

Grenada

“The Isle of Spice”

> Grenada-Charles Stirling

It is full of white sandy beaches, warm clear blue seas and very friendly inhabitants; lush green hills and rainforest to walk in; good food and superb scenery. Sounds like the holiday brochure description of any holiday destination, but this is Grenada, a Caribbean island just north of Trinidad and the South American coast and just south of Barbados. It's the most southern of the Windward Islands, just 21 miles long, 12 miles wide with a population of 100,000. It's "see-able" in a week while offering enough to keep you busy for many weeks plus. It is rated by many as one of the most beautiful and least spoiled of the Caribbean islands. It is also one where personal safety is very good or even excellent.

Grenada really is a great place for a holiday. First, for me, is that everyone was incredibly friendly and welcoming, not with a forced smile and a commercial come on but simply as a natural response. Wandering off the beaten track or in a busy market everyone smiled, took time to chat and a conversation quickly developed whether they were young or old. It seems a happy country. Driving, the frequent little "toot toot" of the horn was explained as simply saying "hello" to any friend. It also has a good diversity in what's on offer to see and do, no chance at all of getting bored with one sole tourist itinerary.

The airport and much of the main tourist activity centres are in and to the south of the capital city of St. George's. Here you will find the two miles of white sand that makes Grand Anse Beach so popular, the more secluded Morne Rouge Bay and beach along with other beaches and a large array of accommodation, restaurants, water sports and scuba dive centres.

History

Grenada was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1498 and between various hostilities with

the native Carib Indians (who previously displaced peaceful Arawaks) and occupations by the Spanish, French and British the island has history to explore. St. George's with two forts, its deep horseshoe shaped harbour (the Carenage), its steep maze of little winding streets and alleys is certainly worth a visit. Here a registered city guide can be well worth using to get the most out of the visit. Actually a guide or ▶

Green hills not far out of St George.

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tour would be good for an overview of the island generally. Then return to the areas of most interest independently for more in depth exploration.

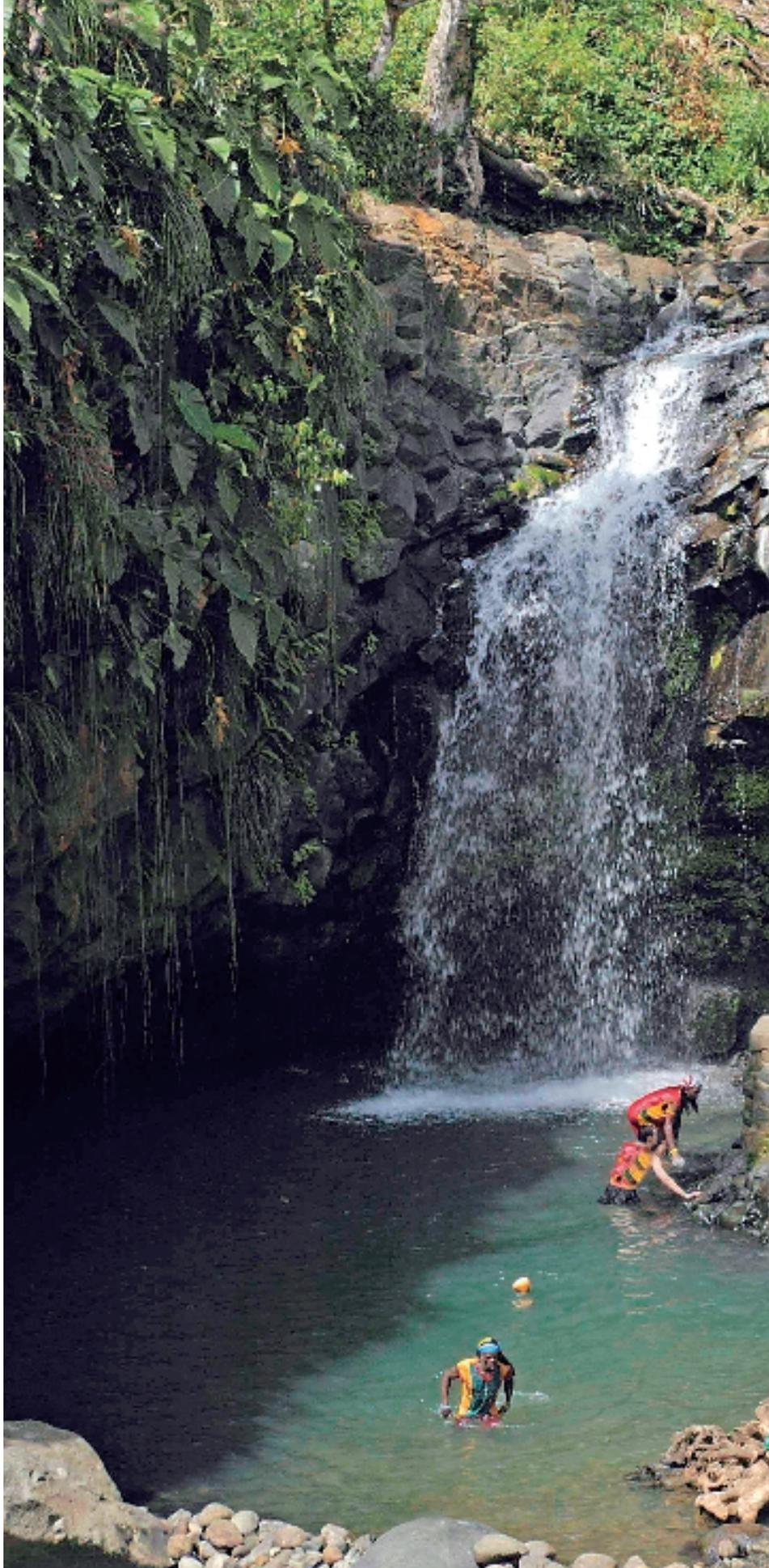
Most people won't be visiting Grenada just for its history, that's just a bonus, but for "The Caribbean Experience" of the people, the beaches and sea, and the nature along with simple relaxation.

