

Darramy on tour No 6 March – July 2007 **Windward Isles**

Well folks, here we are again, think we left you after arriving in Martinique, that was 4 months ago, We don't know where the time has gone, but we have had loads of fun and experiences. After Martinique, which we in the end were quite disappointed with, neither Sue nor I had ever been to the Caribbean before, and had pre conceived ideas such as white beaches, palm trees and lovely blue seas. We only saw a couple of white beaches, a few palm trees it was nothing like you see in the brochures. However we did the island collected some mail and generally unwound. After 3 weeks we set off for St Lucia on the way

there the fishing rod was stolen, what happened was we got a bite, and the line started to run out, I went to grab the rod, but the whole lot including the rod holder went over the side. We were later told it was probably a Marlin, which would have been too much for us to handle, so now we have a new rod etc, bigger and stronger and we are now at war with the fish, but so far no luck!!



St Lucian Coral

St Lucia was great, as soon as we arrived we met 3 boats we knew, all had crossed from Gomera, and then Roger and Vickie on El Vagabond arrived the next day; they had sailed across in December/January. It was great to see everyone, and for the first time in nearly 2 years speak English again. A few rum punches were downed and stories exchanged, (Sue is now a good authority on Rum Punch)! We had a few wet days in the marina in Rodney Bay before going into the bay to anchor we felt that this is what we had come for lovely beaches, swimming off the boat and by now sunshine.



More Coral!

We had a few days here, then slowly sailing down the west coast to various anchorages arriving at Soufriere and the Pitons a couple of weeks later.

This area is beautiful, anchoring was controlled as we were in a Marine National Park. So we had to use moorings to tie up, although we always checked the condition of them before venturing off the boat. Here I went diving, and the coral was

stunning, every colour you can imagine and some great fishes. Remind me to bore you with my underwater photos when we come back in August!

From St Lucia it was a fast reach to Walliblao in St Vincent. We had read the pilot guide, and it advised us that this island was poor, and to watch out for boat boys selling stuff, and maybe some light fingered ones as well, so we were prepared, when we arrived we were met by lots of small boats with boat boys usually two per boat, one to row, and the other to bail as these boats leaked like sieves. Once we explained to them we were not a charter boat,



Coffin Fit

and had no money, they did not bother night, but ended up staying a week. Wallibbalo is where the Disney Corporation have the film set for Pirates of the Caribbean, it was amazing to see as we walked ashore what looked like old buildings 300 years old, and coffins lying about, old carts, and we saw the pier where in the film Johnny Depp swung into the sea and did a gallant rescue needless to say all the local children spent



Rockside Cafe

a fair bit of their day imitating Johnny Depp. We walked inland to a waterfall where we could bathe, and have a massage under the waterfall, most exhilarating. A small local boy tagged along with us and showed us the local fruits growing in the trees, he picked for us fresh Nutmeg, Guave fruit, Mangos, and many more. We have lots of stories about St Vincent, but the people were wonderful,

they may not have had much as St Vincent is one of the poorest of the Windward Isles, but they were a very proud and happy people. I must just mention Rock Side Café, which was recommended to us by another English couple. Wow! what an experience a gastronomic 4 course meal in great surroundings for less than £12.00 each including drink (We will return)!!!

Then it was off to Bequie, and we anchored in Princess Margaret's bay, this was a popular island with many cruisers anchored there, although we got ripped off in the local market, we had a few pleasant days on anchor before we left for Mustique, an island which is well know for its wealthy and aristocratic visitors, (we apparently missed Prince Harry by a day) Mick Jagger was in residence though.



Alvise! What a real treat!!

We went to Basil's bar where all the famous go to drink and eat. This island is small but beautiful. We hired a Mule to go around the island, NO, not a four legged beast, The Mule is like a golf cart but with **attitude**, big wheels and a top speed of about 20 MPH.

We found some lovely empty beaches on the east coast with nice big waves to swim in, We were able to share this experience with some American friends John and Nicole off Gannet, we had spent New Year with them in Gomera, and met up with them a couple of times in the islands. They had family out to visit them, and after a great day they insisted on buying us all dinner in Basil's, these are the sorts of people we like to meet!!

From there it was off to Mayreau in the Grenadines, Salt Whistle bay, this was a proper white beach with palm trees, we had a wonderful week here although it got crowded with charter boats at the end of each day, The setting was what we had been looking for.



We visited Union Island where the market was colourful, then off to Tobago Cays, this is where many of the Caribbean vista pictures are taken, although it sadly was quite crowded with charter boats, we have been told we are 5 years to late, and now to try and conserve the area they are charging yachts to anchor there. The diving was good though, and I saw my first reef shark.

