CARIBBEAN
COMPASS
FEBRUARY 2026 NO. 356
The Caribbean's Look at Sea & Shore



DOMINICA LOVES YACHTIES

— SEE PAGE 19

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If it's February (or March and April) in the Dominican Republic, it's carnival time. Each community has its own unique celebration, and each features a variation on the main carnival character: a limping devil, or diablo cojuelo. Why is it limping? Legend has it that the devil was banished and pushed down to Earth, injuring its leg in the fall. If you don't see some form of devil at carnival then you're not in the Dominican Republic!

LARRY PENALOZA

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

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

About the Cover *Trinidadian Nadia Huggins calls her series of underwater photographs "Disappearing People" as a tribute to the small island nations of the Caribbean threatened by climate change, sea level rise, and the diaspora of a people who were made victims of the transatlantic slave trade. The haunting images of bubbles trailed by underwater swimmers, captured by the photographer but destined to disappear in a fraction of a second (as the swimmers have already disappeared from view), suggest the fragile existence of humanity in the relentless entropy of the universe, hastened by humankind's own self-destructive nature.*

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Caribbean Compass

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READERS FORUM

Thanks for the Memories

Dear *Compass*,

I was pleasantly surprised and honored to be remembered in the Readers Forum of the January 2026 issue by longtime *Compass* correspondent Huge Bacon and my good friend Commodore Escrich of the International Hemingway Yacht Club in Cuba. Happy to see that such connections (and letters from Caribbean sailing legends like Tony Powell and Robbie Ferron) are part of *Compass*'s continuing voyage.



DIGITAL PAINTING BY TAD RICHARDS

Sally sailing

Tom and I read each new issue with interest. We'd like to take this opportunity to send our warmest wishes to all the *Compass* staff, contributors and readers for fair winds, following seas, exciting new ports and comfy safe havens in the new year.

Excelsior!
Sally Erdle
Bequia
Sally, you're the soul and inspiration behind every issue. – The editors

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Grenada Marine Greets ARC+ Arrivals

Nathan and Georgia Fletcher, representing Grenada Marine, welcomed arrivals at the World Cruising Club ARC+ Rally on December 8, 2025. The event, hosted by ARC+, the Grenada Tourism Authority, and Camper & Nicholsons Port Louis Marina, provided an enjoyable opportunity for networking and social connection.



COURTESY GRENADA MARINE

The Fletcher twins at Knife and Fork restaurant, Port Louis

Blue Lagoon Expands Fleet

Blue Lagoon Charter Boats is expanding its fleet to enhance offerings around St. Vincent and the Grenadines. *Pure Pleasure*, a 32-foot speedboat which was previously out of the water, is now making a comeback. In early January, the company also introduced a refurbished 78-foot Fountaine Pajot called *A Cut Above*, designed to accommodate wedding parties and larger groups for special occasions. Blue Lagoon has also refurbished a 25-foot Dusky called *Ripple*, which is now based at the Bequia Plantation Hotel, enhancing the capacity to serve smaller groups and customized trips like sunset cruises and fishing tours.



COURTESY BLUE LAGOON

The 32-foot Pure Pleasure *joins Blue Lagoon's fleet.*

For more info, email Info@blyachtcharters.com or Chelseaglynn@bluelagoonsvg.com. Find Blue Lagoon at bluelagooncharterboats.com/ or instagram.com/bluelagooncharterboats/.

Scrub Island Resort Highlights Wellness-Focused Trend

Scrub Island Resort, Spa & Marina in the British Virgin Islands offers a destination for travelers seeking a slower, wellness-oriented start to 2026. Resort representatives say guests are increasingly looking for trips that emphasize rest, connections, and intentional time away.



COURTESY SCRUB ISLAND

Couple lounging by the Plunge Pool at Ixora Spa

The property promotes an unhurried pace, with open-air gathering areas, waterfront views, and easy access to nearby Marina Cay. Visitors often spend their days moving between beaches, shared meals, and outdoor activities designed to encourage relaxation rather than rigid scheduling.

A key draw is the on-site Ixora Spa, which offers treatments using Caribbean botanicals in spaces overlooking the water.

BVI Yacht Sales: Why Marine Surveys Matter

Buying a yacht entails researching complex systems, hidden wear, and insurance considerations that aren't always obvious at first glance.

A qualified survey by an independent marine surveyor is essential. The surveyor takes a close look at the hull, rigging, machinery, and safety gear, often uncovering issues even attentive owners may overlook.

A buyer-commissioned pre-purchase survey digs deeper than immediate risk, assessing condition, longevity, and what ownership will truly involve.

Behind the scenes, good preparation matters too. When a vessel is properly presented, the survey process is smoother, more accurate, and more reassuring for everyone involved.

In the end, a marine survey offers clarity, confidence, and a better start to life on the water.

For further guidance on marine surveys, contact BVI Yacht Sales (bviyachtsales.com).





Channel 16

Dominica and Barbados Sign Landmark Tourism Partnership

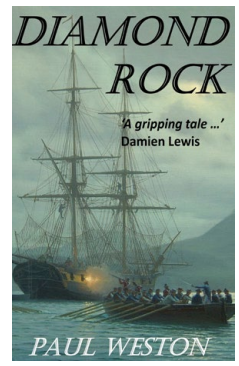
Dominica and Barbados have signed a landmark tourism partnership through an agreement to collaborate on promoting their tourism products and offering enhanced multi-destination packages. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishes a joint framework for cooperation, focusing on marketing, knowledge exchange, and enhancing visitor experiences across both destinations.



COURTESY BTMI

Barbados and Dominica come together for a historic partnership.

New Novel Highlights 1805 Sea Action around Guadeloupe



Set mainly in the West Indies, Paul Weston's most recent novel, *Diamond Rock*, is woven around a British privateer's daring campaign of irregular warfare against the French in Guadeloupe in 1805, a prelude to the famous Battle of Trafalgar, where Lord Nelson defeated Napoleon's much larger fleet.

The novel was inspired by Weston's discovery of shattered French cannons in undergrowth at Anse a la Barque on the west coast of Guadeloupe. Weston has visited all of the locations used in the book in his own boat — rolling down the trade wind passage across the Atlantic to the West Indies, beating up past Diamond Rock just south of Martinique, anchoring among the mangroves in Guadeloupe's Grand Cul de Sac Marin. Combined with his seafaring background on merchant ships as well as his own boats, this allows him to offer a plausible literary rendering of daily life at sea in the early nineteenth century, and gives an insight into how Royal Navy officers, often very young men, were able to act on their own initiative and carry out such astonishing acts of war.

Find Diamond Rock via *Amazon*.

Virgin Gorda Manual Targets Enhanced Visitor Experience

The British Virgin Islands Tourist Board & Film Commission has launched the Virgin Gorda Historical Manual, a new resource designed to strengthen cultural understanding among those who work directly with visitors.

Created as a practical guide for hospitality workers, tour operators, taxi drivers, and other frontline tourism staff, the publication compiles key historical information, cultural context, and site-specific details about Virgin Gorda. Its goal is to help anyone representing the island provide more accurate, confident, and engaging interpretations of its heritage.



COURTESY BVITB&FC

The manual is an important tool for improving the visitor experience.

The manual was shaped with contributions from community members Andy Flax, Rose Gardener, and Iris Leonel Harrigan, whose local knowledge helped ensure the material reflects Virgin Gorda's history with accuracy and respect. Lead researcher Dr. Angel Smith noted that the project revealed the island's deep and often underappreciated historical richness.

Tourism officials described the manual as an important tool for improving the visitor experience and strengthening the territory's cultural tourism product. They emphasized that a deeper understanding of Virgin Gorda's past will help frontline workers offer more meaningful interactions with guests and foster a stronger connection between visitors and the island.



COURTESY FJSOT

Marine service technology graduates: "opportunity, empowerment, and the future of marine careers for young adults in the Virgin Islands."

Marine Service Technology Students Graduate

Future Jobs Skills of Tomorrow, Inc. (FJSOT) marked a milestone on December 5, 2025, celebrating the first graduating class of its Marine Service Technology Pre-Apprenticeship Program on St. Croix in the USVI. The ceremony, held at The Palms at Pelican Cove, honored young adults who completed the territory's first marine service pre-apprenticeship initiative.

The eight-month program blended classroom instruction with hands-on training in marine systems, boat fabrication, safety standards, and dockside operations. Training was conducted in partnership with the St. Croix Marine Center at two sites in Christiansted and Gallows Bay, where students worked alongside seasoned marine professionals.

"This graduation represents opportunity, empowerment, and the future of marine careers for our young adults in the Virgin Islands," said FJSOT President Reuben Fenton. "Our trainees committed themselves to learning a high-demand trade, and today they are prepared to enter the workforce with industry-recognized training and real on-the-job experience."

SAIL FURTHER. SAIL TONGA.

