

# Castaway Caribbean

After a few years of financial ebb, the Caribbean tide is running high and the islands are once again attracting superyachts to discover their tranquil shores. **St Vincent** and the **Grenadines** remain relatively untouched and offer countless options for dining and relaxation

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by **Miriam Cain**









#### Above

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- 1 - St. Lucia
- 2 - St. Vincent
- 3 - Bequia
- 4 - Union Island
- 5 - Carriacou
- 6 - Grenada

#### Top left

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The soaring Pitons are a symbol of St Lucia

#### Left

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The 44.1m (145') *At Last* is a charterer's dream, with an abundance of water toys on board

#### Top right

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The beach at Sugar Beach is among the best in the Caribbean



Its combination of steady winds, dramatic landscapes and natural harbours makes the Grenadines a perfect cruising destination. This, thus far, unspoiled cruising ground offers an abundance of natural beauty, ample dive sites and some of the best fishing grounds in the world. All you need is your own private yacht. With all her Heesen grandeur, the 44.1m (145') *At Last* is a charterer's dream with an abundance of toys and a brand new 10.6m (35') Scout tender equipped with all the best sports fishing equipment. Why not combine a few days ashore on the Caribbean idyll of St Lucia with a 10-day charter aboard *At Last*, cruising the islands and experiencing a part of the Caribbean that has remained relatively unchanged over the centuries.

#### ASHORE

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##### St Lucia

One of the most naturally beautiful islands in the Caribbean, St Lucia also makes way for idyllic resorts and is the perfect place to spend a few nights acclimatising to the Caribbean pace before stepping aboard your yacht to discover the surrounding Grenadines island chain.

Due to its volcanic origins, St Lucia has breathtaking mountains and a fabulous underwater world. As such, it has great appeal for hikers, divers and nature lovers. From the rugged terrain of the south to the flatter, less volcanic north, the island has something for everyone. With the mountains comes rain, and thus lush rainforests where tropical birds find refuge among the acres of designated rainforest reserve. Towering here are the soaring Piton mountains, which have become a symbol of the nation. The twin volcanic peaks appear more dramatic than they are due to the fact that they rise up from the sea in a sheer, spectacular ascent. Gros Piton provides wonderful opportunities for a hike, while those with a greater head for heights can zip-wire through the rainforest or take the aerial tram that rides over the tree tops and provides spectacular views of the rainforest. Nestled between the twin volcanic peaks that dominate the southwest of the island, Sugar Beach boasts the most spectacular setting on the island. Scattered over more than 180 acres of rainforest and with a stunning beach, the Viceroy resort has recently been refurbished and is today the best resort on the island.

Nearby Soufrière is the oldest town on the island. Named by the French, it is most famous for its stunning natural surroundings, including the sulphur springs which lend it its name. The town used to be the island's capital and it still has some original Creole wooden buildings. Those looking for some history will be charmed by the Fond Doux Estate in the hills behind Soufrière. It is a 250-year-old cocoa plantation where you can wander among the cocoa, banana, mango, avocado and papaya trees and watch



## CRUISE TO THE SOUTHWESTERN TIP, PAST PETIT NEVIS AND WINDWARD TO THE FLAT WATERS OF ADMIRALTY BAY AND SOAK UP THE BUSTLING ATMOSPHERE ASHORE IN PORT ELIZABETH (LEFT), WHERE SHOPS AND RESTAURANTS LINE THE WATER'S EDGE

### Left

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Soak up the bustling atmosphere in Bequia's Port Elizabeth

### Below, left

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The 44.1m (145') *At Last* provides several opportunities for all manner of watersports including big-game fishing, kayaking, diving and snorkelling

hummingbirds among the waxy tropical flowers. To the north lies Pigeon Island, a 44-acre national park that was formerly only accessible by sea but is now connected by a man made causeway. Once the home of indigenous Amerindians, and then pirates, the island today abounds with walking trails and historic remnants of its service as a military base. Alongside Pigeon Island is Rodney Bay, St Lucia's main resort area. A bustling hub of shops, restaurants and bars sits alongside the long sandy Reduit Beach and Rodney Bay Marina, which, along with Marigot Bay, is one of the main yachting destinations on the island.

