



St Lucia Sailing Adventure Sailing Vacation by Daniel Jackson

Pristine water, exotic landscapes, thrilling sailing, amazing food and wonderful friendships was the theme of this year's sailing adventure down in the Windward islands of the Caribbean.

It's been 20 years almost to the day that Klaudia and I were last cruising around the islands of St Lucia and St Vincent. Stepping off the plane and feeling that warm trade wind breeze, I knew we were in for an exciting week of sailing and exploring.





Saturday (*Checklists and Provisions*)

The Sailing Vacation commenced on Saturday November 9th, and we met our fellow sailors at the Moorings Rodney Bay base where Lene, the Base Manager, along with the Moorings staff Sharlene and George, gave us the warmest of welcomes.

Skippers - Jay, Steve and I, 1st Mates – Brian, Andrew and Klaudia were briefed on the itinerary that we had chosen and had a close look at the weather and charts for the upcoming week of sailing from St Lucia, down to the islands of St Vincent and the Grenadines.

Shortly after we met our other crew members, Scott, Martha, Gina and Todd, where we were introduced to our 3 Moorings 45ft Catamarans (Cataleya, White Bird and Ewak III) that would become our homes for the next 7 days.

The first day was filled with provisioning and safety checks along with storing supplies and exploring the various onboard systems.

On top of that, a couple of us were still awaiting our luggage to arrive after our bags decided to have an extended stay back in Miami. Fuel and water tanks topped off, we decided to stay in the beautiful marina of Rodney Bay, and we had organized a welcome dinner at La Mesa restaurant. A menu of empanadas, oxtail croquettes and assorted vegetables met us with tropical mimosas for starters, a choice of Mahi Mahi, steak and fries, chicken or beef skewers with hummus for our main dish followed by an amazing flan for dessert. Excited for the new adventure with full stomachs, we retired to our boats around 10pm for an early start the next morning.



Sunday (*Lines, Travelers and Sheets along with a side of a Barrel of Beef Reef*)

Skippers to Customs around 0800 to check out of St Lucia as we were on our way to St Vincent via the jaw dropping Pitons.

Out of the Rodney Bay Channel we started to hoist our sails and after a few small issues with reef lines, a stuck traveler and an overriding main sheet (did someone buy bananas), we made some quick repairs, rounded the Barrel of Beef Reef and pointed our bows south down to the Piton mountains. A light air beam reach was quickly traded for a 25-knot squall that lasted for about an hour, and we registered our first (of many) +10 knot speeds with Scott and Martha getting an exhilarating first introduction to coastal passage making. As we approached the Pitons, we called Peter Butcher the local Park Ranger to book 3 mooring balls, and we were met by a local, Clyde, just outside the mooring field who then helped all of us onto our mooring balls. Clyde made sure we were all settled before he whizzed away on his dinghy, leaving us with the most amazing backdrop of mountains followed by a spectacular sunset.

We all set to make dinner onboard and settled down for the night as the next morning we were to make the 65nm down to the Grenadines.



Monday (Wind ordered, strap yourselves in and ‘fish on’)

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I made my rounds with Skippers Steve and Jay around 0530 to discuss the route and we were all off our moorings by 0600 to transit the 65nm sail past St Vincent and down to Bequia. This was the longest day sail, but it certainly didn't take us long as the wind was blowing a steady 18/20 knots, and we were visited by several squalls into the late 20's during the morning. Reefs in, Cataleya, helmed by Martha and Scott was hitting 11.5 knots constantly and the word quickly got around the other boats which then commenced the speed competition.

Just as we approached the north of St Vincent, I decided to try a bit of fishing. After dragging a line behind my own boat for the last several years and not catching a single thing I was quickly hanging onto the rod as the line started whizzing out. Klaudia and Scott jumped in to stop me being dragged into the water by this monster sea creature and we quickly dropped the sails to help slow the boat down whilst we landed the record-breaking fish.

Scott and Klaudia finally hauled the monster onto the back of the boat, and we were trying to identify what we had caught. After a bit of head scratching and reverse image searching, we quickly released the catch back into the sea (much to the surprise of the fish who took off quickly realizing he had just escaped making our dinner plates). Later, we identified the fish as a Wahoo, but we had dinner plans later that day, so we just enjoyed the pics and the story telling of our amazing fishing tale.



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Along the lee of the coast of St Vincent, the wind settled down and gave us a nice broad reach down to the island of Bequia.

