

TENTHINGS YOU MUST DO IN GRENADA AND CARRIACOU

1 STROLL ALONG THE BEACH

Between them, Grenada and Carriacou are blessed with a plethora of stunning beaches, but make sure you take the time to wander along the 2km Grand Anse Beach in Grenada and the 1.6km Paradise Beach in Carriacou. Both are picture-perfect scenes of island bliss and you can't beat sinking your toes into the soft sand while soaking up the views.

2 CLIMB EVERY MOUNTAIN

Okay, maybe not every mountain, but there are plenty of peaks to set your sights on, including the 2,757-feet Mount St Catherine on Grenada and the 955-feet High North Peak on Carriacou. You will be rewarded for your efforts with absolutely awesome panoramic views of the islands and surrounding waters.

3 CIRCLING THE SISTERS

One of the most-famous dive sites, which has phenomenal coral growth and a diverse mix of marine life, is the Sisters, off Carriacou. These two rock pinnacles actually provide two dive sites, Deep Blue and Barracuda Point, and can be extremely challenging, as they are washed by strong currents. A must-dive for experienced divers.

4 CHASING WATERFALLS

Grenada boasts several visually impressive waterfalls, but St Margaret Falls, also known as Seven Sisters, is worth a visit – the lower two falls are perfect for family outings, but the higher five promise a formidable trek for the adventurous. Also check out Concord Falls, which gets ever more beautiful the higher you go, and the remote Tufton Hall Waterfall, which will require you to don your hiking boots and complete a three-hour guided hike into the interior.

5 TRADITIONAL BOAT BUILDING

On Carriacou, you have the unique opportunity to visit Windward, and see sailing boats and sloops being painstakingly hand-crafted using traditional methods passed down by Scottish settlers. Time your visit for the beginning of August, and you will also be able to witness the exciting Carriacou Regatta Festival, a three-day event which sees locally built vessels compete against one another.

6 VISIT THE 'TITANIC OF THE CARIBBEAN'

Even if you aren't a committed wreck diver, you have to pay homage to one of the largest shipwrecks in the Caribbean, the monster Italian liner Bianca C. She sank in 1961 and is sitting upright in over 50m of water. She has started to deteriorate after over 55 years on the seabed, but there is still plenty to see and she remains a magnificent, awe-inspiring sight.

7 TRAVEL INTO THE PAST

The Belmont Estate is a 300-year-old, working plantation, and it provides visitors with the unique opportunity to see firsthand the centuries-old practice of processing cocoa and producing some of the region's best chocolate. Re-enactments are regularly held, giving a fascinating glimpse into the past.

8 ENJOY A FRESH FISH SUPPER

Gouyave is Grenada's main fishing town and is renowned for Fish Friday, your opportunity to mix with the locals, who flock here for this weekly outdoor culinary event where you can sample seafood delicacies of every description, all cooked fresh over open fires. Gouyave is also home to one of the largest nutmeg processing factories on the island.

9 UNDERWATER WORKS OF ART

Whether you are a newly qualified diver or a seasoned veteran, you have got to pay a visit to Grenada's Underwater Sculpture Park, which was ranked in the Top 25 'Wonders of the World' by National Geographic. Weirdly lifelike sculptures by Jason de Caires Taylor and other artists adorn the seabed, slowly being engulfed by vibrant marine growth. It is so shallow, even snorkellers can join in the fun!

10 TOUR ST GEORGE'S

St George's is the capital of Grenada, and it is home to many interesting tourist attractions, including Fort George, which was built by the French in 1705 and offers stunning views from the battlements. The town is also home to the Grenada National Museum, which is housed in a French barracks dating back to 1704 and displays hundreds of historical items, including Carib and Arawak artefacts, whaling industry tools, sugar-processing machines, and even Josephine Bonaparte's marble bath!

















