

Caribbean Cruising

Part I St. Lucia South

Liza Copeland

In 23 years of cruising our Beneteau First 38 Bagheera to 114 countries we have been hard pressed to find a more idyllic cruising ground than the Caribbean; one that provides so much diversity, has such great sailing conditions, is so accessible and has its best cruising season from December to May when we're craving a warm winter escape.

Offering individual cruisers far more than is commonly portrayed in the popular press the Caribbean island chain arcs over 1,600 miles from Trinidad to Florida with the bonus of only four overnight passages required. In addition, Latin American options can be found along the north coast of South America, in the Panamanian San Blas island chain and along the western Caribbean shores of Central America. This article covers St. Lucia south through the Windward Islands and discusses favoured spots to leave the boat for hurricane season and a visit to the Orinoco Delta. Part II heads north through the Leeward Islands, The Virgins and the larger Spanish Greater Antilles with suggestions for a central Caribbean transit to North America as well as the more common route via the Bahamas.

Destinations depend on time frames. Those heading back across the Atlantic via Bermuda, maybe with ARC Europe, or heading straight to the Azores will probably stay east in the Windward and Leeward chain and the Virgins. Those planning to cruise the enjoyable U.S. east coast during the summer months or keep south out of the hurricane belt have greater flexibility to explore regions to the west.

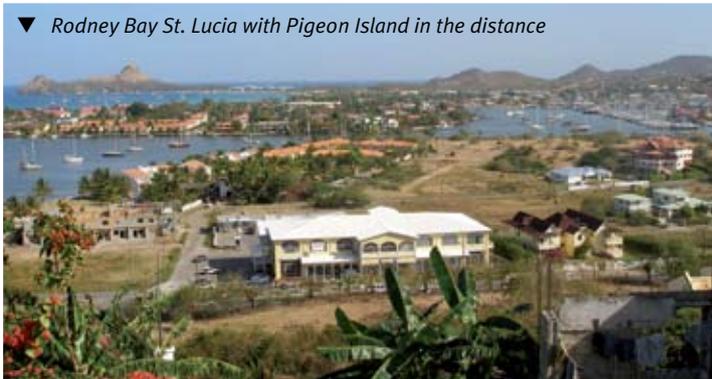
St. Lucia (Rodney Bay 14° 05' N. 60° 57' W)

Congratulations, you have not only completed the ARC but also achieved an Atlantic crossing! The welcome is wonderful and stories abound, tales getting taller as sundowner rum punches are poured. (Note: These punches are powerful, as rum is cheaper than mix!) It's good to relax and sort out the boat. Inevitably repairs, re-provisioning and laundry are necessary. Rodney Bay has most facilities required (especially after its refurbishment due to finish by the end of 2008), with chandlery stores, technicians, sail loft, laundry, banks, supermarkets and many restaurants close to the marina and anchorages (either in the lagoon or in the bay outside). Items not available can generally be guaranteed for a 2-day delivery.

The mountainous, verdant St. Lucia is interesting to explore by bus, taxi or rental car. After oscillating fourteen times between French and English rule it was finally ceded to the British at the 1814 Treaty of Paris. Locals are mostly of African heritage but their patois is French based and many have French names. Old Naval fortifications at Pigeon Island, now joined by a causeway, are easily reached from Rodney Bay by road or dinghy (dock by the funky Jambe de Bois restaurant). Close-by lies the fishing village of Gros Islet that should not be missed on Friday nights. Mouth-watering aromas pour from street vendor's smoky grills sizzling with chicken and fish and massive speakers ensure a 'jump-up' continues into the night.

The Capital, Castries can be visited by bus or boat. The main harbour by town is noisy but Vigie Cove although small has excellent restaurants as well as being convenient to George FL Charles airport for inter-island traffic. (The Hewanorra

▼ Rodney Bay St. Lucia with Pigeon Island in the distance





▲ An enterprising local brings produce to the yachts



▲ Free champagne at the resort between the Pitons.



▲ Roughing it on board!

International airport is at the south end of the island at attractive Vieux Fort with direct flights to the UK.) Castries has an extensive market, particularly vibrant on Saturdays, good supermarkets and a few old buildings remain around the central Derek Walcott Square. Customs can be cleared in Castries but it is far easier in Rodney Bay and Marigot, especially when cruise ships visit.

