Cornell University and a master's degree in environmental science from the University of New Haven. Though much of her adult years were spent in the continental US, her desire to return home never vanished.

"It was definitely a tougher transition than I thought [to return home]. I feel ... the culture shock of being home and having to slow back down, not having as many resources as you may be used to," she said. "But then I really settled back in and kind of figured out how to navigate the work that I do and want to do as an adult in this space ... Being here as an adult has been a learning process, but a beautiful process."

COURTESY ST. CROIX ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATION



Environmental educator Olivia Walton moved back to St. Croix several years ago.

Another adjustment she's had to make: The places she loved as a child are no longer the same. She sees the damage that climate change has caused in the Caribbean, including coral bleaching, droughts, and stronger hurricanes.

"It is hard, it does bring about difficult emotions," she said. "I'd like to take a positive framing when I work with my students, and so I do communicate that it has changed drastically, but I also communicate that they can do something about it."

SEA works to protect and conserve St. Croix's environment through projects and programs that support islanders' social well-being. The organization facilitates free snorkeling clinics and other activities that support community-building and resource-sharing, such as environmental advocacy around pollution reduction and mitigation, capacity-building training, and educational programs. The programs include free summer camps for kids and youth, including one that Walton leads.

She said that it is important for the students to build relationships, not only

—Continued on page 11



—Continued from page 10



COURTESY ST. CROIX ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATION

Walton with some of her students

among themselves but with their surroundings to build a sense of connection, which nurtures environmental conservation and stewardship efforts.

"I firmly believe that to protect the future of our environment we must teach our children to love the Earth," she said.

Hot and acidic ocean surface waters have harmed coral reefs in the US Virgin Islands and the whole of the Caribbean. Today, St. Croix is hotter than when Walton was a child, and projections show that the average temperature will continue to increase.

Hurricane Beryl caused damage on Caribbean islands to the west and south before our interview, worrying many residents who are still recovering from the impacts of Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017. Those storms ravaged the island and others in the region, exacerbating existing challenges, such as not having a reliable energy supply and grid.

These shocks compound and contribute to people's vulnerabilities in an import-dependent US territory facing structural and political inequities. And that doesn't go unnoticed in the summer program.

"I talk with my students about eco-anxiety and climate grief, about how to manage them," Walton said. "We also go through an activity where they stand along a spectrum whether they agree or disagree on various actions, and we also talk about whether they feel responsible for climate change and about potential solutions at different levels."

Walton said the responses among the students have been mixed: "A lot of them felt like they are not responsible for what has happened, but some of them felt they have the responsibility moving forward for what happens in the future. And some of them didn't feel like they should have to be responsible for this now, and I can completely understand that it is very frustrating."

It's an important discussion given the Caribbean's long history of colonialism, systemic inequality, and racism that has put the region at a disadvantage in facing the effects of climate change.

Studies have shown that young people around the world are feeling worried and anxious about climate change.

"I can completely understand their frustration," Walton said. "Even those who feel very passionate about it struggle with the fact that it feels like a lot of pressure on them."

Walton wants them to be just as mindful of the mental health and emotional impacts of climate change as its physical impacts: "I do see a shift throughout the programming to a space where they are more informed, but also feel more agency.

"Basically, they take an environmental issue that they've found interesting, or they're passionate about, and they do something about it," she added. "I like to encourage them to think outside of the box."

Students participate in educational campaigns, community outreach activities, and science communication projects. One year, the kids ran a campaign transforming a popular jingle to share environmental conservation messages.

"[The students] took one of the popular ones about a tire shop, and they revamped it to the same tune, but they talked about leaving tires on the roadside, about pollution, the environmental harm it does in terms of, you know, it can be marine debris but also breeding grounds for mosquitoes and the impacts of actually leaving tires by the roadside instead of disposing of them properly," she recalled, her face lighting up.

She also takes students to see and participate in climate mitigation and adaptation work being done in St. Croix, such as coral restoration projects, environmental stewardship campaigns, local food production, and others, providing them with glimpses of possibilities and transformation that they can lead or be part of.

Her work is paying off: Walton was recognized by the North American Association for Environmental Education in a 30 under 30 class that highlights educators contributing to a sustainable future.

Beyond positively impacting broader communities, students have touched their own families.

"I've had parents of students show up at events and get more involved in the environmental field because their children are showing interest in it," Walton said. "The most common thing is just that they're so happy that their kids really did something that they were really proud about."

At an open house for Walton's program, students brought family and friends to kayak on a protected reserve. One student brought their entire family, she said. Another component of the program is to get students to fortify and expand their ties with their communities, to better understand their surroundings and to assess climate risks and vulnerabilities with their families.

Walton underscored that mutual aid and community ties are important in building resilience in the Caribbean by sharing resources to navigate the impacts of climate change and to better anticipate and prepare for those impacts.

And that is something that is also built into the program: It broadens community bonds and friendships.

Luis Alexis Rodríguez-Cruz is a social scientist and writer, based in Juana Díaz, Puerto Rico. His writing covers food, the environment, science, and policy. On every Sunday, Luis Alexis cooks and publishes La Fiambrera, a newsletter where he writes about social, cultural, and scientific topics related to Puerto Rico's food systems.

This story was first published by Yale Climate Connections, a program of the Yale School of the Environment (yaleclimateconnections.org). This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 2.5 license (CC BY-NC-ND 2.5).




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Ocean Sailing Rallies through the Decades

By Jimmy Cornell

The launch of the first transatlantic rally in 1986 changed the global sailing scene forever, and as founder of the concept, it is one of the main achievements of my life.



WORLD CRUISING CLUB

The transatlantic route of the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers covers 2,700 nautical miles from Las Palmas de Gran Canaria to Rodney Bay, St. Lucia.

From the very beginning, one of the primary aims of the ARC was to provide a framework of safety and support to sailors who lacked offshore experience, and this continues to be one of its main attractions. This factor alone is a great incentive to join a trans-ocean rally for those who do not have offshore sailing experience.

The immediate success of the annual ARC inspired similar rallies all over the world and I am credited with having conceived the idea. One of the main advantages of cruising rallies, whether across an ocean or around the world, is that the organisers take care of formalities, docking, weather and routing information, transits of the Panama and Suez Canals — essentially, all logistical matters involved in an offshore event of this nature, more recently including satellite tracking of the fleet while on passage.