Visiting

Yes there are lots of beaches, from the long golden sands of Grand Anse which has most activity including a small market stall area at its more northerly end grading down to relatively quiet as you walk along it. Other beaches can be large/small, popular or very secluded. You will have excellent choices and all are free and open to the public. Many of the hotels offer some water sports equipment. If you enjoy snorkelling try to take equipment with you if possible as local taxes make it just expensive enough that not much is in stock for sale. Scuba diving is a popular activity both for complete beginners and more experienced divers. Diving is both on scenic coral reefs and coral encrusted wrecks. One of my favourite sites is the wreck of the Veronica with its schooling fish, interesting shapes and crane hanging over its side and it looks like a ship not just a scrap heap. It's shallow so even a novice can dive it and a good area of coral reef is adjacent. Don't want to get wet under the water? Sailing is a huge area of opportunity from day boats to week or longer charters with or without crew, with sea fishing also on offer.

The lush nature of Grenada's interior underscores the island's second most popular name - "The Isle of Spice". With rich agricultural lands more spices are grown here per square mile than any other place in the world so it's a well deserved designation even if it doesn't feature my personal favourite, chillies, as its top spice product. Grenada traditionally produces a third of the world's supply of nutmeg - it is the island's biggest export, while cloves, mace, cocoa, cinnamon, ginger, and a host of other spices are at home here. Another agricultural product of importance is sugar cane.

The interior is partly rugged mountain, the ▶



Annadale Falls, easy to get to but not as large as others.

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result of extinct volcanic activity and protected as a national park with walks or long hikes on marked trails; lakes, hot springs and water falls to be visited, exotic birds and magnificent scenery to be seen. At the coastal level are more national parks with mangroves and estuary habitat to explore. The nature lover is well catered for. Exploring just a little further afield Grenada is in reality a three island state: Grenada, Carriacou, and Petit Martinique. A day or a couple of days spent visiting one of the other islands gives a change to a less developed maybe simpler way of life with equally good but different scenery. If the interest is to simply unwind and relax the range of accommodation in hotels and resorts is reasonably wide. Lacking (on

purpose) are any of the big anonymous hotel complexes. Some of the resorts offer enough on site to keep a family happy; others are small enough and you might meet nearly every visitor staying there along with all the staff. Even in the larger resorts personal attention seemed important. I met a family staying at one resort who said their kids didn't like the spicy chicken so the hotel chef prepared it without spices for the kids. The choice of food, and the type of place to eat, seemed much wider than the size or population of the island would indicate. With both the hotels and resorts and with eating top luxury to real budget is available. At the budget end I ate at market stalls for under a pound sterling for a tasty filling meal and at the more luxury end with

suburb food in great atmosphere overlooking the sea.

Grenada is now easy to reach by charter and scheduled flight, independently or with package tours. The high season is our winter, autumn and late spring to summer is low season with fewer visitors. The hurricane season is late August to November but being out of the normal hurricane belt the islands are seldom hit. ■

Useful further information at:

<http://grenadaexplorer.com>

a general travel guide

<http://www.grenadagrenadines.com>

the official Tourist Office site



Grand Anse Beach.

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