CARIBBEAN
COMPASS
SEPTEMBER 2026 NO. 363
The Caribbean's Look at Sea & Shore

# COMING HOME TO GRENADA

— TURN TO PAGE 37

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# Contents

SEPTEMBER 2026 • ISSUE 363


15 **When an A.I. Tool Joins the Crew**
*by Joan Conover, with Captain Michele Frost*

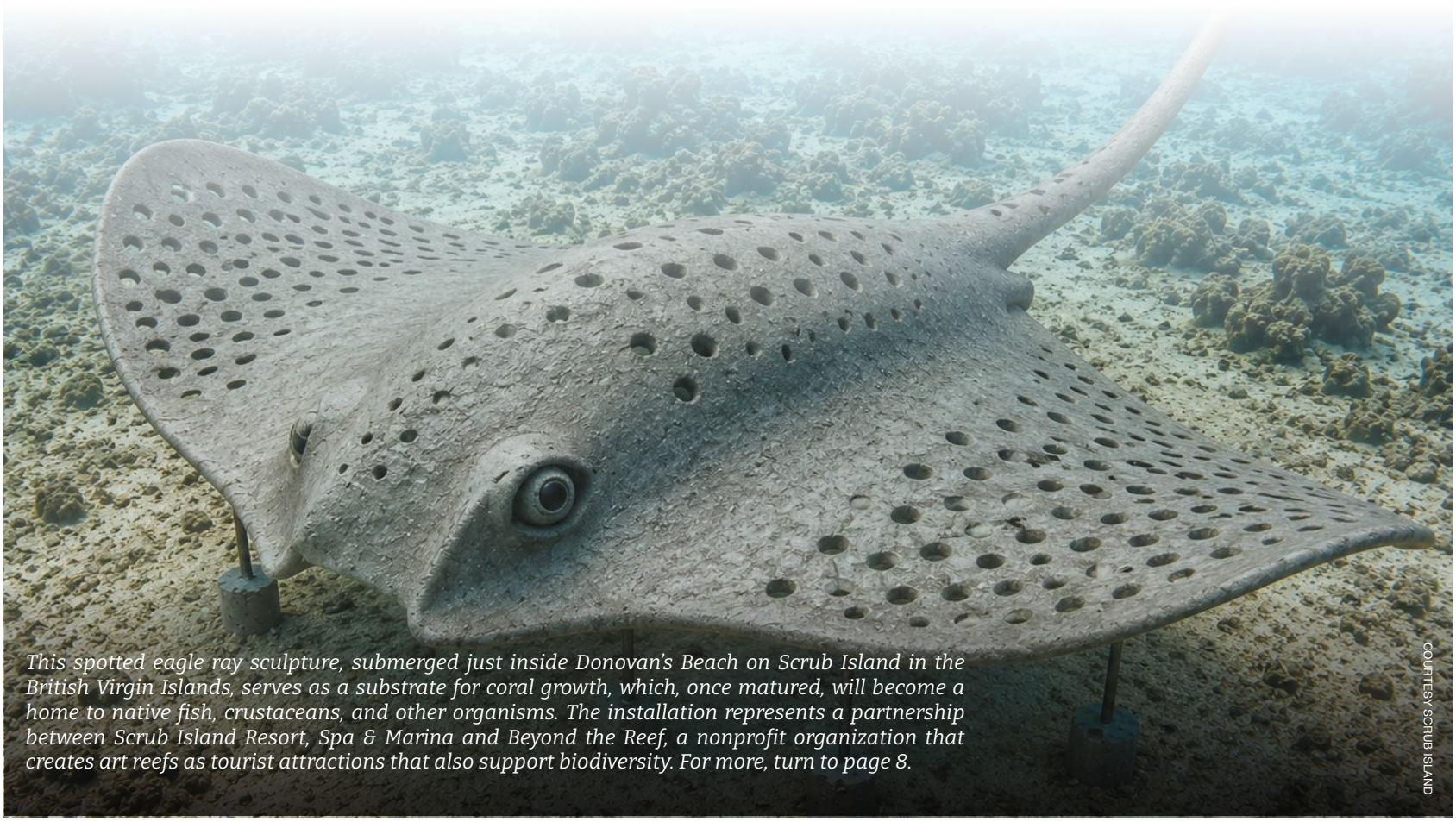
19 **A Regional Response to Sargassum**
*by the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States*

26 **BVI's Top Seven Beach Bars**
*by Robyn McCarty*

29 **Launching of *Free***
*by Maiwenn Beadle*

37 **Coming Home to Grenada**
*by Somira Sao*

45 **Book Excerpt: *Soggy Dollar Daze***
*by Bruce Donath*

*This spotted eagle ray sculpture, submerged just inside Donovan's Beach on Scrub Island in the British Virgin Islands, serves as a substrate for coral growth, which, once matured, will become a home to native fish, crustaceans, and other organisms. The installation represents a partnership between Scrub Island Resort, Spa & Marina and Beyond the Reef, a nonprofit organization that creates art reefs as tourist attractions that also support biodiversity. For more, turn to page 8.*

COURTESY SCRUB ISLAND

## Featured


4 Readers Forum
9 Channel 16
15 Channel 16 Focus
18 Regattas & Rallies
19 Eco News Briefs
32 Island Spotlight: Mustique
33 September Calendar
34 Marketplace
35 Advertiser Index


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

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

**On the Cover** *St. George's seen from Fort George. Built by the French in 1650, St. George's is the capital city of Grenada. This beautiful city, located on a horseshoe-shaped harbor, is surrounded by a hillside of an old volcano crater. The waterfront is lined with elegant colonial buildings and colorful Caribbean style dwellings, restaurants, bar and shops. The center of the city is crossed by steep, narrow streets full of shops and people.*

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## Caribbean Compass

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**Publisher | Dan Merton**
dan@caribbeancompass.com

**Advertising & Administration**
**Shellese Craigg**
shellese@caribbeancompass.com

**Publisher Emeritus | Tom Hopman**

**Editor Emeritus | Sally Erdle**

**Editor | Elaine Lembo**
elaine@caribbeancompass.com

**Executive Editor | Tad Richards**
tad@caribbeancompass.com

**Art, Design & Production**
**Berry Creative**
abby@berrycreativellc.com

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*ISSN 1605 - 1998*



SHERRIL GULSTON SHALLOW

*Sunday lunch on Monday, St. Vincent style. Clockwise from top: salad garnish, plantain, stewed pork, pigeon peas, coleslaw and callaloo. In the center: vegetable rice, potato salad and sweet potato.*

**It isn't so!**

Dear *Compass*:

Re: David Lyman's article in the August issue, nicely done. Great attitude toward flexibility in the galley!

I am puzzled by one statement:

"Most West Indian meals are little more than rice and black beans."

It isn't so!

First, black beans are more of a Latino taste. West Indian (i.e. English-speaking Caribbean) meals more commonly include pigeon peas, which are grown and loved throughout the islands.

Second, a typical noonday meal, in addition to rice and pigeon peas, will include fish, chicken, mutton, goat, pork or beef, usually stewed or curried. These essentials will be accompanied by some or all of the following: a cooked vegetable such as callaloo or christophene, some sautéed plantains, macaroni pie (baked macaroni and cheese) or ground provisions (sweet potato, dasheen, etc.), a salad such as coleslaw or potato salad, and a garnish of lettuce, cucumber and tomato.

Ask for, say, "fish lunch" at an authentic local restaurant, or better yet be invited to a local friend's home, and you'll be assured of a delicious well-rounded meal and a full belly.

**Sally Erdle**
Bequia

**Love Letter to Carriacou from the hostage boaters in Tyrell Bay**

Dear Carriacou,

We are the people held hostage in your lovely Tyrell Bay. We are American, German, French, British, and Portuguese/Cape Verdean. We came to your island to support your economy in the form of maintaining, and in some cases rebuilding, our vessels. We hire your skilled workers, eat in your restaurants, get our laundry washed at Zip, shop in your supermarkets, buy fruit and vegetables at your friendly roadside stands, and buy lots (and lots) of boat supplies. You have seen us in the streets, and may even recognize the gray dog, Doodl, being towed behind the bicycle in her doggie carriage on the streets of Harvey Vale.

We like it here just fine — but please let us leave.

Over the weekend of April 25, a fence was built bisecting the yard in Tyrell Bay Marina. There was no warning, no communication, and no chance to put our boats back into the water before access was completely restricted. We do not take sides in the years-long land vs. lease vs. remuneration dispute — and yes, it is still legally ongoing despite the common misconception that title ownership determined in 2023 settled the whole matter. (It's not that simple, unfortunately.) That fiasco was here long before us and will continue long after we have left, but right now that fight has taken us hostage. We live permanently on our boats and they are our homes, our places of business, and our primary mode of transportation — we have nowhere else to go nor any way to get there.

Our detainment has, and continues to, affect our well-being, cost us employment, jeopardize our immigration status, put our property at risk, and potentially even put us physically at risk. We have lost jobs, delayed medical procedures, and cancelled that once a year visit where we were finally able to convince our family to come to us. We lost vessels in Beryl and know personally the dangers of hurricane season. We are angry, frustrated, and bewildered hostages.

So we enter the fighting ring.

*—Continued on the next page*

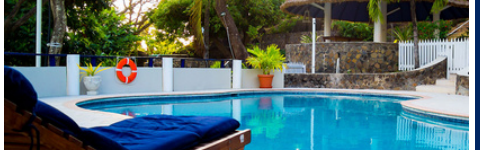
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—*Continued from the previous page*

You ask what have we done to help ourselves so far? Well, we are now extremely familiar with your laws, your government organizations, your public services, and your judicial system. We have read your Constitution and know that it is illegal for anyone to be detained against their will (Article 12. Protection of Freedom of Movement) or for property to be impounded without cause (Article 6. Protection from Deprivation of Property). We have read your Planning & Development Act 23 and know that the fence was illegally erected as it was done without authorization from the Planning & Development Authority (Part V ENFORCEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT CONTROL Article 31). We have appealed to our various foreign embassies and they have spoken with your prime minister. We have corresponded with your foreign affairs office and through them with your Minister of Carriacou and attorney general. We have visited your police force on both Carriacou and Grenada, and know that the commissioner of police is aware of our situation.

And still we sit and wait.

We and the marina have appealed directly to the Corion Estate to allow us to leave through the temporary removal of the fence and the quick relaunching of our vessels. There has been no response to those requests. Since the end of April, it has been complete silence.

The marina applied for temporary relief to the civil court, which included each of our stories of hardship and harm at being held hostage. The court ordered a dismissal of that application, not ruling one way or another.

And still we have hope.

The marina has the manpower, the equipment, and the desire — and yes, even the support of your laws — to launch us. They are the only ones able to do so, and are not yet able to act due to the barriers.

Their blockage is our blockage.





*Let us launch our boats!*

So why do we now write a letter of love to you? You are a power in your own right and we have not yet asked for your direct support. You have welcomed us with kindness and compassion from the very beginning — this is not your fault and we want you to know that we don't blame you for it. You as a society have treated us with kindness and empathy. You have sympathized with our situation, have expressed outrage that such a thing could occur here, and have provided guidance from afar. Even your street dogs and sheep greet us as friends. You are the people, the heart and soul of Carriacou, and we see you being harmed just as we are by this shameful, and quite frankly flabbergasting, situation. The economic trickle-down effect is real, whether you are personally experiencing it yet, or not. Your reputation as a hospitable and safe destination for visitors is being quickly and significantly deteriorated. Trust in your laws is being eroded for locals and foreigners alike. The longer it continues, the longer it will take to recover, and we prefer to see Carriacou thriving.

—*Continued on page 7*

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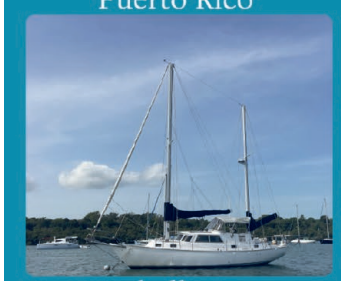
2021 Bali 4.2
$415,000 USD
Tortola, BVI



2013 Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 409
$149,000 USD
Grenada



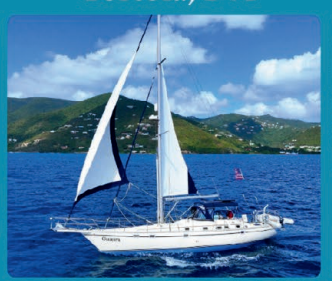
2006 Hampton 558
$499,500 USD
Grenada



1974 Challenger 42 MotorSailor
$55,000 USD
Luperon, DR



2022 Bali Catspace
$445,000 USD
Tortola, BVI



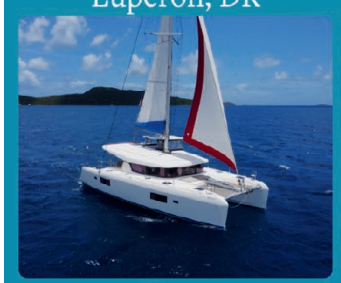
1997 Caliber 47LRC
$159,500 USD
St. John, USVI



2021 Leopard 53PC
$1,265,000 USD
Virgin Gorda, BVI



1992 Caliber Cutter
$112,500 USD
Florida



2020 Lagoon 42
$299,000 USD
Tortola, BVI



2023 Excess 14
$569,000 USD
Grenada



1984 Irwin 52
$159,000 USD
Grenada



2016 Hanse 575
$359,000 USD
Trinidad & Tobago



2007 Lagoon 500
$525,000 USD
St. Thomas, USVI

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*—Continued from page 5*

No, this is not your fault, but we ask you to consider harnessing your power to move mountains, or in this case, remove barriers and open access to oceans. We need the fence removed, at least temporarily, and we need agreement from the Corion Estate to support the launching of our vessels. These are the short-term barriers and are our prison walls.

We ask you to help us raise the noise against those forces that are actively working against a hostage resolution, or whose apathy is resulting in the same lack of progress. You can support those allies who are working hard toward a solution, but are somehow still not able to remedy the situation. You can reach out to the names we have listed below and ask them how they are involved, what they are doing, and whether they see themselves as allies, or blockers, to our release. We have not designated them here as such, but every one of them is aware of the situation and has a role to play. We are simply asking your authorities to do their jobs, obey your laws, and act with the urgency we feel the situation demands. (Today it is us, tomorrow it could be you.)

We know there are yet heroes out there who can help us!