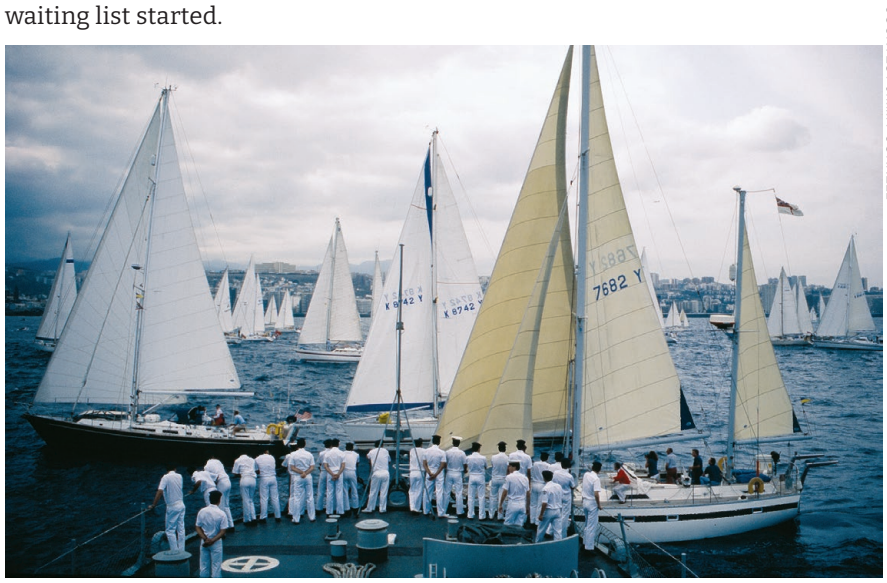
There is also the safety-in-numbers factor and being able to get help or advice in an emergency from fellow participants. A fixed schedule imposes a certain discipline. As some of the participants are businesspeople, retired or close to retirement, they appreciate this aspect and the fact that they can delegate responsibility, as they normally did in their professional lives.

There have been many changes in the 27 years since I stopped my involvement with the ARC. What I find most objectionable is that what started as an event for cruising sailors has been allowed to become a convenient backdrop for racing boats, their owners boasting to have been successful in the largest trans-ocean event in the world.

Nonetheless, such rallies continue to provide their participants not only the opportunity to cross the oceans in safety, but also to come in contact with the people of the countries visited.

The various prestart activities of these events constitute another attraction. There are preparatory seminars on practical matters, safety demonstrations, exclusive forums for female participants, various activities for children, as well as excursions to local attractions.

The success of the ARC served as an inspiration for the first round-the-world rally in 1991. Having briefly mentioned the idea to a number of ARC participants, by the late 1980s I knew that such a rally was feasible. This was instantly confirmed when the project was launched and the maximum number of participants (40 yachts over 40 feet) was quickly reached and a waiting list started.



COURTESY JIMMY CORNELL

Starting line at the first ARC in 1986



COURTESY JIMMY CORNELL

Circumnavigator Jimmy Cornell, rally founder

The route and timing of that rally was chosen carefully to take advantage of favorable seasons and weather conditions along the projected route. This has continued to be the basic rule in all the world rallies since.

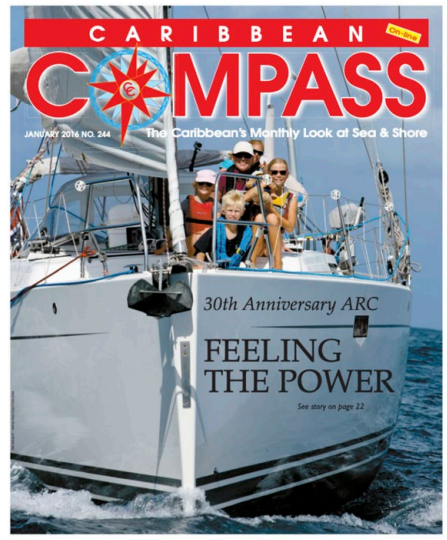
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Looking back to the first ARC in 1986, and the nearly 50 sailing events that have followed, I am very happy that my rallies have provided the framework that has allowed so many sailors to cross the oceans in safety. It is a great satisfaction to know that sailors in those events have had the opportunity to come in close contact with the people of the countries visited in a spirit of friendship and goodwill.

Most importantly, the rallies have given thousands of sailors the chance to enjoy the beauty of the world and its oceans before the catastrophic changes that are now threatening our planet.



The 30th ARC was the cover of the Caribbean Compass *in January 2016.*

To learn more about activities and publications by ocean voyager Jimmy Cornell, log on to cornellsailing.com.

High Latitude Challenge

To mark the 40th anniversary of the ARC transatlantic rally, I've launched an event aimed at anyone interested in joining other like-minded sailors on a voyage to the exciting high-latitude destinations of Antarctica and the Northwest Passage. The route of the High Latitude Challenge is timed to benefit from favorable wind and weather conditions, as well as safe seasons. Two essential factors that were taken into account are the best time to sail to Antarctica (January–February), and to transit the NW Passage (July–August). Equally critical is avoiding the tropical storm seasons in both hemispheres. The resulting clockwise route, starting in September 2026 from Cherbourg, in France, is timed to encounter favorable conditions throughout. *cornellsailing.com/high-latitude-challenge-2026-2027* —J.C.

The Bluewater Journeys of Jimmy Cornell

38 transatlantic rallies

2 transpacific rallies

6 round the world rallies:

- 1991-1992
- 1994-1995
- Expo 98 1997-1998
- Millennium Odyssey 1998 - 2000
- Blue Planet Odyssey 2014 - 2017
- World Odyssey 2021 – 2024

Hong Kong Challenge round the world race 1995 – 1997

ARC's Happy Repeat Offenders

By Elaine Lembo

Sandvita (SWE)

Beneteau First 47.7

Lars Hedman

Lars sailed in the ARC 15 times before 2025, including as owner and skipper of *Sandvita*, a Beneteau First 47.7, every year since 2014, and as skipper of *Thindra*, a Swan 59, for three years from 2009.

Adrenalina (GBR)

J/130

Gill and Lisa Duncan
Gill Duncan sailed as a child in ARC 1991 with his parents on their Ovni 45,

—Continued on page 17



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—Continued from page 16

Tin Lizzie. Gill's father knew ARC founder Jimmy Cornell well; they each bought aluminium-hulled Ovnis at the same time and remained in communication with one another about the boats over the years. As an adult, Gill sailed as skipper in ARC 2012 on the Grand Soleil 52 *Fabiola*, and in 2025 returned with wife, Lisa, and friends aboard *Adrenalina*, a J/130. Crewmate Stephen Robinson is an experienced cruiser/racer, former medical officer, and another ARC veteran.

The Duncans love the sense of security that they get from sailing with the rally. "It always amazes me that 150 boats leaving from the same spot and arriving at the same spot can disappear after 23 hours at sea, spread across a stream toward the Caribbean, by the Atlantic. It makes you realize how small we are."

He adds: "We felt we didn't need the ARC to cross the Atlantic, but we wouldn't have considered doing it outside the ARC. We love the social side of it. We are godparents to a 2012 ARC-couple's daughter. I tell everyone that it is simply the best way to cross the Atlantic. Our other great friends from the 2012 ARC are also coming back on ARC+ on *Akuna*, a Nautitech 40 cat. Last time they crossed as newlyweds, this time with their three kids."