South of Pigeon Island and Rodney Bay is the island's capital, Castries. Its market is a bustling meeting place, especially on Fridays. Castries Port is a day stopover for many of the large cruise liners and is devoted to duty free shopping, for which there are two options at either end of the port: La Place Carenage and Pointe Seraphine - great places to head if you need some retail therapy, but to be avoided if you desire peace.

### ABOARD

#### St Lucia + St Vincent

Over the years, St Lucia has attracted sailors of all types, from pirates sheltering in the safety of the hurricane hole at Marigot Bay to French and English militia in centuries past, to today's superyachts cruising the Caribbean's Windward Island chain. Step aboard *At Last* in Marigot Bay. Described by novelist James Michener as 'the most beautiful bay in the Caribbean', Marigot Bay is one of the best hurricane holes in the world and a popular watering hole. Here you will find yachties mixing with celebrities enjoying rum, alongside fine cuisine at the Capella Marigot Bay Rum Cave. There is also a little clapboard development of shops including a bakery, supermarket, bank, police station and a handful of restaurants, including the notably buzzy Chateau Mygo.

From Marigot Bay you can discover St Lucia's coastline as you gently acclimatise to life aboard *At Last*. Cruise along the southwestern coastline and jump in and snorkel among the squid as they speed in military formation through the clumps of giant brain coral. The surrounding waters also offer opportunities for scuba diving, deep sea fishing, kayaking and windsurfing. For

amateurs of big game fishing, *At Last* provides several opportunities and Captain Vincent Lauro can show you the best unexplored spots in the currents around St Lucia where he is well acquainted with the marlin, tuna, and wahoo. Captain Lauro is also a Scuba dive master as well as an underwater photographer, and with his knowledge and passion for the undersea world, and a degree in Marine Biology, he is the perfect host for a trip both on and under the water.

That night, as you sleep, *At Last* will cruise on to St Vincent. The island makes a great launch pad for a charter through the Grenadines. It has long been regarded as one of the Caribbean's best kept secrets and now is the time to go - with the opening of an international airport early in 2014, which has increased its capacity to handle nearly four times as many passengers, the island will only get busier every year.

St Vincent is dominated in the north by a 1,220-metre volcano, Soufrière, which last erupted in 1979. The best way to view its volcanic origins is from the decks of a yacht, but those wishing to expend some energy can climb to the peak for impressive views over the surrounding Grenadines chain. The less energetic in the party can spend the day relaxing in the secluded Cumberland Bay on the island's west side, or step ashore to visit the Falls of Baleine, a breathtaking waterfall that spills from a mass of rainforest foliage into a rock-bound pool.

#### The Grenadines

Sprinkled between the volcanic peaks of St Vincent and Grenada is a 96-kilometre trail of palm studded sandbars, coral reefs and tiny islets, known as the Grenadines, that haven't changed much since Columbus first sailed these crystal clear waters. A hop across from St Vincent, Bequia is one of the most developed islands in the chain. Cruise to the southwestern tip, past Petit Nevis and windward to the flat waters of Admiralty Bay and soak up the bustling atmosphere ashore in Port Elizabeth, where shops and restaurants line the water's edge.

Further inland, explore the old forts and Bequia's summit, Mount Pleasant, or take the tender to snorkel the reef off Princess Margaret beach. The divers in your party will love the wall at Devil's Table along with the deep waters of Moonhole. Spend the evening with locals and A-listers alike at Fernando's Hideaway. The rustic restaurant is tucked away on a hillside forest





#### Clockwise from left

— One of the most developed islands in the Grenadines, Bequia has plenty to keep charter guests entertained; the five uninhabited palm fringed islets of Tobago Cays are ringed by pristine white beaches and clear waters; the calm waters are protected by the famous horseshoe reef; swim and snorkel with sea turtles in the wildlife reserve and marine park between Petit Rameau and Petite Bateau

#### Below

— Swim and snorkel around Grenada's Grand Anse Beach



and is run by the eponymous Fernando, who catches his own fish every morning for the restaurant.