FROM THE EDITOR

Located at the southernmost tip of the Windward Islands, just 100 miles north of Venezuela and outside of the hurricane belt, Grenada and Carriacou provide a safe, quiet and family-friendly year-round getaway from the hustle and bustle of daily life. There is much to do on land, but it is underwater where the islands really come into their own. Between them, they boast a veritable fleet of sunken ships - with the enormous 180-metre-long Italian liner Bianca C as an impressive flagship - alongside some of the healthiest coral reefs in the Caribbean, and both habitats (man-made and natural) support a diverse range of marine life, including various species of turtle and shark, eagle rays, stingrays, barracuda, tarpon and all the usual reef suspects. The islands could be purpose-made for dive groups. From a diving perspective, you have a rich selection of sites to choose from, in depths to suit all levels of experience, and with reefs, wrecks and marine life aplenty, there is something for everyone. And for any non-diving members of the party - or when you just want to let your gills dry out - the islands boast a multitude of topside activities and attractions, from historic forts, run distilleries and cocoa plantations to magnificent waterfalls, national parks and mountains. Grenada and Carriacou are also great spots for couples. I have fond memories of Grenada as it was the first place I visited with my now-wife many years ago. Whether you are both exploring beneath the waves, enjoying a romantic stroll along a stunning beach, or trekking through lush rainforest to some remote waterfall, there is much to bring you together. Once two becomes three or more, and you have a family in tow, then Grenada and Carriacou unveils its 'fun side', and children will love the off-road safaris, river tubing, snorkelling and other adrenaline activities.

The islands offer plenty to lure you in, and while you can choose to stay on one or the other, a twin-centre holiday taking in both Grenada and Carriacou should be high on your bucket list.

Mark Evans Editor-in-Chief, Scuba Diver www.scubadivermag.com







GRINGIN GRENADA & CARRIACOU

The diving off Grenada and Carriacou is best described as the perfect blend of natural and man-made

First off you find prolific coral and sponge growth smothering some of the most-pristine and healthy reefs in the Caribbean, which in turn provides a rich habitat for the likes of angelfish, snapper, wrasse, butterflyfish, damselfish, parrotfish, pufferfish, boxfish, trumpetfish, grouper and lobster.

This rich diversity of marine life then brings in efficient predators such as barracuda, jacks, stingrays and various species of shark, along with elegant turtles and eagle rays.

Interspersed among these pockets of colourful coral kingdom, you then come across all manner of shipwrecks, ranging from purpose-sunk vessels like the Buccaneer, MV Hildur, Westsider and Boris to 'genuine' wrecks like the Shakem, Hema I, King Mitch and the newly sunk Persia II. And let's not forget the mother of them all, the immense Bianca C, a 180-metre-long Italian liner sitting upright in 50m that has sat at the head of the islands' vast sunken fleet ever since she went down in 1961.

And for something completely different, how about visiting an underwater work of art? Grenada's Underwater Sculpture Park features lifelike representations of people that are now becoming ever-more otherworldly as they are slowly covered in encrusting marine growth, and provide a weird-and-wonderful shallow dive that is suitable for novice divers and even snorkellers.







GETTING STARTED

If you are a non-diver, the islands are the perfect place to get your diving certification. Blessed with a number of top-quality dive centres and numerous sites that have calm, clear, warm waters and plenty of fish to welcome you into their watery realm, you would be hard-pressed to find a more-idyllic location to chalk up your first foray into diving, whether that is a simple trydive or your entry-level qualification.



JOIN THE HUNT FOR LION(FISH)

As with many Caribbean countries, the island waters have been invaded by Indo-Pacific lionfish, a voracious predator that has no natural enemies in the Caribbean, breeds at a rapid rate, and is munching all the native reef fish. Thankfully, Grenada and Carriacou have been very proactive in tackling this issue, and you can head off with a Hawaiian sling spear and collecting tube and do your bit for reef conservation by harvesting lionfish. Best of all, for all your hard work, you get to eat your catch, as there are now several recipes for the white meat of these fish and believe me, it is tasty!