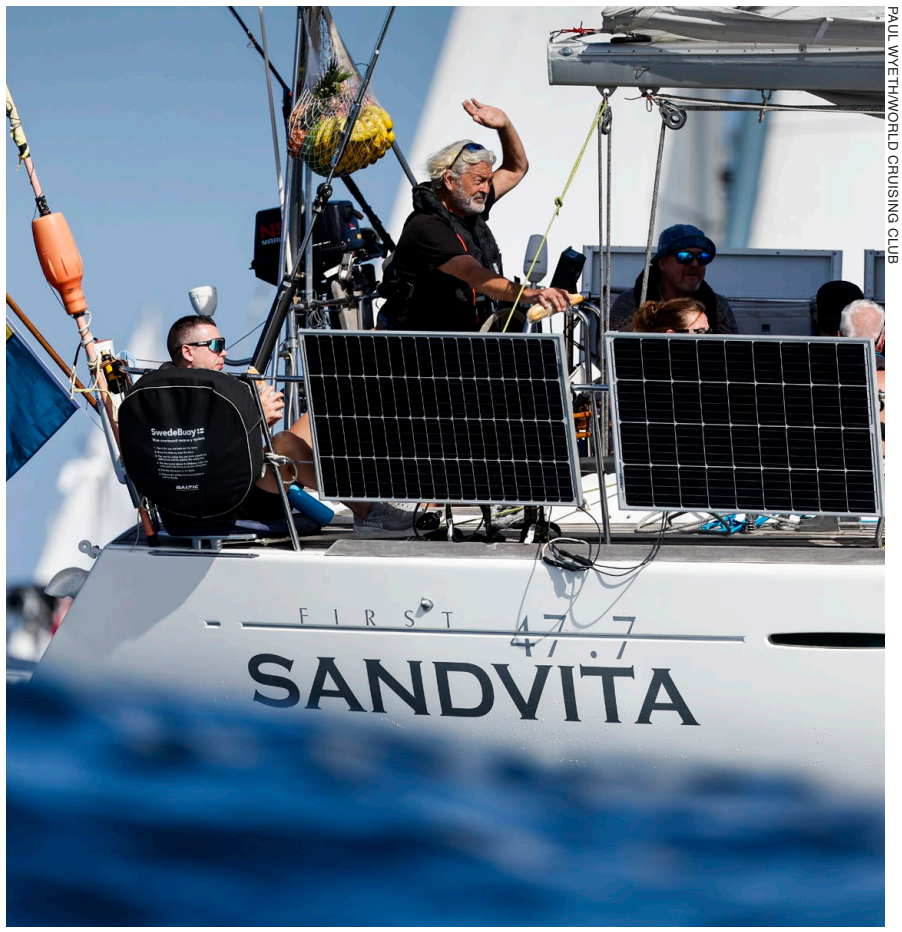
Madrigal (USA)

Farr 50 pilothouse

John and Angela DiMatteo

John and Angela DiMatteo circumnavigated with World ARC 2018-19 and completed a transatlantic with ARC Europe 2022. After three years cruising the Mediterranean, they are returning to the Caribbean.

"World Cruising Club's World ARC program allowed me to go from working full time as a partner in a large New York City law firm to sailing around the world with my wife in six months, without a professional crew," DiMatteo says.



PAUL WYETH/WORLD CRUISING CLUB

Sandvita *skipper Lars Hedman has sailed the ARC 16 times.*

> *"Simply the best way to cross the Atlantic."*
> *— Gill Duncan*



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Dominica Yachting Festival to Hold 2026 Annual Race to Mero

Story by Hank Schmitt, photos by Elaine Lembo

You may ask, where is Mero and why is there a race there? Mero is a small beach community on the west coast of Dominica, 10 miles south of the waterfront town of Portsmouth. The race is a new addition to the annual PAYS (Portsmouth Association of Yacht Security) Dominica Yachting Festival, inviting cruisers to discover this Caribbean jewel of an island that harks back to what cruising was like in the 1970s.



The racecourse to Mero takes sailors down the west coast of Dominica.

The festival was started in 2016 to promote a mooring field in Portsmouth, donated by members of Offshore Passage Opportunities (OPO) to encourage cruisers to not only visit, but also to feel secure to leave their boats for the day and explore the many natural wonders Dominica offers. Profits from the Sunday BBQs pay for a patrol boat to watch over the anchorage 24/7.



Race participants anchored off Mero

The race to Mero is to encourage the government to expand the mooring field to Mero and install a dinghy dock so cruisers have more than one safe place to anchor and stay longer in Dominica. Think fun race, but also, towing your dinghy. Not only is there a race to Mero, but there is a race back to Portsmouth on the following day after a "jump up" street party.

The race takes up only two of the seven-day event (March 24-25). Here are more reasons to plan to be in Dominica for the whole festival, March 21-27:

- Free mooring for the first 30 boats to sign up. There is a $100 sponsorship per boat for the first 30 boats. The deposit (plus $100) goes toward meals, the Indian River Tour, and van excursion. (moorings are only $12 a night all season.)
- Free opening reception dinner on Saturday March 21.
- Sunday and Wednesday BBQs at the PAYS Beach Pavilion, only $25 including all the rum punch you can drink (don't overdo it!).
- Discounted tours.
- Participate in the race to Mero and receive a metal commemoration plaque to mount in your nav station.
- Free closing party at prizegiving Friday night.

See the website for a full itinerary. www.PAYSDominica.com

PAYS makes it easy to visit all season long. When you first arrive, check in at the PAYS office. Staff will take care of customs procedures. In many cases they clear you in and out at the same time, a free service. Customs fees are only about US$30 for one week. The PAYS office also sells $12 park passes that are required to visit all the attractions on the island.



Post-race festivities include parties and parades led by island cultural groups such as the Mahaut Bouyon Lapeau Kabuwit drummers and Sensay costume dancing groups from St. Joseph.

At previous festivals, cruisers have felt as though they must have won the lottery when they arrived in Portsmouth, Dominica, by dumb luck and found themselves participating in a festival program. This year, PAYS wants to make sure there's a full mooring field by encouraging skippers to sign up in advance.

PAYS can take credit cards to pay for BBQs and tours when you arrive, but cannot take deposits online. That is why Offshore Passage Opportunities is using its website to take deposits to guarantee you a free mooring. OPO is also sponsoring the extra $100, doubling your deposit fee. After the 30-boat limit is reached, you may still be able to get a free mooring, but not the $100 bonus or 100 percent guarantee that there will be a mooring. Of course there is unlimited room to anchor out for free.

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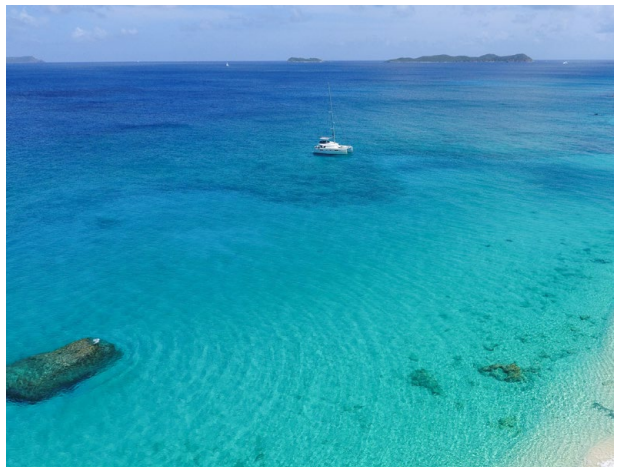
Sailing the Caribbean with Horizon Yacht Charters: BVI & St. Vincent & the Grenadines

Horizon Yacht Charters has long been recognized as one of the Caribbean's premier sailing companies, offering exceptional yacht charter experiences across two of the region's most captivating cruising grounds: the British Virgin Islands (BVI) and St. Vincent & the Grenadines (SVG). With bases at Nanny Cay Marina, Tortola, and Blue Lagoon Marina, St. Vincent, Horizon provides access to a diverse mix of scenic islands, world-class anchorages, and the warm trade winds that make Caribbean sailing legendary.