Marigot Bay is one of the Caribbean's jewels with its picturesque sandy spit and palms although there has been extensive development. Dock space or mooring buoys may be available otherwise anchor inside or outside the buoyed entrance channel. There are several restaurants. Check out the mangroves to hear the tiny but incredibly noisy tree frogs and climb the steep hill for a stunning view of the harbour. South of Marigot anchoring, diving and fishing is mostly regulated by the CMMA and SMMA organizations who operate mooring buoys. The basic rate is for two nights and they visit the yachts to collect the fee. At the northern bluff off Soufrière the snorkelling is colourful right under the buoys and around the headland large elkhorn coral is growing back after past hurricane damage.

Soufrière is a charming old French town of weathered wooden structures adorned with gingerbread trim. It has good eating and shopping. Visits to the nearby bubbling sulphur springs, passing through verdant rainforest and cultivated valleys en route, and the Diamond Botanical garden that is alive with hibiscus, bougainvillea, heliconias and brilliant birds, are particularly worthwhile. Two tall peaks called The Pitons soar on St. Lucia's southwest shore. They offer a challenge to climb and are fun for fitness.

St. Vincent (Wallilabou 13°15'N 61°17'W)

It is frequently an exhilarating 30nm broad reach south to St. Vincent although winds are often blustery off its north shore as they funnel around towering craggy peaks smothered in green. It was one of the last islands to be settled by Europeans and many cruisers pass it by, although Wallilabou Bay, (just south of Cumberland that is also an overnight anchorage) has gained popularity as it has the set for the 'Pirates of the Caribbean' films. One actually clears customs on site! We found local 'boat boys' a little aggressive, unusual now in the islands.

The capital Kingstown has some attractive buildings and is being re-developed. Prices are good in the well-stocked supermarkets and produce is excellent. The anchorage is

not ideal and many cruisers come here by bus or taxi from Young Island and Blue Lagoon in the south or by ferry from Bequia, a popular island for cruisers just an hour away. Close-by lies the oldest botanical gardens in the western hemisphere. Captain Bligh brought breadfruit here after his ill-fated Bounty voyage.

The St. Vincent Grenadines

Bequia (Admiralty Bay 13°00'N 61°15'W)

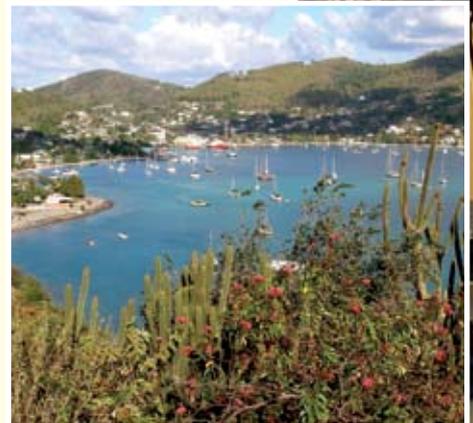
Bequia has retained its colourful laid-back charm. Sheltered Admiralty Bay holds large numbers of yachts and ashore delightful facilities keep cruisers here for weeks. Buoys are available, there is also a small marina, or anchor either side of the central ferry channel but watch the depth. Holding can be tricky, generally better by the outer white sand Tony Gibbons Beach (Princess Margaret). Officials are located in the centre of Port Elizabeth. There are two dinghy docks in town, with garbage facilities at the northern one by the market; prices are high here and vendors quite persistent. It's best to spread business around.

Check with the helpful tourist office at the head of the ferry dock for the events of the week sheet. 'Happy hours' are abundant with a steel band at the Calabash every Thursday, and much more besides. (Call VHF Channel 68 or 16 for most bookings.) The Whaleboner has a bar made from a whale's jawbone with stools from vertebrae. Bequians are descendants of Africans, French, Scots and Americans who introduced whaling boats in 1875. Using open boats and harpoon their season is during the winter months when the Humpbacks are heading south (currently four whales are allowed each year). We've only been there once when a whale was towed in and the stench was memorable as they boiled up its blubber on the beach! Bequians still build boats and make amazing model yacht replicas if supplied with pictures and dimensions.

