



DON'T  
MISS.

The Carnival

RBC Royal Bank

NATY

NATTY SOCIAL





FOLLOWERS OF *GOLDEN COMPASS'S* ADVENTURES  
MIGHT REMEMBER THE LOBSTER ROLL COMPETITION THAT CHARACTERIZED  
THE BOAT'S JOURNEY THROUGH MAINE. NOW IN THE SOUTHERN CARIBBEAN,  
THE COMPETITION ON BOARD HAS TURNED TO THE DISTINCTLY MORE DANGEROUS—RUM.

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM RAYCROFT

**I**T'S HARD TO BEAT A GLORIOUS DAY playing in the warm Caribbean Sea, diving on a coral reef, basking in the quiet, lazy calm soothed by a tropical ocean breeze. A stroll on a pristine beach, a lounge in the onboard Jacuzzi, all leading up to an evening of culinary delights and fine wines. This is your typical Caribbean yacht charter.

Anything but typical, our Down Island charter on the 151-foot charter motor yacht *Golden Compass* brought us all this, plus much, much more.

We had timed the start of our trip to Trinidad and Tobago to coincide with Carnival, a very special time in the Caribbean. Carnival is a serious tradition with each island trying to outdo its neighbors. And no island nation does it quite like Trinidad. Its Port of Spain celebrations are legendary with miles of dazzling, colorful, themed floats and provocative costumes.

Upon our arrival, Ed, one of *Golden Compass's* owners, greeted us with these wise words, "Rest up, for this is the calm before the storm." Then he added, "and wear comfortable shoes!"

Carnival Trinidad-style is a full contact sport. Night and day the merriment goes on, the pageantry and pounding Caribbean beat both delight and assault the senses at an obscene volume. The constant music blasting from massive arrays of loudspeakers mounted on a fleet of 18-wheel flatbed trucks makes ear protection a necessity. With thousands of costumed islanders, many of them scantily clad, dancing and grinding their way along the hot, circuitous route, the procession snakes through town from the harbor up to the judging pavilion.

The crush of humanity on the streets results in a sort of mega block party where everyone is encouraged to jump into the mix—and so we did. Cameras in hand, we folded into the parade and were swept up in the current, carried along in an undulating river of celebration, music and dance—old and young, all moving together in glitz and glitter...

Returning to the yacht later that night I was surprised that *Golden Compass* seemed to be the only yacht in port. Given the magnitude of such an entertaining event and the friendly



reception we received I would have expected more yachts to be there. Our experience left us with the feeling that Trinidad is a much-underrated yachting destination worthy of serious consideration, especially at Carnival time.

Departing Port of Spain in the morning, our plan was to steam north to Grenada, the southern most of the Windward Islands then work our way up to the Tobago Cays, Bequia and St. Vincent, departing from St. Lucia. Several hours into the crossing to Grenada the gentle rolling and pitching from the eight-foot seas had lulled most of us off to dreamland or movieland when the quiet was shattered by the unmistakable clatter of a large military-style helicopter. Coming in fast and low it was suddenly hovering 50 feet above our deck. The pilot radioed our captain to maintain course and speed—we were about to be boarded. A moment later an armed airborne crewmember was out the helicopter door suspended on a thin cable being lowered to *Golden Compass's*

foredeck. Timing his landing with the pitching bow as best he could, our guest arrived in a heap but unharmed on top of one of the WaveRunners.

You don't see this every day. The Trinidad and Tobago Defense Force had requested that we take part in an aerial ship-boarding training exercise, and the owners of *Golden Compass* were only too happy to oblige. Invited into the galley, our new friend talked about his mission while our crew stuffed bottles of water, juice and diet Coke into the pockets of his flight suit. Back on deck, the retrieval was as exciting as the landing; after hooking onto the cable he went up like a shot, the big helicopter buzzing *Golden Compass* as it departed.