The BVI base offers unparalleled convenience for charterers, with everything on hand that's required to enjoy the ideal start and end to a vacation. Guests want for nothing at Nanny Cay thanks to the on-site facilities and amenities including a beach, freshwater pool, spa, shops, bars and restaurants as well as a comprehensively stocked chandlery. Sailors head out of the fully-serviced marina to embark on line-of-sight sailing in consistent trade winds and calm waters to iconic destinations such as The Baths, Norman Island, Anegada and Jost Van Dyke.

In SVG, the quaint and conveniently located Blue Lagoon Hotel and Marina offers the perfect base on the southern coast of St. Vincent. Guests can take advantage of the boutique hotel rooms overlooking the marina, restaurant, convenience stores and concierge services to top and tail their charter.

Sailing the Grenadines opens the door to a distinctly different, more adventurous style of cruising – ideal for those looking for an off-the-beaten-track experience. SVG's chain of islands — Bequia, Mustique, Canouan, the Tobago Cays, Union Island, and others — offers pristine anchorages, vibrant marine life, and a sense of remoteness cherished by sailors seeking serenity away from crowded routes. From the volcanic peaks of St. Vincent to the turquoise horseshoe reef of the Tobago Cays, this region invites exploration at a slower, more soulful pace.



As one of the largest independent yacht charter and sales companies in the region, Horizon continues to expand and innovate to meet the evolving needs of charter guests.

In the BVI, Horizon ushered in a dynamic new season with exciting additions to both its bareboat and luxury crewed fleets. Recent arrivals include a Fountaine Pajot New 44 (Maestro version) and a Jeanneau Yachts 55 joining the bareboat fleet, and a Lagoon 55 and a Fountaine Pajot 67 headlining the luxury crewed fleet. Each yacht represents the latest in comfort, performance, and design.

For guests seeking something extra, Horizon has introduced the Ultimate Captained Charter package. Available on select yachts, including the Jeanneau Yachts 55, the package bridges the gap between a bareboat and luxury charter with a dedicated captain, premium water toy package and upgraded 15-foot-center-console super tender with 60-horsepower engine.

Whether chartering out of the BVI or SVG, guests can be assured of a premium service from Horizon. Each base is staffed by an established, knowledgeable and helpful team who care about the experiences their guests will have. It's this level of commitment and quality of product and service that draws charterers back to Horizon time and again.



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Tropical Treasure Hunt Co: The Unique Caribbean Escape

By Alex J. Coyne, photos courtesy Tropical Treasure Hunt

Escape room puzzles are popular everywhere; however, few of them are quite as unique as the puzzles created by Tropical Treasure Hunt from St. Thomas in the US Virgin Islands. Visitors are invited to take to the seas, solving an intricate and picturesque quest that includes a day charter around the islands.

I spoke to founder Anthony Schultz for more details.

The Story of Tropical Treasure Hunts

The Tropical Treasure Hunt Company started when Schultz was looking for something fun to do for his girlfriend's birthday. "We went to the beach, and I started envisioning a treasure chest, and I thought it would be cool if she found love notes."

The surprise took about 12 days to plan, and the journey took them to one of their favorite local beach bars with a birthday party at the end.

"I enjoyed it, she loved it, and then our friends wanted a treasure hunt, too!"

His father, a printer, helped them to create advertising when the business first began. "Paper, ink, brochures: the business was destiny, that's what it took to start it. We started doing romantic treasure hunts for co-workers, then for families and small groups, and in 2018 we went full time."

Schultz's background was in industrial psychology and data analysis. This, he says, became integral in designing escape rooms and puzzles (he has completed around 60 different rooms) for team building and other cooperative groups.

His love for mystery and drive for imagination are inspired by Walt Disney. "I grew up in Tampa, Florida, and I've always been a huge Disney fan." He particularly cites Disney's drive and imagination. "I want to entertain people and bring immersiveness to the experience."

Today, Tropical Treasure Hunt Co. has been designated a Disney Signature Experience.

More About Escape Puzzles

The Tropical Treasure Hunt Co. escape rooms combine puzzle-solving skills, co-operation, and a love for solving mysteries which are not limited to a single room — rather, they take participants on an island tour.



Pirates of the Caribbean



Junior escape artists flex their muscles.



"I thought it would be cool if she found love notes."



Egg and spoon race through a maze

"Escape rooms get people out of their comfort zone," says Schultz. "Puzzles rely on the theme, but also rely on teamwork," which makes the escape room experience great for families, strangers, and company team building, with a focus on cooperative groups like companies and schools where solving puzzles can aid in personal development. "Companies and schools are the perfect fit, because employees and students should know someone cares about their development."

Historical Caribbean events and artifacts are part of the whole experience. To solve one particular puzzle, visitors have to use a treasure map and 1700s spyglass to find the next location.

St. Thomas and the surrounding islands are incorporated, with some puzzles going through local bars and beaches such as Sapphire Beach.

Their storylines are creative, and their puzzles intricate. "We have blacklights for what's called the enchanted torch, we have multi-directional or alphanumeric lockboxes, and we have picture-based clues where you have to read the artifacts to figure out answers. We even have human battleship," he says passionately. "People are standing in grids, and you're throwing a foam ball or water balloon over a tarp to find the opponent's grid."

The escape room experience has even been converted into a tent, which they've successfully shipped to several hotels.

Games rely heavily on group cooperation, and one team member is designated as the leader. "Think of the games from *Survivor* and mix in *Pirates of the Caribbean*."

They have done a handful of proposals, "which are amazing moments. Someone gives us an

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engagement ring, and we put it in the treasure chest."

People enjoy challenges that also teach them something, says Schultz. "I wanted people to be educated on key things that have a huge impact on world history."

The Pirates Treasure Museum (piratemuseumstthomas.com) is an important part of this specific puzzle experience. Sometimes, he says, history can be misunderstood — pointing to commonly inaccurate depictions of historical pirates or scenery.

Boat Charter Treasure Hunt

"We've always thought about an escape puzzle that can go to different islands, incorporating a yacht and sailing," says Schultz.

Partnering with Seahorse Water Taxi, they came up with "The Salty Piracy Adventure," (seahorsevi.com/the-salty-piracy-adventure) an experience that incorporates the best of the Caribbean over six months. The storyline uses character actors, fully immersing visitors in the puzzle they have to solve. "You're looking for the Chalice of Eternal Life, using breadcrumbs scattered through the map," says Schultz.

Groups begin at their store in St. Thomas, later making their way through to its sister island via the chartered yacht. "Participants have to 'sneak' their way into the museum with a tour badge, and borrow the treasure map before starting."

The challenge incorporates getting on the Captain's Boat for more clues, then returning to St. Thomas. It also includes lunch, allocating a full day for the experience rather than the traditional 20-or-30 minute escape room.