Sincerely yours,

Leslie Bell-Friedel, *Nizhoni*

Lou Le Sommer, *Malumau*

Nadège and Jeremy Sauvage, *Mr. Tong*

**For the Tyrell Bay Hostages (and Doodl)**

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*Corion Estate (family/representatives):*

Trust Admin - Stephanie Nerverson-Young

Estate Representative - Nellie Adams

Estate Representative - Margaret Corion

Local Representative - Clarence (Policeman)

Planning & Development Authority:

Technical Operations Manager - Naomi Dorival

CEO - Allen Gilbert

*Government of Grenada:*

Minister of Carriacou - Tevin Andrews

Prime Minister - Dickon Mitchell

Minister of Legal Affairs / Attorney General - Claudette Joseph

Foreign Affairs, Trade & Export Development Chief of Protocol - Lyndeon George-Bellamy

Permanent Secretary - Roxie McLeish-Hutchinson

*Royal Grenada Police Force:*

Commissioner of Police - Randy Connaught

Staff - Carriacou

Staff - Grenada

*Foreign Embassies:*

US Principal Officer - Cindy M. Diouf

French Consul, St. Lucia - Kévin Billières

French Attaché to OECS - Hilda Henri

German Hon. Consul - Jochen Lenz

Tyrell Bay Marina Owner - Jerome McQuilkin


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# BUSINESS BRIEFS




*Leeward Islands guide*

## Doyle Guides Launches First Digital Summer Sale

Doyle Guides has discounted select 12-month plans in its mobile app through September 30. The Leeward Islands guide, newly updated for 2026–27, drops from $59.99 to $39.99, with the Windward Islands, Trinidad & Tobago, and The Caribbean Pet guides also reduced; the latter by half. Discounts apply automatically on Android; Apple users redeem codes online.

*For more, visit www.doyleguides.com/summer-sale.*

## Air Charter Solutions Come to the Eastern Caribbean

LAC Global Ltd. has expanded its charter operations to link Antigua and Barbuda, Guadeloupe, Dominica, Martinique, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and St. Lucia, with more destinations on the horizon.



COURTESY LAC GLOBAL

*LAC Global emphasizes flexible routing and multi-island connectivity in the Caribbean.*

LAC Global continues to emphasize flexible routing and multi-island connectivity, tailoring each flight to the needs of the moment — no rigid schedules, no one-size-fits-all solutions. The company is actively expanding its network and welcomes inquiries about new routes and partnerships.

*To book a flight or explore how LAC Global can serve your needs, contact: info@lacsvg.com; +1 (784) 527-3082, +1 (784) 434-9181.*

## Propspeed Coating Kits stocked by Budget Marine

Marine growth on propellers, shafts, and saildrives can increase drag and negatively affect speed, fuel efficiency, and overall vessel performance. Since partnering with Propspeed in 2022, Budget Marine Group has supplied the Propspeed® Foulfree foul-release coating system, a biocide-free foul-release coating system specifically formulated for propellers, running gear, and other underwater metals. Its foul-release surface makes it difficult for marine organisms to adhere, helping protect propellers, shafts, struts, trim tabs, rudders, and saildrives from marine growth.

Budget Marine carries Propspeed coating kits in a range of sizes, together with Stripspeed® foul-release coating remover and Propspeed application tools. Products are available through Budget Marine's Caribbean store network and online catalogue, although availability may vary by location.

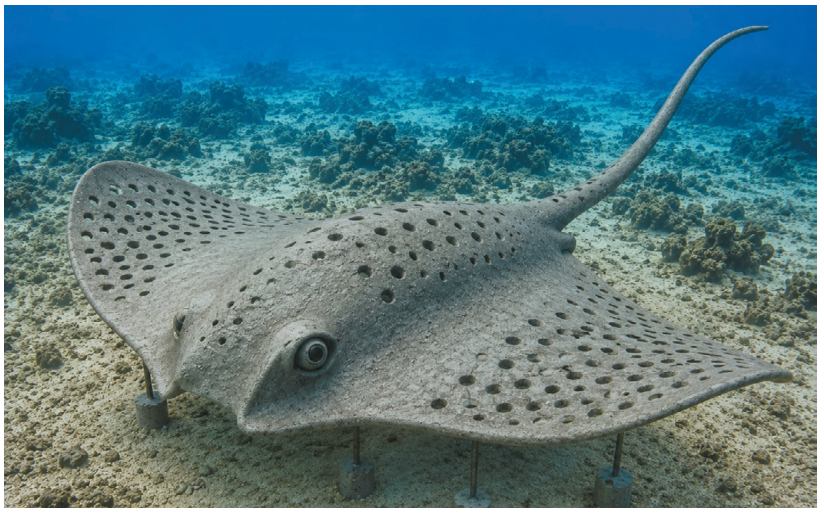



COURTESY BUDGET MARINE

*Propspeed protects propellers, shafts, struts, trim tabs, rudders and saildrives from marine growth.*

## Scrub Island's Submerged Art Supports Biodiversity

In an effort to preserve and protect native island life, Scrub Island Resort, Spa & Marina has partnered with Beyond the Reef, a nonprofit organization that creates art reefs — sea sculptures that can be popular tourist attractions while also supporting biodiversity, including the well-known wreck of the *Willy T* (*Compass*, September 2019 — www.caribbeancompass.com/online/september19compass_online.pdf). The latest work, Spotted Eagle Ray, has been installed just inside Donovan's Beach on Scrub Island, far enough to stay undisturbed by resort activities, yet still close enough to be a short snorkel from the shore.



COURTESY SCRUB ISLAND

*Beyond the Reef's latest art reef — the spotted eagle ray*

The Spotted Eagle Ray works as a substrate for coral growth, which, once matured, will become a home to native fish, crustaceans, and other organisms, as Scrub Island extends its world class accommodations to include its neighbors with scales, fins, and flippers.




COURTESY CLARKES COURT

*Clarkes Court Dockside Restaurant — this way!*

**St. Maarten Comes to Annapolis**

The St. Maarten Marine Trades Association (SMMTA) and the St. Maarten Tourism Bureau (STB) will attend the U.S. Sailboat Show in Annapolis, Maryland, October 15-18, showcasing St. Maarten as a sailing destination, and highlighting cruising opportunities throughout the region. Representatives at the booth expect to showcase what's new in the island's marine industry and tourism offerings, and present it as the Caribbean's sailing crossroads.

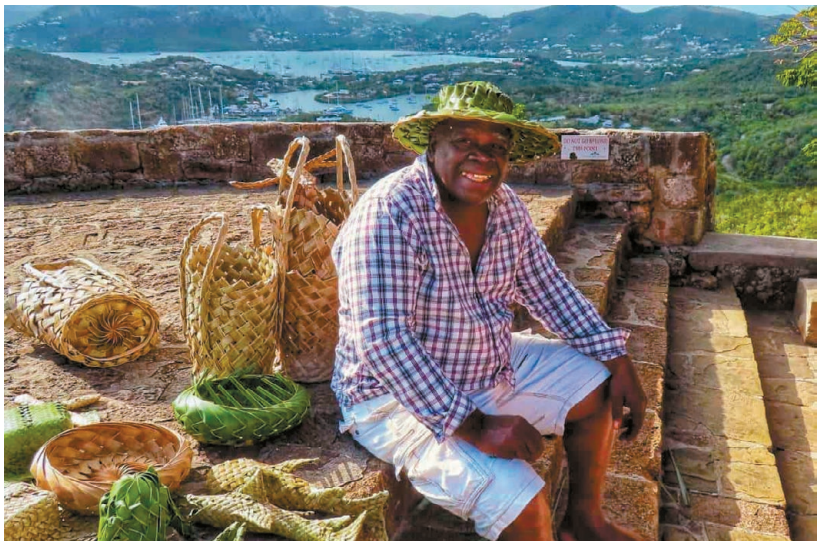
*For more information about St. Maarten's marine industry and yachting services, visit yachtingstmaarten.com.*

**The Caribbean in Focus: Winners Coming Soon**

The Seas & Scenes: Love the Caribbean Photo Contest 2026, hosted by *Caribbean Compass* and Environmental Protection in the Caribbean (EPIC), has officially closed after a month of stunning photography celebrating the people, wildlife, landscapes, culture, and environmental spirit of the Caribbean.

Photographers from across the region and around the world submitted compelling images and stories, from vibrant marine life

JANE IRISH



*"Spirit of Antigua" captures a moment at Shirley Heights*

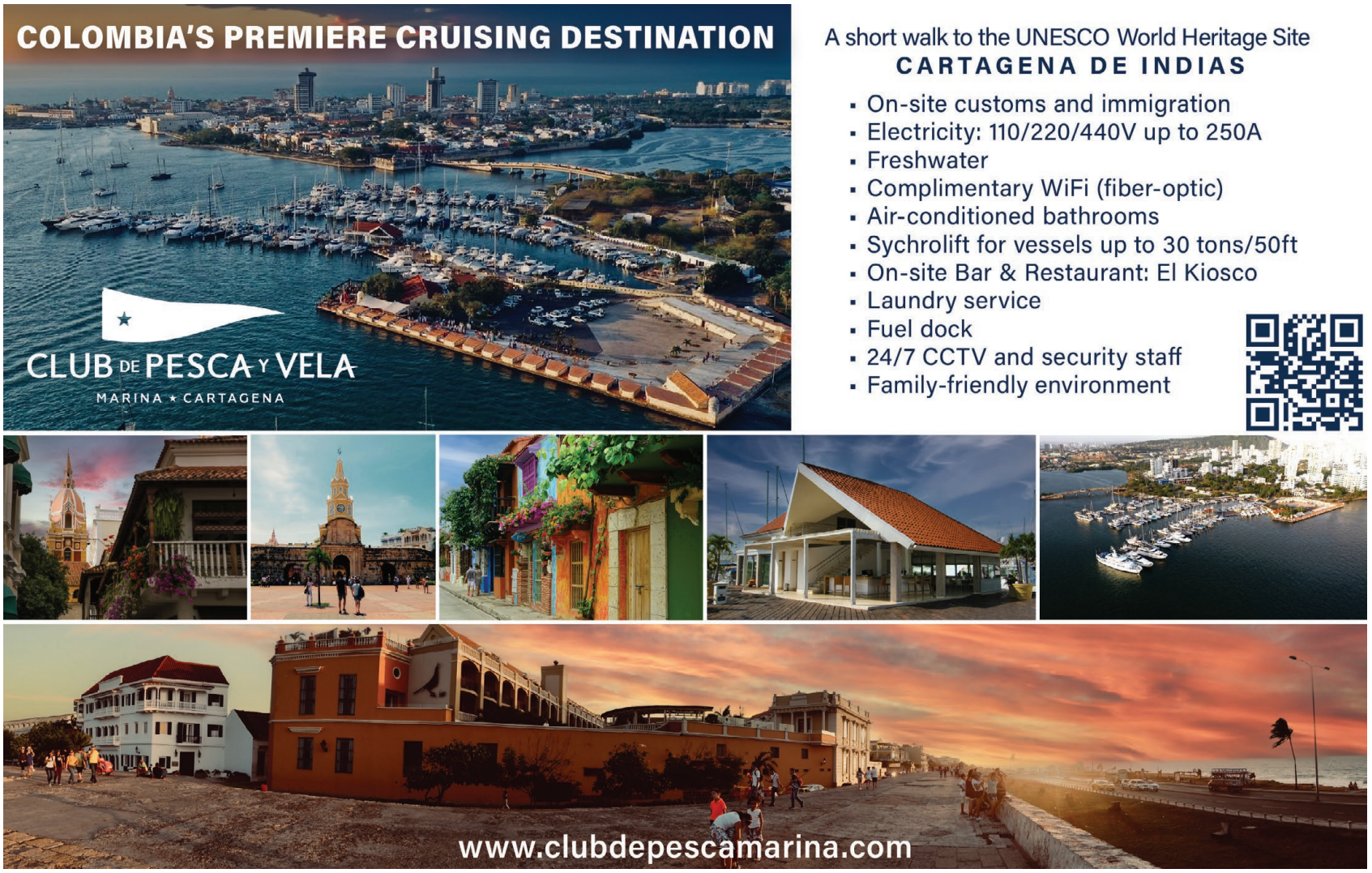
and dramatic coastlines to cultural traditions, life on the water, and inspiring acts of stewardship.

With public voting now complete, the judges are reviewing the entries and selecting this year's category winners. Audience Choice winners will be determined by popular vote.

Winners will select from a prize pool valued at more than US$3,000, generously contributed by businesses and organizations throughout the Caribbean and beyond.

The winners will be announced in late September. Visit epicislands.org/photo-contest-winners-2026/ to learn more and view the winning photographs once they are revealed.

*—Continued onthe next page*



—Continued from the previous page

KRYSTAL BAPTISTE



*Love, Nevis Style*

### Nevis Film Commission Brings in *Tides of Temptation*

The Nevis-set suspense drama series, executive-produced by Taye Diggs, premiered July 7 as the Lifetime network's first microdrama.

The series follows Constance (Mea Wilkerson), a young woman caught between her controlling brother Malik and volatile boyfriend Wes, whose world is upended when ambitious athlete Jamal (Swag Boy Q) enters her life. Troy Brookins and David John Craig also star. The Nevis Film Commission secured the production in December 2025, part of its ongoing push to attract high-profile film and television projects to the island.

### WICO Approves FY2027 Budget, Reviews 2026

The board of directors of the West Indian Company Limited (WICO) convened for its regularly scheduled meeting, highlighting continued growth across the company's cruise operations (302 cruise ship calls and 946,199 passengers through May 31), financial stability, and ongoing investments.