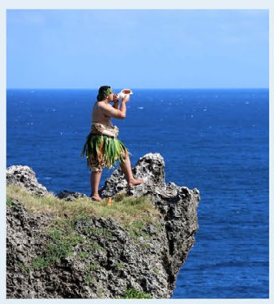
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St. Croix, USVI



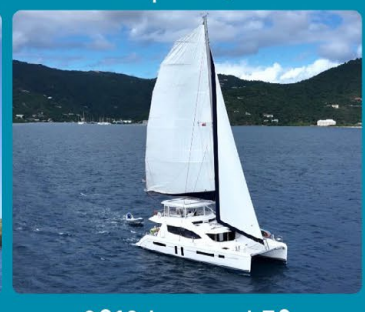
2018 Lagoon 630MY
$1,699,000
Tortola, BVI



2018 Jeanneau JY51
$539,000
Grenada



1989 Taswell 49
$228,000
Trinidad & Tobago



2016 Leopard 58
$899,000
Tortola, BVI



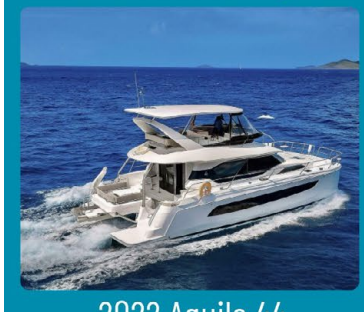
2011 Beneteau Oceanis 43
$99,500
Virgin Gorda, BVI



2016 Jeanneau 519
$290,000
Antigua & Barbuda



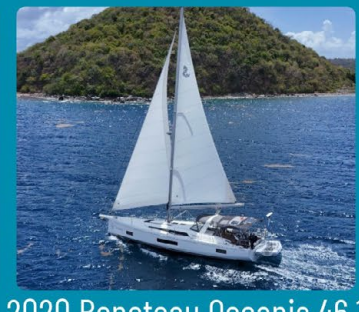
2021 Fountaine Pajot Tanna 47
$950,000
Saint-Thomas, USVI



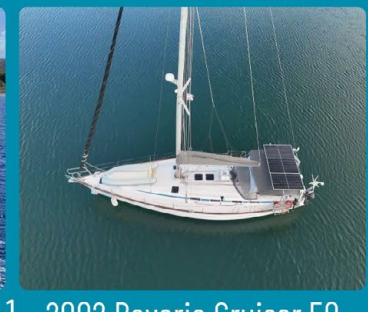
2022 Aquila 44
$649,000
Virgin Gorda, BVI



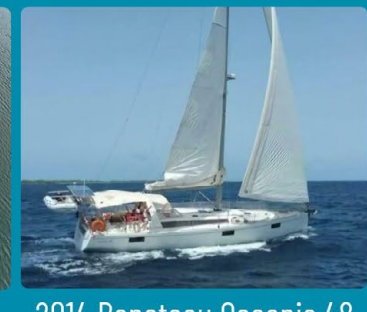
2023 Hanse 510
$899,000
Tortola, BVI



2020 Beneteau Oceanis 46.1
$485,000
Tortola, BVI



2002 Bavaria Cruiser 50
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Dominican Republic



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Biodiversity and Ocean Governance Are Top Priorities



COURTESY OECS

Participants toured a biodiversity trail.

The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission hosted back-to-back meetings in Guadeloupe in fall 2025, bringing together regional experts and partners. The sixth Biodiversity and Ecosystems Management Committee meeting reviewed progress on key projects like BioSPACE, discussed procurement challenges, and highlighted flagship initiatives from member states, including Montserrat's Mountain Chicken Recovery and St. Lucia's Nature-Based Solutions. The OECS 30x30 Programme gained momentum with plans for a regional conservation hub and a $10 million funding application.

The 23rd Ocean Governance Team meeting, chaired by Antigua and Barbuda, focused on regional priorities such as the Maritime Single Window Initiative and Blue Economy opportunities. Participants also toured a recycling facility and biodiversity trail, and students engaged with a waste management exhibition. These meetings reinforced OECS's commitment to coordinated action, sustainable development, and ecosystem protection across the Eastern Caribbean.

St. Lucia Endorses National Coastal and Marine Spatial Plan

The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) has congratulated the Government of St. Lucia on the formal endorsement of its coastal and marine spatial plan. The landmark decision highlights St. Lucia's leadership in sustainable ocean governance and its commitment to advancing Blue Economy goals.

Developed under the Caribbean Regional Oceanscape Project with World Bank support, the plan provides a comprehensive framework to guide the use, management, and development of the nation's coastal and marine resources. Central to the initiative is a coastal master plan, which identifies priority interventions and investment opportunities aimed at strengthening economic resilience and fostering inclusive growth.



COURTESY OECS

St. Lucia's Coastal Master Plan aims at strengthening economic resilience and fostering inclusive growth.

Key areas outlined in the accompanying marketing plan include village tourism, solar farm enhancement, resilient fisheries facilities, business accommodation, and wind energy development. Together, these projects are designed to support St. Lucia's transition toward a climate-resilient Blue Economy while safeguarding natural coastal assets.

Find St. Lucia's Coastal and Marine Spatial Plan at shorturl.at/BX43Q.

EPIC Marks 25 Years with Major Seabird Restoration Advances

The Environmental Protection in the Caribbean (EPIC) program is marking its 25th anniversary with significant progress in long-term seabird and habitat restoration efforts across the transboundary Grenadines. The region, spanning Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG), has been a central focus of EPIC's conservation work for more than 16 years, beginning with early surveys that identified the global importance of islands such as Battowia and the Pillories.

—Continued on page 15



Bocas del Toro Regatta

The seventh annual Bocas del Toro Regatta will take place on Saturday, February 14, 2026 off Bocas del Toro, Panama. This one-day event will feature monohull and multihull divisions, serious racing and serious partying.



RAY JASON

It's not every regatta that has a pirate ship as one end of the starting line.

The awards banquet, held in what many consider the undiscovered Caribbean, is described by its organizers as a "fungatta," with a prize list donated by local businesses and an affordable entrance fee.

Information about the event and Bocas Marina can be found at www.bocas-marina.com.

Kai Marks-Dasent Named 2025 Young Sailor of the Year

The Sylvester Simmons Foundation has announced that Kai Marks-Dasent is the 2025 recipient of the Sylvester Simmons Young Sailor of the Year Award, his second time earning the honor. The award recognizes a year of athletic achievement, service and leadership, values central to the Foundation's mission.

Representing St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Marks-Dasent competed in major regattas including Barbados Youth Sailing Week, the Antigua ILCA Open, the UK ILCA Nationals and the Caribbean Dinghy Championships. His performances reflected discipline and pride in carrying his nation's flag abroad.

Judges were particularly impressed by his fundraising feat: sailing solo in a 12-foot ILCA dinghy from St. Vincent to Union Island, a 42-mile journey, to raise money for CSEC exam fees for 15 Union Island Secondary School students recovering from Hurricane Beryl.

Marks-Dasent also served as baton bearer during the King's Baton Relay in July, representing youth sailors nationally, and in October received the Prime Ministerial Youth Sailor of the Year Award.

"Kai's achievements are truly inspirational," said Dr. Kingsley Simmons of the Foundation.

The award ceremony took place in December 2025 at De Reef, Bequia, attended by the Simmons family, the sailing community and supporters across the Grenadines.



COURTESY SIMMONS FOUNDATION

Mrs. Joan Simmons presents the award to Kai Marks-Dasent.



The People of ARC 2025

Story and photos by Bob Zannetti

Standing at an evening gathering at the Rodney Bay Marina among the participants of the 2025 ARC on the lush and beautiful island of St. Lucia, you can't help but be overcome by the sense of accomplishment that permeates the air. More than 140 boats and 900 people sailed in the most recent ARC from the Canary Islands to St. Lucia, and gathered at the marina to rest, recharge, repair and remember the extraordinary experience of sailing 2,700 miles across the Atlantic Ocean.

Here are some of their stories:



Paula Rissanen (left) and skipper Raina Alapeteri of Carissa

Carissa, a Swan 441, hails from Finland and was sailed in the ARC by a nine-woman crew with skipper Raina Alapteri, who shared with me that she is the oldest skipper in the fleet. Raina is 80 years old and an inspiration to all!

The boat is part of Ocean Ladies, a 200-member association in Finland that offers sailing experiences to women and combines a love of sailing with actions to increase the wellness of the oceans. Offshore sailing is of particular interest to the group, hence the abundant crew available for ARC. *Carissa* took over a month to sail from Finland to the Canaries for the start of ARC and switched out crews in the many stops along the way.

Once the original crew was put together, watch schedules were organized and final preparations were completed. During ARC, the crew was focused on going fast, so they changed headsails often and focused on sail trim. They were rewarded with a relatively quick passage in spite of some light airs and rain, but like all sailors, they were sure that if they had newer sails they would have arrived even sooner. Carissa will spend the winter sailing around the Caribbean with different Ocean Ladies crews and then return to Europe with ARC in May 2026.