There are several small technical, chandlery, sails and canvas facilities. Internet cafés are abundant, with free WiFi in some restaurants. A convenient launderette is to the left of the market up the hill. Knights, just off the waterfront street north of Customs, is a general supermarket with many other stores selling some different products. Doris Fresh Foods opposite the market has higher end items as well and there are several boutiques.

Mustique (12°52.7'N 61°11.4'W)

Although lying just 10 miles south-east of Bequia the sail to Mustique can often be a slog to windward in turbulent seas, although a stop at Bequia's southern Friendship Bay breaks the trip. There are mandatory mooring buoys in Britannia Bay, the only anchorage allowed in Mustique, with a park fee. Make sure you



▲ The large Admiralty Bay, Bequia



▲ Don't worry about clothing - there is plenty to buy!





▲ A Caribbean jewel, Marigot Bay



▲ 'Boat boys' arrive on varying craft. They are seldom aggressive these days but try creative pricing!



▲ Bagheera on a mooring buoy at Soufriere with great snorkelling closeby

avoid Montezuma's reef unlike the French cruise liner the Antilles in 1971. It was still on fire when I visited several months later.

In 1958 Mustique was bought by the Hon. Colin Tennant to be an island for the rich and famous, and the late Princess Margaret accepted his gift of a 10-acre plot as a wedding present. Now managed by the Mustique Company it is charming to visit. Basil's Bar by the beach is entertaining and a picturesque walk north leads to the old-world Cotton House, originally an 18th century coral warehouse and sugar mill, with a mesmerising stop to watch small planes land downhill on the small runway – not unusual in this part of the world!

Canouan (12°42.6N 61°20'W)

An island in transition by development. It has a Moorings charter fleet based in Charlestown Bay, but as this main anchorage can get uncomfortable, it is little visited by cruisers.

The Tobago Cays (12°40'N 61°21.4'W)

Many charterers spend their holiday in this group of white sand deserted islands anchored in brilliant turquoise seas sheltered by the large Horseshoe Reef. It is 'what dreams are made of' but if you have flexibility avoid the main crowds mid-January to mid-March, if not you will enjoy it anyway! The snorkelling/diving is rewarding, the green turtles have recently returned and inquisitive iguanas rustle in the scrub as one climbs to the tops of rough paths ashore to stunning views. Most boats anchor outside by the reef although anywhere around the islands is permissible in sand. Study the chart and cruising guides carefully before approaching and follow the golden rule regarding the sun (see Cruising notes). There is a park fee. Friendly vendors sell bread, produce, lobster, T-shirts etc: from their colourful boats.

Mayreau (12°38.9'N 61°23.5'W)

Lying just to west, Mayreau has some pretty beaches with enterprising locals who set up stalls and offer dining ashore. Sandy Salt Whistle Bay is a favourite and it is wise to arrive early in season, or anchor in Saline Bay. Snorkelling can be rewarding on the windward side but, as with Tobago Cays, watch the westward current.

PSV and Petite Martinique

(PSV 12°32'N 61°23'W)

Although these lie south of Union and Palm Island, Petit St.Vincent (PSV) is part of St. Vincent so should be visited before clearing

out at Union. Petit Martinique is officially part of Grenadian waters but it seems accepted that most cruisers will visit from PSV. The entire island of PSV is an exclusive hotel. Since the 60's it has been one of our favourite anchorages with its white sand beaches ashore. Access is now limited for yachtsmen to using the bar and restaurant which are well worth a visit both for their wicked banana daiquiris and the stunning view of translucent turquoise and sapphire seas. Just to the south Petit Martinique, originally a smugglers island, has bargain fuel, French wine, and restaurants. Judging by the ancient ages on the gravestones the life has suited the locals! A large reef lies to the north of PSV and it is important not to cut the corner when heading northwest. Watch for boats swinging at PSV if the wind dies.

Union and Palm Island

(Clifton 12°35.7'N 61°24.9'W)

Entry to the small but bustling port of Clifton gives a spectacular example of an area studded with reefs. Look at the charts well in advance, particularly when approaching from the north. There are some small dock facilities with water and fuel available or anchor off. Customs are in town along with several shops, market stalls, boating facilities and internet cafes. This is the Port of Entry for clearing in or out of St. Vincent Waters.