The board also received updates on WICO's ongoing engagement with regional tourism and cruise industry organizations, including the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) and the Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA), as the company continues to strengthen its regional presence and industry partnership

### Nevis Mango Festival

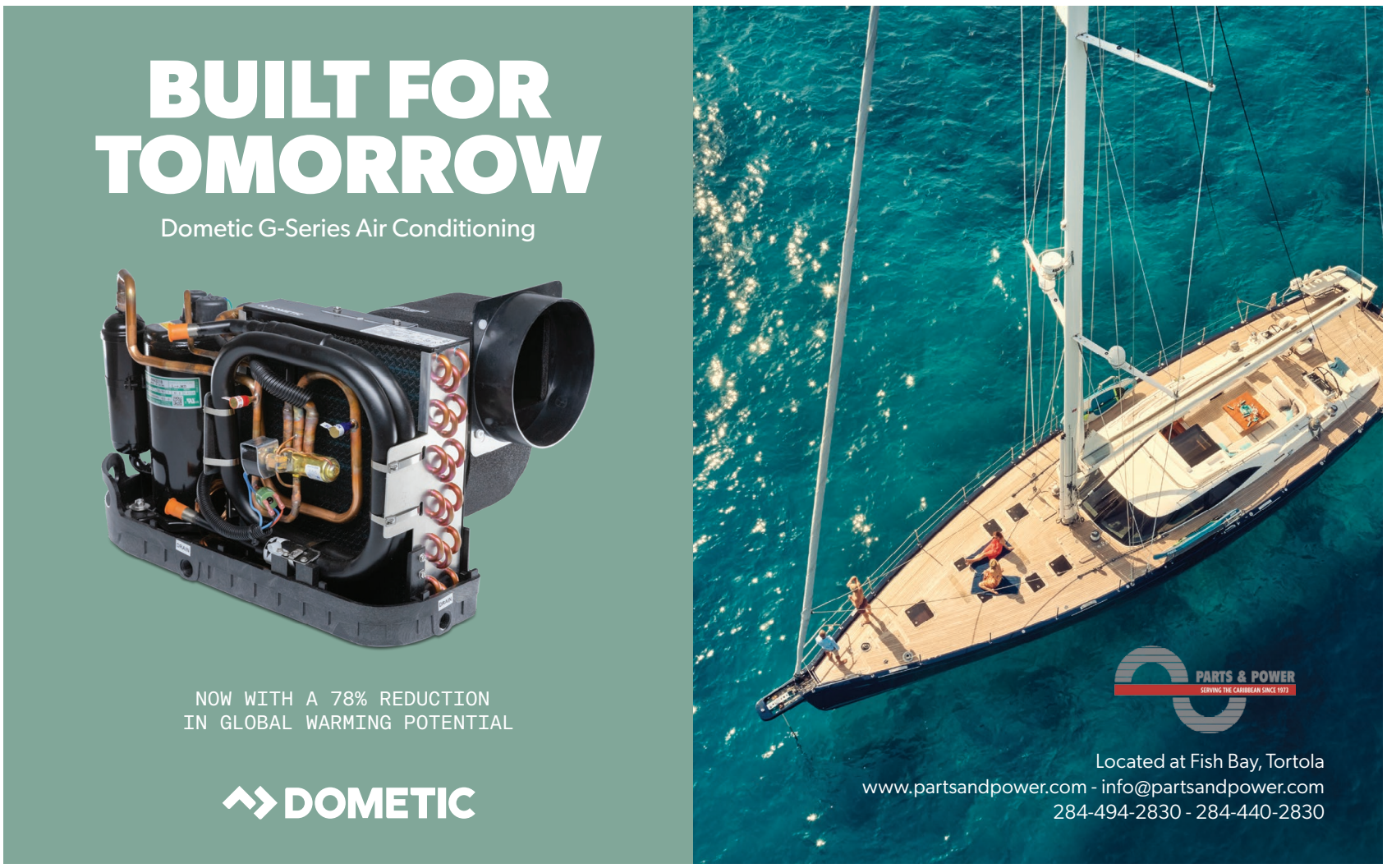



COURTESY NEVIS MANGO FESTIVAL

*It's a mango thing.*

The 2026 Nevis Mango Festival, held July 2-5, welcomed over 5,000 attendees, an increase of 1,000 over the previous year, for four days of food, music, and island spirit. Highlights were a waterfront cocktail hour at the Four Seasons Resort featuring mango-infused cocktails and a three-course dinner concluding with the gift of a personalized menu signed by Chef Eric; a mango-themed dinner at CHASKA Indian Cuisine & Bar in Cades Bay, where guests cooked side by side with Chef Eric during a master class; the Mango Mania eating contest; a mixology competition featuring local bartenders; and an evening pub crawl with more mango-themed drink specials.

—Continued on page 13



# Beat the Tropics: How Toplac Plus and Pre-Kote Plus Keep Caribbean Yachts Looking Brand New



From the trade winds of Grenada to the anchorages of the BVI, the Caribbean conditions present a true test for a cruising yacht's paint job. Relentless UV, salt spray and heat can turn a gleaming topside into a chalky, faded mess within a season, unless you're using the right system. That's where Toplac Plus and Pre-Kote Plus from Interlux® make the difference, a proven two-step combination trusted by cruisers and professional yards throughout the region.

Start with the foundation: **Pre-Kote Plus**. This all-in-one primer and undercoat is formulated with tough, flexible resins that create a smooth, resistant base for enamel topcoats. It bonds reliably to primed wood, steel, alloy and GRP, while its excellent coverage makes colour changes easier, often requiring fewer coats to achieve the desired finish. With low VOCs, Pre-Kote Plus is easy to apply by brush or roller, quick to sand and offers improved flow and a better final appearance compared with using a primer or undercoat alone. Pre-Kote Plus does the unglamorous work that makes everything above it last.

Then comes the finish: **Toplac Plus**, the premium one-part topcoat from Interlux® for use over Pre-Kote Plus, delivers a stunning, high-gloss finish that rivals the results of a professional yard. Designed for all substrates above the waterline, it can be applied by brush or roller without the need for tipping, thanks to excellent flow and levelling, and with no need for sanding between coats. Built-in UV filters keep color rich and gloss intact instead of chalking under tropical sun, and independent five-year test results show the finish holding up season after season.



For Caribbean-based owners, that combination of durability and easy, user-friendly application helps make boat maintenance simpler and more rewarding. Toplac Plus and Pre-Kote Plus were built for exactly this, a system designed for DIY boaters that professional yards trust too, available in a wide range of vibrant colors to match any hull or coachroof.

Whether you're touching up brightwork before your next passage or giving the topsides a new lease of life ahead of the season, pairing Pre-Kote Plus with Toplac Plus delivers an ultra-smooth finish and long-lasting protection. Easy to apply by brush or roller, the system helps boat owners achieve lasting results that look great and stand up to the challenges of life at sea.

Toplac Plus and Pre-Kote Plus from Interlux® are available through chandleries across the Caribbean. Ask your local supplier or visit Interlux.com to find your nearest stockist.



VIRGIN GORDA
YACHT HARBOUR

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**Virgin Gorda Yacht Harbour** is the ideal destination for hurricane season storage in the Northeast Caribbean. Our two large boatyards provide many excellent storage options for vessels up to 9′ draft, or 350 metric tonnes.

In addition to our trusted Hurricane Keel Pit service for keelboats, our South Boatyard now offers brand new steel cradles for which will provide extra peace of mind for yacht owners during hurricane season. For any of those bigger tasks that you cannot do your- self, there are several qualified, licensed, and insured sub-contractors available locally who specialize in all manner of shipwrighting, including electronics, rigging, carpentry, and more.

Our North Boatyard boasts the largest hauling capacity in the region, capable of hauling vessels up to 39′ beam. Every haul out slip also comes with the option to strap down to helical sand screws, which are an excellent way to ensure the safety of your vessel.

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Virgin Gorda Yacht Harbour

virgingordayachtharbour

—*Continued from page 10*

Saturday featured a Passport Food Tour of bars and restaurants across Nevis, and Sunday concluded with For the Love of Mangoes, the festival's signature event at Malcolm Guishard Recreational Park, featuring a cooking competition, kids' events, and the Mango Festival Concert under the stars.

Dates for the 2027 Nevis Mango Festival have been confirmed, with the celebration set to return July 1-4. *For more information on the Nevis Mango Festival, visit www.nevismangofest.com*

COURTESY NEVIS MANGO FESTIVAL



*Mango Mania eating contest*



KRYSTAL BAPTISTE

*We're Number One!*

**Trunk Bay Named the World's Number One Beach**

Beach.com, the online travel guide known for its data-driven beach rankings, has chosen the U.S. Virgin Islands' Trunk Bay as Number One on its list of the world's best beaches.

Trunk Bay, on St. John, was cited for its crystal-clear turquoise waters, picturesque mountain backdrop, powder-soft white sand, and world-famous underwater snorkeling trail.

Also ranked were Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge on St. Croix, ranked No. 7, and Magens Bay Beach on St. Thomas, which came in at No. 17, making the U.S. Virgin Islands one of only a handful of destinations represented multiple times on the prestigious global list.

—*Continued on the next page*




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—Continued from the previous page




COURTESY ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA TOURISM AUTHORITY

*Charmaine Spencer of the tourism authority and artist Dylan Phillips stand ready to greet visitors to Antigua and Barbuda Art Week*

### Antigua and Barbuda Art Week Returns

The fourth edition of Antigua and Barbuda Art Week will take place from November 11–18, 2026. This year's program includes a unique public art installation, a retrospective exhibition celebrating artist Maria Ross Iztueta (1934–2024), expanded exhibition spaces, and a growing calendar of experiences designed to encourage residents and visitors to experience Antigua and Barbuda through the eyes of its artists.

"Dual Thresholds" is an installation, created by local artists, which transforms reclaimed wooden doors into original works of art inspired by the people, culture, landscapes, and everyday life of Antigua and Barbuda.

Additional program highlights include "Art in the Quay," the return of the Art and Cultural Village, open studios and galleries, the Art Trail and the new Art Trail Passport. "Flavours & Canvas" is an immersive culinary arts and painting experience. Further program details will be announced in the lead-up to Art Week.



COURTESY OECS

*Ambassador Linares of Cuba with OECS director Jules*

### OECS News

H.E. Yenielys Vilma Regueiferos Linares has been accepted as Cuba's new ambassador to the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). Upon accepting her accreditation, OECS Director General Dr. Didacus Jules thanked Cuba for maintaining remarkably consistent relations with the OECS built on respect and solidarity.

Cuba and the OECS partners have strengthened bilateral cooperation despite many challenges, delivering significant humanitarian benefits. Cooperation has included Cuban medical assistance during COVID-19, educational scholarships, and hurricane recovery support.

A strong focus on economic development partnership among OECS Member States and the Kingdom of Morocco was the highlight of OECS Economic Promotion Week, June 22-26, in Morocco.

The participating OECS member states, represented through the embassies of the Eastern Caribbean states in Morocco, included Antigua and Barbuda, the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Speaking for the OECS, Ambassador Ian Queeley reaffirmed that "the relationship between the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States and the Kingdom of Morocco is one built not only on friendship, but on shared aspirations for sustainable economic growth, innovation, investment, and South-South cooperation." Over the course of the week, participants engaged with a wide range of Moroccan public and private sector institutions.

Further strengthening ties between Africa and the Caribbean, OECS has announced the appointment of Ms. Aisha Maina, chief executive officer of Aquarian Consult Limited, as OECS strategic advisor for Africa-Caribbean cooperation. In her advisory mandate, Maina will work directly with the Office of the Director General to guide policy frameworks and operational strategies that unlock tangible, mutual economic benefits.



COURTESY SVG SAILING ASSOCIATION

*Shooting the gap at Bequia Heads on the way to Canouan*

### Historic Fleet of Boats Given New Life for Grenadine Communities

Six sailing boats that spent more than 25 years in storage at a British Army base have been successfully shipped to St. Vincent and the Grenadines and delivered to the Grenadine islands of Canouan, Mayreau, and Union Island, where they will help support and develop sailing opportunities for local communities. The project was made possible through the generosity and commitment of David Barnard and Kestrel Liner Agencies UK, with significant support from Marlon Gibson of Kestrel SVG.

Before the boats could begin their journey, members of Vincy Sailors spent two days carrying out repairs, maintenance work, and sea trials to ensure the vessels were seaworthy after years in storage. Then on July 21, a team of sailors, supported throughout by a safety team from Blue Lagoon Boat Charters, guided the restored boats through the Grenadines to their new home. Their arrival is expected to help expand access to sailing across the Grenadines and create new opportunities for young people and communities in those islands.




COURTESY HIDEAWAY AT HULL BAY

*Lee Steiner discusses agritourism*

### Talk Explores Future of Agritourism in the USVI

As conversations continue around the future of agriculture in the U.S. Virgin Islands, one St. Thomas entrepreneur is making the case that the future of farming lies not only in what farmers grow, but in the experiences they create.

Lee Steiner, founder of The Hideaway at Hull Bay and a licensed commercial farmer, told the Caribbean Food Crops Society Meeting and the Virgin Islands Agricultural Caribbean Conference at the University of the Virgin Islands at a summit that agritourism can help Virgin Islands farmers diversify income, strengthen food security, and create sustainable new business opportunities by transforming working farms into visitor experiences.

Steiner discussed practical ways farmers can diversify income through experiences such as farm tours, farm-to-table dinners, and overnight farm stays.

# *Wavelength*: When HAL Became Part of the Crew

*By Joan Conover, with Captain Michele Frost*

**Part One: The Night the Passage Changed**

Every autumn, hundreds of cruising boats leave the U.S. East Coast and begin the annual migration to the Caribbean. The route is as familiar as it is demanding. Boats funnel through the Chesapeake, gather in Hampton, cross the Gulf Stream, and either continue offshore or pause in Bermuda before heading south through the island chain. Every skipper watches for the same thing: a weather window that offers just enough time to slip safely between cold fronts before settling into the trade winds.

It is a ritual shared by generations of cruisers. It is also a reminder that the North Atlantic always gets the final vote.

In November 2025, *Wavelength*, a 42-foot aluminum OVNI designed for offshore sailing, joined that migration.

The boat had been carefully prepared for the passage. She had been recently surveyed. Her rig had been inspected, electronics upgraded, communications tested, safety equipment reviewed. Bill and Captain Michele Frost had spent months preparing for what they expected would be another step toward their new cruising life in the Caribbean, where they planned to begin the Wavelength Ocean Project's first beach cleanup as part of a personal mission to advocate for clean water shortly after arriving in Antigua.

Instead, they would become part of one of the more difficult offshore departures in recent memory.

**Preparing to Leave Hampton**

During the first week of November, *Wavelength* lay at Hampton Yacht Club amid one of the largest offshore fleets on the East Coast. Crews attended weather briefings, completed final provisioning, checked rigging one last time, and waited for the signal to depart.



COLLECTION MICHELE FROST

*The fractured rudder tiller-arm yoke after removal in Bermuda. The clamp failed under repeated shock loading from breaking seas, leaving only enough steering integrity for the autopilot to continue holding course.*

Only two days before leaving, Bill and Michele also installed an experimental artificial intelligence configuration developed through the Seven Seas Cruising Association (SSCA). Known simply as HAL, it was never intended to navigate the boat or replace seamanship. Its purpose was much narrower: to organize information, verify sources, and help crews work through problems when fatigue and stress made clear thinking more difficult.