Ganeasa is a 52-foot Amel Super Maramu from the United Kingdom sailed by Crispin and Hannah Waterhouse and their two daughters, eight-year-old Poppy and six-year-old Lotty. Crispin and Hannah are experienced sailors who want to share as many sailing experiences as possible with their daughters while they are still young enough to want to be with Mom and Dad. Their plan is to continue sailing together as a family and circumnavigate.

This trip started with the 2,500-mile sail from the UK to the Canary Islands, where they were joined by Crispin's brother, an excellent sailor and perfect addition to the crew — but two days after departure from the Canaries, he developed a very painful swollen foot, fever and general malaise. It was determined he was likely bitten by a spider in the Canaries and would require additional medical assistance, so they diverted back so he could be hospitalized.

—Continued on the next page



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Hannah and Crispin Waterhouse and their daughters Poppy, left and Lotty, with Ganeasa. *Crispin and Hannah want to share sailing experiences with their daughters while they are still young enough to want to be with Mom and Dad.*

He was replaced by a young woman, Anlisa, who could help with the kids but had no sailing experience. This left all of the sailing to Crispin and Hannah, who want the kids to enjoy and cherish every moment of family togetherness, so have taught them not just to "survive" every day, but to "thrive!" The rest of the trip was a mostly downwind glorious sail. Their time in St. Lucia was enjoyed by all as they prepared for the sail to Panama, which began in mid-January.

Ninja Penguin is a Bowman 57 out of the UK. It was sailed in the ARC by owners Giles and Aly Ridyard along with their 15-year-old son Jack and six-year-old daughter Elsie, plus six charter guests.

The boat's charter concept is to give people the opportunity to sail and learn so they can one day skipper their own boats in events like the ARC. Giles puts the watches together based on experience and abilities, so all get the opportunity to learn new skills. He basically allows them to take responsibility for sailing the boat, which is a great learning experience and also gives him and his family some downtime.



Jack, Elsie, Aly and Giles Ridyard with Ninja Penguin. *Elsie's favorite part of the voyage? "The Milky Way!" — referring to the spectacular night skies at sea.*

Giles and Aly also are delighted they can give these sailing experiences to their children. Elsie is really enjoying St. Lucia. She said her most memorable moments from the voyage were first, arrival on the island, and second, "the Milky Way!" — referring to the spectacular night skies at sea.

Plans going forward include a run up the Caribbean island chain through April and then returning to the UK via Bermuda and the Azores. They plan to do the ARC 2026 with charter guests, and then voyage to Nova Scotia before returning to the UK. As Aly says, "There could be worse jobs in the world!"

Westwind is a 52-foot Amel Mango based in the Netherlands. The owners, Rob and Saskia Dillman, sailed with their two adult sons Sebastian and Max. The ARC was the next life chapter for Rob and Saskia; both have cut back their work schedules to give them the time. Their two sons' schedules also coincided with the timing, so they were able, after years of trying, to pull it off a family adventure.

Rob's careful planning of sail trim and setup helped them cut time off their voyage. In the Canary Islands they bought a used genoa that fit the boat, and set it up with their existing genoa as matching headsails, attaching both to the furling system on the forestay. This allowed them to unfurl and furl both sails at the same time with minimal crew management and maximum efficiency. A good part of the voyage was deep downwind, so this setup made them much faster.

—Continued on page 15

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Scrub Island Resort, Spa & Marina: From Sunrise to Sunset



A Private Island Experience in the British Virgin Islands

The island keeps its own rhythm. Boats come and go through the marina, conversations stretch longer than expected, and the seasons inspire freshly caught meals. Somewhere between morning and evening, time becomes less useful than it once was. This shift is subtle but unmistakable, and it often stays with guests long after they leave.

At Scrub Island Resort, Spa & Marina, days are shaped less by schedules and more by light, water, and the natural movement of the island. Mornings may begin watching the sun rise over the marina, walking the shoreline, or simply easing into the day from a private balcony. What follows is not a fixed itinerary, but an experience that unfolds gradually, revealing itself in familiar ways.

Morning on the Marina at Scrub Island

Morning arrives quietly across Scrub Island. Light moves over the marina, reflecting off calm water and docked boats preparing for the day. Coffee is enjoyed from villa terraces and guestroom balconies, where steady trade winds set an easy tone before the island fully wakes. Marina Village begins to stir at its own pace, offering a gentle transition from rest to activity.

There is comfort in this hour. The views are recognizable, shaped subtly by season and sky, and the island feels steady without ever feeling static.

On the Water at Marina Cay



As the day warms, attention naturally turns toward the water. The short crossing to Marina Cay opens access to clear Caribbean seas and a range of on-water experiences. In partnership with Up 'n' Under Watersports, guests can experience eFoiling and AquaDarts, explore tranquil waters by kayak or paddleboard, or use snorkel rentals to discover the area's colorful underwater world.

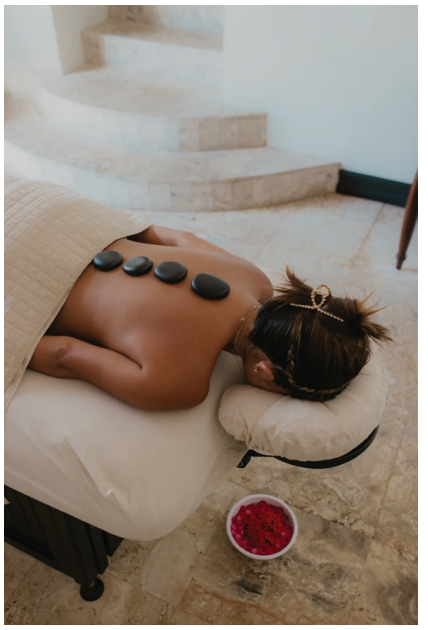
Some stay out longer than planned. Others return sooner, content with a brief moment on the water before transitioning to a meal overlooking the sea. The pace is personal, guided more by instinct than intention.

North Beach Cabanas and the Art of Retreat

By midday, Scrub Island invites retreat. Sunshine settles gently across the island, and shaded spaces become welcome refuges. North Beach cabanas offer a comfortable place to pause along the shoreline, whether for a relaxed lunch, an afternoon of reading, or simply time spent listening to the steady movement of the sea.

Here, luxury is defined by space and ease. Movement and stillness exist side by side, without expectation.

Ixora Spa and Island Wellness



Afternoons favor calm. A swim provides refreshment, while time spent at Ixora Spa becomes a natural continuation of the day. Positioned above Marina Village, the spa offers Ayurvedic treatments focused on relaxation and renewal, complemented by elevated views of the Caribbean Sea and quiet spaces designed for lingering before or after a treatment.

Wellness at Scrub Island feels integrated rather than scheduled. The island itself does much of the work.

Evenings in Marina Village and North Beach Festival

Evenings are shaped by appetite and atmosphere, whether dining by the water, gathering casually with friends, or lingering to watch the sky change from gold to deep blue.

During special events such as the North Beach Festival, the shoreline fills with music, conversation, and a sense of shared celebration. The island absorbs the energy easily, never losing its balance.



Island Nights at Scrub Island Resort

When night falls, quiet returns without emptiness. Lights shimmer across the marina as tarpon put on a show below the surface. Guests make their way back toward hillside villas, guestrooms and boats, while others linger a bit longer, enjoying the stillness that settles after the day has fully passed.

A Private Retreat Always in Season

Scrub Island is not defined by urgency or excess. It offers days shaped by water and light, afternoons that make room for pause, and evenings grounded in connection. Over time, these moments begin to feel less like highlights and more like touchstones.

From first light to last light, Scrub Island Resort, Spa & Marina remains a private retreat, always in season, always ready.

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—*Continued from page 10*

Their next move is to enjoy the Caribbean. They'll see what happens after that.

Sea Dragon is a Challenge 72, a commercial boat in that it takes guests on board who pay for the experience. Phoebe Rogers, the first mate and one of the professional crew, grew up sailing on Lake Tahoe in California, and as her love for sailing grew, she set her sights on a professional career. After years of apprenticeships and coastal sailing experiences she secured the first mate position for the Atlantic crossing.



Peter Gilmore has a unique insight into the ARC based on his ocean sailing experiences and interactions with so many of the participants over the years.

After an eventful trip weatherwise from the UK to the Canaries, Phoebe and Sea Dragon welcomed the paying guests aboard. There were four crew and 10 guests varying in experience from those who had never sailed before to those who aspire to do the crossing in their own boats. Phoebe observed that ocean sailing is one of the most transformative environments you can elect to put yourself in. She said that observing how the crew grew through their experiences and interactions under her tutelage was one of the most rewarding things she has ever experienced.

Sea Dragon will spend the winter island-hopping in the Caribbean with various charter crews and then return to Europe. Phoebe has upcoming contracts on a variety of boats and then will reunite with Sea Dragon next year for additional voyages.

