

C A R I B B E A N

On-line

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The Caribbean's Monthly Look at Sea & Shore

'CAMP GRENADA'

See story on page 24

by Ellen Birrell



Hello Muddah, hello Faddah, here we are at Camp Grenada!

Twelve "campsites" reach from St. David's in the southeast to St. George's in the southwest. The many activities enjoyed by cruisers in Grenada have elevated summer camping to new heights. Instead of erecting tents, we just sail from one site to another, taking a mooring ball or a slip or just swinging on anchor. This adult camping allows us to decide when we come and go. We are free to roam without permission of counselor or Customs!

Campsite #1: St. David's Bay

We liked the serene setting but found the conditions rocky. Ashore, Grenada Marine Bar has a wooden deck with great air circulation and comfortable tables. Normally quiet with a beautiful view over the bay and out to the reef break, it offers strong, reliable WiFi, no passwords, no excuses. Cruisers frequently use shoreside establishments as our living rooms, and my husband, Jim, and I have now added this one to our "Front Room List". They even have a variety of plugs for electricity at no charge. One camper was heard: "One-ten normal plug, no way! Wow!"

Bel Air Plantation resort adjoins the bay, offering beauty, mini-mart and restaurant. On a bluff above La Sagesse Bay, a ten minutes walk beyond, I became overheated. Wind off the Atlantic whistled through my sweaty mane. Mind and heart were stretched viewing the expansive rocky coastline.

Campsites #2: Westerhall, #3: Calivigny, #4: Port Egmont, #5: Le Phare Bleu

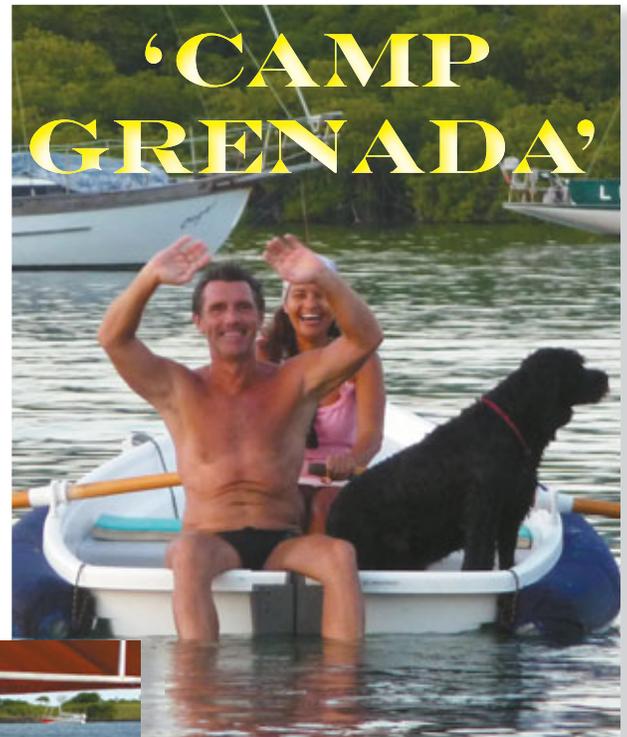
We broke camp and sailed west aboard our Jeanneau Sun Odyssey, *Boldly Go*. Waters were lively, chop uncomfortable, scenery colorful with spectacular breaking foam against black volcanic rock.

We passed Camps 2 through 5 before we jibed into the reef-strewn entrance of Clarke's Court Bay. If there is a hurricane, we'll double back for shelter in Calivigny Bay or Egmont Harbour.

Campsite #6 Clarke's Court Bay

We dropped anchor near friends just east of Hog Island Bridge. Clarke's Court is remote, but a hearty dinghy ride gets you to Whisper Cove Marina and Lower Woburn, where buses are plentiful into town. We can also dinghy to Le Phare Bleu and Clarke's Court Bay marinas.

We got our music fix from a Rafted Concert thrown by Le Phare Bleu Marina on their tugboat. Campers arrived by dinghy, tying off astern. The featured visiting musician is required to write and perform a song about their impressions of Grenada.



Above: Here we are at summer camp for cruisers! Hog Island can be 'hog heaven'

Left: Rafted Concert at Le Phare Bleu on August 25th

Top left: The Carenage as seen from the St. George's anchorage

The young Swiss vocalist-guitarist's song was sweet and spot on!

A week later, a squall howled down on us for several hours. (See "September 15th, 2011" on page 31.) A commercial fishing vessel nearly dragged over the top of our boat. It was scary.

Weary from the previous night's ordeal, we took reprieve at Whisper Cove Marina.

"I like that," proprietress Marie laughed when I described my "Meat & Meet Market" experience: "This week we kept meeting up with our cruising friends here. Pete, captain of *Coral*, came two afternoons in a row to buy meat. We got to meet Pete who was buying meat at Meat & Meet."