Anchors down the skippers checked the boats and crew in and we settled down to our second group dinner “Welcome to the Grenadines” at Jacks Bar. Collette and her staff treated us to an amazing dinner of welcome drinks, corn chowder with home-made focaccia baskets, followed by a choice of Catch of Day, Burger and Fries or a grilled lemon herb butter chicken with avocado pesto pasta, with Jills Brownie with vanilla ice cream and salted caramel for dessert. The dinghy was riding a lot lower on the way back to the boats. A little excitement greeted us back at the boats as the wind got up and Ewak III started to drag their anchor (quickly get them bananas eaten). We got the anchor reset and laid a bit of extra chain out as we settled in for the night and fell quickly asleep with the day’s adventures and the monster fish that we let go an amazing memory.



Tuesday (How blue is that water?)

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Awaking to the smell of coffee I sat up on the top deck early to watch the sunrise coming up over Princess Margaret Bay, Bequia.

Scott and Martha took the dinghy to town to look around and most of us had a lazy morning, snorkeling in Admiralty Bay.

Once back to the boat we weighed anchor around 1100 after fixing Ewak III's non-starting engine (ok I'm really starting to think the bananas are beating me now) and set off for the 20nm sail down to Tobago Cays.

The islands and reef of Tobago Cays have long been a bucket list location for me after seeing Captain Jack Sparrow marooned there in the Disney movie series "Pirates of the Caribbean".





We rounded the rock out of Bequia and headed south towards Mayreau. Not to be outdone by Cataleya's previous 11.5 knots, Ewak III hoisted full sail, but it was White Bird that found their groove as Jay recorded a whooping 12.4 knots (Picture evidence provided).

Baleine rocks passed and we all grouped together, and motorsailed into the tight anchorage between Petite Bateau and Petite Rameau. Just as we arrived a squall came through and kicked up the amazing turquoise waters of Horseshoe Reef. Boat boys came out to assist but the water was so choppy even they had to retreat. Cataleya grabbed a mooring ball by the skin of their teeth, closely followed by White Bird but Ewak III were now in the worst of the swell and wind and after several attempts with their extra short boat hook and mooring lines I jumped into our dinghy like a swoosh buckling Jack Sparrow to assist. (It looks so easy in the movies), however after several more death-defying minutes we all managed to get Ewak III on their mooring and then within seconds the sun came out like nothing had happened (Surely all the bananas are gone now)

After all this excitement we all jumped in our dinghies to go explore these amazing waters and we were gifted with sightings of stingrays, turtles and a wide variety of colorful fish. What a day..... we all met on Cataleya for sunset drinks and stories of sailing and the tale of the fish we caught got bigger. Dinner back on board our own boats we were gently and not so gently rocked to sleep as the waves came over the reef. A little bit of a bumpy night, but we were in Tobago Cays.....



Wednesday (*Hiking, Snorkeling and Lobster*)



At 0900, several of us all met at Petite Bateau beach on our dinghies and hiked up the trail to the top of the large hill, (Mountain for those of us that live in Florida). Amazing views of the reef and the anchorage. We all took pictures and then were surprised to see the largest iguana we have ever seen sitting watching us in a tree. The hike was followed by more snorkeling and lunch on the beach with Mr. Mandy Man who brought fresh lobster and treated us to the best beach lunch we could have imagined.

We left Tobago Cays around 1300 to start our first part of heading back north, having to sail 24nm to the island of Mustique. After we arrived in the beautiful Princess Margaret Bay, we all tried to spot Mick Jagger's house as we grabbed mooring balls. That night we decided to have a potluck dinner on the lead boat. Each boat brought unbelievable dishes of food, and we ate like kings and queens.

Whilst we were celebrating our new friendships onboard, we were unfortunately having to say goodbye to Scott and Martha who would be leaving the next morning. A prior organized family event back home meant they would be leaving the Sailing Vacation and flying out of Mustique the next morning. We all realized that the Sailing Vacation was quickly passing but we celebrated meeting one another and talked and ate late into the night, still comparing boat speeds and even the Wahoo caught a couple of days earlier gained a couple of extra feet in size.







Thursday (*Saying goodbye to friends and the Grenadines*)

Mustique Moorings Company came to collect us all by water taxi and took us into the bay where we transited by another taxi through the pristine mountains of Mustique up to the airport to check out of the Grenadines. Tortoises lay on the perfectly manicured lawns of the houses of rock stars and billionaires, and we arrived at the quaint little airport of Mustique.

Promising Scott and Martha that we would all be back next year we said our goodbyes and cleared customs and immigration and returned to the boats to start our sail north.

As we rounded Bequia Head, Scott and Martha flew overhead and could see the fleet reaching back towards St Vincent.