Peter Gilmore is one of the famed "Yellow Shirts" of the ARC. As marketing and communications manager of the World Cruising Club, he's able to channel his lifelong love of sailing to inspiring others.

Peter has sailed all his life. He started sailing with his parents shortly after he was born and learned how to walk on a sailboat. When he was 18 and finished school he did two Atlantic crossings on a Pogo 10.50 with his mom, dad and sister. Returning to the UK, he studied media and communications at Cardiff University and was an avid sailboat racer. Upon graduation he worked as a journalist for a while, and then joined the World Cruising Club.

Peter has a unique insight into the ARC based on his ocean sailing experiences and interactions with so many of the participants over the years. That has helped him and the team he works with to make the event more meaningful and enjoyable for all.

ECO NEWS BRIEFS

—*Continued from page 7*

Over the past year, field teams completed comprehensive boat, land and drone surveys, producing the first full baseline of seabird populations and nesting sites on both islands. The findings reaffirm earlier research showing Battowia hosts one of the largest red-footed booby colonies in the Lesser Antilles, while the Pillories remain a key nesting area for red-billed tropicbirds, bridled terns, brown boobies and laughing gulls.

New technology is playing a growing role in the work. EPIC, in partnership with the SVG Forestry Department, Fisheries, National Parks and the Coast Guard, conducted drone training sessions to expand local capacity for safe aerial monitoring of steep and inaccessible nesting cliffs. Early drone imagery has already identified critical nesting hotspots.

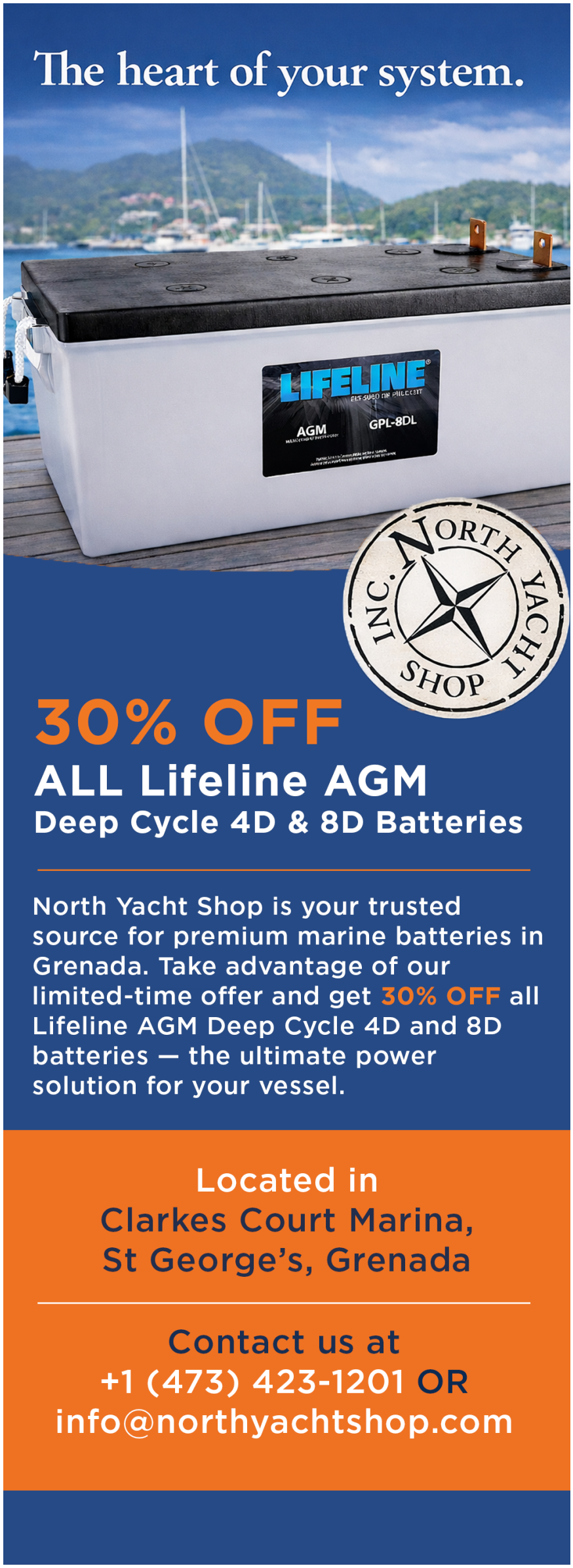
Surveys also documented widespread habitat degradation caused by invasive goats, which remove vegetation needed by tree-nesting species and leave ground-nesting birds vulnerable to predators and erosion.

Education and outreach expanded alongside fieldwork, with more than 500 students, teachers, community members and forestry staff participating in seabird workshops across SVG. EPIC has also begun early engagement with local goat owners to build support for habitat recovery.



COURTESY EPIC

EPIC, in partnership with the SVG Forestry Department, Fisheries, National Parks and the Coast Guard, conducted drone training sessions to expand local capacity for safe aerial monitoring of steep and inaccessible nesting cliffs.



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC FUN: CARNIVAL, INDEPENDENCE DAY AND WHALES!

By Denise Simpson

For those of you choosing the well-travelled Thornless Path route (Compass January 2025, caribbeancompass.com/dominican-republic-the-thornless-path-route-to-high-season-fun), with easy and affordable check-in together with great provisioning along the north and northeast coasts of the Dominican Republic, February, March, and April are the fun months of the year for carnival, independence day, whale watching and so much more! Here's how to navigate it all.

Luperon Town Anchorage

Various moorings are available with some anchoring areas in silt/mud or alongside dockage at the marina. In the past the captain and all crew members were required to dinghy to the government dock for check-in, then walk to the gate where the officials are based — but that might have changed again, so ask the DR harbor contractors upon arrival.

Luperon has a small carnival and independence day gathering. If you want to experience a larger carnival, or if you want to provision in the large supermarkets, taxis can take you to Puerto Plata (about an hour and a half drive) or you can hire a vehicle within 30 days of arrival on your tourist visa.

Puerto Plata

The new year kicks off with a vibrant and fun carnival parade, plus independence day celebrations in the third-largest city in the country, also a great spot for grocery supplies, machine shops and so much more.

Carnival is traditionally celebrated throughout the Dominican Republic during February and part of March, with parades held every Sunday in different cities. Between Carnival Sundays comes Independence Day on February 27, commemorating independence from Haiti in 1844.

Dominican Carnival is a tradition inherited from Spanish forefathers, dating back to 1520; it's an unforgettable experience. Celebrations are held every Saturday and Sunday from the first weekend of February until the first weekend of March, with parades every Sunday in Puerto Plata, Punta Cana, Río San Juan, Bonao, Constanza, Montecristi, Samaná, Higüey, La Romana, Santiago, Santo Domingo — and La Vega, which is home to one of the largest and most popular carnivals in the Dominican Republic. *Carnaval Dominicano* is the oldest carnival in the Caribbean region.


LARRY PENALOZA

Diablo Cojuelo, the limping devil

Each city or province has its own unique celebration, but each features a variation on the main Carnival character: a limping devil, or diablo cojuelo, with its respective mask. Why is it limping? Legend says it was banished and pushed down to Earth, injuring its leg in the fall. If you don't see some form of devil at carnival then you're not in the Dominican Republic!

Cofresi, Puerto Plata

Cofresi is just down the road from the large, vibrant, colorful and fun Puerto Plata Carnival. Space is limited to the marina, as there are no anchoring areas nearby. It is one of the best tourist cities for chocolate, rum and cigar production, as well as an amber museum, historic sites, fun outdoor activities (such as waterfall excursions, kiteboarding, and horseback riding), excellent provisioning and so much more.

—Continued on the next page



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—Continued from the previous page

This is a child- and pet-friendly English-speaking marina with fast and easy check-in, since all officials are onsite. A large local supermarket sends a free shopping shuttle to the marina, which features the only fuel dock on the north coast, 24/7 security and the only travel lifts for both multihulls and monohulls on the north and northeast coasts, with backup generators for the occasional power outage.

The marina offers special dockage rates based on the length of stay for cruisers and smaller vessels year-round. Also please note: vessels with low topsides should request a lower dock in the small yacht basin (D dock onwards), as the higher fixed concrete docks can make for a long climb down at low tide.

It's best to use plastic hose for chafe protection if staying longer term, since the marina is self-flushing with culverts under the seawall causing water movement. This is noticeable with any north wind (only 8-10 days a year) so make sure your cleats and backing plates are firmly secured to a strong deck and use your snubbers if need be. Spring lines and fenders are also recommended for docking.

Samaná

After Carnival in Puerto Plata, many cruisers head to Samaná to see the amazing whales (many report seeing them close by when entering or leaving the bay). There are also many tourist attractions in Samaná, such as horseback riding and hiking, and one can explore the beautiful tropical coastline.