Prune Island was renamed Palm Island by the Caldwells who planted palm trees throughout the islands and first developed this island. It is now a high-end resort but the white sand beach full of pale pink 'chipchip' shells is a lovely day anchorage in light winds.

Grenadian Waters

Carriacou (Tyrrel Bay (12°27'N 61°29'W)

Off the tourist trail the hilly island of Carriacou has become a popular haven for long-term cruisers. Anchor in the pale aqua ocean and leave the dinghy at the long pier to clear into Grenadian waters with the officials and to shop in Hillsborough, the Capital, then move to the south side of protected Tyrrel Bay. Here facilities abound with restaurants, small grocery stores, shops, internet facilities, The small Tyrrel Bay Haul Out and marina and other boating facilities. Cruisers have become involved in the local community and for seven years have held the Carriacou Children's Educational Fundraiser. Pelicans are common here and recently a leatherback turtle laid her eggs, the first time for years. Mangrove oysters are a popular delicacy.

Grenada

(St.Georges 12°02.7'N 61°44.8'W)

Fourteen miles south of Carriacou lies the spectacular spice island of Grenada. Aromas of spices waft over the water from this mountainous, lush island



▲ Attractive Soufriere with its French creole buildings with gingerbread trim



▲ St. Lucia is a stunning towering verdant island, it's worth taking time to explore



▲ A bird tour in Tobago, enjoying our guides powerful 'scope



▲ Palm hats give good protection from the sun



▲ Local markets are plentiful and locals full of information about how to eat their produce

that was aptly nicknamed the 'the banana bread island' by our 4-year old son after we completed the ARC in 1986. An interior hike in the rainforest is a must, cooling off in one of the many waterfalls or mountain streams and seeing the cultivation that supplies much of the island chain.

The reach south from Carriacou is generally an easy one with gusts funnelling through the mountains giving exhilarating sails, alternating with calms, in flat seas. In contrast, coming north can be hard on the wind. With the exception of small bays St. Georges, the vibrant capital, provides the main anchorage on the west coast. The bustling town climbs up the hill from the Carenage where anchoring is discouraged. The lagoon has recently been transformed by the recently opened Peter de Savary and Camper and Nicholson Marinas into the luxury Port Louis development. Between the bays lies the yacht club where we enjoyed watching spirited local kids in the sailing programme.

The many bays of the south coast have been subject to much development, particularly Prickly Bay (l'Anse Aux Epines), but are still attractive to cruise. Considered south of the hurricane belt (although devastated in 2004 by Ivan) there are several marine facilities and yards with considerable ongoing expansion. The area is approved for hurricane season boat storage by most insurance companies, with certain parameters. Customs clearance is possible at Port Louis in St. Georges, The Moorings at True Blue Bay, Spice Island Marine in Prickly Bay, and at Grenada Marine in St. Davids.

Trinidad and Tobago

(Chaguaramus 10°40.5'W 61°38.3W)
80 miles south of Grenada lies Trinidad's sheltered Chaguaramus Bay approached through the narrow Boca that has strong currents. Sadly we found the beaches on the islands here extremely dirty. A U.S. Naval base during the war, the bay's west end is commercial while its east end houses wall to wall boatyards with some small marinas and large Crews Inn hotel/marina complex with the Customs dock at the east end. Paperwork is strict here and hefty overtime may be charged. It is possible to pick up a mooring buoy or anchor off in Chaguaramus and around in Carenage Bay by the hospitable SSCA club although this anchorage becomes roly in a southerly wind.

Boating facilities are sophisticated as is the

cosmopolitan and fun capital Port of Spain. The local cruisers 'chaperone', the lively and well organised Jesse James (Members Only), runs regular tours to shopping centres, markets and carnival events all announced on the morning VHF net at 8.00am VHF 68, along with bridge games, Mexican dominoes etc: Many cruisers moor here all winter and boats pour in for the February carnival. The culture of carnival has deep roots for Trinidadians and the outstanding costumes and pan (steel) bands take 6-months to prepare. The Asa Wright nature reserve, the scarlet ibis coming to roost in the mangroves at dusk and the spiritual experience of watching a leatherback turtle lay 100 or so eggs are all worthwhile trips. Talk to local cruisers about security at anchor and safety walking ashore.