Marie chuckled in French lilt, "Yes, I like the sound of that." Life in Camp Grenada can be quite structured if you wish. At 0730 hours, Monday through Saturday, the Grenada Cruisers' Net on VHF 68 broadcasts weather information and invites campers to share news related to safety and security, camp arrivals and departures, services, activities and bartering. Today Susie from *Spirited Lady* reported finding a single flip-flop and another cruiser offered up an AK47.

As at any good camp, there is a time for everything from crafts to recreation, cerebral to social activities, sports to community service. The campers and suppliers are daily inventing new activities. It is an incredible community.

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The guard replied smiling, "Mostly all of us tryin' dat."

In Secret Harbour Marina, there are 18 campers in Spanish class led by Ronnie Ramos of *Campechano*. Lesson One: the alphabet. "... B pronounced "bay"; Bueno. Bonito. Barato. That is what you ask for when shopping: good, good looking, inexpensive."

Managing the gaggle of gringos, he seats us in a circle and asks each to compose a sentence. When it got around to Vicki from *Boto* who was seated next to Ronnie, she said: "Mi professor es muy guapo."

Ronnie's face flushed. He composed himself, and responded with a sentence none of us understood. He leaned forward in his seat, raised his Puerto Rican eyebrows and repeated it.

Finally, he translated, "Vicki, you are out of order!"

Campsite #9: Prickly Bay

A short sail landed us in Prickly Bay near the Tiki Bar. On Friday night, jumping around to Barracuda and his hip band including saxophonist, bass guitar and drums, it was an out-a-campsite experience!

Saturday afternoon we dashed ashore to catch a shuttle to Grand Mal just north of St. George's for Grenada's 700th Hash. As it was our first, we were considered virgins. (Read "Cruisers on the Run" by Rosie Burr on page 27.)

The next Saturday, with seven other campers, we assisted with the Mount Airy weekly reading program. It is provided free to children who wish to improve on their reading, writing and arithmetic skills. Excited and effusive, the children read from age-appropriate books, and then formed a large circle. Joke from *Zee Vronk* led all of us in a rapid-fire arithmetic game.

Campsite #10: True Blue Bay
Thursday's cooking class at True Blue Bay resort turned out to be The Esther & Omega Show.

Fire leaped from the portable gas stove positioned in the center of the patio. Esther ladled steaming coconut cream sauce into Omega's open palm. The audience gasped.

Omega touched tongue to palm, rolled her eyes back, leaned forward and declared, "Dat's right."

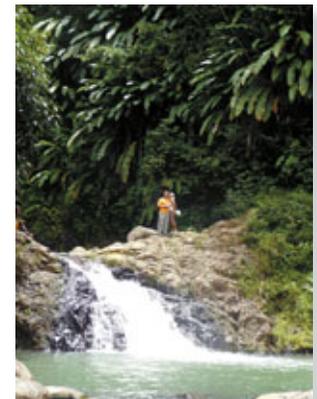
"Today we makin' Nutmeg Callaloo Chicken," proclaimed large and magnificent Omega.

Esther continued, "Omega and I were arguin' in de kitchen. We sometimes stand at de doorway and do dat." The audience laughed. "De general manager caught us. He said, "I hear you usin' up your energy arguin' with each other. I want you ta channel dat energy in a positive way. I want de two of you ta start a cookin' class for our guests. Think about how you will do dat and get back ta me." Dis is how de weekly cookin' series came ta be."

Two 20-inch pans sizzled as Esther drizzled in vegetable oil. She poured in chopped christophene, onion, chive and ginger. Next she showed us how to slit a pocket into the chicken breast.

Like Laurel and Hardy, Esther and Omega two played off each other. With a swoosh of steam, "Has ta have crunch! Barely cook dis so ya have crunch ta contrast rich stuffed chicken breast. Improvise! Make ya veggies work for ya."

One camper was heard saying, "Now that I know who's in the kitchen, I'll be sure to be back for a breakfast, lunch or dinner at True Blue."



Darko and Hilno of Dora enjoy Margaret Falls, one of The Seven Sisters

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Campsite #7: Hog Island

Tootling through the classic boats on anchor here — such as *Lily Maid*, *Coral*, *Old Bob* and *Gaicho* — for Hog Island's Sunday afternoon hangout is a lesson in cool. Grenadian families and yachties crowded the tiny beach and Roger's Beach Bar. Folks limed, music blared.

That week we played hooky with fellow campers Hilnoetna and Darko of *Dora*. We took the dinghy to Bus #2 and transferred to a Grenville bus. Requesting the Seven Sisters trailhead, the driver dropped us just beyond the Grand Etang summit.

We strolled through groves of mango, nutmeg, passionfruit, and callaloo. The path narrowed to single track. The jungle thickened, our heartbeats quickened. Intense shade and green consumed us. Thirty minutes later Margaret Falls came into view. Wow-za!

We enjoyed the cold percolating waters at the base of the falls while Jim scrambled up a muddy, slippery, vertical trail to visit Margaret's loftiest sister.