We made Grenada at nine p.m., anchoring just offshore for the night in the lee of the island. Protected from the ocean swell we enjoyed a dinner of tempura shrimp appetizer, followed by filet mignon on the upper deck. At first light

---

Coming in fast and low, it was suddenly hovering 50 feet above our deck. The pilot radioed our captain to maintain course and speed—we were about to be boarded.



*these pages*  
Fort George offers a picturesque view of Grenada's St. George's harbor. One of the island's main exports is cocoa; visiting a plantation gave guests a first-hand experience (opposite page, top). The Seven Sisters Waterfall offers an exhilarating 50-foot drop for those brave enough to jump (opposite page, bottom).





*Golden Compass* moved onto the dock at the Camper & Nicholsons marina adjacent to the exclusive Port Louis resort in the tiny picturesque harbor of St. George's. It is one of the most beautiful ports in the Caribbean with its inner harbor promenade known as The Carenage, lined with little shops, restaurants and bars, and colorful local fishing boats and coastal freighters tied along the old stone docks.

After lunch we piled into the *Nautica* with a bag of snorkel gear and GoPro cameras and headed to the Underwater Sculpture Park just outside the harbor. Fascinating works of art, the life-size sculptures placed on the reef at Moliniere Bay are the creation of artist Jason deCaires Taylor and a must-do snorkel or dive experience.

Our first stop ashore was the massive fort that stands high on a promontory guarding the harbor entrance. Here we met a sassy local guide named Lystra who was quite knowledgeable about the island's history and gave us the tour in her own "spicy" way. Built by the French in 1705 as Fort Royal, it was later renamed Fort George by the British. Inside the fort stands the bullet-pocked stone wall where Prime Minister Maurice Bishop and 15 others were lined up and executed by a rebel firing squad in a coup on October 19, 1983. This action prompted the United States military invasion of Grenada ordered by President Reagan. Look closely and you can still find signs of thanks to the United States from the citizens of Grenada painted on walls around town.

Grenada, "The Spice Island," lives up to its name with vendors selling nutmeg, turmeric, mace, cinnamon, saffron and much more at St. George's colorful outdoor market. After a walk around the town it was on to the Grand Etang National Park and Forest Reserve, where the Mona monkeys are bold and happy to relieve visitors of any food or snacks they happen to carry.

The Seven Sisters Waterfall is well worth the hike, combining an interesting nature walk and a refreshing swim. Local kids will supply a walking stick and lead the way for a small gratuity. Naquone, our young guide, led us down to the natural pool at the base of the falls then agreed to show Ed and I how to navigate the slippery climb up to the top of the falls for an exhilarating 50-foot jump. Local knowledge goes a long way; we followed Naquone's every footstep clinging to roots and rocks. After briefing us on where to stand for the best descent, he jumped, and we each did our best to land in the exact same spot in the rushing water below.

Pressing on we visited the 400-acre privately owned Belmont Estate located on the north side of the island and found it to be fascinating. The plantation grows an exotic array of spices but cocoa is its mainstay. Our entertaining young guide, Meshach, showed us how the local cocoa bean is grown, harvested and processed into chocolate. The products are exported to buyers around the world including Whole Foods. We were treated to "cocoa tea," a tasty local hot chocolate drink.

Also on the island's north side, the River Antoine Rum Distillery is Grenada's oldest, dating from 1785. A tour of







these pages  
The Golden Compass  
Rum Invitational  
included a visit to  
a distillery that  
produces rum the  
old-fashioned way  
(above left). Tobago  
Cays Marine Park's  
turtle sanctuary  
brought guests up  
close and personal  
(opposite page,  
middle). Bequia boat  
models depict the  
island's long whaling  
tradition (opposite  
page, top).

the distillery is an eye-opening experience in that it seems impossible that rum is actually produced in what appears to be little more than a factory in ruins. Still utilizing the oldest operating water wheel in the Northern Hemisphere the distillery turns out very strong rum products. Words failed me after the tasting and I barely managed a raspy, "This is very strong rum."

