

Shop the streets of picturesque St. George's, Grenada's capital city.



THE SIMPLE LIFE

Leave your Paris Hilton-esque couture and your designer pooch at home, and hop a plane to unspoiled Grenada for a honeymoon hit of true island flavour. BY KATE YORGA

Travellers seeking the original Caribbean code of a simple beach holiday call Grenada "The Real Caribbean." On this island, there's none of the frat-boy atmosphere frothing like spilled Carib that you may have heard about in Cancun, or the I-want-my-Caribbean-to-be-exactly-like-North-America of all-inclusive resorts in Jamaica.

With no hotel exceeding three stories (or the height of the palm trees) and an out-of-the-way location as the southernmost Windward Island (just north of Trinidad), Grenada provides travellers with elegant rustic or luxe choices mixed with laid-back Caribbean cool.

Despite bearing the brunt of Hurricane Ivan's wrath in 2004, Grenada is recovering fabulously and ready to treat travellers right: tourist spots are back on track, vegetation is lush (while maybe a bit shorter in spots) and locals are waiting with big smiles and open arms.

You'll easily slip into island rhythm thanks to Grenada's sensual paradise: see trees of cocoa, mango and nutmeg; hear the fluted songs of tree frogs under a star-studded sky; taste the tang of fresh nutmeg ice cream; smell cinnamon bark crushed by your guide during a tropical rainforest hike; feel relaxation seep down your spine after frolicking in turquoise waters.

While Grenada has many allures, you are in the Caribbean, so the ocean will beckon strongest. And rightly so: Grenada is considered among the best dive and snorkel destinations in the Caribbean. Spend days exploring the incredible underwater visibility, diving and snorkelling hand in hand (it is your honeymoon, after all!) amidst extensive coral, spotting parrot fish, turtles, seahorses, barracuda, moray eels and more. Grenadian waters host more than 28 sites, including reefs, wrecks, walls and the largest shipwreck in the Caribbean.

When you're fully waterlogged, there's plenty to keep you occupied on land. Chill on the famous three-kilometre-long picture-perfect Grand Anse, one of over 40 white sand beaches dusting Grenada's coasts. With year-round average daytime temps of 30°C (22°C at night), you'll look native in no time. And, since one-sixth of Grenada's 440-square-kilometre



Dunk your toes into the stunning Grand Anse beach sand.



Dunk down in a Bel Air Plantation villa.



landmass is preserved as parks and wildlife sanctuaries, you have to ask yourself: what wouldn't Paris Hilton do? Trek through the Grand Etang Forest Reserve, where hikes range from easy 15-minute jaunts to trips lasting several hours.

Besides being a little slice of heaven, Grenada (Gra-nay-da) is also "The Isle of Spice." Nutmeg is the star: called "Black Gold," 400 years ago it was the most valuable commodity in the world for its potent medicinal properties. Before Hurricane Ivan, Grenada was the world's second largest producer of nutmeg. Trees have been replanted, and the nurturing tropical climate will hasten the regrowth to help Grenada regain this status within five years. Grenada has other piquant prizes: cinnamon, cloves, ginger, mace, bay leaves, turmeric, vanilla and ginger are all part of the island's luscious treasure chest.

These spices figure prominently in Grenadian cuisine. At The Aquarium Restaurant, dine on pumpkin and ginger soup, jumbo shrimp coated in freshly grated coconut with pineapple and curry dip, and caramelized walnut spiced parfait. The beachfront spot, set amidst tropical gardens, ponds and a waterfall, draws tourists and locals alike for its famous Sunday night BBQ.

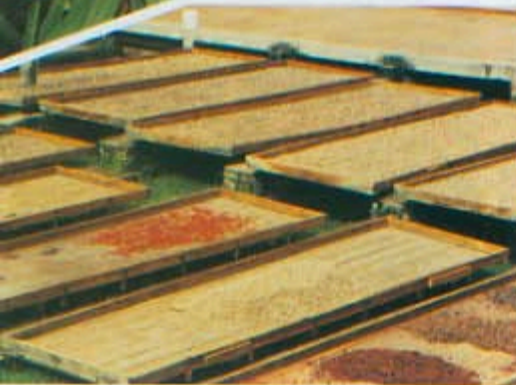
For more elegant Caribbean cuisine served in a relaxed atmosphere, dine overlooking the beach in the Water's Edge restaurant at Bel Air Plantation. A recent lunch from creative chef Craig Copland's kitchen: fresh tuna wrapped in a callaloo leaf and simmered in spicy coconut curry sauce, and blueberry chocolate cake (\$70 XCD).