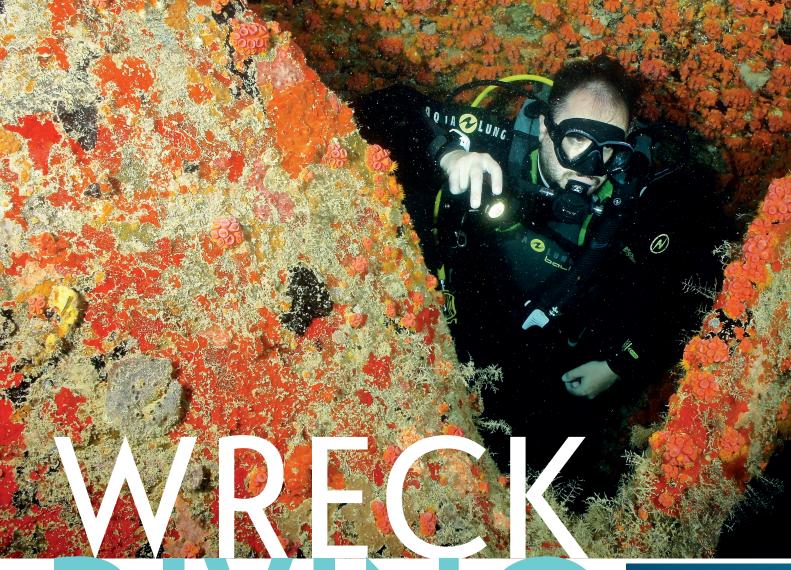
TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

At the other end of the scale, many of the shipwreck sites in particular lend themselves to technical diving. Whether open circuit or rebreather diving, more-experienced veteran divers are spoilt for choice, and the likes of the Bianca C, King Mitch, Hema I and so on are major draws for those with a 'lust for deeper rust'.



SNAP HAPPY

Underwater photographers will have an absolute ball in the waters off Grenada and Carriacou. As well as the riot of colour adorning the reefs and wrecks because of the phenomenal coral and sponge growth, which with the accompanying reef fish is excellent for wide-angle and macro shooting, you can also encounter turtles, sharks, rays and other photo-friendly 'big animals'.



Grenada can quite rightly claim to be the 'shipwreck capital of the Caribbean', boasting a vast array of shipwrecks in depths to suit all levels of divers

There are few countries globally that can compete with Grenada and Carriacou when it comes to shipwrecks, never mind just in the Caribbean, and even more incredibly, many of the sunken vessels were genuine maritime accidents, not purpose-sunk artificial reefs. And because the islands sit near a busy trade route, the number of wrecks is going up all the time! This is fantastic news for divers, and whether you are a newly qualified open water diver, or a hardcore diving veteran, you will find a multitude of shipwrecks awaiting your visit. And if you aren't into your sunken metal, never fear – the sheer amount of marine growth and fish life that lives on and around the wrecks means every dive is a swirling riot of vibrant colour.







TITANIC OF THE CARIBBEAN

You cannot talk about wreck diving in Grenada without first mentioning the mighty Bianca C, a gigantic 180-metre-long, 18,000-ton Italian liner which went down off the coast of Grenada in 1961.

The Bianca C was built in 1939 on the south coast of France, and then after being launched as an incomplete ship named Marechal Petain, was sunk by German forces in August 1944. The hull was raised in 1946 and taken back to its original shipyard where it was refitted and launched as a cruise ship in 1949, bearing the name La Marseillaise.

She then became known as the Arosa Sky in 1957 after being sold, before finally, in 1959, she was bought by the G Costa du Genoa company, and was renamed Bianca C after a daughter in the family firm. She was tasked with the run from Naples, Italy, to Guaira in Venezuela, and Grenada was her last stop on the return leg.≠



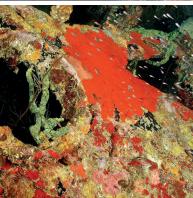
On 22 October 1961, while anchored off St Georges, an explosion in the boiler room saw the vessel catch fire. Hordes of local boats - ranging from sailing boats, power boats and tiny dinghies to ocean-going yachts and inter-island trading schooners, even rowing boats - responded to the crisis, rescuing all but one person who perished on board. Sadly, of 12 badly burned crew, two other men died later. Showing the friendliness and generosity that Grenada is renowned for, all of the rescued passengers were given food and shelter in hotels, guest houses and even private homes.

