



# THE ISLE OF SPICE

**GRENADA'S NOT A LARGE ISLAND, BUT IT HAS A LOT TO OFFER, FROM HOME-GROWN CHOCOLATE TO SWIM-UP WATERFALLS. GISELLE WHITEAKER GETS SAND BETWEEN HER TOES IN THE CARIBBEAN.**



Clockwise from top: One of several pools at True Blue Bay Boutique Resort; the infinity pool; trees on Grand Anse Beach.

The sun is shining, the sky is sapphire blue and the temperature is hovering around the 28-degree mark, despite the early hour. It's 9am and it's shaping up to be a beautiful day in Grenada. We're fast discovering this is not unusual – we chose the best time to visit Grenada (between January and April), when there's an abundance of sunshine in lieu of Britain's cooler months.

From the master bedroom of our two-bedroom villa at True Blue Bay Resort, there is direct access to outside. We follow the path around the curved infinity pool surrounded by sun loungers, past the beach bar and Aquanauts Grenada – we've booked to go snorkelling with them later in the week. We stroll along a wooden pier, admiring the population of colourful crabs feeding on the rocky outcrops near the shore, before arriving at Dodgy Dock, the oceanfront al fresco restaurant. We sit by the water, dining on made-to-order omelettes and watching the birds – Carib Grackles – flit from table to rafter in hopes of spotting a snack. It's a relaxing way to start the day.

The pace of the Caribbean is already slowing us down. We've been ensconced at True Blue Bay Boutique Resort, a family-owned and operated hotel on the South Coast, for two days now. We've spent much of our time lounging by the pool, although yesterday I made use of the resort's kayak and paddled around True Blue Bay. Today, we're catching the free shuttle to Grand Anse, Grenada's most popular beach, a mile-and-a-half stretch of soft, white sand, shaded by trees dotted along the sand and framed by low-rise hotels. The shuttle will be back in four hours, giving us enough time to soak up some sun and pop into the nearby café.

Each day brings adventure on this lush island, whether large or small. One day, we hire a guide. Most visitors take in one of the rum distilleries, the nutmeg processing station, and Belmont Estate, a 17th-century plantation that offers tours around the organic farm, gardens, heritage museum and cocoa processing facilities. We're looking for something a little different. After a quick chat with our guide, Andre, off we roll, swinging by the Carenage, a scenic inlet on the edge of St George's, the capital of Grenada. We wander around Market Square where the Saturday market is just warming up and locals tempt us with necklaces made from local spices. Moving on, we drive through colourful tumbledown villages as we make our way to Grand Etang National Park, in the centre of the island.

At the turn off to Grand Etang Lake, Andre spies another guide, who gives him a nod. We pull up and a white-chested monkey with matching white cheeks and Barbie-pink lips scampers over to accept a wedge of banana. The guide continues his deep-throated monkey call. George, a hefty specimen with grey cheeks and a black mask, answers the call. The Mona monkey happily clammers up our arms to retrieve bananas, pausing at one point to nuzzle my head, until he gets bored, returning to the treetops.

After admiring the lake, we move on to the trailhead for Seven Sisters Waterfall, collecting a walking stick from the visitor centre before making our way down a sometimes muddy path. The hike weaves through vibrant green foliage,



The Mona monkey happily clammers up our arms to retrieve bananas, pausing at one point to nuzzle my head.

Clockwise from top left: Bright colours at True Blue Bay Resort; rum and chocolate tasting at True Blue Bay Resort; the villas overlooking the infinity pool; Mona monkey; the villa's master bedroom.



at some points no wider than a goat track. We cross a small river towards the end, catching our first glimpse of the double falls. At the upper falls, we strip down to our swimmers for a refreshing dip.

Having worked up an appetite, we stop at Good Food Restaurant in Grenville, the second largest town in Grenada. Elio feasts on oil down, the national dish, which is a one-pot stew of breadfruit, chicken, dumplings, callaloo and other vegetables, cooked in coconut milk. I try the pork with rice 'n' peas and confirm this local eatery more than lives up to its name.

The afternoon sees us admiring vestiges of the Cold War: a Cubana Airlines passenger plane and a Soviet crop duster abandoned at the former airport on the east of the island. Goats are tethered by the old runway, which is now

used as a drag-racing strip and informal road. We take in spectacular views from Welcome Rock, a short but rewarding hike, before driving almost the full length of the island back to the outskirts of St George's to stop at French-built Fort Frederick, which sits atop a hill offering sweeping views of St George's.

The next day, we chug away from Dodgy Dock on the Aquanauts boat, ready to dive in. Moored around the coast, we snorkel across the flat surface of the water. Figures rise up from the deep – the Molinere Bay Underwater Sculpture Park created by Jason deCaires Taylor was a response to storm damage from Hurricane Ivan in 2004. Taylor created 75 works that are now in sand patches and gullies between natural rock formations at a depth of 5.8 metres. The structures provide a base for marine life to proliferate, a process that has already begun.



The café features ridiculously delicious chocolates made on-site, cakes, and drinks including cocoa tea, which we sample with coconut milk.

Clockwise from top left: Market day at St George's; the upper fall at Seven Sisters Waterfall; an abandoned crop duster at Pearls Airport; cocoa products at the House of Chocolate; café tables at the House of Chocolate; the exterior of the House of Chocolate.



Sculpture at the Underwater Sculpture Park photo courtesy of @jasondecairestaylor

The Sculpture Park is listed as one of National Geographic's 25 Wonders of the World for good reason.



The sculptures at the Underwater Sculpture Park provide a base for marine life to proliferate. photo courtesy of @jasondecairestaylor

One sculpture lying in the sand has a soft coral growing from its face. The Sculpture Park is listed as one of National Geographic's 25 Wonders of the World for good reason.

In the afternoon, we visit the House of Chocolate in St George's, a mini-museum cum café that portrays the history of chocolate and the growth of cocoa and chocolate production on the island, through hands-on exhibits. The café features ridiculously delicious chocolates made on-site, cakes, and drinks, including cocoa tea, which we sample with coconut milk. It's an unusual, slightly bitter, nutty brew that could easily be addictive.

For a small island, there's a lot to do, but we're running out of time. Our last night sees us walk down dusty tracks along the coast to the West Indies Brewing Company. This is beer-lovers heaven. The bar is ringed by taps, each with a different brew. There are locally brewed ciders for the non-beer drinkers and the bar staff have such a solid understanding of the product that they pick beers to suit each punter after a short conversation. The free samples are a bonus.

Wobbling our way back to True Blue Bay Resort, we know we're not seeing everything, but this will not be the last time we heed the call of the Caribbean. The Spice Island is way too nice to resist. ■

**INFO**

True Blue Bay Boutique Resort is a home away from home in Grenada. Experience the restaurant, spa, yoga studio, pools, dive centre, marina, yacht charter, kayaks, Hobie Cats, cooking classes and rum tastings on-site or drop in for a meal at Dodgy Dock. Street Food Wednesdays are particularly popular. [www.truebluebay.com](http://www.truebluebay.com)