Unlike commercial Trinidad, Tobago, which unfortunately lies to windward, is a rural and bird paradise with beautiful white sand bays. Clearance is completed at Scarborough and Charlotteville, then anchorages chosen depending on weather conditions.

Venezuela Orinoco Delta – Manamo River

(9°58.5'N 62°15'W)

Although few cruisers visit, it is just a day-sail south from Chaguaramus to the Manamo River, Venezuela, part of the Orinoco Delta. Water hyacinths stream around the boat as thousands of the large scarlet ibis birds peck in the mud flats, then come to roost in selected trees, their wings flashing red in unison illuminated by the last rays of the sun. Dawn and dusk also brings greetings from pink river dolphins, noisy parrots, howler monkeys and toucans. There are a few eco-lodges but mostly the river is deserted with just a few villages of the local people, the Warao, Indians, probably the most simply living people we have ever experienced. Although the chart marks a complicated river bar entrance there is now a deep-water shipping channel to service the oil rigs with clear channel markers. Informal customs is in the small town of Pedernales.

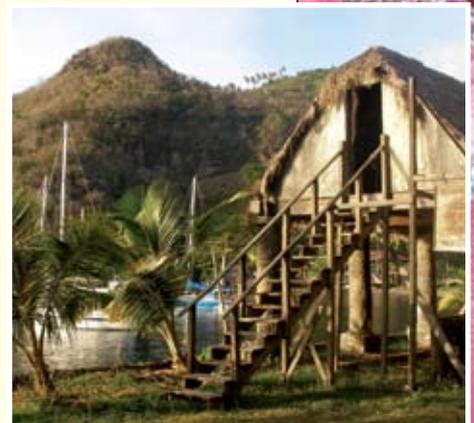
Testigos (11°23'N 63°08W)

Los Testigos is a remote paradise where we were given lobster by the locals. Clearance on the southerly island is for three days but, similar to Pedernales, does not cover the rest of Venezuela.

Margarita Island

(Porlamar 10°56.7'N 63°50W)

The big, but shallow bay at Porlamar in duty free Margarita is popular with cruisers. Enterprising vendors will deliver fuel to your boat (Approx 1p per litre for diesel, 2p for petrol!). There have been some security issues in the outer bay.



▲ In Wallilabou Bay, St Vincent the customs office is on the set of the 'Pirates of the Caribbean' films



▲ The small village with customs office in Los Testigos, Venezuela



▲ The culture of carnival runs deep in Trinidad, special effort goes into the kids



▲ A gift from the fishermen! Testigos, Venezuela

Puerto La Cruz (10°12.4'N 64°40'W)

Otherwise stay a distance off the Venezuelan north coast for security and head for Cumana on the mainland to buy fuel or straight to Puerto la Cruz (PLC) (no fuel for yachts). Currently it is not wise to stop at the coastal



QUIET CARIBBEAN

▲ The ubiquitous cruisers' 'pot luck'

islands or Mochima Park. PLC has an expensively developed large lagoon with numerous excellent facilities and yards for boats, good shopping and a comfortable marina/hotel complex Bahia Redonda, as well as others. Here agents are available to clear customs or one can do it oneself with some effort. Vendors will also change money at the 'local' rate (currently around 5 bolivars to the US\$1 as compared to the bank rate of 2.1). US dollars and Euros are preferred. Technical work is inexpensive and good, but should be overseen. Credit cards are generally not taken by the yards and using them doesn't give the benefit of the street exchange rate obtained with cash. Check with local cruisers regarding security locally and in town. Several agents within the marina complex arrange tours for spectacular travel inland.

Cruising Tips

1 Weather - The recognised Caribbean hurricane season runs from June 1st to November 30th. About 75% of hurricanes and tropical storms occur between August and October, peaking in September. Dry season runs from January to June. Out of hurricane period the trade winds average a consistent 10-25 knots from NE-SE, tending to be NE early in the season and SE later, and gust around the islands' north ends. Visibility is generally good although can be hazy and is considerably reduced in squalls. Check your cruising guide for weather radio, VHF, SSB and Ham frequencies, also at boating facilities ashore and the internet for forecasts. Cruiser's nets also give weather. Boaters in the Caribbean commonly listen to Chris Parker on SSB 8104khz at 8.30am local which follows Melodye Pompa's (Second Millennium) Safety and Security net at 8.15am. Those who can download e-mail get weather GRIB files.