Storylines are dramatic, immersive, and fun.

"There are a lot of different thrills, including an actor with a death scene, and a glowing key that's been treated with a particular element that reacts when you break the spell."

He calls it their masterpiece.

"It's a great escape room adventure that's not limited to one room, but takes you through the islands and museum with a live guide that's going along and playing the part."



The "Hunt for a cure" escape team





Caribbean Reminiscences: *Freedom's Child*, Part Two

by Chris Doyle



DIGITAL CREATION BY CHRIS DOYLE

Young Chris a-sail on Freedom's Child



PAINTING BY CHRIS DOYLE

Peter and Tony: People considered us an unlikely team to go proa sailing.

The first race was ideal. The course was from St. Vincent, round the windward side of the island of Bequia to finish in Port Elizabeth. This meant reaching on port tack, our best point of sailing, with only a few miles to windward at the end.

Race day was fine and about 25 boats from 28 to 40 feet vied for a starting position. The only other multihull was a 30-foot Piver trimaran. *Freedom's Child* was a little hairy in a crowded start with her tendency for unpredictable accelerations, so we didn't hoist the main till moments before the gun.

No sooner had we raised it than a gust swept us up to the line to make a good start. We were confident, but we hadn't expected to pull away so dramatically. We had a genoa up and were able to keep everything pulling with one crew on the outrigger, our float just above the waves. We pulled ahead, and soon were sailing at about 10 knots, while the rest of the fleet had become specks in the distance. By the time we reached Bequia, the spectators weren't sure whether we were in the race or not, but they cheered and waved anyhow. The final beat was mainly on our slower tack with the outrigger submerged, but it was difficult to work up much anxiety when the opposition is not in sight. We scudded across the finish line in 2.5 hours, giving us ample time to tidy the boat and walk back to the line and see the next boat arrive half an hour later.

"That boat too fast mon," the locals said. "There's a move afoot to have you made ineligible for the big prize," one yachtsman told us. The next day was a rest day, and we watched the local open fishing boats race with their pretty sprit rigs and long narrow hulls, near relatives in spirit and construction to our boat.

We went to party after party and by nightfall staggered back merrily to lie happy on our hard wooden planks under the open sky. Then the rain came, that heavy tropical rain that gushes like a waterfall. I abandoned ship and jumped onto a schooner across the dock, stumbled below in the darkness to fall over numerous sleeping bodies. I found a small place somewhere and slept. The schooner left at 0530 but the crew were kind enough to wake me first. I clambered out and looked at the proa in the cool early morning light. Peter was alone on board. He lay huddled under a sail which clung tightly to him, forming a number of creases and hollows to the contours of his body. Each one was full of water. Beneath he lay damp, but blissfully oblivious.

We cooked coffee and scrambled eggs with Peter's blowtorch which he otherwise used for making gold fillings and prepared for the race back. A bad night and lack of a decisive captain hurt. We were still at anchor by the five-minute gun and ended up two minutes late for the start. We didn't get ahead until south of Bequia, then suffered in the light headwinds which put us mainly on the "wrong" tack. We dropped back, tacked too close to the shore in a foul current, and dropped back some more. As the beat turned into a close reach we started to pick up, but the wind was too light for high-speed sailing and we only finished third. Still, on corrected time on the combination of two races, we were first. Although the host club members were most hospitable, the more loquacious of our own club's yachtsmen were unhappy with the results. They mumbled and muttered through the prize-giving, and one tore his third prize up in protest.

We had won the big prize of some EC$1,000, along with a giant trophy. I had dreams of lashing this to the bow and sailing back down with it, but alas, they kept it. Our name was engraved later.

At first light the next day we set sail for Grenada with bright sunshine and a strong reaching wind. We started to fly again, racing with the puffs and pausing in the lulls, sheets of spray covering us the whole way. The tops of the waves would smash into the crossarms, disintegrating to spume which flew with the wind. It was a perfect sail marred only by the forehatch coming unsecured unknown to us and the front 10 feet, which is separated by a watertight bulkhead, filling up. She started nose-diving in a rather alarming fashion. It did not take too long to heave to, bail and make way again, completing the 80 odd miles in 8.5 hours. We averaged 10 knots to the north end of Grenada.

We raced quite a lot after that but were banned from prizes unless we could muster a class of three multihulls. We once did this but somehow got forgotten in the prizegiving. Still, it was satisfaction enough to move fast. Sometimes we achieved what seemed incredible speeds, overtaking a whole racing fleet in one reach. To windward, in good winds, we could beat the fastest racing monohull around our size. But when the winds became light, we would lag behind and wish for better sails.

The next season's winds were lighter. We all seemed involved in other things, and the proa sat like a discarded toy. Eventually we mustered some energy and took her for what was to be our last race.

This race started in St. Vincent and was to a small island called P.S.V., some 36 miles to the south. We had real competition this time. Two new Spronk catamarans had come on the scene. They were twin giants, 48 feet long weighing a mere four tons and carrying, by our standards, a huge sail area.

—Continued on page 25



PAINTING BY CHRIS DOYLE

One of us could crawl out and sit on the outrigger, a suggestion that was met with derisive laughter from those who had experienced her wild ways.

—Continued from page 24

We had two things going for us. One was a spinnaker requisitioned from my boat, the other was that the whole race was on our fast tack. Peter and I were on our own this trip; we were unable to find anyone mad enough to sail with us. The wind was rather light, but after the start we managed to get the spinnaker aloft, and Peter handled its sheets from the outrigger.

The race soon broke into two. There were the multihulls and the mighty *Ticonderoga*, the 72-foot Francis Herreshoff ketch, while the rest faded into the distance. We were alongside one of the cats for a long way. Once again, we went faster in the puffs and fell back in the lulls. But the wind dropped a little more and she pulled steadily ahead. We stayed with *Ticonderoga* till we reached Mayreau. Ticonderoga took the lee passage and we took the reef-strewn route to windward through the Tobago Cays. The sun went in, we aimed to cut fine around a reef, when an almighty crash indicated we had misjudged it at eight knots.

Freedom's Child was at a standstill. We dropped sail and inspected the damage. The plate had been driven hard through the housing, causing a major leak. To move the plate was impossible, so we caulked it with rags as best we could and made sail again; one man bailing, one man steering. We could nearly keep up with the incoming water — but not quite. As we covered the last few miles the level rose steadily. The finishing line came into sight, the water was up to the seats. Just to make things more difficult we now came onto a short beat. We just made it across the line and ran her up the beach and went to the bar. A little rum helped our attitude, and we watched the next boat, the first monohull after *Ticonderoga*, arrive an hour later. Somewhat revived, we abandoned ship, rescuing our clothes and the blowtorch, and begged shelter on one of the cats.

The next morning, bright and early, we bailed the hull with the help of local fishermen, who are always kind and helpful to any seafarer in trouble in the true comradeship of the sea. They helped us bash the centerboard out of the wreckage of its housing, and we made a temporary repair.