No one expected its first real-world test to come so soon.

**Everything Changes**

Not long after departure, the weather deteriorated.

A late-season frontal system intensified off Cape Hatteras, producing steep, confused seas that challenged boats throughout the fleet. Conditions built rapidly.

Bill later described the experience in a satellite message sent through Starlink.

"Hey Joan, it's Bill and Michele on Wavelength. We had a hell of a night Wednesday night. Seas to 15–20 feet, manual steering for 18 hours into Thursday afternoon. We tried to keep the seas on the starboard quarter. We were swamped multiple times. One 20-foot three-wave group hit us as we climbed the first wave. It flooded the cockpit, spun the boat sideways, and left us nearly beam-on before we recovered, only to meet the next wave almost bow-first. By the third wave we finally recovered with the stern back to the seas."

Captain Michele recorded the same experience very differently in her journal.



COLLECTION MICHELE FROST

*The removed rudder tiller-arm yoke revealed a complete fracture around the clamping ring. The break showed characteristics consistent with a part that had experienced repeated loading before finally failing under the extreme shock forces generated by breaking seas. The component had remained just intact enough to allow limited steering until* Wavelength *reached Bermuda.*

"It was a combination of the Tilt-A-Whirl and a runaway roller coaster. Except this ride didn't end after two minutes. It went on for hours. For two people who had sold everything to pursue a dream of sailing, there were moments when I wasn't sure we would ever see the next port."

For 18 exhausting hours Bill hand-steered through breaking seas, trying to protect both the boat and themselves while every wave demanded another correction.

Eventually the sea state began to moderate. The steering system did not.

**Critical Failure Offshore**

As conditions slowly eased, something deep within the steering linkage failed.

The autopilot still functioned, but only because enough of the steering system remained intact to hold a course. The crew immediately understood they no longer had a routine equipment problem. They had suffered a potentially catastrophic steering failure hundreds of miles offshore. The original destination no longer mattered. Bermuda suddenly became the only practical refuge.

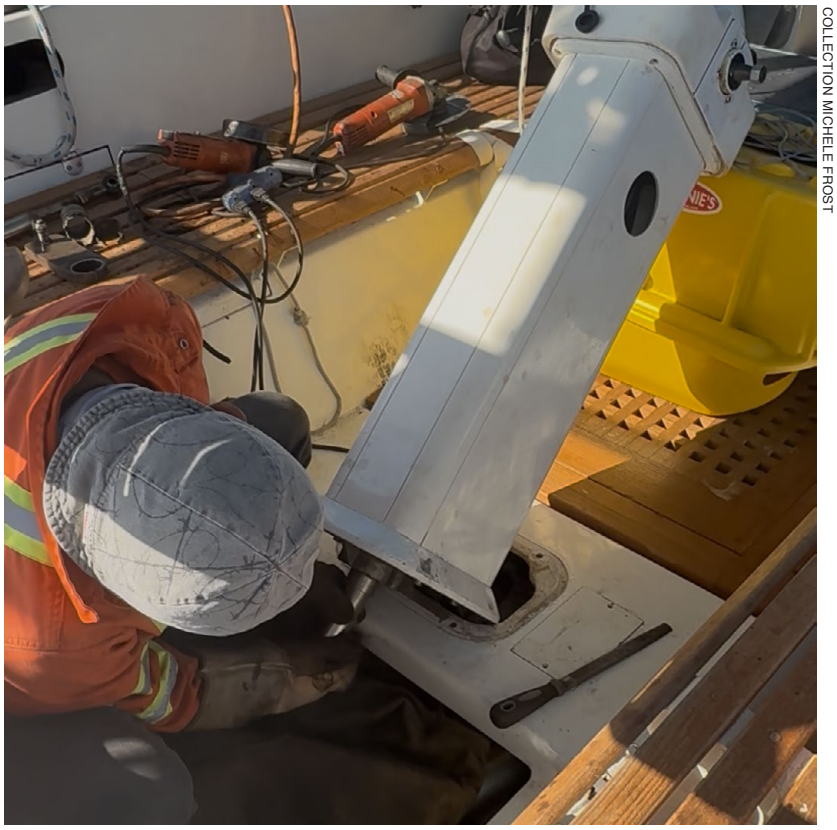
At the same time, reports from across the fleet painted a sobering picture. An estimated 40 percent of the rally boats either diverted to Bermuda or delayed their passages because of weather, equipment failures, or storm damage. SSCA Commodore Frank Smith, serving as a liaison with the U.S. Coast Guard, was coordinating reports from vessels throughout the region as numerous boats requested assistance or reported significant problems.

The event reminded many longtime sailors of previous difficult rally years, including 2013, when several boats were lost and others forced to abandon the passage.

Whether attributed to changing climate patterns or natural variability, these weather systems continue to intensify more rapidly than forecasts sometimes suggest, and offshore sailors continue to encounter them unprepared. A departure window that appears reasonable one day can become a survival exercise the next.

*—Continued on the next page*

*—Continued from the previous page*



COLLECTION MICHELE FROST

*Temporary stabilization of* Wavelength*'s rudder system after the steering failure. The crew's successful diversion to Bermuda made inspection, repair planning, and eventual restoration possible.*

**HAL Joins the Crew**

Once the steering failure had been identified, the focus shifted entirely to keeping *Wavelength* moving safely toward Bermuda.

The rally organizers were notified. The boatyard in France was contacted. Photographs of the damaged steering components were transmitted. Possible repair options were discussed. Throughout those exchanges, HAL quietly became another member of the support team.

Rather than making decisions, it helped organize the information arriving from multiple sources. It reviewed photographs, summarized likely failure points, assembled emergency contact information for Bermuda, identified repair resources, and helped the crew think through inspection priorities once they reached port.

**One assessment read:**

"Rudder tiller-arm yoke fractured at the clamp, likely due to accumulated fatigue combined with shock loading. Inspect the rudder post, steering linkage, hydraulic ram, and seals. Temporary stabilization may be possible until permanent repairs can be completed."

**Bill's response was immediate.**

"We'll need to haul out in Bermuda. We may also have a compromised rudder ram. At the very least, it all has to be inspected."

The discussion quickly became practical. Could the autopilot continue to steer? Could additional shock loading be reduced? Had Bermuda's repair facilities been contacted? What replacement parts might be available? How could the rudder be protected until haul-out?

While Bill reviewed engineering emails arriving from France, he simply remarked, "I'll ask HAL as well."

Joan's answer reflected decades of seamanship. "Protect that poor rudder."

**A Different Kind of Crew Member**

HAL never steered *Wavelength*. It never selected a route. It never issued a distress call. It never replaced the judgment of the skipper or the experience of those providing assistance ashore.

Instead, it served as another tool — one that helped organize information, verify sources, identify missing details, and allow an exhausted crew to work through an increasingly complex situation more methodically.

Every critical decision remained with the Frosts.

They protected the damaged steering system, monitored the weather, communicated with Bermuda, worked with the boat's builder in France, and ultimately brought Wavelength safely into port.

Sometimes, that's exactly what good seamanship looks like.



*Captain Michele and Bill Frost*

**What is HAL?**

HAL (Hybrid Applied Layer) is an A.I.-assisted cruising workflow developed through the Seven Seas Cruising Association. It is not an autopilot, weather router, electronic captain, or navigation system. Instead, HAL provides a structured framework that guides artificial intelligence to operate within defined maritime rules, trusted source priorities, safety boundaries, and operational workflows.

For cruisers, HAL helps organize equipment symptoms, weather information, photographs, maintenance procedures, emergency contacts, port resources, and crew observations into logical, verifiable steps. It is designed to support the skipper — not to replace seamanship, official forecasts, navigation, rescue authorities, or command responsibility.

*Part Two, "Damage Control, Fatigue, and the Limits of AI Offshore," will be published in an upcoming issue of Caribbean Compass.*

*The complete HAL Mariner workflow is available as an SSCA member benefit. A public version is also available through the SSCA Boating and Cruising Hub for anyone interested in exploring how this system works. It's free for use, but users must have a guest or free ChatGPT account. Use this link to the workflow: chatgpt.com/g/g-6a112c2599f4819184a62dc8e11f50fe-ssca-boating-and-cruising-hub*

*This is a published ChatGPT (workflow) usable by anyone with the link, created for users by* Caribbean Compass. *Ask it to do a port card for St. Martin, ask what HAL is, ask about general routes for planning. This workflow is not full HAL, but will give a sample of how HAL supports cruisers.*

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COURTESY STIR

*In St. Thomas, USVI, a new class and a new race are added to the popular annual regatta.*

**Change Is in the Wind for St. Thomas International Regatta**

TThe 2027 St. Thomas International Regatta (STIR) takes place from April 8-11, 2027, instead of the customary Easter weekend. At the same time, recognizing one of the sport's fastest-growing disciplines, STIR is adding open wing foiling to its existing slate of classes. New too is the Three Sheets Distance Race & Rally division, which moves this popular 100-nautical-mile St. John-St. Croix-St. Thomas-based regatta under the STIR umbrella.

The Notice of Race (NOR) and online registration open in fall. For the latest updates and entry information, visit www.stthomasinternationalregatta.com

Chartering makes it especially easy to fly in, jump on a race-ready yacht, and sail. Options include:

The St. Thomas Sailing Center (STSC) (stthomassailingcenter.com/racing/st-thomas-international-regatta) has IC24s, Sunfish, and Hobie Waves available for race charter for STIR 2027.

Other companies:

Sail Racing Academy (www.sailracingacademy.org/tour/st-thomas-international-regatta-2027/ ) and LV Yachting (lvyachting.com/caribbean-events-page/) offer race charters for STIR 2027, as does Ondeck Sailing in Antigua (www.ondecksailing.com/st-thomas-international-regatta-stir/).

Caribbean Regatta Logistics, owned and operated by St. Thomas native Ben Beer, can assist owners and teams in bringing their boats to race. (Phone (340) 998-6203; Email: benbeer13@gmail.com, Web: stthomasinternationalregatta.com/faq/caribbean-regatta-logistics

Both Sevenstar Yacht Transport and DYT Yacht Transport offer direct transportation from St. Thomas to the Mediterranean and the US.

**Regatta Celebrating Antigua Held in England**

The St. Edmundsbury Sailing & Canoeing Association held the 13th Antigua Sailing Day Regatta at Lackford Lake, northwest of Bury St. Edmunds, England, on a Sunday afternoon in June. The regatta, started as a celebration of Antigua Sailing Week, has won official sponsorship by the Antigua & Barbuda Tourism Authority.

Alan Wright won the day's overall crown, with Mike Steel second. Between-race entertainment by the Dallaway Steel Pan Band further added to the Antiguan flavor.

Antigua Sailing Week 2027 in the Caribbean is April 21-25.

**Registration for St. Maarten Heineken Regatta Opens**



COURTESY SESCA

*Overall winner Alan Wright*

Registration is officially open for the 47th St. Maarten Heineken Regatta, with defending champions, multigenerational sailing families, and returning one-design teams already setting the tone for the 2027 edition.

*The Notice of Race is available through Yacht Scoring at https://www.yachtscoring.com/emenu/50865.*

*A full story on the upcoming regatta can be found at*

*https://caribbeancompass.com/defending-champions-lead-the-next-generation-as-registration-opens-for-the-47th-st-maarten-heineken-regatta/*

**Aruba Regatta Brings Community Together**

The Aruba Regatta, which celebrated its 16th year in July, continues to bring together the island's sailing community and celebrate Aruba's strong maritime heritage with an event especially important for local sailors.

The Sunfish class remains the regatta's most popular fleet, having been well established in Aruba and neighboring Curaçao for many years. These boats are ideally suited to the island's consistently strong trade winds, which are generally stronger than those found elsewhere in the Caribbean. The Optimist fleet also continues to grow, while the traditional miniature boat class remains a unique feature of the event.

Aruba is also the birthplace of Sarah-Quita Offringa, one of the world's most accomplished windsurfers. Having recently secured her 29th World Championship title, she has achieved a level of success unmatched by any other Caribbean sailor in a single discipline.

*— Robbie Ferron*




COURTESY BUDGET MARINE

*The regatta celebrates Aruba's strong maritime heritage.*

COURTESY OECS



*Loading sargassum for disposal*

### Coordinated Effort Targets Sargassum Solutions

Across the Eastern Caribbean, sargassum seaweed has long been a critical challenge for coastal communities, marine ecosystems, and local economies. Now a study tour through Martinique and Guadeloupe is shaping a more coordinated regional response.

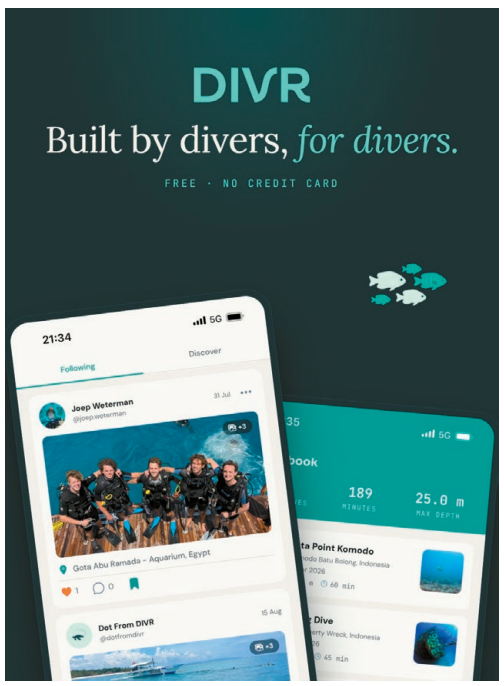
Susana Agüero, EU program manager for Barbados, the Eastern Caribbean States, the OECS, and CARICOM/CARIFORUM, demonstrated Martinique's integrated approach — combining manual collection, sea barriers, and offshore harvesting — along with emerging storage and processing methods that could soon turn sargassum into commercial products.

The stakes are high: decaying seaweed along shorelines such as the fishing village of Soubree, Grenada, releases toxic gases, degrades mangroves and coral reefs, worsens coastal erosion, and damages small-scale fishing equipment and access to fishing grounds.

Delegates toured every stage of the management cycle, from offshore interception barriers and barges to manual collection sites at Macabou and Pointe Faula, where Dr. Hardin Jn. Pierre of St. Lucia's Ministry of Agriculture noted the value of avoiding heavy machinery that can disrupt sea turtle nesting habitat. They also reviewed air-quality monitoring partnerships and frontline safety measures like personal gas monitors for response teams. At the Holdex facility in Le François, Martinique, participants saw sargassum converted into compost and biogas, with processed seaweed shown to boost agricultural yields by as much as 14 percent.