Use the town anchorage, or you can stay at the English-speaking marina outside of the town anchorage. This marina has all officials onsite for fast and easy check-in, 24/7 security and the only fuel dock on the northeast coast. The solid fixed concrete docks are within a large self-flushing seawall and can also experience some surge, so use the same guidelines as mentioned above during certain times of year.

If you need to shop or bulk provision, speak to the marina manager to arrange a taxi or car hire to get to town or the large supermarkets in Las Terrenas (about an hour's drive).

Los Haitises National Park

From Samaná, many cruisers head over to Los Haitises, which is a beautiful, peaceful nature reserve with a small hurricane hole. From there you can stage up for your Mona Passage crossing, or continue to Marina Cap Cana in Punta Cana (not recommended for deeper-draft boats) for the crossing to Puerto Rico.

COURTESY DR DEPT. OF TOURISM



Los Haitises National Park, Samaná Bay

Final Notes

Facebook users can join our group, "Dominican Republic Cruisers & Boaters INFO." Whatever Dominican Republic experience you choose, we're sure you'll have a great time!

Denise Simpson is a host of the Seven Seas Cruising Association USA (SSCA).



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Let the Magic Happen!

The PAYS Yachting Festival fulfills its mission to sailors while celebrating the Nature Isle

Story and photos by Elaine Lembo

A Tuesday morning in late March 2025 was Race to Mero day on the volcanic leeward island of Dominica. Minutes remained before *Lung Wai*, our Beneteau 46, was to head to the starting line off Prince Rupert Bay, and we were sweating through our competitive cruising woes.

So far, we'd certainly had a blast at festivities and tours of this stunning country during the third annual PAYS Yachting Festival. Today, on the upside, our slapdash crew was running on a liquid diet of rum punch and beer because the only breakfast place at the PAYS pavilion at Turtle Beach in the waterfront town of Portsmouth is closed Tuesdays (festivals be damned). On the downside, we couldn't get the hydraulic swim platform of the former Sunsail charter boat to swivel up into the closed position.



A cruise south down the west coast of Dominica is a passage alongside an unblemished landscape that announces the country's lush mountainous terrain and nine active volcanoes.

"We'll have to forget the race," fretted Michael Hauhuth, our skipper and *Lung Wai*'s owner. The collective silent reply: *No way!* We hustled. Crew mate Nico Baumann started to pull rods apart and inspected the electrical panel belowdecks for a blown fuse; retired offshore skipper and racer Dale Cheek hopped to, leading lines at the ready off the port and starboard stern quarters. I lay flat on my belly and made myself useful in the way that only former deck swabs know how to do by using elbow grease to hold the platform up while the other two tied it off on either end to keep it in the raised position.

Michael was sailing solo while he waited for his wife to fly in from Europe and join him on their bluewater travels. Had we not met only minutes before, he would have been up a creek without a paddle. As it was, not only did our crew of friendly strangers MacGyver a problem, we continued to relish our bouncy and serendipitous sail south in brisk 25-knot tradewinds. We got to know each other a bit more, and we carried out a fun mission together.

It was an early and robust start to a day that ran bright, hot and long. It wouldn't end before it blossomed into an even longer night amplified by rain showers, a PAYS awards ceremony complete with remarks from organizers and tourism bigwigs, a barbecue, musical entertainment from a deejay, and throngs of cruisers and locals partying at a street fair to the beat of the St. Joseph Mahaut Bouyon Lapeau Kabuwit drummers and garishly costumed Sensay dancers.

Casual, rich bonding moments such as these, thanks to PAYS and its activities, helped us fulfill the core mission of all sailors roaming the Caribbean: a search for adventures as soft as the beach in the anchorage where we make landfall, a way to get an inexpensive bite to eat and a cold beer, and an easy venue to meet new friends.

—Continued on page 21

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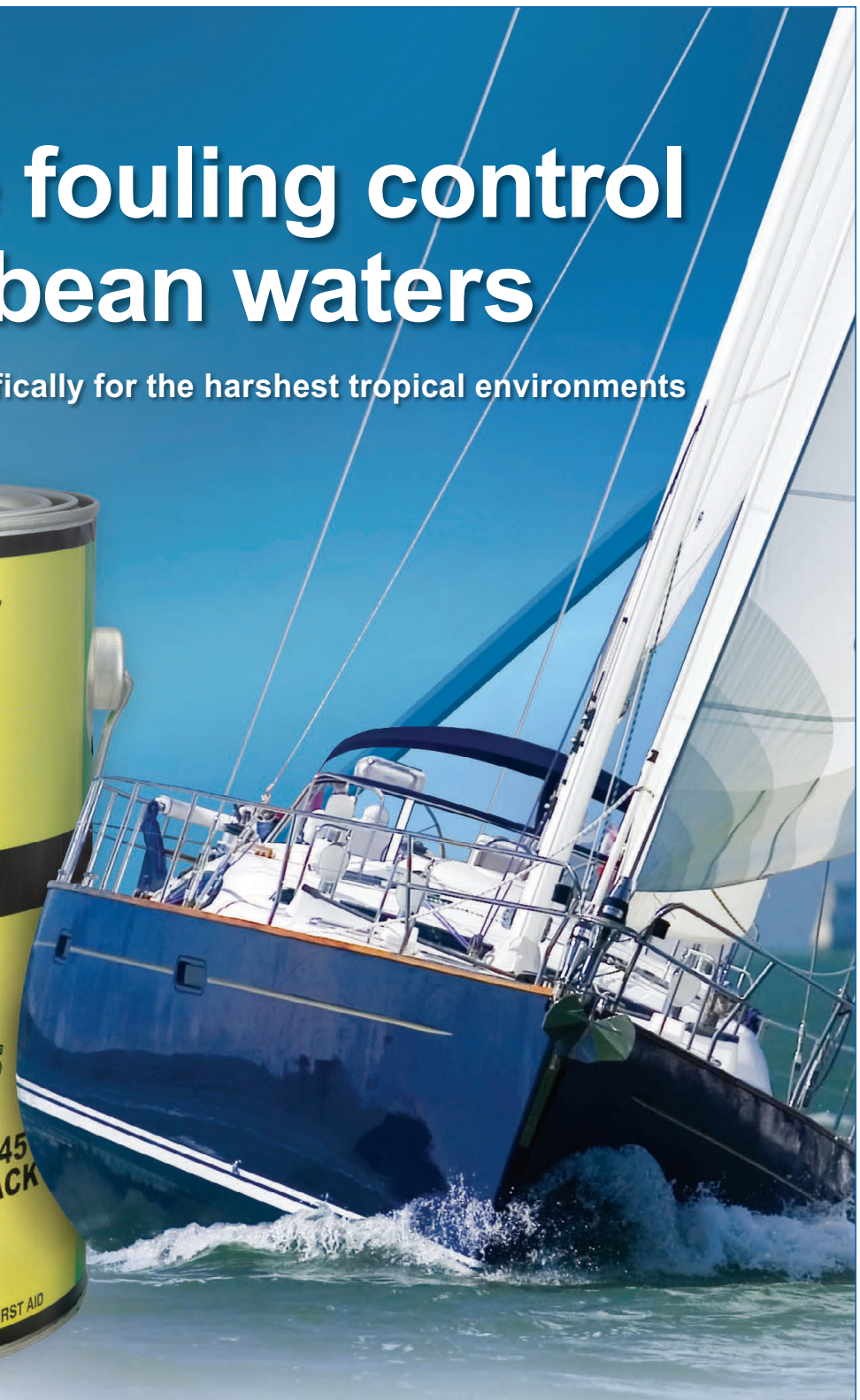
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PAYS: Good Works Beget Good Works

Along with that high-season mission, sailors want and need stuff: a dock to tie off the dinghy, showers and heads, a market, a bank, a hardware store and pharmacy, a place to responsibly toss trash, and a sense of security.

More than anything else, sailors want to feel that the place they've discovered is undiscovered, the quintessential Caribbean island of the imagination, where life is simple and natural, the pace slow, the demands few, the schedules nonexistent, the crowds scant, the locals friendly and welcoming, the scenery enticing and wonderful.

Increasingly over the years, lush Dominica has answered this call. This hasn't come about without a lot of work. In some ways, it still has miles to go, despite strides in ecotourism accommodations and excavation projects to make way for a new marina and a massive international airport. When it comes to marine services, Dominica is no St. Thomas or Tortola, no St. Martin or Antigua — or St. Lucia, Grenada and Trinidad — and it doesn't want to be. It also probably can't be, and that's just as well, according to island locals, business owners, and authorities. "We are very small but very rich," says tour operator and musician Kenneth Gussie. "Not in diamonds and pearls, but in nature."



We oohed and ahhed our way through the Indian River tour.