River Antoine Rum Distillery was of particular interest to us since we had planned to sample and rate island rums from every stop along the way. To this end we had been growing our *Golden Compass* rum collection on board behind the bar; the final showdown was planned for our last night aboard.

Leaving Grenada at dawn we slipped out of St. George's harbor with a light rain falling as the lights of the town faded in our wake. By noon the sun was out at full strength as we motored into Clifton Bay at Union Island, the gateway to the Grenadines and the Tobago Cays. A cluster of five tiny, uninhabited islands and reef, the Tobago Cays are arguably the most beautiful real estate in the entire Caribbean.

We dropped anchor near the wreck site of the *HMS Petunia*, a WWI British gunboat, as a local fisherman motored up offering us a fresh catch from his boat, *Sweet*

*Deal*. We were in the protected Tobago Cays Marine Park, established in 1997. The shallow depth and sandy bottom here make for good holding for smaller yachts and account for the spectacular strata of blue and green sea color. The highlight of the park was snorkeling at the Baradal Turtle Sanctuary where hawksbill and green turtles forage, oblivious to the presence of their fan club.

The 27-mile run to the island of Bequia had us arriving into Port Elizabeth late in the day. The approach from the south brought us close to the recent wreck of *Love Divine*, a bright red island freighter that came to grief on the rocks of West Cay one night several months earlier. Near the wreck at the southern tip of the island is the private residential community of Moonhole. These unique homes, literally carved out of the rock, cling to the sheer cliff above the sea. Devoid of electric power, they rely on kerosene lamps and propane gas. Some are available for seasonal rental and each provides commanding views.

Barely seven square miles, Bequia is the second largest island in the Grenadines and is home to a population of about 4,000. Truly a tiny gem, Bequia is calm and laid back with a colorful history and a whaling tradition. The International Whaling Commission designated Bequia one of



the world's very few places where limited whaling is approved. Taking no more than four whales per year, Bequia natives must adhere to traditional hunting methods of hand-thrown harpoons from small open sailboats. Keeping the tradition and history of boatbuilding alive, talented local artists have taken to building beautiful models of these unique "Bequia Boats."

Once ashore, we continued our tradition of enjoying an ice-cold Hairoun beer while searching for another bottle of rum. From her sampling at the Whalebone Bar and Restaurant, one guest remarked, "best damn homemade nutmeg ice cream ever!" The fresh pastries at the Gingerbread bakery were also a hit. Sitting at Tom's Café on the waterfront, I watched a rusty orange mail boat come and go, picking its way through the mooring field of cruising yachts anchored just off the beach. These island freighters arrive daily from St. Vincent, delivering their varied cargo of canned goods, car parts, cases of bottled water, fishing tackle, building materials, fresh fruit, electronics and, of course, mail. A primitive but functional system, the cargo was all deposited on the town dock and is retrieved by its recipients on foot or by hand cart or tossed in the back of an old island pickup.

Only 10 miles to the north of Bequia but a world away is the busy, bustling port city of Kingstown, capital of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. *Golden Compass* moored at Young Island in the lee of Fort Charlotte, whose 600-foot summit offered a killer view of *Golden Compass* at sunset.