(Fortunately it was to far away to get a decent photo!) After a couple of days we headed off to Petit St Vincent, a small private island, with a superb hotel with small bungalows on it, very quiet, it was said to call room service you hoisted a flag by your bungalow and someone came out to you in a golf buggy obviously not place where you rush! We went across to Petit Martinique which

is part of the Grenadian set of 3 islands, then back to different anchorages on Union Island, where we had to check out with customs and immigration before moving off to Carriacou the second of Grenada's Islands

. This was very unspoilt, and an island we felt we could enjoy living on as it was still quite undeveloped. any way, we eventually set sail for Grenada, a very different



island a lot of development taking place, some of the beaches were quite pretty, others lacked the white beach image however there was a good cruising community, a radio net to help cruisers each morning, a few people had over the years developed some tours at reasonable prices so we were able to see the island and understand how it has developed though its chequered history. We met up with El

Vagabond and a few other boats we knew of from the Canaries so more reunions with old friends (hic!). We went to a fish fry in the streets, we went to the local Doctor for our yellow fever jabs, visited a rum factory & nearly died when trying a 170% proof rum! Local transport was exciting, as on all the islands there are Maxi Taxis, which are Toyota Minibuses, The priorities in these buses were many large stereo speakers, sometimes even a couple of LCD screens, plenty of seats which seem to fold out of nowhere, and there seemed no maximum seating capacity our record occupancy on one trip was 18 adults and 2 children! Fares were about equivalent to 40 pence each way, it didn't matter how far you went, we found that those taxis which were driven by owner drivers were the safest, if they were just driven for an owner, it was often the wall of death, so you made sure you did not pay until you got to your destination, just in case you didn't make it!! It would have been a waste of 40p.

We can recommend Hog Island for the Sunday BBQ. What a combination, Loud Reggae music, sunshine, food much beer and rum, once Sue started dancing there she could not sit down, I managed to take a short video of her dancing with various rastus men, something her grandchildren will be amused to see!



We waited for a weather window to sail to Tobago, but sadly the wind wasn't doing us any favours so after waiting two weeks we set off for an overnight sail to Trinidad, where we had previously decided to leave the boat for the hurricane season. We arrived the next morning; this place was so different from anywhere else we had been. It is very developed, more tropical, we

are now in the rainy season so when it rains watch out. We did customs and immigration then headed out to a few anchorages which we enjoyed; swimming was curtailed when we saw a Caiman in the water (Type of crocodile), it kind of focused the mind a bit! Any way the locals were all swimming so we ventured back in, the water here is a different colour still clear, but a lot of rainwater is washed out of the South American rivers so has an effect on everything. The bird life here is very tropical, we have seen many new species and the colours of the birds is amazing. We



Leatherback Hatchlings

are now in a marina getting jobs sorted, and enjoying the swimming pool each day, it is a relief from the high humidity we have to put up with and we have also hired an air conditioning unit to stay cool as well. Amy came out to visit us for a few days, our first visitor since last October; we went on what must be the highlight of our trip so far. We went to see the endangered species of the Giant Leatherback Turtles,

coming ashore and laying their eggs. The whole evening was awesome these turtles are 5 –6 feet long and about 4ft wide, they slowly emerge from the sea, and walk up the beach to find a spot to dig a hole and lay their eggs, then after laying fill in the hole to protect the eggs from predators, turn around and return to the sea, I could go on for pages about this, but if ever you get the chance to do this just do it. The whole thing is awesome.

Once again the people here are lovely, we have to be a bit more street wise though as is always the way in places where the class distinction is more noticeable. We have just returned from a 3-day visit to Tobago by air. £30.00 return fare, and Sue really enjoyed being pampered in a luxury hotel. Tobago was a lovely island excellent diving, possibly a tourist paradise, we will try to get there by boat another time.



Egg Laying

Well we have now done all the windward islands except one, We have enjoyed most islands, its not only their varied scenery or different cultures and traditions, it's the people themselves who really make these island special. A great mixture of races cultures and religions living in close proximity to each other harmoniously, a pity the rest of the world can't follow their example. We have enjoyed buying fish from the

local fishermen; fruit from different vendors, all have a tale to tell and a permanent smile. Even the children and teenagers are polite and well mannered it will be a bit of a culture shock when we return to the UK.

Future plans: we are back in Chester mid August, where we hope to catch up with many of you, and may be able to give you a better insight into what we have been up to. It's Amy's wedding early September then we are off to China for a holiday, A country Sue has always wanted to visit so we are going on a three week tailor made tour of all the places she wants to visit, then back to the UK early Oct before returning back to the boat towards the end of the month, we have not fixed a major plan for next season, we are hoping to go up the Orinoco river in Venezuela to start with and want to end up in Cuba about February time, from there its either North up the Eastern American coast or to head back South and do the islands along the Venezuelan coast, we understand the San Blas islands are pretty special so who knows?

The world is our oyster, have boat will travel!!

(Delete as applicable)

Best Wishes *Kindest Regards* *Love and Hugs* *Cheers*

Brian and Sue