Baskets woven by Kalinago indigenous crafters



Charismatic musician and tour guide Kenneth Gussie

Amid this stunning backdrop of endless rainforest delights (heliconia sprout like wildflowers along the roadways), and islanders who adore their homeland, are the diligent, relentless, and occasionally ad hoc efforts of PAYS. The acronym stands for the Portsmouth Association of Yacht Security, a bevy of water and land taxi tour operators who rate the members of the sailing crew networking service Offshore Passage Opportunities among their top supporters — one could even call them *the* top supporter.

—Continued on the next page

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Smith Prince, vice president of MAYS

—Continued from the previous page

For more than a decade, the folks of OPO, led by its cheerleading, fearless and partially-retired founder, bluewater voyager Hank Schmitt, have raised tens of thousands of dollars to support installation of moorings, the seaside PAYS pavilion, showers and heads, and a dinghy dock in Portsmouth. During post-hurricane recovery in 2017 and throughout the Covid pandemic, OPO members, spurred on by Schmitt, stepped up in a humanitarian way, helping PAYS families and taxi operators regain their footing with financial aid and transporting recovery supplies.



PAYS barbecues every Sunday and Wednesday evening draw in the crowds and raise needed funds for the group's marine activities.

As they court the hearts and souls of sailors, OPO and PAYS also generate a funky, enthusiastic buzz to raise awareness of these ongoing nautical infrastructure-building duties. Their top marketing tool was first known as Yachtie Appreciation Week, which morphed a few years ago into today's PAYS Dominica Yachting Festival. Once national and local government and tourism officials realized a good thing had been going on without them, they too decided to climb aboard, lending the event its current name.

It was these officials, along with PAYS leaders, who turned out to fete Schmitt and kick off the third annual festival on the evening of March 22, 2025. At the event's welcome reception, party and buffet at the Cabrits cruise ship dock facilities near Fort Shirley, they repeatedly sang the praises of PAYS, Schmitt and OPO, and finally, "yachters and yachties" for their presence and contribution to the country's tourism efforts.



A cruiser disembarks from the PAYS-funded dinghy dock on the waterfront of Portsmouth.

"Hank has been carrying the heavy chains of PAYS, he has recruited the cruisers of OPO, and they have not given up on us," said Andrew "Cobra" O'Brien, PAYS president. "Welcome here tonight!"

Indeed there was much to celebrate: the planned expansion of PAYS moorings in the towns of Mero and Newtown farther south along the coast, a collaboration with Budget Marine in Guadeloupe to provide tackle, making it a truly Caribbean undertaking, and the unwavering interest of sailors and their ever-widening circle. The evening saw participation from sailors "between boats" who flew in for the festival from as near as the United States to as far as Southeast Asia.

—Continued on the next page

PARTNER CONTENT

Yacht Ownership and Caribbean Cruising Made Seamless with Horizon Yacht Charters



For many sailors, a charter holiday in the Caribbean goes beyond a vacation to become a stepping stone toward yacht ownership. For nearly three decades, Horizon Yacht Charters has helped turn that aspiration into reality, offering a practical ownership pathway combined with access to two of the region's most rewarding cruising grounds: the British Virgin Islands and St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

Founded in 1998 with bases at Nanny Cay Marina on Tortola, BVI and Blue Lagoon Marina on St Vincent, SVG, Horizon is the largest independent yacht sales and charter company in the Caribbean. The company is known for its hands-on approach, strong customer service and carefully maintained fleets. Those same principles underpin Horizon's tax-free yacht ownership and charter management programmes, designed for sailors who want to combine personal use with professional management and charter income.

Buying a yacht through Horizon allows owners to purchase factory-direct and tax-free, from major manufacturers such as Jeanneau, Bavaria, Beneteau, Dufour, Lagoon, Nautitech, Fountaine Pajot and Excess. Horizon's in-house team manages every stage of the process, from specification and commissioning to insurance, dockage, maintenance, and warranty support. For owners based overseas, this level of support transforms what can be a complex process into a straightforward and well-supported experience. Brokerage services are also available for owners looking to sell and buyers looking for used yachts in the Caribbean.



Yachts placed into charter management are maintained to a high standard supported by detailed service records. Most Horizon fleet boats are privately owned by active sailors who expect to sail their own yachts, sometimes extensively throughout the region. That program benefits both owners and charter guests, ensuring reliable, well-cared-for boats.

Location is a key part of the ownership decision, and Horizon offers two very different Caribbean bases. The BVI remains one of the world's most popular sailing destinations earning the title of "Sailing Capital of the World" — known for easy navigation, protected waters, and an enviable collection of anchorages, bays and beaches. For owners, the BVI delivers consistent charter demand well into the summer months.

St. Vincent & the Grenadines offers a contrasting experience, with longer passages, open-water sailing, and fewer charter boats. The reward is a quieter, more authentic cruising environment shaped by hospitable local communities and dramatic landscapes. For those looking for a unique experience, the Grenadines provide a sense of exploration and discovery that is increasingly rare.

Horizon's fleets reflect a balanced mix of monohulls and catamarans ranging from 34' – 67'. Owners benefit from boats that appeal strongly to charter guests while remaining enjoyable for private cruising. Horizon's all-inclusive luxury crewed charters and the American Sailing affiliated Horizon Sailing School at both locations further broadens charter options and supports learn-to-sail and skills-building programmes alongside traditional bareboat charters.

By combining yacht sales, charter management, and regional expertise, Horizon offers a model of ownership that is both attainable and rewarding. For sailors drawn to the Caribbean, it provides a way to move beyond chartering without letting go of the freedom that made sailing there so appealing in the first place.

For more information on charters or tax-free yacht ownership visit horizonyachtcharters.com

—Continued from the previous page

"What's going on?" Schmitt asked the crowd. "The best week of your life!"

We believed him, and we'd barely embarked on any adventures beyond meeting each other, much less crewing with each other in a regatta.

Mission Accomplished

Along with good chow, cold beer, and a range of outdoor activities, the Race to Mero (and the festival overall) gave sailors what they love most: accomplishing their mission. OPO plays a role there, too, because a crew matched for offshore sailing deliveries often become friends, stay in touch, and reunite as much as they can, whether on land or at sea. This is music to the ears of PAYS, Dominica tourism officials, and business owners eager to promote their home as a great and economically worthy place to spend money.



St. Joseph Sensay dancers were the whirling sensation of the nighttime Mero street festival.



Andrew "Cobra" O'Brien of PAYS rehashes how trials and tribulations such as hurricanes and the pandemic haven't stopped the good works of PAYS for visiting sailors.

When I signed on for the festival, the hard work of finding like-minded friends had already been done for me. Flying on the same nonstop flight to Dominica from Newark, New Jersey, were Pepper and Chris Blankenship, who joked that they now sail aboard the SV *Nothing* while they shop for the next ride. Chris had previously done bluewater deliveries with my *Lung Wai* sailing mate Cheek for OPO, and they had stayed in touch. And the Blankenships had previously cruised the Bahamas aboard *Endless Reach*, a Gemini catamaran. Rounding out our flight group were OPO passagemaker Steve Scalia and his wife, Betsy, from upstate New York, who sail the 36-foot *Bel Vento*, a 2002 Hallberg-Rassy MKII on Lake Champlain.

And that wasn't all. As we toured historic Fort Shirley under the guidance of Dominican-born historian Dr. Lennox Honychurch, we were joined by more cruising sailors drawn to the festival.

Novelist and inventor Paul Weston and wife Sally had been en route to Grenada to put their Outborn 42 cruising sailboat *Kadash* up for the summer, when they decided on a return detour to Dominica. Weston, whose work, *Gulf of Lyons*, was announced in the April 2025 issue of *Caribbean Compass*, told me they'd already made landfall in Dominica in January, and appreciated the mooring and dinghy-docking services of PAYS in Portsmouth.

"We'll return next year," Weston said as we toured the fort. "The main attraction for us is the unspoiled natural environment. Cruising sailors should know that Dominica is one of the gems of the Caribbean and they should not hesitate to visit. The people in general are very friendly. The PAYS organization is a very good thing, and is of great assistance to the cruiser."

News of the festival was a happy coincidence for boatbuilders Loz and Mark Cann, owners of the beautiful gaff-rigged *Arro*, a 37-foot steel-hulled Falmouth oyster dredger. After their landfall in the Nature Isle, the couple was headed back to Antigua, where they'd do work at the Slipway and race in the annual Antigua Classic Yacht Regatta.

—Continued on page 25







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—Continued from page 23



Hank Schmitt (blue T-shirt), founder of Offshore Passage Opportunities and a key force behind widespread financial and hands-on support for PAYS, motivated his network of sailors to converge in Dominica. With Trafalgar Falls in the background, our group included, from left: Chris and Pepper Blankenship; Cathy and Hank Schmitt; Dale Cheek; Elaine Lembo; Betsy and Steve Scalia

Mary Bowker, of *Remedy*, a 1983 Wauquiez Hood 38, was focused on a reunion with Dominica, thanks to the festival. Bowker, who'd worked and lived on Dominica with a teen adventure program in 2006/7, said "I fell in love with the people and the place and wanted to visit again. I have seen the effort PAYS has made to make Dominica a safe and enjoyable stop for cruisers and I always want to support the efforts however I can. I have a great time at the festival — I enjoyed the community of sailors and Dominicans. I especially enjoy the day of service."