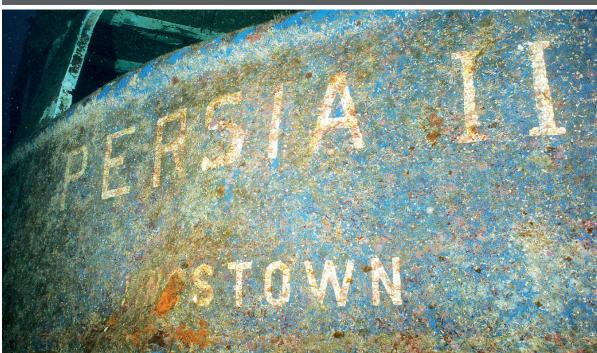
British frigate HMS Londonderry was in Puerto Rico and sailed down to Grenada to assist. When the naval vessel arrived on 24 October, the Bianca C was still ablaze. The frigate managed to take the huge liner in tow, with an aim to move it away from the shipping lanes, but it proved problematic due to the Bianca C's rudders being jammed and eventually the towing line snapped and the ship sank, which is how it came to rest upright in 50m of water off Pink Gin Beach.

Over 55 years on the seabed has taken its toll on the old girl, and she is deteriorating year on year, but there is no taking away from the epic scale of this enormous vessel, and she still makes a fine flagship for the rest of Grenada and Carriacou's sunken fleet. It is still possible to make out key aspects of the ship, including the swimming pool, bollards, winches, parts of the superstructure and the bow chain and rope locker.

In terms of marine life, you often get large shoals of Atlantic spadefish cruising above the wreck, along with large barracuda, eagle rays and even the odd reef shark.







ACCIDENTAL SHIPWRECKS

As said before, due to its location on various shipping routes, Grenada is also blessed with a plethora of shipwrecks that were the result of maritime accidents, and now provide underwater playgrounds for divers and protective habitats for marine life.

The 50-metre freighter Shakem was carrying much-needed bags of cement for the building industry on Grenada when she was caught in a storm in May 2001. The heavy cargo shifted and she went down, settling upright in 32m. The remnants of the bags of cement can clearly be seen in the holds – the cement has set, and the bags have long since fallen apart, leaving giant 'pillows' stacked neatly in piles – but her real draw is the rich smothering of coral and sponge growth that seems to cover every square inch of her hull, superstructure and especially the large crane lying amidships. This is liberally covered in gorgonian sea fans, while the rear of the ship almost looks like a fluffy white wall dive due to the thick coating of coral.

Smaller than the Shakem at a length of 40 metres, the Veronica L is a freighter which sank after springing a leak, but was then raised and moved to a location near Grand Anse after work began on the cruise ship dock. Now lying in 15m, she is a perfect wreck dive for all levels, and is adorned in marine growth and fish life. If you want to get a little more depth, you can even follow anchor chains off the stern down to a small drop-off at a depth of 30m.

The Atlantic side of Grenada – which is often rougher, with large swells, but also benefits from having tremendous visibility - is home to several world-class shipwrecks.

The King Mitch makes for an unusual wreck dive, given that she resembles a box with a pointed front! Originally a US Navy minesweeper from World War Two, she was retro-fitted into a freighter by having two cargo holds inserted in her middle, with a crane attached to the deck between them. She lies several miles offshore on her side in 32m, and sank in 1981 when her bilge pump failed. There is some coral growth on her, but as the wrecks on this side of the island are often swept by sometimes fierce currents, it is nowhere near as prolific and dense as on the Caribbean side. What it does have is nurse sharks, lots of them, and southern stingrays, not to mention patrolling barracuda and amberjack.

A little closer to land is the cargo vessel Hema 1, which had delivered a consignment of cement to the island and was enroute back to Trinidad on 1 March 2005 when she was also the victim of a failed bilge pump and ended up in 30m of water. Shortly after being sunk, she was broken apart by hurricane surge, and now the hull and bow lie on their port side, with the midships well flattened. This wreck is another haunt for nurse sharks, which swarm in large numbers under hull plates and near the bow, and reef sharks sometimes pay a fleeting visit from out of the blue.

The latest vessel to join Grenada's underwater fleet on the Atlantic side is the Persia II, which went down in 35m in March 2017. Coral growth on this cargo ship is fairly sparse at the moment, but algae has taken a hold, and marine life has already started to move in, with various reef fish and the invasive lionfish in residence. Being some eight miles offshore means currents can be strong, and she lies close to deep water, so only time will tell what will eventually call her home, but in the meantime, divers can enjoy seeing a ship in the early stages of being claimed by the sea.