### DIVR App Converts Dive Info into Data Points for Ocean Research

COURTESY DIVR-CONNECT




*DIVR app on a cell phone*

A Dutch startup has launched a free app that turns recreational scuba diving into a source of research-grade ocean data. DIVR lets divers log a dive in less than 30 seconds, share photos with dive buddies, and record the species they encounter. Each species sighting is validated against the World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS) and structured using Darwin Core, the international standard for biodiversity data, before being shared with marine research organizations including Coral.org and the European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet). At launch, the platform covers more than 4,300 marine species and 4,700 dive sites worldwide.

The app is available free on iOS and Android. *divr-connect.com*

COURTESY GREEN FINS



*Dr. Alex Brylske*

### Appointment to Green Fins Advocacy Post Announced

The Reef-World Foundation has appointed Dr. Alex Brylske as Green Fins development lead – North America & Caribbean. In this role, Brylske will support development, stakeholder engagement, and funding mobilization to expand the implementation of the Green Fins initiative across the region. Working in close coordination with The Reef-World Foundation, he will help establish regional pathways for Green Fins adoption, build local capacity, and strengthen demand for sustainable, reef-positive marine tourism.

Brylske brings decades of experience in marine science, diver education, environmental interpretation, and sustainable tourism. He is the founder and president of Ocean Education International (OEI), a consulting and training organization for which he developed ECO PRO, OEI's professional-development program for the dive tourism industry. *Reef-World Foundation (reef-world.org),*

*Ocean Education International (ocean-education-international.com)*

### Grenadines Seabird Nesting Site Reclaimed

NICK SPENCER



*Members of the EPIC team setting up photo-monitoring markers on Battowia*

The successful removal of dozens of invasive goats from Battowia in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, site of one of the Caribbean's most important seabird nesting colonies, is a major milestone for the Grenadines Seabird Restoration Project implemented by EPIC and its partners.

For years, free-roaming non-native goats have damaged the island's fragile ecosystem by overgrazing native vegetation, accelerating erosion, and reducing the quality of habitat that seabirds depend on for nesting. Removing this invasive animal is a critical step toward allowing the island's natural vegetation to recover and restoring habitat for species such as the red-footed booby, magnificent frigatebirds, laughing gulls, and the brown booby within one of the most important breeding colonies in the region.

*—Continued on page 23*

# How to Maximise a Horizon Sailing Charter in the BVI and St. Vincent & the Grenadines

A Caribbean sailing charter offers something few holidays can match: the freedom to wake up somewhere different every morning, swim before breakfast and decide your day according to the wind, weather and mood. With Horizon Yacht Charters operating from Nanny Cay Marina in the British Virgin Islands and Blue Lagoon Marina in St Vincent, guests can choose between two of the Caribbean's most rewarding cruising grounds, with bareboat, skippered and crewed options available.



The first step to maximising your charter is choosing the destination that suits your style. The BVI is ideal for easy island hopping, with relatively short passages connecting Tortola, Virgin Gorda, Jost Van Dyke, Norman Island, Cooper Island and, for those wanting to venture farther, Anegada. Horizon's BVI itineraries range from five nights to two weeks and can incorporate everything from snorkelling, diving, kiting and hiking to secluded bays, spa days and lively beach bars.

Rather than trying to tick off every island, build breathing room into your itinerary. Spend a morning exploring The Baths before sailing north, linger over lunch ashore, or give yourself an unscheduled afternoon to discover a quiet anchorage. Horizon provides an individual chart and boat briefing before each BVI charter, making this the ideal time to discuss priorities and tailor the route around the crew's interests and experience.

*—Continued on the next page*



—*Continued from the previous page*

St Vincent and the Grenadines offer a different kind of adventure. Starting from Blue Lagoon Marina, sailors can head south through an archipelago of more than 30 islands and cays, with highlights including Bequia, Mustique, Mayreau and the Tobago Cays. The passages are generally more open than in the BVI, rewarding sailors who enjoy putting in some genuine sea miles between spectacular anchorages.

Here, allow enough time to slow down. Explore Bequia's colourful waterfront and engage with local vendors; Anchor off picturesque Mayreau and paddle board or dinghy ashore for a BBQ dinner or a walk to the hilltop village and historic 1930 stone Catholic church; Dedicate plenty of time to the Tobago Cays, where reefs, clear water and small uninhabited islands make getting off the yacht every bit as important as sailing it. For a longer adventure, Horizon also offers one-way charters from St Vincent to Union Island or Grenada, recommending at least ten nights for these routes.

Choosing the right charter format can also transform the experience. Confident sailors may relish the independence of a bareboat, while a skipper can remove pressure from navigation and introduce guests to local favourites they might otherwise miss. A learn-to-sail charter is an ideal skillcation, broadening horizons for future vacations. The ultimate indulgence of a fully crewed charter allows everyone to concentrate entirely on the experience.

Above all, resist over-planning. Provision wisely, discuss your ambitions with Horizon's local team, leave room for weather and spontaneous discoveries, and remember that the best Caribbean sailing days are rarely measured by distance covered. The real luxury is having your own yacht, an extraordinary cruising ground ahead and the freedom to decide where to go next.

For information on charters aboard exceptionally maintained monohulls and catamarans, visit horizonyachtcharters.com.







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THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

# PURE GRENADA

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—*Continued from page 19*



NICK SPENCER

*Red-footed booby chick*

The Grenadines are home to three globally important and 18 regionally important seabird nesting sites, as well as the most extensive coral reef complex in the southeastern Caribbean. Seabirds contribute directly to reef health by transferring nutrient-rich guano into surrounding coastal waters, particularly in locations where numerous seabirds are nesting and roosting. This nutrient transfer promotes coral growth and in turn supports reef-dependent fish populations. Fisheries in the Grenadines are vital for local food sources, employment, and export revenue. Seabirds are also vital to maritime livelihoods through helping fisherfolk locate fish, navigate at sea, and interpret changing weather conditions.

The Battowia restoration operation required extensive planning, coordination, and specialized field expertise. Invasive species specialists, with experience in offshore Caribbean island restoration and invasive species removal, were hired to carry out the work with oversight from EPIC's local field team. A research permit was applied for and granted by project partner, the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Forestry Department.



NICK SPENCER

*Juvenile red-footed booby*

With this first phase of restoration completed, the EPIC team is already looking toward and planning the next phase of work which also includes invasive species removal on the Pillories offshore island group. While restoration takes time, this achievement marks an important turning point for Battowia's recovery and the long-term protection of one of the Caribbean's most valuable seabird nesting colonies.

This project is funded by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration funds administered by the United States Department of Interior. The project is a collaborative effort between the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Forestry Department, the Science Initiative for Environmental Conservation and Education (SCIENCE), and Environmental Protection in the Caribbean (EPIC). *To contact the EPIC Grenadines Team email epicgrenadines@epicislands.org.*



PARTNER CONTENT

# Caribbean season, without the delivery miles




For many sailors, the Caribbean season begins long before the first anchor drops in clear water. It starts with the charts coming out, regatta dates being circled, flights being checked, and the familiar question: where do we want the boat to be when the trade winds settle in?

Whether the plan is a gentle cruise through the islands, a busy racing calendar, a charter season, or simply more time afloat in warm water, getting the yacht to the Caribbean is part of the story. Some owners want the Atlantic passage itself. Others would rather arrive rested, step aboard locally, and spend their time sailing the islands instead of delivering the boat across the ocean.

**Not every Caribbean season needs to start with a crossing**

An Atlantic crossing can be one of the great sailing experiences. With the right boat, crew, and weather window, it is a passage to remember. But it is also a serious undertaking. Weather systems, squalls, currents, gear fatigue, and the sheer length of the trip all demand a lot of the yacht and everyone on board.

That is why yacht transport has become a practical option for many Caribbean-bound owners. Sevenstar Yacht Transport operates regular sailings from Northern Europe and the Mediterranean to the Caribbean, as well as from the US East Coast to the islands. With monthly departures and a choice of loading ports, owners can plan around their own cruising schedules, regatta dates, or charter commitments.

Shipping a yacht does not diminish the adventure. It simply places the adventure where many owners want it most: among the islands. Instead of spending weeks on delivery, arranging extra crew, and putting ocean miles on the boat before the season begins, owners can fly in and start in the Caribbean with the yacht ready to use.

For cruisers, that can make a real difference. More time can be spent moving from anchorage to anchorage, meeting other sailors, exploring ashore, and following the weather at a comfortable pace. The season starts with more sailing time in the islands and fewer unknowns after a long delivery passage.

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**Think about the return before the season ends.**

Race boats have their own reasons for planning transport. The Caribbean regatta season runs on fixed dates, and boats need to arrive ready, with crew, sails, tools, and support equipment in place. For a racing team, certainty matters. Transport helps keep the focus on preparation and performance rather than on delivery timing.

More owners are also booking the return trip at the same time as the outbound voyage. It is a simple step that can make the whole season easier to manage. The yacht has confirmed routes to the Caribbean and home, with transport insurance options available as part of the planning. It also helps Sevenstar plan capacity early, so space is available when the season ends.

The return leg is often where transport proves its value. After a winter of cruising or a busy run of regattas, the yacht may need to head back to the Mediterranean for summer, return to Northern Europe for maintenance, or reposition for the next owner's trip. Sailing back is possible, of course, but it is not always the most practical choice. A shipped return means fewer miles, less wear and tear, and a smoother handover into the next season.

**How the transport is handled**

For owners who have not shipped a yacht before, the process can be impressive the first time. Seeing a boat lifted and secured on board a ship is not an everyday sight. Behind that moment, however, is a carefully prepared operation. Sevenstar works with captains, owners, local agents, and loadmasters on lift plans, stow plans, and sea-fastening arrangements tailored to each yacht.

The yachts heading for the Caribbean are not all alike. Some are family cruisers seeking an easy winter in the islands. Some are race boats traveling with sails, spares, and support equipment. Others are motor yachts repositioning for owner use or charter. Each boat has its own setup, but the aim is the same: to get her safely to the right place, at the right time, and ready for the season ahead.

Sevenstar's Caribbean services follow the region's seasonal rhythm. Regular departures from Northern Europe, the Mediterranean, and the US East Coast give owners several ways to position their yachts for the islands, with Le Marin, St. John's, and St. Thomas serving as practical Caribbean ports for both arrival and departure. Flexible loading options make it easier to choose a practical departure point, while monthly sailings help align transport with cruising plans, regatta calendars, and winter schedules.

Yacht transport is not the answer for every sailor. For some, the ocean passage is part of the dream, and that will always be true. But for owners whose goal is to spend more of the season among the islands, or for teams working toward a fixed racing calendar, shipping the yacht can be the more practical option.

The Caribbean has a way of pulling sailors back. One season leads to another, favorite anchorages become part of the boat's story, and regattas return to the calendar year after year. When transport is planned early, especially as a round trip, that seasonal rhythm becomes easier to manage.

For anyone looking ahead to warm trades, island passages, and another season in Caribbean waters, now is a good time to consider how the yacht will get there and how she will come home again. Whether the plan is cruising, racing, chartering, or simply giving the boat a better winter, Sevenstar can help make the move part of the plan rather than the hard part of the season.

Ship the boat. Sail the islands. Come home without the hard miles welcome@sevenstar-yacht-transport.nl

# Top Seven Beach Bars in the British Virgin Islands

*Story and photos by Robyn McCarty*

One of the greatest joys of chartering in the British Virgin Islands is how effortlessly you can hop from anchorage to a beach bar. From legendary Painkillers to floating dance floors, the BVI is home to some of the most iconic beach bars in the world, each offering its own slice of island personality. Exploring them is as much a part of the experience as the sailing itself, and it's what makes this destination so unforgettable.

What truly sets the BVI apart is how these beach bars are best experienced by boat. With limited road access, scattered islands, and bars tucked into quiet bays or floating just offshore, a private charter allows you to move freely from one destination to another on your own schedule. You can arrive by dinghy, jump straight into the water and swim ashore, linger longer when the vibe is just right, or sail on when adventure calls. No ferries, no crowds, no rigid timelines, just a seamless, stress-free way to experience its legendary beach bar scene, where the journey is every bit as memorable as the destination.

We've rounded up our favorite beach bars in the British Virgin Islands, and believe me, we've tried them all! Being a charter broker, I love having the opportunity to give people my honest recommendations, so they can have the best trip possible. No matter your vibe, there's a beach bar for you.




*The Soggy Dollar Bar, Jost Van Dyke: casual, lively, and quintessentially BVI*

**Soggy Dollar Bar, Jost Van Dyke**

No road access, no dock, just crystal-clear water and one legendary cocktail. Come ashore to the iconic Soggy Dollar Bar on Jost Van Dyke and order the world-famous Painkiller with your toes still in the sand. It's casual, lively, and quintessentially BVI. If you've dreamed of a postcard-perfect beach bar moment, this is it.



Willy T, *Norman Island: floating on the water*

So why the name Soggy Dollar? It's delightfully literal. With no dock, many visitors swim ashore, arriving with wet cash in hand.

One of our favorite touches is the Soggy Dollar Drink Board, which lets guests purchase drinks for friends in advance. It's a fun, unexpected way to create connection, and a memorable surprise when they arrive at this legendary beach bar.

This one is a must-visit, and don't deny yourself the tried-and-true cocktail, the Painkiller. I mean, if you've been to the BVI and skipped Soggy Dollar, did you even go?

***Willy T*, Norman Island**

Have you ever been to a bar that's literally floating on the water? We have, and we highly recommend it.

Anchored just off the beach, the *Willy T* is a renowned floating bar and restaurant where the party rarely slows down. Expect dancing, bold personalities, and the kind of stories that only seem to happen at sea. Jumping off the upper deck and spontaneous celebrations are all part of the experience.

*Willy T* is named after William Thornton, a British-American physician, inventor, and architect best known for designing the U.S. Capitol.