But the real climb was the next day, to St. Vincent's La Soufriere volcano. Although we were told the trek would be relatively easy it turned out to be a challenging, steady climb up 3,300 feet from the trailhead. Our young, agile guide kept us moving along ridges lined with bamboo through rainforest, slogging up mud steps braced with bamboo, and across two rocky river beds. As the climb began to flatten out we reached the tree line only to find deep, wash-out ruts intersecting the trail, making the going that much more difficult. The weather had been deteriorating all morning, the mist had become a steady rain and the wind worsened the higher we climbed. We made the 4,048-foot summit in a little over two hours but by then clouds completely obscured the crater view. On the descent the wind was whipping and the rain came in a heavy downpour making the muddy trail even more difficult to negotiate. We emerged from the jungle like a pack of messy, drowned rats, absolutely soaked and chilled to the bone. Lucky for us the *Golden Compass* crew had loaded a bag of towels in Charlie Tango's taxi van along with our lunch. Standing under the van's lift gate, out of the wind and rain and wrapped in a big *Golden Compass* towel, one guest remarked, "That had to be about the best sandwich I've ever had," not to mention the cold bottle of Hairoun that came with it. It was the kind of adventure you are glad you did once it's over, and earned each of us a good hot shower back on the yacht before our last supper together aboard.

While we were busy sliding down the muddy volcano, our captain had been busy sourcing enormous local lobsters,

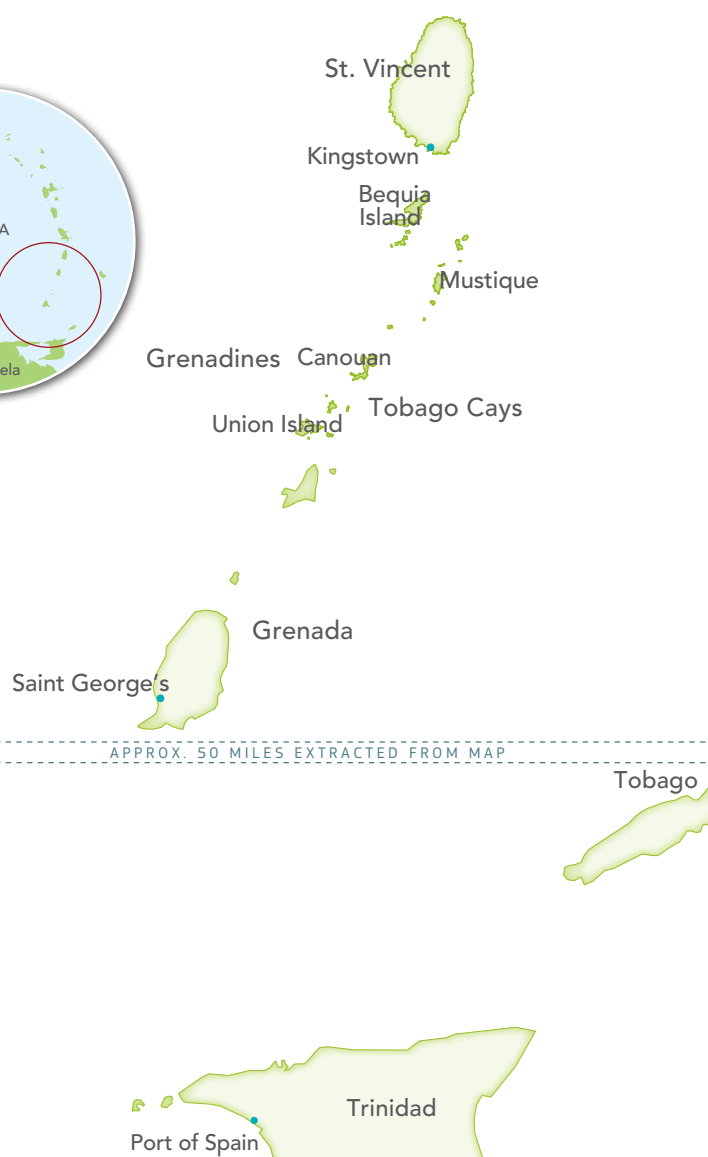


which the chef split and roasted with herb and garlic butter, and served with roasted potatoes and vegetables, finishing up with a mixed berry tart and, as always with every meal, a choice of fine red or white.