The next day, before you leave the island visit the Old Hegg Turtle Sanctuary on Bequia, before setting off to the glamorous and sophisticated island of Mustique – a private retreat of barefoot luxury surrounded by beaches of pure, white sand. The island's popularity with royalty and the jet set has endowed it with a prestigious reputation. Anchor off Britannia Bay and enjoy some Caribbean revelry with an exotic cocktail at Basil's Bar, or step back a century with afternoon tea at The Cotton House. For fishing enthusiasts among the party, the waters surrounding Mustique are teeming with big game – ideal for offshore fishing excursions. Alternatively, those wishing to stay on dry land can hire a horse from the island's equestrian centre and discover the numerous riding tracks, or simply relax in the calm, shallow waters that lap Lagoon Beach.

Set a course for the short cruise to the Tobago Cays; five uninhabited, palm fringed islets ringed by pristine, white sand beaches and clear waters, which provided some of the backdrops for the blockbuster *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Anchor in the wildlife reserve and marine park between Petit Rameau and Petite Bateau, and swim and snorkel with sea turtles in the calm waters protected by the famous horseshoe reef. Dine aboard *At Last* on fresh fish, lobster and pastries brought to the yacht by locals from Union Island.

After a night at anchor, exchange the peaceful Tobago Cays for a picnic lunch on the equally unspoiled Mayreau Island. One of the smallest islands in the chain, it is ringed with perfect white sand beaches. From here, cruise on to the cosmopolitan Clifton Harbour on the mountainous Union Island – a sailor's delight offering pretty anchorages and a couple of bars and restaurants. Enjoy a stroll along the main street while Captain Lauro completes check-in formalities for St Vincent territory.

A stone's throw from Union Island, Petit St Vincent is your own desert island offering total privacy and seclusion along three kilometres of white sand beaches. A resort island, the owners welcome superyacht guests to step ashore and enjoy its many amenities including the barefoot beach bar and Hillside Spa. Anchor between Petit St Vincent and Petite Martinique for the night and enjoy a barbecue of freshly caught fish. After a peaceful night, breakfast on the aft deck while you cruise towards Carriacou. Known as the Island of Reefs, its varied coastline has many offshore islets that are perfect for diving and snorkelling. Visit the oyster beds around Tyrrel Bay or step ashore and explore the French and English ruins of Belair National Park. Early evening, before you set off towards Grenada, watch the pelicans performing 'aquabatics' around the yacht as you enjoy a last walk on the beach at the flawless spit that is known as Sandy Island.

#### Grenada

As you draw near Grenada, the fresh ocean breeze mingles with the aroma of spices carried on the trade winds. The southern most of the Windward Islands, lying south of the Grenadines, Grenada has always been one of the more sophisticated Caribbean islands thanks to its abundant production of spices at a time when they were a valuable commodity. The verdant interior of the island today remains unchanged: a landscape of mountains, rivers, waterfalls and rainforest, but at the heart of the island, in the capital of St George, is where you will find Caribbean festivals, fairs and markets among a rainbow of pastel coloured dockside warehouses and red-tiled roofs. There are also a handful of sophisticated developments along this southern stretch of coastline, including C&N's Port Louis Marina. Located on a headland, the marina has views over St George and offers a lively marina village. Venture ashore and visit the spice factory, a rum distillery, or a nutmeg and chocolate factory, after which you may need to spend the afternoon swimming around the gentle bay of Grand Anse Beach. For your final night aboard, berthed in the marina at Port Louis, raise a local rum punch into the small hours to the sounds of a local steelpan band.

*For further information on chartering At Last or any of the Camper & Nicholsons' charter fleet in the Grenadines, contact your nearest charter broker, see page 6.*