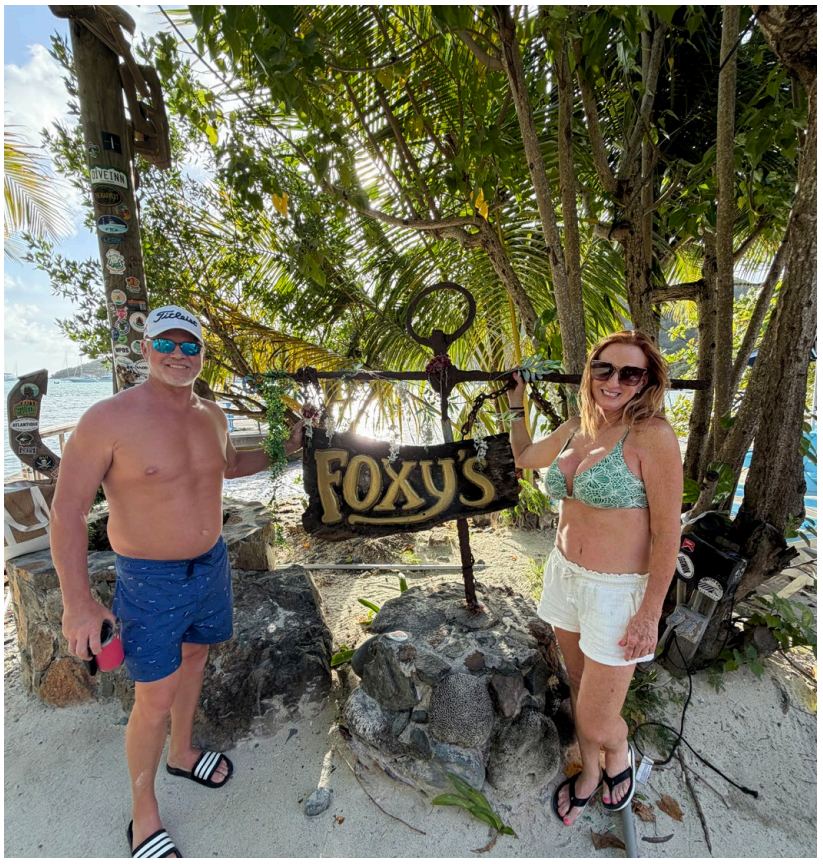
What we love most is how *Willy T* fits every vibe. Looking for something laid-back? Stop by for lunch, feel the breeze, and relax on deck. Ready to turn things up? Late afternoon is prime time for shot skis, dancing, and partying the day away.

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**Foxy's Bar, Jost Van Dyke**

An institution in the BVI, Foxy's is beloved for its live music, quirky island charm, and legendary New Year's Eve celebrations. Whether you stop by for a casual lunch or stay late into the night, this Great Harbour hotspot delivers energy, character, and unforgettable memories.




*Foxy's Bar, Jost Van Dyke: live music, quirky island charm, and legendary New Year's Eve celebrations*

Named after its founder, Philicianno "Foxy" Callwood, and often recognized as the birthplace of the BVI yachting tourism industry, Foxy's has been keeping the spirit of the islands alive for more than five decades. Foxy and his wife, Tessa, built the bar as a way to share the joy, music, and culture of the islands with visitors from around the world. That legacy lives on today through their daughter, Justine, who has founded several beloved beach bars of her own.

Known for generous pours, Foxy's is the place to try the famous Sly Fox rum cocktail or a frosty Bushwacker while enjoying live music, or to drop in for one of the epic parties that have become part of BVI lore.

A true sailor's rite of passage, Foxy's has been a must-stop destination for generations of charter guests and cruisers in the British Virgin Islands.

**Cooper Island Beach Club, Cooper Island**

For a more laid-back, eco-chic experience, Cooper Island Beach Club delivers craft cocktails, fresh island cuisine, and stunning sunset views. Relaxed yet refined, it's the perfect stop for guests who appreciate great food, thoughtful design, and golden-hour moments that linger long after the sun goes down.

Cooper Island Beach Club, home to the BVI's only solar-powered microbrewery, is a great place to grab a tasting flight and take in the scenery. Browse the island's boutique, enjoy fresh takes on BVI classics at the Beach Club restaurant, and don't miss a visit to their rum bar.

With one of the most extensive rum selections in the Virgin Islands,




*Cooper Island Beach Club, Cooper Island: a laid-back, eco-chic experience*

over 400 rums from around the world, the rum bar is ideal for sipping aged rums or expertly crafted cocktails in a calm, sophisticated setting. If you love rum but prefer a relaxed atmosphere over a party scene, this is your spot.

Endless drink options, incredible views, and delicious food make Cooper Island Beach Club the perfect place to slow down, recharge, and reset during your charter.

**Cow Wreck Beach Bar, Anegada**

If you're making your way to Anegada, Cow Wreck Beach Bar is a must-stop for a completely different side of the BVI. Known for its pristine white sand, quiet atmosphere, and crystal-clear turquoise water, this stretch of beach feels wonderfully remote.



*Cow Wreck Beach Bar, Anegada: plans fade away and island time takes over*

The name "Cow Wreck" comes from a 1929 shipwreck, when a freighter carrying cattle bones ran aground on nearby Horseshoe Reef. For years, bones washed ashore, giving the beach its nickname, something the bar still playfully nods to with its quirky cow skull decor.

Cow Wreck is the kind of place where plans fade away and island time takes over. Settle into a beach chair, take a walk along the shoreline, or simply enjoy the peaceful surroundings that make Anegada so special. Of course, no visit is complete without trying their signature cocktail, the infamous "Cow Killer." This is a creamy, potent twist on the classic Painkiller.

With its mix of natural beauty, rich history, and laid-back charm, Cow Wreck Beach Bar is a stop that feels both authentic and unforgettable.

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**Bitter End Yacht Club, Virgin Gorda**



*Bitter End Yacht Club, Virgin Gorda: barefoot chic*

A family institution in North Sound, Bitter End Yacht Club offers a beach bar experience that blends laid-back island living with a touch of elevated adventure. It's the final, remote outpost in the BVI, where the Caribbean Sea meets the Atlantic Ocean, and arriving by yacht is part of its magic.

The setting, against the waters of Virgin Gorda's North Sound, is stunning: calm seas, surrounding islands, and endless activity on the water. Bitter End embraces a "barefoot chic" vibe, with many of its structures built from materials salvaged after Hurricane Irma in 2017. One standout is the *Reef Sampler*, a storm-recovered boat transformed into a unique beach bar.

What makes Bitter End especially memorable is its energy — equal parts relaxed beach club and watersports playground. Spend the afternoon sipping a rum cocktail while watching kiteboarders glide across the water, or explore the shops and waterfront spaces.

For charter guests, it's the perfect blend of scenery, activity, and unmistakable BVI charm — all in one unforgettable stop.

**Saba Rock, Virgin Gorda**



*Saba Rock, Virgin Gorda: craft cocktails, polished dining, curated spaces*

Set in the heart of the North Sound, Saba Rock is one of those places you can spot from a distance, and once you arrive, you understand why it's a must-stop. This unique one-acre island resort has a storied past, originally gaining recognition in the 1960s as a diving base founded by Bert Kilbride, long before it became the vibrant destination it is today.

The vibe here leans a bit more elevated. Think craft cocktails, polished dining, and curated spaces that invite you to stay awhile. Grab a drink at the bar, settle in for lunch overlooking the water, or wander upstairs for a different perspective of the island and its surroundings. There's also a sense of discovery woven throughout, from a small museum showcasing maritime artifacts to the daily 5 p.m. tarpon feeding, a longstanding tradition.

What makes Saba Rock stand out is its balance — it's lively without feeling crowded, refined without losing its island ease. Whether you're stopping in for a quick cocktail or lingering into the evening, it's a place that effortlessly blends social energy with that unmistakable BVI backdrop.

For charter guests, it's a staple stop in the North Sound. Stylish, storied, and always worth pulling up to.

**Charter Magic**

What makes these beach bars truly special isn't just the drinks or the views — it's how you arrive. Exploring by private charter means no schedules, no crowds, and complete freedom to move at your own pace. Swim ashore, stay for another round, or sail on when the mood strikes.

If discovering the British Virgin Islands one beach bar at a time sounds like your ideal vacation, a private charter is the best way to experience it.

*Robyn McCarty is the founder of Chillaxin Charters.*

# The Launching of *Free*

*Story by Maiwenn Beadle, images by Anna Landry*



*A crowd gathers for the blessing of the boat. The people onboard are family members of the builders, the owner, and others with a special connection.*

***Editor's note:*** *"The Launching of* Free*" originally appeared in the January 2016 issue of* Caribbean Compass *(www.caribbeancompass.com/online/january16compass_online.pdf). It is reprinted here as a tribute to an historic and ongoing Caribbean traditional industry.*

Free in St. Barth *is still owned by Thierry de Badereau and still racing. The winner of the West Indies Regatta in 2016, she showed she had lost nothing when she claimed victory in the same race in 2024.*

Cal Enoe is still building Carriacou sloops. His current project is a 46-footer using Guyanan greenheart for the keel and local white spruce for the ribs. A training project at the Carriacou Boatbuilding School, it is scheduled on completion to sail to Europe as a platform for cultural exchange and international promotion of Carriacou's maritime heritage.

In a sea of people, I press my face to her stem and whisper a self-conscious blessing. *Sail fast, little boat, sail fast and keep your people safe.* She is a strong boat, well built, with clean, sweet lines. Her frames are hand-cut from island trees, her planking silverballi. She is strong but light. She does not need my blessing. We will race against her in Antigua and she will give her sisters a run for their money; you can see it in her deep forefoot, her beam, her sheer.

There is no discussion. These boats, built by hand and eye, their timbers hewn with an adze, are unbelievably fast and fleet. A Carriacou sloop, her hull shaped by tradition, is like nothing else to sail. She is built to work, to fish, to stay ahead of the customs man. She is built with the pride of a village in every plank and every seam. On an island where there is precious little to inspire the youth, here is a tradition handed from father to son. Craft and skills taught, and, most important of all, a lesson of patience. For even in a world of iPhones and tweets, a world of constant communication and immediate gratification, you cannot hurry the build of a wooden boat. Each frame must be shaped, each plank. Each seam must be caulked, and the ring of the caulking iron is steady and monotonous and will not be hurried. From model to sailing, she is a lesson in the old ways.

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*Carrying the boat, piece by piece. Here is a group of villagers with the hull.*

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*All the villagers know she will float by sunset; all the outsiders are unsure and concerned, missing the organization that peppers their lives.*

But she is not a boat yet, not until she has tasted the water. Now she is a heavy solid box, and to make her into a boat the whole village will need to help her across the 150 feet of beach and through the shallows until she floats high on the ocean.

Three days ago she was a bare hull, and in a week she will be underway to Antigua, 300 miles to the north. The patient build is done now, and there is a flurry of activity. Everyone will help. A goat head sits on the workbench and there is blood on her deck from the kill, a sacrifice that the boat demands. Later the priest will sprinkle holy water on her and bless her. The builders' mouths are dry from the sun and the shot of Jack Iron rum shared to send her on her way. A last lick of sunshine-yellow paint is going on her hull, and somewhere on the island a truck is searching out utility poles for the rollers. An anchor is found, big and old and rusty. It will take the entire load on the line used to haul her from the beach.

An animated discussion ensues. *How far out? Here, No there. Don't be stupid mon, it need to be there. Will it set? Is there enough line for the tackles? No? No problem, we will find more.* Here you can clearly see the juxtaposition of two cultures. All the villagers know she will float by sunset; all the outsiders are unsure and concerned, missing the organization that peppers their lives. Where else could you find a village that will all turn out to drag a boat across a beach, not even for one of their own but for a complete stranger? For the last 150 years they have launched boats here in this way, many of them much larger. Now there is nothing to be said, only work to be done.

Here is Cal Enoe, the builder, calmly in charge. Beside him, Alexis Andrews, filmmaker and champion of these boats. We watched his amazing film *Vanishing Sail* last night in Hillsborough, the hall ringing with laughter and gentle ribbing. Hey Hopey, you a movie star now. To one side stands Thierry, the St. Barth restaurateur who will be this sloop's owner; his face is tense now but it will relax in the biggest grin when he sees her floating. The boat is a dream conjured up between Alexis and Thierry at the West Indies Regatta, always very generously supported by Thierry with a dinner for all comers at his fabulous beach restaurant, La Plage, where she will be the day charter boat.

The crowd is drinking beer and rum and the advice is coming in stronger and faster. A massive braid line is slung around her middle and tied in a knot, no, lots of knots. Well, if you are not sure of your knots, tie lots. Chocks are hammered into her pristine paint and the front of her keel is jacked with a car jack. The rollers have arrived and skids are run down the beach. Under the chocks, poles four inches in diameter take her load on the port side, and as she lists gently onto them, the barrels that have supported her weight through the build are removed. A massive plank is nailed on the turn of her bilge where she will lay on the rollers. And then the heavens open: not just a light shower, but a drenching tropical downpour. At least, if nothing else, the skids will be well lubricated for her launch.

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*Setting the lines for the launch*

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*Many hands make light work of a heavy hull, portrayed in the watercolour "The Launching" by Anna Landry.*

Here are the priest and the band. She is blessed and christened and her name unfurls on the flag. Free in St. Barth. Now we must set her free. Behind me I hear a voice say — either wistfully or resentfully, I am not sure which — "once we launch her we will not see her again, she will go off to Antigua and not come back." And indeed this is true. These boats have become so expensive to build that they are no longer island fishing boats and cargo boats — they have become yachts. Sadly, the islanders who build them can no longer afford to keep them. Gentrification has allowed the building tradition to continue where it would have died, and the future will always be different from the past, but there is a tinge of sadness in this amelioration. This is the dichotomy: in keeping something alive, we have changed it irreconcilably, but with the price of timber doubling in the past few years, the only way for the traditions to live on is for outside money to come and buy these boats. This boat is the first boat built by Alwyn Enoe's sons, the first boat built by a new generation of boat builders; with her the skills have lived to be passed on.

And so the process of cutting down commences. Three axes come down in unison on the bases of the poles, chop, chop, chop, and she slips six inches as the bases narrow and break off in the sand. Chop, chop, and down she comes one lurch at a time until she rests on her keel and the turn of the bilge, like a great whale lying on her side. Once the paint on her keel is touched up and the last welding is done on her rudder, all hands start to pull and push her. Can it really be possible to move her like this? More hands to her transom, then another haul and she lurches forward on the skids. She is headed to the sea. There is no choice, she must float now, she cannot go back. With each effort she moves a little closer, until she is poised at the steep slope of the beach. The line holding her back, slowing her headlong dash to the sea, snaps but she stops just in time. Over the rise she goes, and down with a crack. Again and again the crew on the line hauls, then waits while the heaving anchor is reset. Her bow is pushed around by the power of many hands, and once again the hands on her transom shove. The impossible is happening, and she is moving inexorably toward her natural element. In the twilight she takes to the water, not yet floating, but close. A powerboat takes her bow line and *Free* is free from the land. A massive cheer erupts, tense faces relax, and the bottle of rum is passed. She floats high, and she is a beauty.