In this pattern our adventures rolled on. During our visit to the Kalinago territory, home to the Indigenous people of the island, I urged a father who'd cruised in with his sons to join us in Portsmouth for one of the weekly PAYS barbecues. Aboard a small skiff snaking our way through the Indian River, liveaboard cruiser Julie Folgate and I joked about our consignment shop wardrobes. Julie also took time to recount the travels she and husband Chris have had over the years of sailing *Marly*, a 38-foot Caliber, with their two children. The couple sailed into Dominica eager to catch up with their Bahamas cruising buddies, the Blankenships. More would join us still at Mero on race day. The fun just never stopped.

Through all the tours — one day to walk the Red Rocks on the northern end, another to swim the freshwater Emerald Pool, then drive through the Roseau Valley; snorkeling among the bubbles at Champagne Reef; and last but not least, a stop and walk along the boulders of the massive Trafalgar Falls — we encountered sailors. Our merry band at each turn stood a chance of expanding. By the time we'd finished the race to Mero and were hanging out, even more appeared — friends of the Folgates and Blankenships. Beverages flowed, time vanished.

From the beach, as the sun set, I could see a dozen boats anchored out. I thought about the words of Smith Prince, vice president of MAYS, the Mero arm of PAYS, who told me that the goals there are similar to those in Portsmouth. "What we hope to have here is an extension of PAYS," he said. "Water, immigration, laundry, dinghy dock, showers. Our shallow anchorage is an advantage. We'll collaborate with PAYS so we're not at split purposes," he added. "Portsmouth has been doing it for 20 years, and we just started."

I mulled it over, asking myself, will sailors make landfall in Mero? An earlier chat with Bowker had already answered the question. "It would be great if Mero had a dock," she said. "Cruisers should know that the people of Dominica are generous, caring, and lighthearted. PAYS is there to help, not pester. Smile and talk with them. Support them."

The 2026 PAYS Dominica Yachting Festival runs from March 21-27, 2026 (paysdominica.com).



Rick Martell, 1943-2025

by Elaine Lembo


ELAINE LEMBO

Slipping out before snow and ice could delay his departure, Captain Richard Arthur Martell Jr., 82, embarked on his final passage minutes before the winter solstice on December 21, 2025. Good bets are that his destination were the Caribbean Islands he knew and loved so well from decades as a charter and delivery skipper there. As he did for so many of his countless offshore voyages, he set out from Newport, Rhode Island, taking his last breaths in comfort at Newport Hospital, after a long and complicated illness.

Known for his bucking-the-system ways as much for his brilliant, beautiful blue eyes, Rick was a true renaissance man. He was a surfer who took to the waves with the rising legends of the North Shore of Honolulu, Hawaii, in the early 1960s. He was a serious offshore racer and United States Coast Guard-licensed yacht captain who logged hundreds of thousands of miles in conditions both calm and calamitous. He was a unique artist who took the time that art demands, focusing on clay work and oriental ceramics of the 15th century. He loved wood in all ways. He was a logger and a veneer broker, and an easy target for lost-cause rescues of beautifully designed wooden hulls in peril of rot. He logged and split his own wood for firing raku ceramics, proud that he didn't have to pay someone to do what he easily could do for himself.

He was also the much-beloved sweetheart of his partner, Elaine Lembo, whom he met when he serendipitously sat next to her for Sunday breakfast at the Blue Benn Diner in Bennington, Vermont, in 1991. Their encounter and subsequent romance are featured in *Sonny's Blue Benn: Feeding the Soul of a Vermont Town*, by Caitlin Randall and Peter Crabtree.

With Elaine, Rick owned and restored boats, and sailed offshore to the Caribbean, where they worked as charter yacht crew for several years up and down the island chain. Their base of operations while aboard the charter yacht *Windward Haze* was Nanny Cay Marina in Tortola in the British Virgin Islands, a location that afforded them hijinks with many like-minded carefree souls and long-lasting friendships.


BILLY BLACK

Rick, all smiles, in the companionway of Land's End

They loved exploring BVI and later, other anchorages in the Caribbean and all over the world, whether for Rick's yacht clients or for Elaine when she was a staff editor at *Cruising World* magazine. The *CW* period of their lives, from 1998 to 2015, is cherished as among their best years together. Rick was also very supportive of Elaine when Sally Erdle, founding editor of the *Caribbean Compass*, retired and asked Elaine to succeed her as editor in chief of the magazine, a role Elaine has held for more than three years.

The CW period is also when Rick and Elaine owned the 1935 Crocker ketch *Land's End*, the platform for many water-based adventures from Wickford, Rhode Island, to Friendship, Maine. On occasion they would sail *Land's End* to Potter Cove on Prudence Island, in Narragansett Bay. Elaine was so smitten by Prudence and its community that it is no surprise that one day Rick found another wooden hulk in need of rescue, the Bow House, in the Homestead settlement not far from the ferry on the island's eastern shore. One of the Bow House's chief attractions was a shed that they converted to a studio so Rick could return to his clay and throw pots. The output of his Prudence Pottery artistic endeavor over the last eight years is prodigious and sought after by admirers and those familiar with the tea ceremony.

Rick was as devoted to liberal politics as he was to his unfiltered Pall Mall cigarettes, a habit that brought him both constant companions in bars and boatyards and worried consternation to those who cared about his health. Yet throughout his eight decades, he seemed to defy the odds, smoking while he logged, sailed, and threw pots — and while refreshing himself with gin and tonics. Smoking may have also helped him survive two brutal years of ground combat as a U.S. Army infantryman with the 1st Cavalry Division in Vietnam from 1965-67. "Every day is a bonus" was his motto, and nothing and no one would deter him from his routine.


COURTESY DIANE PFAUTZ

Rick and Elaine out sailing on a fine summer day in Newport, 2023; note his Native Son T-shirt from the ferry company that runs from the USVI to the BVI and back.

Born at Mary Fletcher Hospital in Burlington, Vermont, August 24, 1943, Rick was the son of Richard and Mary Martell and brother to Linda, all of whom predeceased him. Rick was intensely proud of his father, who led a full career with the U.S. Navy as chief provisioning officer and chef to Presidents Truman and Eisenhower. One of his father's career highlights was his service as chief commissary steward in the Navy's 1946 Antarctic expedition headed by Rear Admiral Richard F. Byrd. The Martell family lived in Guam, the Philippines, Hawaii, Washington, D.C., and various communities in Rhode Island. Rick was a 1961 graduate of North Kingstown High School and attended his 50th class reunion.

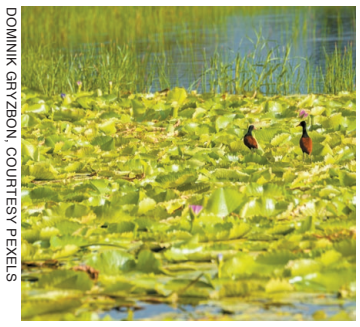
You can see more of Rick's pottery at facebook.com/rickmartellceramicvessels

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CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 2026



DOMINIK GRYZBON. COURTESY PEXELS

Marshlands, Trinidad. World Wetlands Day is February 2.