2 Pilotage - Have detailed charts, piloting through the reefs particularly in the Grenadines can be deceptive. Imray charts are particularly user-friendly. We use Nobeltec and C-Map electronic charting effectively (note: both are now owned by Jeppesen Marine and the combined version will be launched shortly). Cruising Guides are a great asset for harbour charts and information. The Windward Islands by Chris Doyle (Cruising Guide Publications) and Imray's Cruising Guide from Grenada to the Virgin Islands (2nd Edition 2008) are popular.

Navigational aids cannot be relied on. The American system 'red right returning' is used throughout the Caribbean.

Current There is generally a westerly set. Watch carefully while snorkelling.

Advance planning - It is crucial when cruising through reef strewn regions that the sun is overhead or behind. If in your eyes you will not see the colours change to lighter hues or browns that indicate shallow waters and reefs respectively Polaroid glasses intensify the colours.

3 Moorage/Anchoring There are few marinas. Electricity can either be 110 or 220 and a dual voltage battery charger is useful and a multi-plug adapter for use ashore. Anchoring is the norm. Look for white sand patches, never anchor in coral. Although many use the traditional Bruce and CQR the newer anchors such as the Spade types and the Delta are becoming popular as effective for penetration particularly if one has to anchor in seagrass. Most cruisers now use all chain and an electric windlass which facilitates easy 'gunkholing' and changing anchorage if the wind changes. It also effortlessly gets someone up the mast and the dinghy on deck.

4 Officials - Clear in at a Port of Entry immediately on entering a country's waters. Fees vary but are generally reasonable. Officials have working hours and many charge overtime, particularly Trinidad where you must also report if you depart for a period and leave the boat at the marina. Only the skipper should go ashore with ship's papers and crew passports. Making crew lists in advance with boat details - name, registration, length etc and net tonnage, and having a copy of ship's documents can save time. St. Vincent and Grenada have streamlined the procedure to one page with five copies - press hard! Clearing out of a country is mandatory before being able to clear into the next. Have quarantine and country flag flying from the starboard spreader on arrival. Always dress conservatively and be polite!

5 Water and Fuel - Water is potable throughout the islands and available at marinas and the major centres. There is sometimes a charge. Fuel is also readily available.

6 Deck Canvas/Ventilation Although we are always quizzed about pirates and sharks, the sun is your greatest danger. Use a hat, sun block and don't rush getting a tan. A bimini is a must, preferably with good headroom, also a dodger with large opening central panel for a good air flow at anchor. Side curtains on the lifelines by the cockpit reduce UV burn reflected from the water. Below fans are a must over every berth and in the main cabin and particularly in the galley that also ideally has an opening port. Windscoops also increase the airflow below.

7 Security It is wise to lock your boat, secure the dinghy with a wire or chain cable and padlock the outboard to the stern pulpit or dinghy. Raise dinghy at night on a halyard if concerned. Have a companionway hatch that allows airflow for the night. We have had no problems but talk to other cruisers before and when you arrive particularly in Trinidad and Venezuela. Some anchorages are more vulnerable. Recently local authorities have become geared to stop theft from yachts.

8 Local boaters The local brightly coloured boats are picturesque but the local lads have large outboards and love to speed, at times going



too close to anchored yachts. If swimming/snorkelling always keep a good look out. There are seldom aggressive 'boat boys' these days. In some anchorages, particularly in the Grenadines, vendors circulate the boats with goods for sale. Prices are higher than the norm as would be expected but it does not help in the long run to pay too much. Note: lobster season is from 1st October- 30th April. It is illegal to buy outside those months, and a female at any time.

9 **Beasties and Berries**

Manchineel – is frequently found growing on beaches. This tree with bright green/yellow leaves and small apples, is extremely poisonous. Do not stand under one in a rain shower, collect the wood for a BBQ and do not eat the apples.

Cockroaches and mosquitoes – seldom a problem in winter but have repellent cockroach 'hotels' or boric acid handy. Check packages for cockroach eggs before bringing aboard.