The weekend had been too much. We had been fairly beaten by even more diabolical speed machines. Someone said: "Dick the maintenance man is looking for a boat." We cornered him as quickly as possible, hijacked him for a trial sail to Carriacou, plied him with sales talk and completed the deal. We returned in one of the other cats and dreamed of building the ultimate seaworthy speed machine.

Freedom's Child lived up to Russel Hawn's original expectations. His design was excellent. She was a thrilling boat to sail: fast, wet and exciting, with great surges in speed, and always a feel of being on the edge. Local fishermen never showed any interest in the design and had soon ditched sail for outboard engines.

She did draw a lot of attention wherever we went, and one person in St. Vincent was inspired to build a proa of sorts, but it never seemed to sail well. Dick sold her to a Grenadian businessman with little sailing experience, who sadly never got round to using her, and she was left ashore in Prickly Bay, where she rotted and was then burned to retrieve the fastenings.

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"Yellow Flagging" It Is Ill-Advised

by Chevanev Charles

Editor's note: *Readers often ask about the legality of the common practice of "yellow flagging it" through the islands — that is, dropping anchor in the waters of a country where you have not cleared Customs and Immigration, spending the night aboard with the yellow "Q" flag raised without going ashore, and then sailing out of that country's waters without clearing in. As one correspondent wrote:*

"Let's imagine that I've checked out of Customs and Immigration in Bequia and am setting out for the French island of Martinique. An average boat speed of six knots or so sees me off the northern end of St. Lucia at dusk. I've no wish to go ashore, so I drop the hook in Rodney Bay to get a good night's sleep, making sure that I fly the Q flag under the starboard spreaders.

"The question is, am I operating in accordance with International Maritime Law?"

We've always answered this question to the best of our ability, but we aren't "sea lawyers," so we're glad to now be able to share this response from Mr. Chevanev Charles, a maritime lawyer at the Temple Stoke (www.templestoke.com) firm based in St. Vincent & the Grenadines. Temple Stoke also offers immigration law services from its New York office.

Simple answer: It is ill-advised to make a habit of slipping in and out of a country's territorial waters without clearing.

From a historical perspective, the "Q" or quarantine flag was the shipping sector's preventive measure against the spread of infectious diseases. The principles of contagion were understood and with few effective technological and medical standards, the quarantine flag was one of a variety of measures to separate clearly or suspected sick individuals or disease carriers from uninfected people.

In a modern context, the purpose of the Q flag is slightly different. It is a declaration that your ship is free from diseases that may require confinement and it is a signal to port authorities that you would like to be boarded and inspected requesting "free pratique." Or it signals the intention to disembark, usually via dinghy or water taxi, and pass through Customs and Immigration ashore. "Free pratique" is essentially the license for a ship to enter a port on the assurance that she is free from contagious diseases.

COURTESY TEMPLE STOKE



The author practices maritime and immigration law in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and in New York.

If you aren't asking to be boarded and inspected, or aren't signaling your intention to go ashore and clear customs and immigration, you shouldn't be flying the Q flag.

It is useful to consider that flag etiquette is actually a (sometimes indecipherable) combination of law and maritime tradition. Because most countries have slight differences and requirements in their law, and some actually have vague or no law on the subject, it is best to go with tradition and when in doubt, please contact the authorities of that nation on VHF. Being non-conversant of your obligations could lead you to cause unnecessary insult by giving mixed signals or could lead you to a fine for breaking the law.

Not all countries are bothered with the use of the flag but theoretically the Q flag should be flown as soon as the yacht has entered territorial waters of a country. In the case of Antigua, for example, the Q flag is flown before clearing in (i.e. going through customs) and the courtesy flag is flown only after customs is cleared.

Territorial water limits are enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (LOSC, Art. 3) to which the majority of Caribbean islands have acceded. In essence, the territorial water limits are 12 nautical miles from the shoreline. For countries that are archipelagoes, like St. Vincent & the Grenadines, this limit starts from invisible lines that envelop all the islands under their jurisdiction.

While some countries are lax on their enforcement, one must be mindful that not all are lax and it is against port regulations and policy in many Caribbean islands to slip in and out unnoticed.

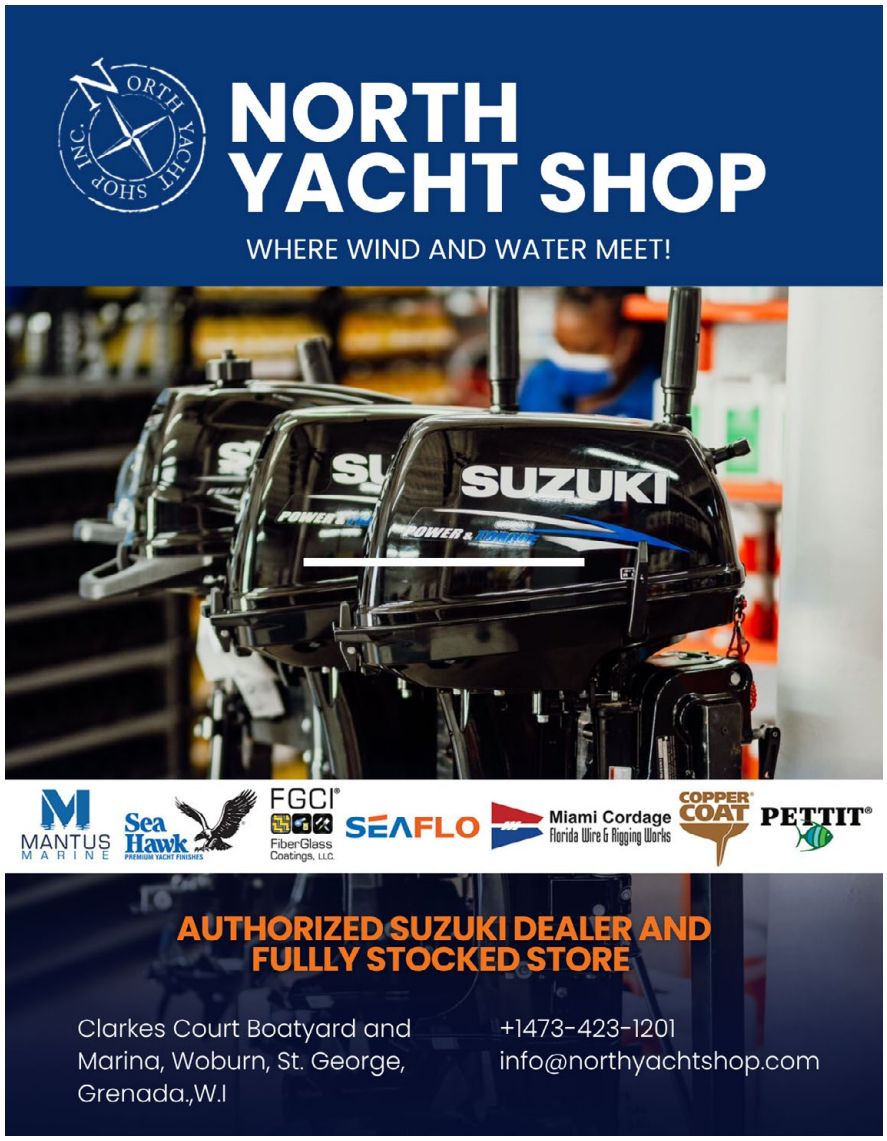
Based on several conversations with port officials in Antigua & Barbuda as well as St. Vincent & the Grenadines, it is best to contact the authorities of the country you are approaching on VHF radio to avoid misunderstandings.