In a week I will see her again in Antigua, the impossible achieved, her rig stepped and a 44-hour trip covering the 300 miles between English Harbour and Windwardside under her belt. She is a flyer, all right — amazingly fast and by all accounts strong and comfortable. Thierry's face is grinning now, and Cal cracks a shy but proud smile. The tension of the launch is gone. Here, on a dock usually frequented by megayachts and rock stars, sits a beautiful little Carriacou sloop, and in her the story of an island tradition.



*A massive braid line is slung around her middle and tied in a knot, no, lots of knots, at her stem. Well, if you are not sure of your knots, tie lots.*



LEXI FISHER

# Mustique

*by Lexi Fisher and Chris Doyle*

*The only permissible anchorage is in Britannia Bay.*

Mustique, like St. Barths, is a Caribbean island rife with celebrity lore. It was developed by socialite Colin Tennant, who bought the island in 1958 and began selling plots to wealthy friends starting in the 1960s. In the 1970s, a consortium of villa owners led by Venezuelan oil tycoon Hans Neumann bought a controlling stake in the Mustique Company from Tennant to protect the island from further development, and by the mid-1980s had bought out his remaining share. House prices have soared from about a million dollars to over 10 times that much. Ownership has transitioned from celebrities to businesspeople who value their privacy.

Mustique has about 90 large houses, one hotel, a beach bar, a few boutiques, a small local village, and a fishing camp. About half the houses are available for rent when the owners are not in residence. As you would expect for an island of this type, prices are geared to the well-heeled.

Once very open and friendly, Mustique now has some restrictions. Some of these are: use common courtesy — stick to the roads and do not walk up driveways or onto private property. Use the beach south of the anchorage for beach time. Take scenic photos for your own use, but do not photograph residents.

What is wonderful about Mustique is that much of the island has been left wild. There are lovely trails, and there is not much traffic. As other islands sprout buildings like some invasive weed, much of Mustique remains beautiful and undeveloped. It is one of the best-preserved Grenadine islands, where you can often hike or bike in peace, with fabulous beaches and shady pathways.

**Navigation**

Montezuma Shoal is about half to three-quarters of a mile west of Britannia Bay. It presents a real hazard and has damaged the hull of a cruise ship, a large charter yacht, and many a bareboat. It is marked by a red and black buoy. Stay at least a quarter of a mile away. If you come from the south, do not follow the coast too closely, as there is quite a reef extending seaward from the southern point of Britannia Bay.



LEXI FISHER

*Looking from the dinghy dock to the celebrated Basil's Bar, a must-do stop for many of Mustique's visiting sailors.*

The only permissible anchorage is in Britannia Bay. If you see a yacht moored in Endeavour Bay, it belongs to a house owner. Britannia Bay has sparkling clear water and is a lovely area for swimming and snorkeling, though it is generally rather rolly. The north side of the harbor has loud music on Wednesday nights.

**Regulations**

The Mustique Company controls the coastal waters of Mustique and provides 35 well-maintained moorings for yachts up to 60 feet; legally they cannot take yachts even one inch longer. Yachts over 60 feet must anchor outside the moorings under the direction of the harbormaster (Mustique Moorings, VHF:16/68, 488-8363, 533-0216). The Mustique Moorings crew are around most of the day from 0800-1800, but sometimes away from 1230-1430.

*—Continued on page 34*

## CALENDAR

# September 2026

| | |
|---|---|
| 3-5 | Curaçao North Sea Jazz Festival. curacaonorthseajazz.com |
| 6 | Flag Day – public holiday in Bonaire |
| 7 | Labor Day – public holiday in Puerto Rico & USVI |
| 9-12 | Varadero Gourmet Festival, Havana, Cuba. grupocubasol.com/events |
| 12 | Caribbean Wellness Day |
| 14-21 | St. Lucia Dive Fest. stlucia.org/en/events/dive-fest/ |
| 16 | National Heroes Day – public holiday, St. Kitts & Nevis |
| 19 | Independence Day – public holiday, St. Kitts & Nevis |
| 19-21 | Back to School Regatta & ILCA Masters Championship, BVI |
| 22 | Autumnal Equinox |
| 22-26 | St. Lucia Bill Fish Tournament, Rodney Bay Marina, St. Lucia. slgfa.profishingtournaments.com/tournament.php?id=2524 |
| | Republic Day – public holiday, Trinidad & Tobago |
| 24 | BVI Virgin's Cup and Willy T Race. caribbean-multihulls.com/event/bvi-virgins-cup-and-willy-t-race |
| 26 | Harvest Moon (full moon) |
| 29-4 Oct | Tobago International Cycling Classic, Tobago |

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—*Continued from page 32*




Doyle Guide *chart of Mustique*

There is a conservation fee that entitles you to stay three consecutive nights. This fee is: up to 70 feet, EC$200; 71-100 feet, EC$450; 101-150 feet, EC$550; over 151 feet, EC$1,000. The harbormaster and their team collect the fees and give you an official receipt. Their hut is at the end of the jetty. The moorings do not lift, so they can be hard to reach. Call the harbormaster and someone will come out and help. Otherwise, put a dinghy in the water or, if you have a stern platform, come stern-to so you are low enough to tie onto the mooring. There is no extra charge for the moorings.

Each buoy has a swivel on top. Attach your lines through the swivel. Use two lines, one to each side of your bow. Allow plenty of line to increase the scope (20 feet minimum, more if your bow is high off the water). Never use a single line from one side of the boat through the mooring to the other side. Yachts of up to 45 feet and 6- to 7-foot draft can use any mooring. Longer and deeper yachts should use the outer moorings, which are more widely spaced over sand. If you are over 60 feet, or if all the moorings are taken, contact the harbormaster for anchoring instructions. Do not anchor without guidance.

Day-charter yachts visiting Mustique pay a landing fee of EC$40 per head or EC$300 per day.

Regulations may be changed by the Mustique Company at any time, so fees and procedures are subject to change. Before you visit, it is well worth calling the moorings office and asking about the current level of restrictions.

Tenders should only be used to drop people ashore in Britannia Bay or to go to the beach in the same bay. They should not be used to visit other parts of the island.

Drones and press photography are banned unless express permission has been given by the Mustique Company.

Because of the island's priority on privacy, captains are responsible for their crew and guests, and the Mustique Company has the right to permanently ban any captain and yacht whose passengers or crew misbehave.

The designated visitor area is usually open. This includes the local village, the shoreline south to the salt pond, and the salt pond trail. If you wish to go outside this area, please talk to the moorings office so they will know who is wandering about.

Sometimes (normally three weeks over Christmas and the New Year, two weeks in August, and two weeks over Easter), land access is further restricted, and you cannot go outside the visitor area unless you have a confirmed reservation for The Cotton House, in which case you must ask them to send transport for you. If, at these times, you need to visit customs or the clinic, arrange it with the harbormaster's office. There is some flexibility. During these times call before you come to discuss what you want to do. You may be able to hike, though you may have to take a local guide.

Beach picnic tables have been set up for the use of residents. People on yachts may sometimes be able to use the ones in the visitor area at no charge; ask the harbormaster for details.

*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).*

## St. Vincent & the Grenadines Entry and Exit Procedures

**Ports of Entry**

The port of entry for Mustique is Britannia Bay, Lovell. For additional **St. Vincent & the Grenadines Ports of Entry** (www.noonsite.com/place/st-vincent-the-grenadines/#mainports), click on the blue Explore Country button and select Main Ports. Noonsite members can access the **Noonsite: Ports of Entry Map** (www.noonsite.com/noonsite-map/?country=st-vincent-the-grenadines).

**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 six months can be granted.

**Entry Process**

Visitors to Mustique are only permitted to use the mooring buoys in Britannia Bay and need to taxi to the airport for formalities, when required. On arrival to St. Vincent & the Grenadines, the captain should proceed to the customs, immigration and port authority offices with their SailClear notification ID number, exit zarpe, crew passports and boat paperwork. A 30-day cruising permit is granted, with additional months possible upon request.

**Exit Process**

Same as the entry process; clear out at one of the ports of entry for St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

**Rates**

Private vessels must pay a monthly cruise tax of $35 XCD per person on all crew and passengers over the age of 12. Charter boats must be in possession of a St. Vincent & the Grenadines Cruising License.

noonsite.com

*Check **Noonsite: St. Vincent & the Grenadines** (www.noonsite.com/place/st-vincent-the-grenadines) 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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*Hawksbill Turtle by Nina Banks.*

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*2017: James sailing with the two oldest kids (Tormentina - age 9, Raivo - age 7) in Jason Fletcher's sailing dinghy, St. David's Harbour, Grenada.*

# Coming Home to Grenada

*Story and photos by Somira Sao*

*After a broken spreader forces the Sao-Burwick family back to Grenada, six kids and 5,000 miles of ocean prove just how far a cruising family can grow.*

For 14 years, my husband, James, and I have been living aboard full-time with our kids: Tormentina, Raivo, Pearl, Tarzan, Jade and Atlas, ages 16, 14, 12, 9, 6 and 4. They always contribute immensely to our sailing program, but on our most recent passage — from South America to the Caribbean aboard our 50-foot trimaran, *Thunderbird* — it was as if all the knowledge the kids had gained over the years shifted perfectly into place.

The passage had started in Uruguay and taken us 5,000 nautical miles, along the entire coast of Brazil, French Guiana, Suriname and Guyana. We then sailed along the coasts of Venezuela and Trinidad, through Galleon's Pass, and entered the Gulf of Paria through Bocas del Dragón to Chaguaramas, Trinidad.

Underway, our young crew suddenly showed a lot of self-motivation and newfound power, both physical and mental. I felt a distinct maturity shift in them, whether it was navigating, taking the helm, trimming sails, making sail changes, standing watch or managing risk to prevent problems. There was a new fire in everyone's eyes. When we arrived, we were a totally different group of people. There was mutual respect for one another's strengths and vulnerabilities, with shared gratitude for our ability to work well as a team.

About two weeks after we made landfall, James told us, "All I want for my birthday is to go sailing." With momentum and energy from our last voyage, it was hard to stop.

We stripped excess weight from the boat — surfboards, skateboards, spares, extra sails, winter clothes. Two days later, on his birthday morning, we cleared out of Chaguaramas. We made a brief stop in Scotland Bay, where we scrubbed *Thunderbird*'s three hulls of any growth, and then we picked up our anchor, ready to sail. We slipped smoothly out of the Boca with the outgoing tide and made a course north toward St. Croix in the US Virgin Islands.

As a family, we had spent considerable time in Trinidad and Grenada, but we hadn't explored the other Caribbean islands. It felt a little strange to sail past Grenada without stopping. We had friends there we hadn't seen in seven years. These long-overdue reunions would be postponed a bit longer, until we returned south. Hurricane season had just started, making it sensible to head north sooner rather than later.

Our loose plan was to visit the US Virgin Islands, then sail to the British Virgin Islands to see friends raising families and operating charter businesses out of Tortola. After that, we planned to island-hop south and spend time between Grenada and Trinidad for the remainder of hurricane season.

**The First 24 Hours**

After exiting the Boca, we made excellent time. What a difference a light boat makes. We had aggressive conditions: strong currents flowing from the southeast, and 20 to 25 knots on our beam. It was quite the Caribbean birthday bash compared to the gentle equatorial sailing we'd just experienced.

Pearl had baked a birthday cake in a double boiler the night before and was waiting for the right moment to light candles, but James didn't care about cake. He had a big smile, so happy to be sailing fast and flying a hull. As a sailor who felt totally at home in the Southern Ocean, he was completely in his element in conditions like these.

*—Continued on the next page*



*2018: Birdseye view of St. George's Harbour, where the hustle and bustle of the Carenage and Port Louis is a big contrast to the undeveloped feel of St. David's.*

*—Continued from the previous page*

The kids discussed the boat's sensitivity now that we were sailing with less weight on board. We had very little sail area up. With this wind direction and current, we realized a better plan may have been to make a speed run to Panama.

Then, almost 24 hours out, James noticed that our port aft spreader bar had broken. My spirits sank. The mast didn't look compromised, but we dropped our main and rolled up the jib. Raivo helped James stabilize the rig while I fired up the engine.

We turned around and set course for Grenada, disappointed about breaking something but simultaneously relieved it happened when and where it did, allowing us to reach a familiar port for repairs.

**A Return to Familiar Waters**

James' history with the Caribbean reads like chapters from another life. His first visit to Grenada was in 1992, when he sailed to St. George's aboard *Nyamba*, a 42-foot aluminum boat that was previously owned by Olympian and America's Cup sailor Sir James Hardy. James anchored at Port Louis when it was still wild and undeveloped with just one dock.

He remembers rowing his dinghy to the seawall in Carenage and climbing up to the Nutmeg ice cream shop above the harbor. The lazy spin of the ceiling fan, the woman's smile as she scooped, and the brain freeze that hit him so hard he doubled over laughing were simple pleasures in a simpler time, when the future stretched ahead like an endless trade wind passage.

A year later, he returned to Prickly Bay and anchored near a wooden dock that creaked with every swell. There were no moorings then, just boats swinging on their anchors and the informal community that forms around shared adventures. That's when he witnessed seamanship as an art form: Don Street sailing *Iolaire* into the anchorage under full main in light air, executing a perfect 180-degree turn, dropping anchor and then backing down with precision. A line was thrown to the dock from the stern, and then Don calmly opened a Heineken as if he'd just parked a car instead of a 46-foot yawl.

James chatted with him on the dock without knowing what a legend he was. He just knew he'd never seen anyone make sailing look so effortless.

**Rediscovery**

Almost a quarter century passed before James returned to Grenada in 2016. In the interim, he had lived his own high-latitude adventures at sea, sailing solo in the Southern Ocean via the three great capes, followed by extreme voyaging with our young family.

While we were living on our Finot-Conq Open 40, *Anasazi Girl*, in the Beagle Channel, James was offered a job in Grenada. We had three children at the time and another on the way. It was a month-long project, managing a refit on a Chuck Paine 62-foot Aussie called *Smoke*. The project was to complete the refit currently underway and determine what additional work was needed to make the boat market-ready.

*Smoke* was hauled out in St. David's Harbour on the southeast side of Grenada, a magical spot that still felt wild and undeveloped, away from the hustle and bustle that had transformed other parts of the island. He realized it would be an ideal place to bring our family. When he returned to us in Chile, he planted the seed of sailing with the family to the Caribbean instead of Europe.