Snakes – Although rare St. Lucia is home to the deadly Fer de Lance.

Fish etc: – Sharks and barracuda are not a danger when swimming unless harassed but it is considered unwise to eat barracuda over 3lbs as they may contain ciguatera toxin. Be careful not to step on the spiny black sea urchins. Spines should not be pulled out of the skin but treated with hot lime juice to dissolve them. Watch out for fish traps buoyed with bamboo or plastic bottles.

Weevils and flour moths – lay their eggs in anything made of grains, seeds or nuts. They penetrate plastic bags. Bay leaves seem to discourage these bugs or treat them as extra protein!

10 **Fishing** – Tow a feather or plastic squid for tuna, dorado (mahi mahi) and many others at 6 knots or more just skipping the surface. To subdue, squirt alcohol (rum!) into its mouth or over the inside gills before bringing on board – we have ours in a 'squeezy' bottle at hand. Be aware of areas where fishing is not allowed (listed in cruising guides and given by customs), which includes much of the Grenadines, and where reefs are protected.

11 **Boat Supplies** – Budget Marine and Island Water World, both head offices located in St.Maarten, are comprehensive chandlers with stores or delivery throughout the islands. There are many other stores, technicians and facilities throughout.

Tourist Tips

1 **Research** - Buy resource books on travel, birds, fish, underwater etc: before you leave and read them transatlantic so you are well prepared to make the most of your Caribbean sabbatical. I've just covered the tip of the iceberg, there is so much to see!

2 **Culture** - Be curious and accommodating about the local culture and customs, interact with the local people, try their food, be inquisitive in the markets, see the sights and explore their lands. Much is different to home but all part of the adventure. Misunderstandings tend only to occur to those who are aloof.

3 **Dress** - The islanders dress conservatively, especially on church days, and do not respect women who don't. Look smart to clear with officials and women are advised to wear pants or a skirt in town. Otherwise dress is light and casual with covering for the sun. The year-round temperature is 27-32° C.

4 **Language** – English is spoken throughout these Windward Islands, with the locals having their own patois mixes, and Spanish in Venezuela.

5 **Communications** – GSM phones with local SIM cards are used. Internet cafes are found in all the main boating centres and often free WiFi in restaurants. Using Skype to phone on the internet is popular. Booster antennae can be useful to pick up the Internet from the boat. International direct dial from all phones with phone cards available.

6 **Finances** - These Windward Islands all use the \$EC which is linked EC\$2.67 with the US\$1, and will also accept \$US cash. Be sure to establish which currency taxis etc. are quoting – and establish a price first. Bank machines are readily available. Have cards on both the Plus and Cirrus systems. In Trinidad TT\$6.3 = US\$1 (\$12.75=£1). For Venezuela see text.

7 **Security** – Seldom a problem on shore in the Windwards, there have been problems in Trinidad and Venezuela. Check with cruisers ahead and on arrival. Take the usual precautions ashore with cameras and bags, and avoid walking in towns at night.

8 **Health** – good medical and dental care especially in Venezuela although facilities can look rough in the islands. Be insured for overseas travel.

9 **Photography** – a photographer's dream! If you have a large SLR you might also consider an additional small camera that is convenient and inconspicuous to carry ashore and keep dry. Always ask permission to photograph people, many still view a camera as the 'evil eye'. People love to see themselves in the viewfinder, printing a photo for them makes a great gift.

Liza is the award-winning, best-selling author of four books. Just Cruising and Still Cruising recount her family travels around the world; Comfortable Cruising tells of their voyage around North and Central America; and Cruising for Cowards, co-authored with Andy (2nd Edition just published and available at bookharbour.com), is their practical how-to text. She has also assisted directing a DVD Just Cruising, writes for several magazines and gives seminars at boatshows and for a variety of organizations on boating and travel. Their 40' 1985 Beneteau Bagheera has now completed over 114,000 miles and visited 114 countries and is still enjoyed and used by the entire family.



▲ Good use was made of the bosun's chair while anchored in Tobago bay!



▲ Relaxed Island sailing and researching the next stop



▲ Bagheera was frequently surrounded by water hyacinths in the Orinoco Delta