On approach, hoist your Q flag, even if you arrive outside working hours and have to anchor; you must wait until the next working day with the Q flag up to clear in. You should come ashore in your dinghy or take a water taxi in. Then you clear customs and immigration. The documentation you are given will be useful to avoid increasingly hefty fines levied on those intercepted leaving the island without clearing in. When you have cleared customs and immigration you can head back to your yacht. You should then lower the Q flag and hoist the courtesy flag of that nation. In most islands of the southern Caribbean port officials will likely be checking to see if all yachts have cleared in, as this is a source of revenue, and will remind you if your Q flag is left up.

It is useful to note that some islands' ports can be very particular about the courtesy flag. For example, in Barbuda a clean and appropriately sized courtesy flag is expected to be flying after you have cleared customs. The courtesy flag should be flown from the starboard spreader in a position above any other flag. The courtesy flag should be, ideally, without imperfection as many take offense to torn or disproportionately sized flags.

It is also acceptable to fly both the courtesy flag and Q flag before clearing customs. However, flying only the courtesy flag before clearing is not advisable and also against maritime tradition, and in many jurisdictions is against the law.

Chevanev Charles is joining the Compass *team with a series of articles on issues of maritime law relevant to sailing community. If you have any questions of general interest, send them in and we'll see that he gets them. For more information, Mr. Charles can be contacted at ccharles@templestoke.com. These articles are legal information and should not be seen as legal advice. You should consult with an attorney or appropriate port officials before you rely on this information.*



—Continued from page 7

Update: The Hub Collective, Bequia

Bequia's arts and culture center has been regrouping after Beryl, refining its mission around three pillars: arts, healing, and the environment.



TAD RICHARDS

Colin Peters and friend outside The Hub

Healing Together: After Hurricane Beryl swept through the Southern Grenadines in July 2024, The Hub, in partnership with MindTHRIVE Co. and supported by Sol Relief, launched the pilot phase of Healing Together in mid-2025. Activities included Psychological First Aid (PFA) workshops for community leaders and first responders, as well as one-on-one counselling sessions. The response was strong across Union Island, Mayreau, and Bequia, with sessions quickly filling up with educators, frontline workers, and families.

Healing Together has been awarded CAD $50,000 by the Government of Canada through the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) to expand its reach. Running from August 2025 to February 2026, the program will extend across Union Island, Mayreau, Canouan, and Bequia.

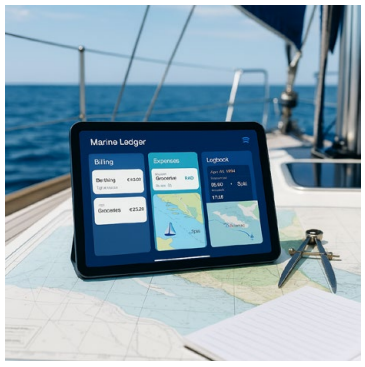
Bush Medicine Revival, *Honoring Heritage*, *Healing*, and *Ecology* is a three-pronged initiative that interweaves cultural heritage, ecological knowledge, healing systems, and sustainable community development across the Grenadines. Project organizers recognize that preserving traditional practices is essential to building resilient futures.

Find The Hub Collective at thehubsvg.com.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Delivery Captain Announces Release of Marine Ledger

Marine Ledger, a new mobile application developed to support captains, crew and private boat owners in the daily management of their vessels, is available for download.



COURTESY DELIVERY CAPTAIN

Marine Ledger on deck!

Marine Ledger consolidates several practical functions used during real onboard operations: voyage logs, expense tracking, GPS-tagged entries, maintenance and service records, document storage and crew notes. The app is designed to work fully offline, allowing owners and captains to maintain accurate records during ocean passages or when operating in areas with limited connectivity.

For information check out marine-ledger.com or delivery-captain.com.

Jolly Harbour Marina Announces Staff Changes

Jo Lucas, who has been with Jolly Harbour Marina and Boatyard in Antigua for 18 years, 10 as general manager and financial controller, entered partial retirement at the end of December 2025.



COURTESY JOLLY HARBOUR

Interim assistant manager Ronald Silencieux

Ronald Silencieux will be interim assistant general manager, working alongside Lucas until the end of June 2026. Silencieux brings an array of experience in IT, facilities, and sales. Jolly Harbour, now with expanded facilities to accommodate monohulls and catamarans, also welcomed two new staff to better serve customers.



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CARRIBEAN COMPASS ANNUAL CALENDAR 2026

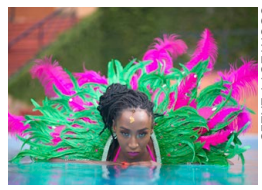
A Year Full of Fun!

by Tad Richards

Editor's note: *As of 2026, the* Caribbean Compass *annual events calendar, traditionally printed in the January issue, will now live online. This shift reflects how sailors, travelers, and readers use the calendar today: They seek quick, reliable, always-current information. Hosting it digitally allows access at any time, from anywhere, and ensures the listings stay accurate as events are added, rescheduled, or occasionally cancelled. Moving the calendar online frees up valuable print space for the stories, photography, and reporting* Compass *readers value most. You'll find the current calendar at the website link (caribbeancompass.com/caribbean-events-calendar) and at the QR code on page 3.*

January

1	New Year's Day – public holiday in many territories.
1	Annual Festival Parade, Montserrat. visitmontserrat.com/festivals
1	Guloya Festival, San Pedro de Macoris, Dominican Republic. bodyandsoulinternational.com/activities/3523-guloya-festival-2026
2	Ancestry Day, Haiti.
2-4	St. Croix Crucian Carnival: Children's parade; Jan. 3 — Adults parade; food, arts and crafts fair. stcroixtourism.com/christmas_festival
3	Wolf Moon (full moon)
4	Guadeloupe Carnival opening festivities (carnival continues through February). carnivalvibez.com/guadeloupe-carnival/
6	Three Kings Day – public holiday in Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic.
9-19	St. Barths Music Festival. stbarthmusicfestival.com
10	Start of World ARC, St. Lucia. worldcruising.com
10-11	One Nation Music Festival, Antigua Recreation Ground, Antigua
10-18 Feb	Mas Domnik, Dominica. avirtualdominica.com/project/carnival-in-dominica
10-31	The Arts Show, CMCarts, St. Croix (opening reception January 10). https://www.cmcarts.org/event-details/the-art-show-2026?
11	RORC Transatlantic Race departs Canary Islands bound for Antigua. rorctransatlantic.rorc.org



COURTESY PEXELS

Carnival is a year-round event in the Caribbean.



