



ISLAND LIFE

Forget the chills of winter and look forward to a sun-drenched Caribbean destination that can still delight and surprise you – as NICOLA GILL discovers

Even if you've been to the Caribbean before, a visit to Grenada will surprise you. Yes it has the idyllic breathtaking pale sand beaches lapped by balmy seas, picturesque candy-coloured streetside shacks and welcoming locals

– but it also has so much more to offer. Free of the bling that has draped itself over some of its neighbouring West Indian islands, Grenada is confidently carefree and happy to welcome you whether you're a five-star traveller or a shoestring backpacker – yes, it is still

possible to travel here on a budget. Nicknamed the Spice Isle (no prizes for guessing why), you can drink top quality island-brewed rum while nibbling on locally grown handmade chocolate in sniffing distance of nutmeg and cinnamon trees – and



that's just the beginning of its foodie delights. Here, it's not the depth of your pockets that matters but the width of your smile. Which frankly isn't asking much as grinning away in Grenada is as easy as lounging in a hammock watching the famous sunset.



Live like a local

Gouyave is a little fishing village in the north-west of Grenada, where the fishermen catch more fish than anywhere else on the island. Plan a visit for Gouyave Fish Friday – best described as a lively street party celebrating home-cooked food with music and dancing. Kicking off at 6pm, you can graze on the dishes served at the simple stalls lining the streets of St Francis and St Dominic while the local steel band plays. Typical dishes include jerked marlin, barbecued snapper, conch, lobster and shrimp of all varieties. And once you've had your fill you can wash it down with tropical juices, beers and Grenadian rum.

The spice market in Georgetown is a must for a Saturday morning stroll. The open air market is colourful, spicy and fresh, where rickety old tables are piled high with produce and roving vendors weave through the passageways selling coconut juice. At times it can seem like the whole of Grenada is packed into this vibrant market, haggling over ingredients for a family meal. It's a treat to see all the exotic fruit and veg then trying to guess what it is (giant rolls of cinnamon bark, fresh nutmeg pods from the tree, golden apples, bluggoes, purple avocados and more).





TWO TO TRY

› Snorkel the **Underwater Sculpture Park** in Moliniere Bay's newly declared Marine Protected Area. grenadaunderwatersculpture.com

› Visit the privately owned **River Antoine water-powered rum distillery** to see (and taste!) rum as it's always been made – from cane harvest to bottle. Tours are just \$2 US per person.

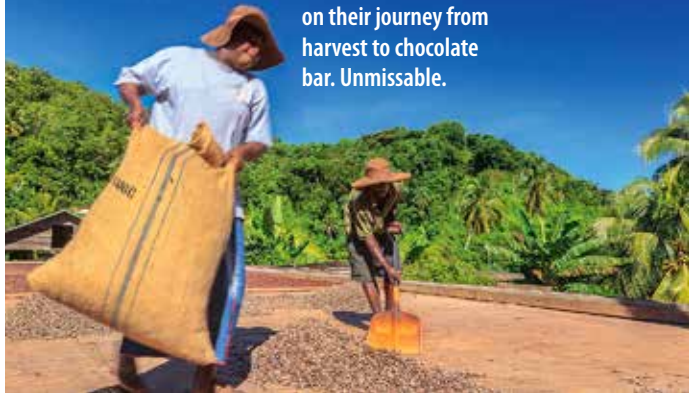


VISIT A CHOCOLATE FACTORY

Belmont Estate in St Patrick, one hour's scenic drive from the capital deep into the mountainous rainforest, is part of the Grenada Organic Cocoa Farmers' Co-operative Society. The guides walk you around the cultivated rainforest, pointing out ripening cocoa pods growing on the cocoa trees among other local trees and plants such as cinnamon, pimento, cloves, bay leaves, turmeric, ginger and mace. After that it is time to marvel at the working small-scale factory where you can see (and smell!) both traditional and modern methods of fermenting, drying and polishing the cocoa beans



on their journey from harvest to chocolate bar. Unmissable.



Treat your taste buds

BB's Crabback, with tables on a large, airy deck overlooking the harbour, combines the vibe of a relaxed beach bar with the smart ambience and dishes of a top-notch restaurant. Try saltfish souse with fried plantains, or land crabs baked with herbs, wine and cheese served in a crab shell with warm bakes (fried dough discs). Once you've tasted

this dish you'll understand why BB's gets through over 1,000 of these crabs a week.

The Doggy Dock Bar and Restaurant at the True Blue Bay Resort has fantastic 360-degree views over the point where the Atlantic and the Caribbean meet. The Mexican menu is supplemented by fresh fruit, local organic chocolate and home-made ice creams to die for. dodgydock.com

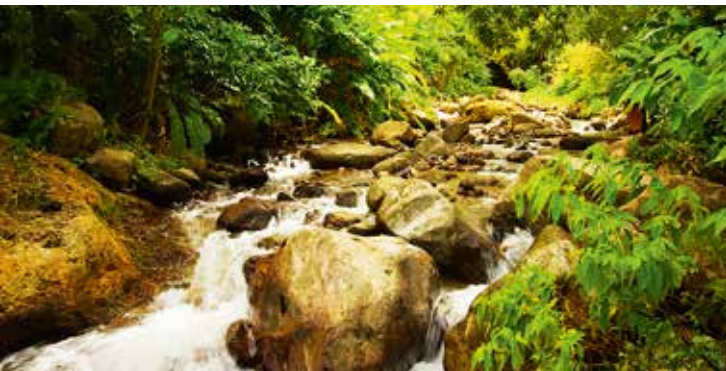
Rainforest rambles

Grenada's mountainous and steamy heart is the rainforest. Home to armadillos, psychedelic butterflies and hummingbirds, it's a world away from the tropical beach scene down at sea level. And if you're going to visit the rainforest there's no one more knowledgeable to have as your guide than 73-year-old Telfor Bedeau. Telfor bounds through the undergrowth in jelly shoes, explaining the vibrant ecosystem. A one-time sailor, surveyor and

English rail worker, Bedeau began hiking in the early 60s and has travelled every pathway in Grenada, clocking up well over 10,000 miles in 50 years.

The only way to end a humid trek through Grenada's rainforest is with a plunge into the sea from one of its icing sugar beaches. Choose from one of its many coves populated by tourists or head for a spot with just turtle egg shells for company.

Telfor Bedeau private guided treks and hikes, 00 1 473 442 6200



WHERE TO STAY

Petite Anse For unbeatable, get-away-from-it-all romance in luxurious but relaxed surroundings it's impossible to beat the Petite Anse boutique hotel. Fresh produce from the plantation is used in the restaurants and the views are heavenly – off the beaten track and truly special. A night with breakfast at the Petite Anse boutique hotel starts from £45 per person per night (www.petiteanse.com).



FACTFILE

Grenada is eight hours from the UK with Virgin (virgin-atlantic.com).

TIME DIFFERENCE: Four hours behind the UK.

WEATHER: Sub-tropical Granada is warm all year round (25-30°C) and all that lush greenery comes from fairly regular rainfall – averaging around 12 days a month from January to April and 20 days of short, sharp rain that refreshes the landscape from June to November in the wet season.

GETTING THERE: Seven nights room only at Kalinago Beach Resort in Grenada start from £781pp including return British Airways (ba.com/grenada) flights from Gatwick including a special pay 5, stay 7 offer valid for travel in June only.

FIND OUT MORE about Grenada at puregrenada.com.