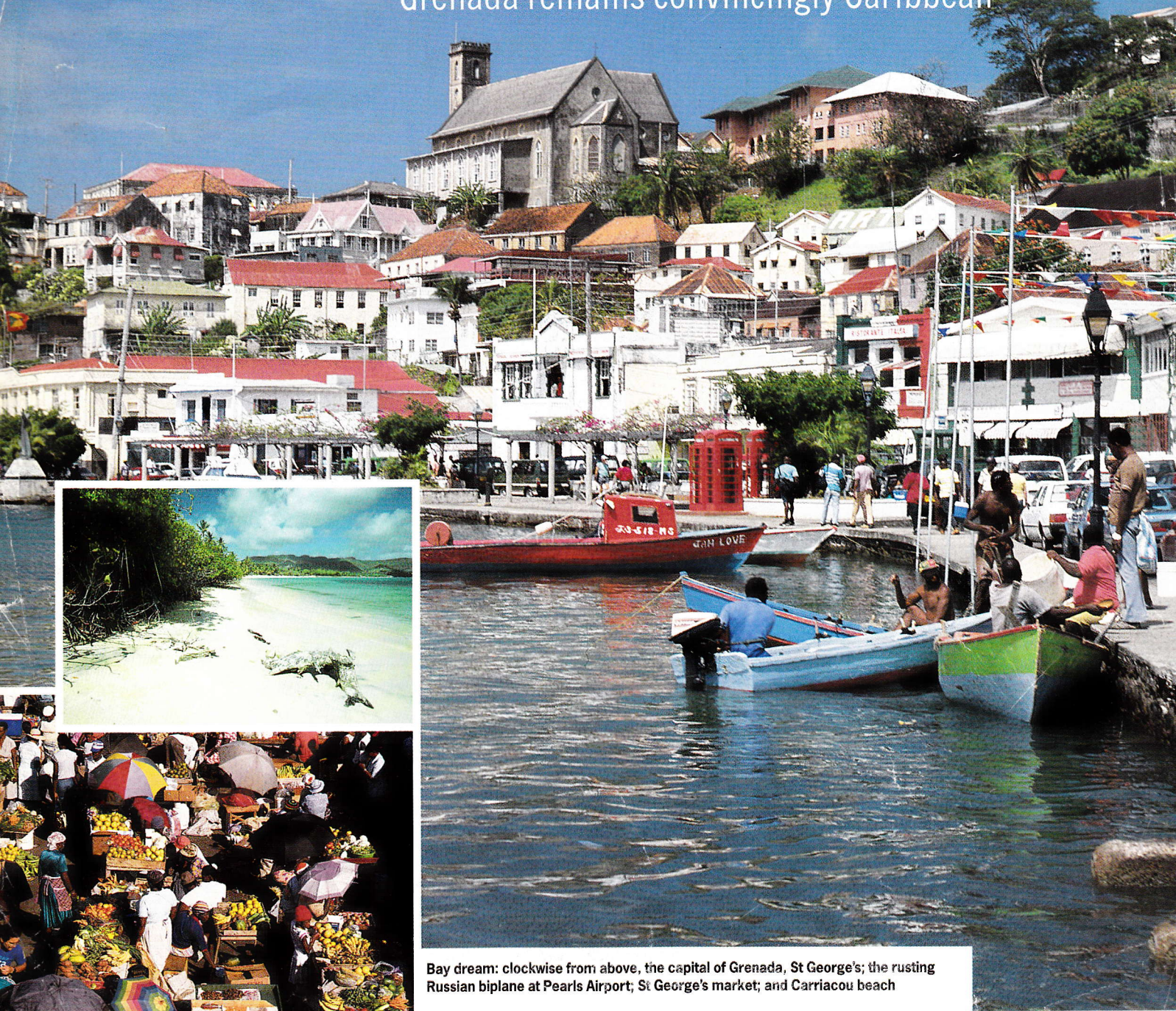


# travel

EDITED BY PHILIP WATSON

# Feels so real

As the West Indies becomes a package-deal destination,  
Grenada remains convincingly Caribbean



Bay dream: clockwise from above, the capital of Grenada, St George's; the rusting Russian biplane at Pearls Airport; St George's market; and Carriacou beach

AT THE END OF THE PITTED RUNWAY OF GRENADA'S deserted Pearls Airport sit two rusting planes. One is a Russian biplane formerly used to spray crops, the other is a gutted Cuban passenger jet hastily abandoned after American forces landed on the island in 1983. Surrounded by burnt-out engines, corroding barbed wire, and the goats and sheep which shade under their wings, the aircraft are stark symbols of the island's turbulent recent past, of a brief socialist experiment that foundered under the weight of internal in-fighting and external interference.

Depending on who you talk to about Grenada, the overthrow of Maurice Bishop's four-year People's Revolutionary Government was either a rescue mission, incursion, intervention or invasion. Whatever it was, it doesn't seem to want to go away; the political fall-out is felt today in anything from everyday conversation – 170 Grenadians were killed in the fighting – to fading slogans daubed on walls that proclaim either "Socialism Will Live Forever!" or "Thank You US For Liberating Us". Even your point of arrival, Point Salines International Airport, is loaded with political significance. Built in the early Eighties with Cuban money and labour, it was this complex that President Reagan utilised – describing it as a major Cuban-Soviet military installation – as part of his justification for military action.