On Wednesday, campers mobbed Clarke's Court Bay Marina for Burger Night. They rustled up hot dogs for us when the burgers ran out. We gyrated to Jomo, Gylfi and Fred's '60s and '70s rock. Birthday girl Ruth from *Astral Wind* danced relentlessly. "I've been waiting a long time for the band to play me the Beatles' "When I'm 64!"

Campsite #8: Mt. Hartman Bay

We moved our campsite yet again, this time deep into the bay adjacent to Secret Harbour Marina. We take advantage of a quick dinghy ashore and walking to Budget Marine, other stores on Maurice Bishop Highway and the Dusty Highway, and the Excel and Spiceland shopping malls.

Do you wonder what it's like using walking as our form of transportation? Jim and I try to get out early, but often find ourselves running errands in the midday heat. We wear long-sleeved shirts and hats, and carry a daypack with water and extra socks. We consider it a part of a healthy life, like a good workout, hydration, nutrition and positive mantra. It gives us time to talk uninterrupted and connects us with our host community.

Coming back from the Dusty Highway, the massive Grenlec building blocked our direct route back to the boat through L'Anse Aux Epines. Jim tried cutting through an adjacent parking lot. He panted coming up the hill carrying several bags.

From a tiny guardhouse: "No, you can't pass there."
We both gave that burdened look.
"No. Oh, no," the guard said gently, kindly.
Jim responded, "We're always trying short cuts."



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Petite Calivigny Bay, St. George's, Grenada W.I., POS 12°00'11N / 61°43'29W

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Campsite #11: St. George's Harbour

Tall Dutch Henk of *Zee Vronk* keeps his tall yellow catamaran at the anchorage off Ross Point for weeks. New mooring balls and the clear water near shore make this anchorage a winner, especially for access to St. George's town. Monohulls beware: northerly swells create relentless roll.



From cooking lessons (left) to Carnival (right) summer in Camp Grenada is hot!

Campsite #12: St. George's Lagoon

Anchoring here isn't viable anymore, but slips at Grenada Yacht Club or Port Louis Marina open up marina and city amenities. Shopping, restaurants, bars, entertainment — all at your fingertips.

What About Other Campers?

Some campers arrive at Camp Grenada, lay down their anchors, and stay put in one place from June to November.

Whether campsite hopping or stationary, most of us conduct boat projects, zoom about in our dinghies (or, like John and other young Old Salts, sail or row dinghies), and spend good amounts of time on land transported by regularly scheduled private shuttles or public buses into Grand Anse, the Carenage and St. George's. Many couples split temporarily for trips "home".

Mike and Rebecca of *Zero to Cruising* organize Tuesday and Thursday beach volleyball. Kate of *Mendocino Queen* leads yoga classes and plays dominoes. Trudie from *Persephone* is getting her scuba certification, and Gwynne on *Gaviotta* rides at Amistad Horse Stables.

Between HotHotHotSpot and CruisersNet, WiFi coverage blankets the populated anchorages of southern Grenada.

New In 2011

Port Louis Marina's completed expansion includes new docks, services, swimming pool, open-air bar and restaurant. From swank to picnic-table planks, there's limin' space for every stripe of camper.

Grenada Cruisers Facebook page facilitates information exchange 24/7/52. Mooring balls adjacent Moliniere Bay's Underwater Statue Park located two miles north of St. George's.

Le Phare Bleu's Rafted Concerts.

Grenada Chocolate Company's new "Nib-A-Licious" bars. Think crispy cocoa nibs in 60-percent-cocoa chocolate.

Grenada camper ranks have swollen with controversies swirling around Venezuela and, to a lesser extent, Trinidad as "best" hurricane season hideouts. Trinidad's 2011 curfew, although cruisers there say it hasn't impacted them negatively, didn't improve the island's PR this summer.



With thanks and apologies to Allan Sherman (1924-1973), Camp Grenada signing off:

*Hello Muddah, hello Faddah,
Here I am at Camp Grenada.
Camp is very entertaining,
and Lynn says we'll have fun even if it's raining.*

*I went swimming at Hog Island,
RIBs were zooming, lost my left hand.
You remember John from Gaucho,
Spleejfin', limin', Nimrod's — pretty macho.*

*All the sailors fear the cyclones,
and the fall has heavy wet ones.
We'd take shelter in Calivigny
but we're too busy having a martini.*

*Let me go north, let me go west,
Tradewinds take me on the next quest.
I have savored every minute,
of this camp, but now I've done that and been in it.*

*Dearest Faddah, precious Muddah,
Bustin' north now in my cutta.
When I'm sailin', you won't hear much,
'til next summa when I'm back in Camp Grenada!*



Ellen Birrell and her husband, Jim Hutchins, offer charters in the Eastern Caribbean. She is writing articles aboard Boldly Go. For more information visit www.boldlygo.us/Boldly_Go/Welcome.html.



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