1	Snow Moon (full moon)
2	World Wetlands Day. ramsar.org/activity/world-wetlands-day
7	Grenada Independence Day – public holiday.
7	Dinghy Championship, Hope Ross Series Day 2, St. Maarten smyc.com/dinghy-season-championship
7-8	Grenada Workboat Regatta. puregrenada.com
7–14	Holetown Festival, Barbados. visitbarbados.org/the-holetown-festival
8	Viking Explorers Rally Welcome Ceremony, Grenada
11-17	Carriacou Carnival (Kayak Mas), featuring Shakespeare Mas. puregrenada.com/product/carriacou-carnival
11-18	Trinidad and Tobago Carnival, street parades 16 and 17. caribbeanevents.com
12–17	Carnaval Ponceño, Puerto Rico. puertoricodaytrips.com/ponce-carnival
12-23	Bachata con Piquete Festival, Dominican Republic.
14	Jump-Up, St. Croix, USVI. gotostcroix.com
14	Bocas del Toro Regatta, Panama. bocasdeltororegatta.com
14-15	Jolly Harbour Valentine's Regatta, Antigua. jhycantigua.com
14-16	Virgin Islands Agriculture and Food Fair (AgriFest) Rudolph Schulterbrandt Agricultural Grounds, Christiansted, St. Croix. viagrifest.org
14-17	Carnival Barranquilla (Colombia). agendacolombia.com
14-17	Semaine Nautique Internationale de Schoelcher, Martinique. cnschoelcher.net
14-14 Mar	Jost Lime & Dine, Jost Van Dkye, BVI. bvifoodfete.com
15-16	Sweethearts of the Caribbean & Classic Regatta, BVI. westendyachtclubbvi.com
15-18	Martinique Carnival. martinique.org/en/about/culture/carnival
15-20	ProCigar Festival, Dominican Republic (15-17 in La Romana, 17-20 in San Diego de los Caballeros. procigar.org
16	St. Barths Carnival
16-17	Main parade days, Mas Dominik. avirtualdominica.com/project/carnival-in-dominica
16-18	Guadeloupe Carnival – gala street festival and Mardi Gras. carnivalvibez.com/guadeloupe-carnival/
16	Presidents Day – public holiday in Puerto Rico & USVI.
16	Bequia International Theater Festival.
17	Haiti Carnival
19-22	Three Sheets Regatta, USVI. threesheetsvi.com
22	St. Lucia Independence Day – public holiday
22-23	Union Island Conch Festival, St. Vincent & Grenadines. caribbeanevents.com/event/union-island-conch-festival
22-1 Mar	Dancehall Week, Jamaica. DancehallWeek.com
23	Mashramani – Guyana Republic Day – public holiday.
23-27	RORC Caribbean 600 race, Antigua. caribbean600.rorc.org
23-2 Mar	Envision Festival, Uvita, Costa Rica. envisionfestival.com
25	Marina Community Drinks, Port Louis Marina, Grenada
27	Dominican Republic Independence Day – public holiday.
28	Taste of Virgin Gorda, BVI. bvifoodfete.com
28	National Gospel Festivsl, Windsor Park Sports Stadium, Dominica

Throughout February:

Carnaval Dominicano, Dominican Republic. godominicanrepublic.com

Curaçao Carnival, with Grand Marcha on March 2. curacaocarnival.com

TBA Oyster World Rally stop in Grenada. oysteryachts.com

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Dominica

Story and photos by Lexi Fisher and Chris Doyle

The rocks are made of compacted mud that has been etched into strange gullies and shapes.

"Full of the best natural electrolytes," our guide, Martin, told us as he cut open fresh coconuts on the trunk of a tree and handed us each one to drink from. We were standing on a cliff overlooking the town of Calibishie on Dominica's northeastern coast. We had been making our way up the Eastern Caribbean chain to get to the Leeward Islands, which I'll update for a new edition of the guide this season, and we couldn't pass up the opportunity to visit the Pointe Baptiste Chocolate Factory, a cute little bean-to-bar operation that makes exceptional chocolate, and Red Rocks, one of Dominica's many natural wonders.

Northern Dominica has many other attractions, including the Sea Cliff Gin Distillery, the Syndicate Rainforest (part of a national park), Milton (aka Syndicate) Falls, Morne Diablotin, Chaudiere Pool, Cold Soufrière, several lovely and wild beaches, and several sections of the Waitukubuli Trail.

Red Rocks, Pointe Baptiste Chocolate Factory, and Sea Cliff Gin Distillery are in Calibishie, past the main town. Calibishie is a picturesque seaside village standing on a white-sand beach with extensive shallows. It includes several small restaurants. For those on a tight budget, a nice bus trip through some lovely countryside brings you here for lunch.

In the 1930s, Elma and Lennox Napier, two Bohemian Scottish aristocrats, fell in love with Dominica and built their home in Pointe Baptiste on a 25-acre estate overlooking the red rocks, which are made of compacted mud that has been etched into strange gullies and shapes and feels impermanent under your feet.



Drinking coconut water overlooking the Calibishie coast

Elma is a landmark figure, the first woman ever elected to a British West Indies legislative council, where she got the first road built linking Roseau to the north. She was also an author who tells her own tale in a beautifully written book, Black and White Sands, which will greatly enhance your enjoyment of Dominica.

One of her grandsons is Lennox Honychurch, the Dominican historian. Another is Alan Napier, a chocolatier who produces chocolate on their old estate set amid beautiful gardens. The main Napier house was built in Roseau, all the planks and frames taken apart, sailed up in local sloops and mainly floated ashore. It survived Hurricane Maria and several others. Alan's operation is mid-scale and growing. Using lumber milled from trees on their property, he built a proper chocolate house for production and has vastly improved his machinery and output in the last couple of years.

—Continued on the next page





—Continued from the previous page



Bean-to-bar at the Pointe Baptiste Chocolate Factory

His delicious chocolate comes in many flavors using local fruits, ginger, lemongrass and more. He welcomes visitors, and you can buy chocolate. Alan or his staff will give tours of the operation and some of the gardens. There is a small tour fee, and it is well worth it. Call or WhatsApp him to arrange a time (225-5378). He often has copies of Elma's book for sale.

Elma had a retreat house at Chaudiere Pool, which is about five miles east of Portsmouth. This is one of the Caribbean's most perfect tropical pools, set amid lush vegetation. You have to hike 20 minutes down a slope to get there. Just before you reach the river, you can still see a few foundation posts from the old house. You pass over one river with a little sluice and turn right up the adjoining river. The pool is fed by a small waterfall and surrounded by lovely-looking rocks. The water bubbles from the falls, reminding some people of a cauldron. The pool is about 15 feet deep and swimming is part of the fun; the adventurous can jump from the cliffs, or shoot down a rock slide. Avoid swimming directly under the falls as they tend to suck you down rather than push you out. It makes a perfect spot for a picnic lunch. Guides sometimes combine this with the chocolate factory and/or Sea Cliff Gin Distillery, Calibishie, and Red Rocks as a long half-day tour.

Simon, a British TV producer, and Amber Oxley, an American fashion designer, came to Dominica and renovated and re-imagined the Sea Cliff eco-cottages, adding a gin micro-distillery. Sea Cliff is up a hill with a lovely view of the sea and it is not far from the Chocolate Factory. They offer free tours of the property which includes tasting their gin, and if you like it, bottles are on sale. You will see their solar-powered micro-boutique distillery and learn how the gin is created using local botanicals including cacao, cinnamon, bay leaves, nutmeg, grapefruit and lemongrass. Afterward, you can walk the Gin Botanicals Trail through two acres of clifftop gardens, labelled botanicals, and many other gorgeous tropical flowers and trees. Schedules for tours vary, so it is best to message them on WhatsApp 646-421-8681.

The Syndicate Trail is an easy walk, just under a mile long; but, depending on the state of the road, you may have to walk a little farther. This trail traverses the best example of tropical rainforest in the Leewards. There are many magnificent trees, including one with buttress roots about 35 feet across. The trees form a dense canopy high overhead and there is little undergrowth. One easy and inexpensive way to do this is to get a taxi to take you and drop you off at Syndicate Forest Center. You can walk the forest trail on your own but you will need to purchase a pass. Afterward, you can walk back down the Waitukubuli Trail to the defunct medical school, and walk or bus back to Portsmouth. The trail starts just outside the forest center building, takes about two hours, and is relatively easy, but can be wet.



The Syndicate Trail traverses the best example of tropical rainforest in the Leewards.



Doyle Guide chart of Dominica

Near Syndicate, a rough hiking trail leads up Morne Diablotin. This is a great climb for the fit and energetic. It is extreme if you make it to the very top.

If you decide to visit Syndicate as part of a morning or afternoon tour, ask about including Milton (Syndicate) Falls. The walk to these waterfalls takes you along a river and through lush agricultural land with mountain views. The falls are about 80 feet high and plunge into a pool. This was used as a water source, so swimming is forbidden, but you cross the river several times, so you will get wet. The vegetation is so dense that the sun only reaches the falls at midday, but it is great to go anytime. To get to the falls you pass over private land, so there is a small fee.

Elma Napier's Black and White Sands: A Bohemian Life in the Colonial Caribbean *is available through Amazon (amazon.com/Black-White-Sands-Bohemian-Caribbean/dp/0953222446?), or order it through your local independent bookstore. You can find Lennox Honychurch's books at amazon.com/s?k=Lennox+Honychurch&crid=34G5EIPPJKLT4.*

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).

Dominica Entry and Exit Procedures

Ports of Entry:

There are two ports of entry: Portsmouth to the north and Roseau to the south.

Advance Paperwork:

All visiting yachts should pre-register with SailClear prior to arrival. For visitors from many countries, a visa is not required. Stays of up to three months are granted on arrival.

Up to three days before arrival, crew can submit their landing card information online at edcard.dominica.gov.dm/.

Entry Process:

On arrival the captain should proceed to the nearest customs and immigration 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. For stays of less than two weeks, clearing in and out at the same time is possible.

Rates:

There are minimal clearance fees during working hours (approximately XCD$5 per person). Clearance outside normal working hours will incur overtime fees.

noonsite.com

Check noonsite.com/place/dominica/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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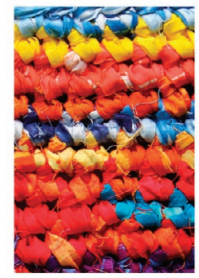
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