Not that they necessarily need it with such a selection of genuine shipwrecks, but Grenada and Carriacou also boast several artificial reefs, and more are in the pipeline. Grenada has the Buccaneer, a sloop sunk way back in 1978 that lies on its starboard side in just 24m and is well-festooned with marine growth. She is only small, but home to plenty of fish life, and her compact nature makes her perfect for photography. The cargo ship MV Hildur has been down since 2007 and lies in Grand Mal Bay in 35m. Like the

Buccaneer, she has collected a thick layer of encrusting coral and sponge growth in her time on the bottom, and her large open holds provide the perfect environment for shoals of fish. Spadefish and barracuda often swim in the water above her.

On Carriacou near Mabouya Island, you have the Twin Tugs, two vessels sitting within a short distance of one another in 28-30m, though for a thorough exploration of both, they are best visited individually due to the depth. Both are around 30 metres in length - the Westsider was sent to the bottom on 4 September 2004, and the Boris followed on 10 September 2007.

The two wrecks are covered in vibrant red and orange encrusting corals and algaes and penetration into the interior is possible on both. Currents can sometimes sweep across them, and they are home to angelfish, wrasse, soldierfish, lobster and moray eels.

So that's a whistlestop tour of some of Grenada and Carriacou's wreck sites, but the ace up the sleeve is that the islands also boast some pristine reef diving as well



DIVING

Grenada and Carriacou have a multitude of reef dives, ranging in depth from just a few metres to some in the technical arena – in fact, between the two islands, you have such a selection you could probably spend a month or more here and not have to hit the same site twice. Most of the dive sites are located on the west and south side of both Grenada and Carriacou; some sites are very sheltered, with little or no current, while others are more exposed and can be subject to quite extreme currents at times. Below are a selection of sites on both islands to whet your appetite.



GRENADA

Purple Rain is widely regarded as one of the most-pristine reefs on Grenada. The reef ranges in depth from 6-25m, and it is explored as a drift, but how fast you go can vary. On one visit it may be a mild current, gently pushing you along the sloping reef, on another, you can be in for a fast ride as the current roars along. The name comes not from the song by a late, diminutive pop star, but from the clouds of vivid purple Creole wrasse that swarm in the waters above the corals and sponges.

Shark Reef is only 12-18m in depth, but the draw is where it is located – just south of Glovers Island on the Atlantic side of Grenada. Generally swept by current, it makes for an interesting drift dive, as you pass through large shoals of snapper and grunts and big patches of sponges and soft corals, keeping an eye out for lobster and huge crabs sheltering in crevices and caves in the reef. Triggerfish, angelfish and parrotfish are also common, and you can usually see the odd nurse shark, which is what gave the site its name.

Grenada has a Marine Protected Zone that the islanders are very proud of, and within this area there are a number of dive sites. Flamingo Bay lies in the northern most part of the MPA and is regarded as one of the top spots to visit. The reef goes from 6m down to around 25-27m, and is covered in elkhorn coral and ball, rope, vase and barrel sponges. Angelfish, damselfish, butterflyfish, parrotfish and trumpetfish swim in among this vibrant habitat.

Happy Valley has similar depths to Flamingo Bay, and is located in the middle of the MPA. It is a truly stunning dive - what starts as a sloping reef rapidly becomes a wall, pockmarked with holes usually occupied by lobster, and an array of huge corals and sponges. Shoaling baitfish fill cuts in the wall, and jacks stalk them through the whip corals. Embedded into the reef, and totally encrusted with coral growth, is a large Admiralty anchor from days gone by.

Dragon Bay is also within the MPA, and comprises a series of sand channels that drop down and out towards a gently sloping reef. Maxing out at 23-24m, the sand is home to garden eels, flounder and southern stingrays, while the thick forests of soft corals and sponges on the fingers of reef shelter spotted drums, seahorses, filefish and trumpetfish.

Molinere Reef is another pretty dive site in the MPA, but as well as the topographically interesting reef, which is shaped by gullies, crevices and sand channels, and also a small wall, the main attraction here is the Underwater Sculpture Park, the first of its kind on the planet. Ranked in the Top 25 'Wonders of the World' by National Geographic, this underwater work of art sees several large-scale installations in just a few metres of water, including Vicissitudes, a circle of life-size figures cast from local children linked by holding hands; The Lost Correspondent, which is a man working at his desk on a typewriter; The Un-Still Life, a classical still-life composition of a vase and bowl of fruit on a table; and the Nutmeg Princess, which sees a life-size figure 'growing' out of a nutmeg pod. Created by Jason deCaires Taylor, Troy Lewis, Rene Froehlich and Lene Kilde, the amazingly lifelike statues have started to assume bizarre alien-like appearances as encrusting corals and sponges have taken hold. Shallow enough to be experienced by snorkellers, this is one site that needs to be appreciated by all divers.