Grenadians, all 100,000 of them, are proud of their spices. Besides using them in food, they are incorporated into locally made products like soaps, perfumes, candles, healing balms, jams and organic chocolate.

If you're culinary-minded, bring a large tote to haul back spices, for yourself and as gifts. One of the best purchase spots is the Dougaldston Spice Estate, where spices are grown and initially processed using traditional methods. Take their tour then spice shop 'til you drop.

Spice shopping in true local style happens every morning, except Sunday, at the open plaza Market Square in the capital city of St. George's. The town's narrow streets are lined with charming shops and houses (a mix of 19th century French and Georgian English architecture) rising from St. George's harbour into the lush, steep green hills. Other great Grenadian shopping stops: The Grenada Chocolate Company, Arawak Islands (www.arawak-islands.com, 473-444-3577) and Art Fabrik Batik (473-440-0568).

For a final step back in time to the real Caribbean, tour the River Antoine Rum Distillery. Privately owned, it uses traditional distillery processes and equipment from 1785. The tour end is marked with a belly-burning swig of their house specialty: 150-proof rum brewed only for local consumption. **W**



Top: Indulge in a luxury private pool suite at Spice Island Beach Resort. Left (up): Nutmeg fresh from the tree. Left (down): Spices drying for Dougaldston Spice Estate.



TRAVEL ESSENTIALS

PLANNING

GRENADA BOARD OF TOURISM
P.O. Box 293, St. George's, Grenada,
WI, 473-440-2279, gbt@caribsurf.com,
www.grenadagrenadines.com.

GRENADA TOURS Local guide Kennedy Jawahir knows it all. St. George's,
473-403-5965, kennedytours@caribsurf.com.

CURRENCY

Eastern Caribbean Dollar; \$1 XCD = \$0.50 CDN.

GETTING THERE/GETTING AROUND

BWIA (British West Indies Airways) offers flights via Toronto, 1-800-538-2942 or www.bwee.com.

SLEEPING

SPICE ISLAND BEACH RESORT For deluxe pampering choose a luxury private pool suite: a stand-alone bungalow including a five-by-six-metre private pool and garden, 15 metres from the beach (doubles from \$2,670 XCD). Grand Anse Beach, St. George's, 473-444-4258, www.spiceislandbeachresort.com.

BEL AIR PLANTATION Book one of 11 self-contained cottages/villas set amidst lush gardens and overlooking St. David's Harbour (doubles from \$935 XCD). St. David's Point, 473-444-6305, www.belairplantation.com.

EATING AND DRINKING

THE AQUARIUM, Point Salines, St. George's, 473-444-1410, www.aquarium-grenada.com, \$70 XCD per person.

THE WATER'S EDGE Besides eating in the restaurant, *lime* (party on) like a local in their upstairs lounge with a 360° harbour view. Bel Air Plantation, St. David's Point, 473-443-2822, www.belairplantation.com.

EXCURSIONS

AQUANAUTS GRENADA Dive (from \$112 XCD) or snorkel (from \$90 XCD). True Blue Bay Resort, 473-444-1126, www.aquanautsgrenada.com.

DOUGALDSTON SPICE ESTATE
St. John, 473-440-3494.

GRENADA CHOCOLATE COMPANY

See chocolate created "from tree to bar" at their cottage factory. Hermitage, St. Patrick's, 473-442-0050, www.grenadachocolate.com.

MARKET SQUARE Corner of Halifax and Granby Streets, St. George's. Mornings only. Saturdays are the most colourful.

RIVER ANTOINE RUM DISTILLERY
River Antoine Estate, St. Patrick's, 473-442-7109, www.caribbean-connexion.com/ecotours/rivers.htm, \$5 XCD.