A couple of months prior to arriving on the Sailing Vacation I had been reading the Doyles guide to the Windward Islands and saw that the original 2004 movie set from Pirates of the Caribbean is still in Soufriere Bay but the water is really deep for anchoring, however there is a bay called Keartons just around the corner where Orlando and Rosie from Rock Side Café help moor boats on their buoys. I had contacted Orlando, and he had reserved 3 of his moorings for us and set up a dinner in his restaurant. We were not disappointed. Big enough for 4 or 5 boats this small bay allows you to dock in about 200 ft of water from the bow and then the stern ties you to a second mooring. All our boat skippers and crew nailed the maneuver, and I had a proud moment on how they were all handling their boats.

Zico, one of the local boat boys who runs a small bar up the mountain came around to see if we needed anything and a couple of us ordered fresh bread baked by his mother for the next morning.





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We had a few hours before dinner so some snorkeled, some hiked, and Klaudia and I took our dinghy around the corner to the next bay to check out the movie set. It was amazing to see some of the movie set still there and I reminisced about the scenes from the movie whilst amazed how clear the deep water was, looking down a few hundred feet below us. We had a quick snorkel prior to being collected by Orlando to take us up to his restaurant. Greeted by Rosie and listening to her tales from the last 20 years in St. Vincent, coming from Germany and finding her way to this small piece of paradise with Orlando was truly awe-inspiring.

Dinner was amazing as we were treated to fresh fish and BBQ ribs with unbelievable views of the bay where our boats sat awaiting our return. Yes, we had sailed here....

Each place visited during our Sailing Vacation had been breathtaking, but Keartons Bay had that special Je ne sais pas, and I'll remember this place forever.





Friday (Clyde and the Whales)

0800 – A small tap on the hull of our boat from Zico meant fresh bread was here, and after a quick conversation he said farewell and away we sailed from this aquatic wonderland, not before taking a look at the watermaker and outlets on Ewak III (is it too late to let them know about bananas), I could see Orlando's beaming smile whilst he waved from the shore for almost 30 minutes as we sailed away from the bay. I promised myself that I would be back soon and hoisted the sails.

Ewak III and White Bird had already hoisted their sails and due to the light winds on the lee of St Vincent we motor sailed up the coast hugging the coastline. Getting a little boost from the back flow of air from Soufriere Volcano we turned off our engine and furled out the jib and were quickly making 7-8 knots.





In the distance we could see a pod of whales blowing water and we were quickly surprised as 3 of them came to investigate us. As we sailed along the 3 pilot whales came in for a look and then gently slipped past the boat to our surprise.

The Pitons came into view as the two towering mountains seemed to just appear out of the water. Several miles before our arrival I got a call from Clyde, a young man who helped us to our moorings in the Pitons on the first days. "Is that you Dan?" came the voice over the phone.

After a quick conversation he offered to come and help us in our next anchorage and off he zoomed in his dinghy to meet us in Marigot Bay.

As soon as we turned the corner into the bay, Clyde assisted all of us with our moorings, we took a quick photo and off he whizzed back out into the ocean.

Some of the crew went off to explore and then we all met up for dinner at Dolittle's. A quick game of pool and dinner before the mosquitos got us. (Apparently it had rained earlier that day, and they were out in force, bizarrely the first we had seen in all the Caribbean).





Saturday (Back in Rodney Bay and Goodbyes)

An early start of 0700 to make the 10 or so miles back to Rodney Bay to drop off the boats. Where had the week gone.....? Way too fast.....

Not much wind so we motor sailed back to the Moorings base and we all went down the channel in line to return the boats.

Amazing people along the way, wonderful memories, great food, breathtaking landscapes, exhilarating sailing.... What more could we have wished for except for it not to end.....



Thank you to the skippers' mates and crew of Cataleya, White Bird and Ewak III, Steve, Martha, Scott, Brian, Jay, Gina, Andrew, and Todd, you are awesome and let's do another one real soon!

Lene, Sharlene and George at the Moorings for your warm welcome and assistance.

To the boat guy on the first day who sold Ewak III bananas.....

Peter (Pitons) Park Ranger and Zico and his mother for the bread.

Orlando and Rosie (Rock Side Café) for an amazing dinner and even better company!

And Clyde..... you are a superhero.....

Nate and Heather for all your advice and assistance over the last few weeks

Lastly, thank you Klaudia (The Admiral) for helping me to create these wonderful Sailing Vacations.

Signing off and standing by on Channel 16, see you next time.

Dan.

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