COURTESY ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA TOURISM AUTHORITY

English Harbour from Shirley Heights



COURTESY CMC

Caribbean Multihull Challenge Jamboree

11 – Feb 17	Aruba Carnival. visitaruba.com/things-to-do/aruba-events/aruba-carnival-season/
14-19	Cayman Cookout, Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman. caymancookout.com
15	Martin Luther King Jr. Day – public holiday in USVI & Puerto Rico.
15-18	Fiestas de la Calle San Sebastián, Old San Juan, Puerto Rico. discoverpuertorico.com/info/fiestas-de-la-calle-san-sebastian
15-22	Barbados Sailing Week, including Mount Gay Round Barbados Race, coastal races and youth dinghy races. roundbarbados.com
16-18	Antigua Yacht Club RS Elite small keelboat regatta. ABYMA.ag
17	Painkiller Cup, Tortola, BVI. painkillercupbvi.com
17	Rebel Salute, Plantation Cove, Jamaica. rebelsalutejamaica.com
17-18	Martin Luther King Regatta, St. Thomas. stthomasyachtclub.org/sailing/regattas/mlk-regatta
18	Oyster World Rally, Antigua. oysteryachts.com/events
21	Public holiday in Dominican Republic (Our Lady of Altagracia)
21	Public holiday in Barbados (Errol Barrow Day).
21-4 Feb	Mustique Blues Festival, Basil's Bar. basilsbar.com/whats-on
23-24	Ocaso Festival, Jaco, Costa Rica. musicfestivalwizard.com/festival-guide/costa-rica/
24	Antigua Yacht Club Sandy Island Race. ABYMA.org
24-1 Feb	Bequia Music Festival. bequiamusicfestival.com
25	Public holiday in Aruba (Betico Croes Day) and in Cayman Islands (National Heroes Day).
25-30	Pure Grenada Sailing Week, Port Louis Marina, Grenada. grenadasailingweek.com
25-2 Feb	Bequia Music Festival. bequiamusicfestival.com
26	Public holiday in Dominican Republic (Duarte Day)
26-30	Spice Island Billfish Tournament, Port Louis Marina, Grenada. sibtgd.com
27-31	Carib Wind Laser ILCA Training Cabarete, Dominican Republic. caribwind.com
28	Public holiday in Cuba (Birthday of José Martí)
29-1 Feb	Caribbean Multihull Challenge. caribbeanmultihullchallenge.com
31	CMC Great Bay Beach and Boardwalk Jamboree. caribbeanmultihullchallenge.com/jamboree/
TBA	Antigua Yacht Club mini-regatta. antiguayachtclub.com/calendar.



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March: Heineken Regatta, St. Maarten

Find the 2026 Calendar at caribbeancompass.com/caribbean-events-calendar/



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Port St. Charles, a luxury marina on Barbados's northwest coast

Barbados

Story and photos by Lexi Fisher and Chris Doyle

These days, Barbados is more often associated with pop superstar Rihanna than it is with cruising and sailing, and while her childhood home in downtown Bridgetown certainly draws a crowd, Barbados also offers some interesting and worthwhile sailing, for those willing to go out of their way to get there.

Though often grouped with the Windward Islands, Barbados is a geographic anomaly in the Eastern Caribbean. Ninety miles to the east of St. Vincent, it is way outside the arc of the other islands and straight to windward. It is the only island in the Eastern Caribbean that is not volcanic. It is the top of a buckle in the seabed that got pushed above the surface during tectonic plate movement. At a later period, it was largely submerged, which gave it a heavy limestone capping; it then rose again to form a relatively flat island (the highest hills are about a thousand feet) with spectacularly beautiful white sand beaches.



The Barbados Yacht Club is in Bridgetown, on Bay Street along Carlisle Bay.

Barbados fishermen venture far out to sea in all conditions.



The Careenage is Bridgetown's historic inner harbor, a landmark right in the heart of the capital.

The island is 21 miles long by 14 miles wide. It is an orderly country with a gentle

topography of rolling hills and green fields. Under British rule for over 300 years, it is often called Little England. Barbados became independent in 1966 and is today a stable parliamentary democracy and active member of the Commonwealth. It is a relatively affluent country. The driving force of the economy is tourism, and this has fueled many other light industries, including printing and light manufacturing. The second largest source of revenue for Barbados is its overseas financial services sector.

In the days of sail, especially in the days of square-rigged ships, it was very hard to reach Barbados from the rest of the island chain, which helped it stay outside the battles between the British and French that characterized the history of most of the other islands.

Left to their own devices, English-speaking Bajans evolved the most distinctive accent in the region. It is a pleasant, friendly sound, thick enough to cut with a cutlass. After you have spent a while here, you will recognize a Bajan anywhere else in the world as soon as they speak.

Bajans count among the finest seamen in the Caribbean. Their fishermen venture far out to sea in all conditions. For their yachtspeople, visiting any other destination and getting home involves serious windward work in the open ocean, with seas often rougher than those in the island chain. There is usually a foul current to deal with as well. I am always amazed at the casual way Bajan yacht crews turn up for races throughout the Caribbean, then think nothing of beating their way back afterward, a trip that would give most of us considerable pause.

Barbados was claimed for England in 1625 by one Captain John Powell and colonized two years later by his brother Henry, with a party of 80 settlers and 10 enslaved people. During the early years of settlement, Barbados had many small farmers, but around 1650, the advent of sugar brought about a sharp change. Small holdings were bought up by the wealthier landowners, who imported enslaved people and created an immensely rich plantocracy that lasted for several centuries.



Doyle Guide chart of Barbados

Slavery was abolished in 1834, but power to the people only became a reality in the 1930s and '40s, long after sugar had become a far less profitable industry. It happened as a result of class struggle, with the formation of labor unions, serious unrest, and street riots.

As the sugar industry declined, tourism evolved to take its place. The island is flat enough that a large airport required no special feats of engineering, and, unlike square riggers, jet planes have no problem getting here. Barbados's quiet beauty, dreamy beaches, and pleasant climate make it a natural for tourism, and Barbados was the first of the eastern Caribbean islands to develop this industry on such an intensive scale.

As a result, there is plenty to do here, with many types of restaurants and shops, lots of nightlife, and plenty of roadside attractions. The people are very welcoming; they understand the value of visitors and treat them well. While the south and west coast are heavily built up to cater to this industry, if you head to the northeast or the center of the island, you soon get away from it all.

It is well worth visiting Barbados, but from a yachting perspective, it can be a challenging trip from the other islands. For Europeans, it makes a lot of sense to make Barbados your first landfall as you come across the Atlantic. However you get here, you can be sure of enjoying your stay.

Barbados Entry and Exit Procedures

Ports of Entry:
There are two ports of entry: Bridgetown to the south and Port St. Charles to the north.

Advance Paperwork:
All visiting yachts should pre-register with SailClear prior to arrival. For visitors from many countries, a visa is not required.

Entry Process:
On arrival the captain should proceed to the Health, Immigration and then Customs offices with the SailClear notification ID number, crew passports and boat paperwork. A cruising permit is needed to move between anchorages.

Exit Process:
Same as the entry process, but the order is Port Authority, Customs and then Immigration. Outbound clearance is valid for 24 hours.

Rates:
Clearance fees are paid upon departure and are $100 Barbados dollars ($50USD).

Check www.noonsite.com/place/barbados/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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C/W = Caribbean-wide
SVG = St. Vincent & the Grenadines

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