It made sense to bring the family to St. David's, where we could be together while *Smoke*'s remaining work was completed.

A year later, in 2017, we sailed *Anasazi Girl* into St. David's channel at sunrise. What a special landfall after a 21-day nonstop passage from Rio de Janeiro! Back then, we only had four children and they were much smaller: ages 8, 6, 3 and 1. We arrived with no marine traffic, tied up to the dock and celebrated a passage that had started in the Beagle Channel. The icing on that cake was closing the loop on our family circumnavigation when we passed Recife in Brazil.

*—Continued on page 40*

CARIBBEAN COMPASS

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LISA LARSEN FROM PIXABAY

—Continued from page 38



*2017: The two oldest kids, Tormentina (age 9) and Raivo (age 7) on the dock at Grenada Marine. In the background is the Chuck Paine Bougainvillea 62,* Smoke*, which James was refitting.*

St. David's Harbour was everything old Grenada had been: a bay tucked away from city traffic and tourist development. The boatyard sat surrounded by rugged coastline and lush, forested land thick with coconut palms, native trees and mangrove swamps. The hillsides remained largely undeveloped, free from shopping centers and big chain hotels. No constant traffic buzz, just wind through trees and water lapping against hulls.




*2025: The Sao-Burwick family hauls out* Thunderbird *in St. David's Harbour, Grenada.*

James made a plan to launch *Smoke* and sail her to Punta del Este, Uruguay. *Smoke* was launched, and our family moved aboard. *Anasazi Girl* was decommissioned and stored on land.

During *Smoke*'s preparations for the voyage south, the kids grew up with St. David's Harbour as their backyard. It was perfect: customs, immigration, a marine chandlery, showers, laundry and a bar/restaurant. A fruit and vegetable truck came twice a week, and the marina provided transport to town once or twice a week, too.

The beach in front of Laura's Restaurant was ideal for children learning to swim. The water stayed shallow with a sandy bottom for a long way out, making it incredibly safe. Laura and Jason Fletcher, the marina owners, offered their space to a swim program called Get Grenada Swimming, which provided free access for all Grenadians to learn this vital skill.

My children's swimming had regressed while living on the frigid waters of the Beagle Channel. In less than a month, the three oldest were jumping off the dock or the boat and swimming to shore. They had a fantasy life




*2017: James, Tormentina (9), Raivo (7) and Pearl (5) bottom right corner. Memories of our haul-out at Grenada Marine after completing a circumnavigation on* Anasazi Girl.

playing on the beach, finding giant conch shells, chasing crabs, fishing, meeting other boat kids in the yard, and learning about refits.

Jason Fletcher let the kids sail an Optimist and his sleek, 14-foot French-designed sailing dinghy in the bay. The restaurant had great food and live music on weekends. The kids' favorites were the steel drums.

When we had transportation, we ventured out and explored the island's sights. Our gastronomical memories were imbued with Grenada's flavors: chocolate, spices, lambi, kingfish, jerk chicken, crabs and oil down. The kids ate skinups, waxy apples, cashews, mangoes, cane and coco water. They visited waterfalls and botanical gardens, and swam in Grand Anse's turquoise waters.

They saw cacao, nutmeg, mace, turmeric and rum get processed. They learned what vanilla beans and cinnamon looked like before becoming powder and extract in our galley. My children learned what a labor-intensive process it is to make a chocolate bar, and the bars we brought from Grenada on the *Smoke* delivery to Uruguay worked better than coffee for our night watches.



*2025: Raivo Sao-Burwick (age 14) inspects the broken spreader bars on* Thunderbird*'s mast.*

**Return to Grenada on *Thunderbird***

We made our way slowly with *Thunderbird* under engine power against the wind and current. It felt like we were sometimes moving backward. Plenty of time for the older kids to think and recount all these beautiful island memories of Grenada. The younger ones who had not yet been there were getting excited.

—Continued on the next page

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James called Jason to tell him we would be coming in for a repair. The closest place to anchor safely was Grand Anse, but we preferred moving the boat to St. David's. Complicated repairs sometimes take time. We knew we could pull the rig there if needed and have a pleasant lifestyle with our family while we waited for the spreader rods to be repaired.

With broken spreaders on both sides, we decided it was safer to drop an Jason asked us to keep him posted and stood by to offer help however he could. As we approached the island eight hours later, my oldest daughter, Tormentina, noticed that the starboard aft spreader had become detached, too. Sunset was coming fast. I kept the boat on course while James and Raivo worked to keep the mast stable. Now we were stressing.

chor at Grand Anse rather than try to get around the corner. We could assess the damage better in daylight and stabilize the rig before making the last 12 miles to St. David's. Once out of the lee of the island, we'd have stronger wind and seas to manage.

We booked a mooring online at Grand Anse and picked one up easily before sunset. Once the boat was secured, Jade and Atlas asked, "Can we have the birthday cake now?"

We all smiled and lit the candles, ready to celebrate not only a big birthday but also getting into port safely.

**The Afterparty**

The next morning, we put the dinghy together and cleared into Grenada. We sent Raivo up the mast to take photos of the damage. Then came James' birthday afterparty as he consulted a circle of marine industry knowledge: Peter Bosgraaf, the Dutch architect who designed our boat; Paul-Hervé Blonce, a mast engineer at Lorima in Lorient, France; Peter Gibb, an engineer in Darwin, Australia; Alexandre Fortabat, a French naval architect cruising with his family in the Caribbean;



*2025: Pearl Sao-Burwick (age 12) and Jade (age 6) enjoy sunset on the shore of St. David's Harbour.*

Alejandro Bottino, an Argentine naval architect in Buenos Aires; Buzz Ballenger from Ballenger Spars in California; and Sebastian Schull, a French composite expert. So grateful for these friends. We now had plans for the repair, so it was just a matter of moving the boat safely so we could make it.

—Continued on page 44

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*Zan, Pearl and Raivo examine* Thunderbird's *hull at haulout.*

*—Continued from page 41*

We found out that Ditmar Zubar, a machinist James met in Trinidad in the 1990s and again in Grenada during the *Smoke* refit, was teaching machining. He was in his 80s now and almost ready to retire, but he was in St. David's, training employees in a machine shop.

The plan before going anywhere was to remove the spreaders so they wouldn't bang into the rig and cause more damage, keep the rig stable with a spiderweb of lines, and then motor around the island to St. David's. Jason suggested a rigger named Michael St. Bernard, aka "Tank" (who had worked on *Smoke*), to remove the spreaders. Which he did. Raivo and James then stabilized the rig. Big graduation day for my son, because James let him make the decisions on how best to do it.

The forecast looked good for motoring around the corner the next day. We left at first light and made our way carefully. Raivo suddenly felt the full weight of being responsible for work on a boat, especially with our entire family aboard, as he nervously watched the rig's movement and the lines he had placed to keep the mast stable.

We arrived early in the morning at the entrance to St. David's Harbour and motored easily through the channel, then picked up a mooring. We felt a huge rush of relief — the sound of waves lapping gently against the hull, the familiar rugged coastline greeting us once again in this special corner of Grenada.

We felt like we were home.

*This story was originally published in* Cruising World *magazine.*

PARTNER CONTENT

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# Book Excerpt: *Soggy Dollar Daze*: Our Decade of Owning a Famous Piece of Paradise, Part 1

*from the book by Bruce Donath, photographs by the author*

***Editor's note:*** *In 1995, a married couple decided to chuck it all and buy a legendary but challenging slice of paradise: the Sandcastle cottages and Soggy Dollar bar in Jost van Dyke in the British Virgin Islands. This is their story.*




*Bruce and Debby*

Debby and I were tingling about owning a small business on a Caribbean island with a gorgeous beach! How many people get to say that? We were giddy with excitement. No more paperwork. No more running around. Of course, there would be plenty of both in the near future, but in the moment, we forgot about all that and reveled in our acquisition.

Darkie, our favorite Tortola-based taxi driver and trusted advisor, picked us up in the Sandcastle powerboat and delivered us to White Bay, where we now lived.

We were strangers in a strange land, and he helped us settle in and navigate the neighborhood. He told us which of the neighbors we could count on, which were occasionally prickly, and which ones to avoid.

Besides the one acre of lovely sand, our property encompassed the bar and another building for food, supplies, two propane-powered freezers, the boutique inventory, wine, and a tool room. We had a shed for an occasionally used 4,000-watt diesel generator, four cottages lit by propane lamps, 60 healthy coconut palms, a 24-foot Mako center



*Early days — the bar in 1995*




*This watercolor by Karla Fredericks captures the spirit of Soggy Dollar.*

console open boat with a fussy outboard, a 16-foot flat-bottom fiberglass open boat/dinghy, and two 4,000-gallon cisterns under two cottages and another under the kitchen floor. Out on the beach, we had 15 lounge chairs in various states of wear and tear and eight hammocks tied between palm trees.

What we did not have was a dock on the bay, despite the dependence on boat travel, and no road. Nor was there town water, electric power, phone utility services, streetlights, or any lights in the bay besides ours and those in the neighbors' homes, which were powered by car batteries and, occasionally, small generators.

Despite the lack of overnight cottage guests, our days were hot with a trickle of visiting boaters during this beginning of the off-season.

On our third day as owners, one day after our first weekend, Tropical Storm Iris swept in with 35-mile-per-hour winds and gusts up to 50 miles per hour.

Darkie was as cool as a cucumber, but Debby and I were terrified. What would happen to our buildings, our beautiful palm trees, our boat tied to its mooring about 70 feet from the beach? Would we find it later washed up on the beach, or worse?

Debby and I had retired to Cottage 3, which was about 130 feet from the surf and surrounded by palm trees. I lay awake, nervous as a cat, listening to the wind that made a whistling noise as it swirled around in the palm trees. I could hear the waves begin to grow in intensity.

Next came the rain, sounding like thousands of pebbles being dropped on aluminum. Then these things combined, and a real, live tropical storm blasted with fury and threatened to destroy the amazing property we'd owned for only three days.

But in the morning, everything was mostly fine. The boat was still there, and there was no damage to the property.

Debby and I toasted with wine later: "To our very first tropical storm. May we weather them all."

We kept our ears on the weather reports, having heard meteorologists report that 1995 was likely to send many hurricanes to the Caribbean islands. Tropical Storm Iris had given us a small taste of the havoc of high winds and big waves, so when we heard that Hurricane Luis was coming and that it was going to be a doozy, we put our game faces on and battened down the hatches before it made landfall. This storm was scheduled to arrive on our tenth day as owners of a place where killer storms frequently visited, though the last one, Hurricane Hugo, was six years earlier.

*You can buy Soggy Dollar Daze from Amazon at www.amazon.com/Soggy-Dollar-Daze-Decade-Paradise/dp/B0H8X5FZLH?*

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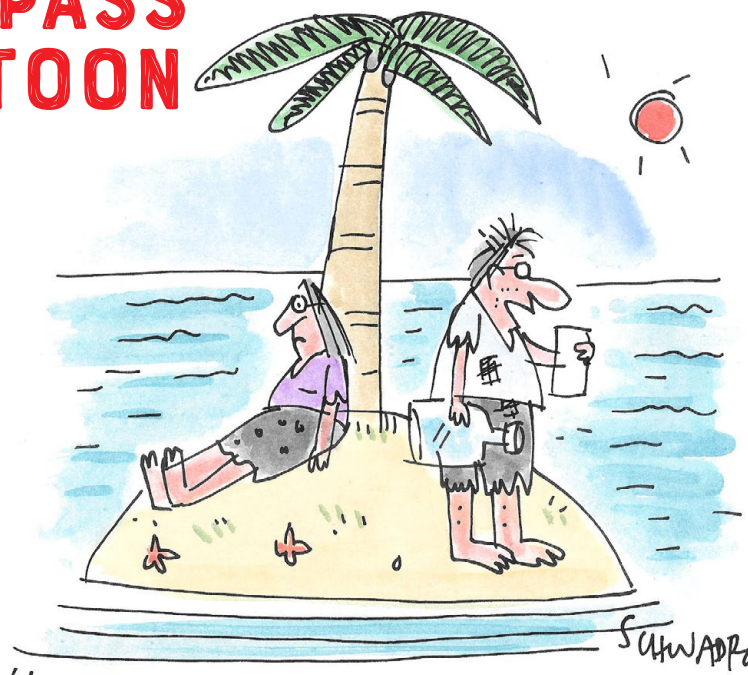


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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AkzoNobel | C/W | 11 | Doyle's Guides | USA | 35 | Marina Santa Marta | Colombia | 43 | Soggy Dollar Bar | | 45 |
| Art Fabrik | Grenada | MP | EPIC International | St. Maarten | 35 | McIntyre Bros | Grenada | 47 | St. Croix Marine Center | St. Croix | 33 |
| B+G Marine Services | Tortola | 13 | Grenada Tourism | Grenada | 22 | Nacra Sailing | Netherlands | 44 | Tobago Cays | SVG | MP |
| Basils Bar | SVG | 17 | Grenadines Sails | SVG | MP | Neil Pryde Sails | Grenada | MP | Turbulence Sails | Grenada | 13/MP |
| Blue Lagoon Hotel & Marina | SVG | 4 | Happy Kite | SVG | MP | North Yacht Shop | Grenada | 28 | Virgin Gorda Yacht Harbour | Virgin Gorda | 12 |
| Budget Marine | St. Maarten | 2 | Hartman Cove Marine Services | Grenada | 20 | Northern Lights- Parts & Power | Tortola | 11 | | | |
| BVI Tourism | BVI | 21 | Horizon Yacht Charters | Grenada | 23 | Norvos Insurance | C/W | 7 | | | |
| BVI Yacht Sales | Tortola | 6 | Horizon Yacht Charters | Tortola | 20 | Paradise Beach Club | Grenada | 47 | | | |
| Catamaran Brokerage | St. Maarten | 47 | Hydrovane International Marine | C/W | MP | Parts & Power | Tortola | 10/41 | | | |
| Clarkes Court Boatyard & Marina | Grenada | 35 | IGY Marinas | C/W | 42 | Power Boats | Trinidad | MP | | | |
| Club De Pesca Marina | Colombia | 9 | Island Water World | St. Maarten | 48 | Sailors for the Sea | C/W | 35 | | | |
| Crown Bay Marina | St. Thomas | 5 | Mac's Pizzeria | SVG | MP | Sevenstar Yacht Transport | C/W | 24-25/36 | | | |

MP = Market Place pages 38
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