

Condé Nast Traveler

HOW TO
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BEST SEAT
IN
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TRUTH IN TRAVEL

APRIL 2006

INTIMATE CARIBBEAN

13 ISLANDS YOU CAN (ALMOST) CALL YOUR OWN

EXCLUSIVE

THE NEW **SEVEN
WONDERS**

AMAZING SIGHTS
WORTH THE TRIP

TOP 50
SPAS

SPAIN
BEAUTY AND
A BARGAIN

82 FEEL-GOOD GETAWAYS
HOW SPOILING YOURSELF CAN HELP OTHERS
(A WORLDWIDE GUIDE)



U.S.A. \$4.50
Foreign/Canada \$5.50

PETITE MARTINIQUE

Petite (pronounced pity) Martinique is the epitome of a dot: Round, with one large hill, it is home to about a thousand citizens and has just one main road, two miles long, and one hotel. The friendly people will walk with you just for the company, shops and restaurants have the refreshingly quirky habit of opening and closing on a whim. This is the Grenadian island that few Grenadians have visited.

You'll meet Locals, including some Rastafarians; day-trippers from luxe Petit St. Vincent, next door; and the occasional fugitive yachtie who comes ashore to eat a proper meal.

Every night The ten-room Melodies Guest House is pretty austere, but it really is the only place to stay on the island (473-443-9052; spiceisle.com/melodies; doubles, \$30-\$50).

Top table The breezy, outdoor Palm Beach Restaurant & Bar, for Creole shrimp, curried lambie (conch), and a peppery calaloo soup (473-443-9103; entrées, \$11-\$26).

Hazards Wandering goats and chickens; teenagers who get their kicks joyriding in golf carts up and down the sole strip of road; the ferry ride from Grenada, which can be rough in winter.

"I no longer feel like a tourist" moment After you stroll around for about an hour, locals will start recognizing you and saying hello unprompted.

Lingo 101 "Good night" is said instead of "Good evening." Practice at home.

Gear Strong sneakers to climb Mount Piton.

Etc. Petitemartinique.com.

Access Take the two-hour Osprey Lines ferry from Grenada (473-440-8126; ospreyelines.com; one-way, \$21).



CARRIACOU

A central ridge tumbles down to small cliffs and sandy beaches. Hillsborough is a blip; many of the 7,000 Kayaks (as the locals call themselves) live in villages in the hills and around sweeping bays. Hotels range from cheap and not-so-cheerful to cool and comfortable.

You'll meet Seasoned Brits and a few passing yachties.

Top night Grand View Hotel, on a hill with panoramic views (473-443-6348; carriacougrandview.com; doubles, \$60-\$75).

Top table Jensen's Garden Restaurant, for good seafood and vegetarian dishes but haphazard service (473-443-7979; entrées, \$11-\$18).

Wheels Rent a 4WD. Sunkey's Auto Rental meets you at the dock any time of the day or night (473-443-8382; \$48-\$56 per day).

Tipple The 140-proof local Jack Iron rum; ice sinks in it.

Hazards Bad roads, old maps, driving on the left.

Hospital with a view Princess Royal, high above Hillsborough.

Déjà vu Sandy Island, a pristine uninhabited offshore cay, is pictured in a lot of Caribbean tourism ads—and justifiably so.

Etc. Grenadagrenadines.com has thorough listings.

Access Take the 90-minute Osprey Lines ferry from Grenada (473-440-8126; ospreyelines.com; one-way, \$21).

LITTLE CAYMAN

Jacques Cousteau anointed the Bloody Bay Wall, where divers drop from 18 feet to more than 1,000, one of the world's best scuba sites. But Little Cayman is also "for the birds": With a resident population of 110 people, it has more than 20,000 red-footed boobies, 1,000 frigate birds, the scarce Cayman Brac parrot, plus herons, shorebirds, waders, and the endemic West Indian whistling duck.

Posh nights Rent a three-bedroom apartment at The Club, which has an outdoor whirlpool and swimming pool (345-948-1033; theclubatlittlecayman.com; apartments, \$500-\$550).

Waterfront nights Borrow a bike to get to the Salt Rock Dock, the best sky-watching spot around.

Top table Gladys Howard cooked with Julia Child and Jacques Pépin. The stuffed tomato bread is a dining room favorite at her Pirates Point Resort (345-948-1010; prix fixe, \$40).

Good local food On Saturdays, Sam McCoy's Diving & Fishing Lodge, for high-voltage McCoy's Rum Punch and family-style cookin' (345-948-0026; prix fixe, \$15).

Wheels McLaughlin Rentals (345-948-1000; jeeps, \$75 per day). Or just use a bike—most resorts have them.

Sweet deal From 2 to 6 P.M., take afternoon tea amid the permanent collection of watercolors, historical books, and charts at the National Trust House in Blossom Village.

Fun day Pack a picnic, rent a kayak, and head to Owen Island, an offshore cay near the South Hole Sound Reef.

Hazard Motorboats encountering unaware snorkelers.

Etc. Caymanislands.ky.



CAYMAN BRAC

On this 12-mile oblong, a rugged limestone bluff runs mid-island and ends in a sheer 140-foot drop at the eastern end. Cayman Brac has 2,000 residents, or "Brackers."

Good nights Brac Reef Beach Resort (345-948-1323; bracreef.com; doubles, \$140).

Pampered nights Walton's Mango Manor, five rooms and a villa (345-948-0518; waltonsmangomanor.com; doubles, \$80-\$100).

Top tables The Captain's Table; ask to be seated poolside (entrées, \$22-\$30). Anything fried, frittered, or stewed at Aunt Sha's (345-948-1581; entrées, \$10-\$25).

Wheels Two taxis with mom-and-daughter Maple and Samantha. Rent a scooter at B&S Motor Ventures (\$30 per day).

Gear Climbing that ridge? Sturdy ropes, safety gear, and hiking shoes.

Hazards Mosquitoes—quadrillions of them.

Etc. Thebrac.com