Wibbles Reef is a fairly deep reef, extending from 15-26m, and it is generally tagged on to the end of a dive on the Bianca C, as once you drift off the bow of this giant, you can start heading upwards and pick up the reef on your way. It makes a nice dive in its own right, and as it is often swept by a current, it makes for a relaxing drift dive – you just set your buoyancy, then sit back and enjoy the ride, taking in the scenery as you go. Turtles, eagle rays, jacks and barracuda are often encountered along the way, and the sponge growth, particularly of barrel varieties, is impressive.





CARRIACOU

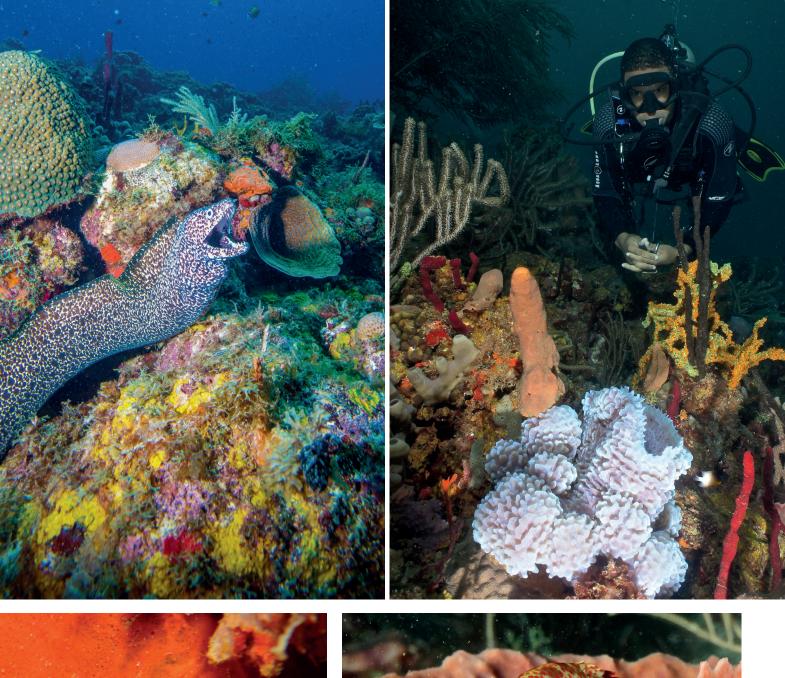
Over on Carriacou, you have the Sisters, which is one of the most-famous dive sites on the islands. These two rock pinnacles are often swept by strong currents, and this means they have phenomenal coral growth, as well as a diverse mix of marine life. There are actually two dive sites, Deep Blue – which features a wall that drops to 40m - and Barracuda Point, and both can be extremely challenging if the current is running, but this is when you get the major displays of shoaling fish.

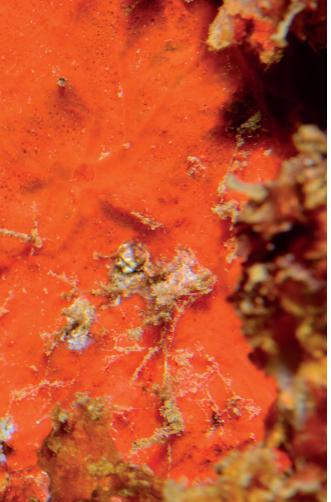
Tropical Hill is a seamount rising up from 18m to just below the surface, and it is absolutely teeming with life. Wide cracks running several metres upwards on the rock face can be jam-packed with lobster, while shoals of Creole wrasse and snapper swarm in and around the large gorgonian sea fans and sponges protruding out into the nutrient-rich water. Turtles are often found mooching around in the shallows.

White Sand Beach is a relaxing shallow dive, no deeper than 12m, which basically entails cruising around several large rock formations that are covered in coral growth and large sponges, making them a perfect habitat for juvenile reef fish, and exploring the sand patches between, which are home to jawfish, garden eels, southern stingrays and occasional turtles.