If this all seems way too much trouble in paradise, it is this legacy that actually makes Grenada more interesting to visit than so many other tropical islands. It is rough around the edges, less manicured, less developed and certainly less affluent than many parts of the Caribbean – and all the better for it. Grenada feels more *real*.

Luxury is available, of course. While no one is allowed to build higher than a palm tree, there are several hotels and resorts, mainly along the two-mile beach known as Grande Anse. Here you'll find most of the bars, beach vendors and bronzing Americans. It is also close by the picturesque hillside capital, St George's, with its sweeping harbour front and historic buildings – one of which, Fort George, being the site of the execution of Bishop and six of his associates.

You can decide to beach yourself on Grande Anse for the entirety of your stay, but Grenada has a dramatic coastline and a

volcanic interior, and a trip – by hire car or taxi – around the island is to be recommended. At 21 miles long and twelve miles wide, this makes for a thoroughly enjoyable day trip, one which takes you through rainforests, waterfalls and mountainous regions, as well as skirting some of the island's 45 beaches, many coral-reefed.

Two stops are essential. Don't miss "Caribs Leap" on the west coast, a dramatic cliff top from which, in 1651, over 40 native Caribs jumped to their death rather than surrender to French colonists. Secondly, do lunch at the Morne Fendue Plantation House (tel: 442 9330) in the north of the island, near Sauteurs. Here, octogenarian

Betty Mascoll (known as "auntie" throughout the island), whose father built the imposing building in 1908, serves a traditional West Indian buffet of delicacies such as chicken fricasee, pepperpot stew, sweet potato casse-rolé, yams and christophene. The house also has three simple guest rooms upstairs.

The cuisine is also excellent, if somewhat more *haute* and costly at Cicely's restaurant in the Calabash Hotel. Sited on secluded Prickley Bay in the south, the hotel is British-owned and run and has 30 suites with patios, eight of which have private pools. It has landscaped gardens, a beach bar, swimming pool, fitness room, tennis court, and water sports, and is perhaps the best small resort on the island.

Breakfast is a special treat. You can nominate a specific time for such pick-you-ups as mango and papaya with lime juice, pancakes with

bacon and maple syrup, and strong Caribbean coffee. Better still, just open your door and, a few minutes later, breakfast will miraculously appear on your private balcony, transported from the maid's pantry adjacent to your suite. This is the most civilised start to a day's holiday, and typical of the degree of service and excellence the Calabash is justly renowned for. Just one question though: didn't anybody think that "Shower of Gold" was a curious name for a hotel room? **PW GQ visited Grenada as a guest of British Airways Holidays (01293 723161). Double rooms at the Calabash cost from £1,048 per person for one week, including flights from Gatwick, transfers and breakfasts. Packages are also available through Caribbean Connection, Kuoni, Hayes & Jarvis and Simply Caribbean, among others. For information, contact the Grenada Tourism Board, 1 Collingham Gardens, London SW5 0HW (0171-370 5164).**



## Grenada is less manicured and less developed than other Caribbean islands

and deserted, and with our packed lunch and cold beers we spent an unforgettable day there.

A stay at the Caribbee Inn makes visits to Anse La Roche a daily possibility. Perched on a bluff looking out to the nearby Grenadine islands, the inn has just eight suites, all beautifully designed and with four-poster beds, hammocks and panoramic views. There are private grounds, where Wendy Cooper's two Amazonian macaws return every evening, and candlelit, French Creole-inspired dinners in the main building, with its cool fans and wooden louvered windows. The overall effect is intimate and romantic – this is a popular retreat for honeymooners.

The Inn can arrange for journeys into Hillsborough, the island's one-street capital, around the island in "Danny Boy's" taxi, or boat trips to Grenada's third island, Petit Martinique. But the highlight of any day

is Robert Cooper's pre-prandial "Sundowner" punch. Made with fine local rum and topped with grated nutmeg, this is the perfect addition to a sunset stroll. Walk past the poinsettias and the hummingbirds to the bench at the head of the bluff, and marvel at the 270° vista. For added spice, slip in a slug of the island's hooch, jackiron, a brew so potent (it is said to be distilled to over 200° proof) that ice sinks in it. **PW Double rooms at The Caribbee Inn start from US\$90 (£60) per night. Breakfast and dinner is an additional \$45 (£30) per person. Prices exclude service charge and tax. For further details call: 00 809 443 7380; fax: 00 809 443 8142. Flights from Grenada with Airlines of Carriacou start at £30 return; the hovercraft service is £19 return. The Owners Syndicate (0181-767 7926) and Transatlantic Wings (0171-602 4021) offer package and tailor-made trips to the Caribbee Inn.**

## Sandy sure

IT HAD JUST BEGUN TO RAIN WHEN WE ARRIVED AT Anse La Roche in Carriacou, Grenada's sister island 23 miles to the north. Cited in a recent *Independent on Sunday* survey as one of the world's ten best beaches, La Roche is not easily reached. "Follow the track until you come to a tree that leans over, head down past the disused plantation house and look out for the seashell marker," we were told by Englishman Robert Cooper, part-owner with his wife Wendy of the nearby Caribbee Inn. "The beach is just down below."

Twenty-five minutes later, we were swimming in a warm sea, the soft rain dancing on our skin and prickling the surface of the water. La Roche is a perfect 300-yard crescent of fine white sand and the overhanging trees offer shade and shelter. Apart from the occasional interloper by boat, it was peaceful