If you are after an adrenalin-rush, then Layer Cake is just the ticket. Located off the south of the island, it comprises a rapid drift along a gently sloping reef which then becomes 'stepped' like a wedding cake, but with deep undercuts and overhangs that you can shelter in momentarily out of the current before heading back out into the maelstrom. Nurse sharks and moray eels are often seen as you fly over the reef.











TOPSIDE ATTRACTIONS





Grenada and Carriacou are the complete holiday destination, boasting a host of attractions and activities to keep you occupied when you are not exploring beneath the surface.

For the adventurous, the lush interior offers many hiking trails, ranging from gently undulating, family-friendly paths to rugged, off-the-beaten-track explorations. The rainforest around the Grand Etang Forest Reserve is one of the most-popular areas on the island, and the thick vegetation surrounding Grand Etang Lake – a 30-acre body of water sitting in the crater of an extinct volcano – is home to a wide variety of animals, including the playful Mona monkey (Grenada is its only home outside of West Africa). The 450-acre Levera National Park has an extensive mangrove swamp that is considered one of the most-important wild-life habitats on the island, and between March and August, you have the chance to witness leatherback turtles laying their eggs, or see the newly born youngsters making their way to the sea.

To explore the island using other modes of transport, you can venture off on a jeep safari or a self-drive guided buggy tour, which will deliver you to some out-of-the-way places, or use pedal power to explore on a bicycle. Of course, there are a multitude of seasoned drivers offering minibus tours of the islands, who will be able to regal you with all manner of facts, figures and interesting information. Why not tie a tour in with a river tubing adventure? Blasting down river in a blow-up ring is fun for all of the family!

There are lots of opportunities to delve into the rich history of the islands as well. At the Belmont Estate, a 300-year-old working plantation spread across 400 acres, you can see firsthand the centuries-old practice of processing cocoa and producing some of the region's best chocolate, while on the River Antoine Estate – a privately owned rum distillery dating back to 1785 - you can marvel at the oldest functioning water-propelled distillery in the western hemisphere. On Carriacou, the Belair National Park is home to various old English and French ruins, along with pristine windmills, attesting to the island's industrial heritage. To really head into the past, check out the petroglyphs, well-carved images embedded into rocks at several points around the western and









northern coasts of Grenada, which are from the Amerindian era around 1,000AD.

The Gouyave nutmeg processing station, one of the largest factories on Grenada, gives you an insight into how workers choose, grade and package the nutmegs, an export that helped gain Grenada its nickname of 'the Spice Island' (it is the second largest producer of nutmeg in the world).

In St George's - the capital of Grenada – you can tour around Fort George, Fort Matthew and Fort Frederick, which were all established in the 18th century and offer stunning panoramic views of the town.

You can also see the Christ of the Deep statue, which was commissioned by the Italian Costa Steamship Line in appreciation for the rescue of the passengers and crew off the Bianca C cruise liner when it sank in 1961, and wander around the Carenage, a picturesque harbour that is a hub of trade and tourism.

If you can't get enough of that inviting, warm, blue water, then there are plenty of surface watersports on offer. You can chill out and relax on a sailing catamaran cruise, taking in the stunning island scenery, or if that isn't fast enough for you, why not try a high-speed RIB safari? If you want to explore under your own power, many places offer rental of Hobie Cat catamarans, kayaks and stand-up paddleboards, and for the kids – and the young-atheart! – you can always go for a blast on a ringo towed behind a speedboat, or try your hand at flyboarding.

The native inhabitants of the islands are very welcoming and friendly, so make sure you also take time to interact with the locals. There are plenty of events throughout the year on both Grenada and Carriacou, from colourful carnivals, sailing regattas, fishing tournaments, music festivals and even events dedicated to that tasty island delicacy, chocolate!

And let's not forget that Grenada and Carriacou are the perfect place to just kick back, relax and let the islands whisk away the trials and tribulations of daily life back home.

Nothing beats chilling out on one of any number of beaches with an ice-cold cocktail and soaking up the island vibes. Heh, if it was good enough for Captain Jack Sparrow - Anse La Roche Beach on Carriacou was featured in the original Pirates of the Caribbean movie - it is good enough for you! Now, where's the rum...