After dinner, as *Golden Compass* cruised up the coast of St. Vincent to St. Lucia, we gathered around the mahogany bar that forms the salon's centerpiece. It was finally time to taste and rate the rums we had collected along the way. In all, 15 vintages were presented, representing some of the best from Barbados, St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Vincent and Grenada. After everyone had tasted, re-tasted, discussed and re-tasted again we tallied our votes. Tied for second place was Angostura from Trinidad and Tobago, and Admiral Rodney from St. Lucia. Both proved to be excellent, however, the clear winner of the "First Annual *Golden Compass* Invitational International Rum Challenge" was St. Nicholas Abbey, a wonderfully smooth, flavorful rum from Barbados.

The rum induced an easy sleep as the sea miles clicked away on the 50-mile run to St. Lucia and flight back to the real world. Begun in the raucous tenor of Carnival, and ending with the mellow tones of the best Caribbean rum, this voyage truly delivered all that the Caribbean promises.

**SB** ENHANCED DIGITAL CONTENT ON THE IPAD APP



## fact file

**COUNTRIES VISITED:** Trinidad and Tobago (capital: Port of Spain), Grenada (capital: St. George's), St. Vincent and the Grenadines (capital: Kingstown). Distance traveled: 238 nm

**TIME ZONE:** UTC - 4 hours

**LANGUAGES:** English, plus French Patois in Grenada and Vincentian Creole in St. Vincent and the Grenadines

**CURRENCY:** Eastern Caribbean dollars (EC dollars) in Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and the Trinidad and Tobago dollar in Trinidad and Tobago

**WHEN TO GO:** High season runs December to April, with low season May to November.

**CLIMATE:** Tropical, dry season runs January to May, and wet season is June to December

**GETTING TO TRINIDAD:** Piarco International Airport has service from the U.S. by American Airlines, United, JetBlue and Caribbean Airlines.

**CARNIVAL IN TRINIDAD:** February 16-17, 2015

**YACHT ENTRY AND ASSISTANCE:**  
**Ports of Entry to St. Vincent and the Grenadines:** Chateaubelair, Wallilabou, Kingstown, Bequia, Union Island, Canouan and Mustique

**Local Assistance in Trinidad:** YSATT, a nonprofit association for businesses in the yachting industry, can assist with entry procedures and tourist information.

[www.ysatt.org](http://www.ysatt.org); +1 868 634 4938

**Yacht Clearance Grenada:** [www.mayag.net/Clearance.html](http://www.mayag.net/Clearance.html)

### MARINAS:

**Crewsinn Hotel & Yachting Centre,** Trinidad (customs & immigration on site)

[www.crewsinn.com](http://www.crewsinn.com); +1 868 634 4384

**Port Louis Marina,** Grenada

[www.cnmarinas.com](http://www.cnmarinas.com); +1 473 435 7431

### MORE INFORMATION:

**Tourism Trinidad and Tobago:**

[www.gotrinidadandtobago.com](http://www.gotrinidadandtobago.com)

**Tourism Grenada:** [www.grenadagrenadines.com](http://www.grenadagrenadines.com)

**Tourism Bequia:** [www.bequiaturism.com/island.htm](http://www.bequiaturism.com/island.htm)

**Tourism St. Vincent:** [www.discoversvg.com](http://www.discoversvg.com)

**Tobago Cays Marine Park:** [tobagocays.org](http://tobagocays.org)

**Moonhole:** [www.moonhole.com](http://www.moonhole.com)

### St. Nicholas Abbey Rum:

[www.stnicholasabbey.com](http://www.stnicholasabbey.com)

**Charlie Tango Taxi Tours, Kingstown, St. Vincent:** [www.charlietangotaxi.com](http://www.charlietangotaxi.com)

**ABOUT GOLDEN COMPASS:** One of most traveled charter yachts in the world, *Golden Compass* was chosen by her owners for her comfortable features and then had a year-long refit to become world capable. Her owners won the 2012 World Superyacht Awards Voyager's Award for their global travels.  
[www.goldencompass.biz](http://www.goldencompass.biz)

### CHARTERING GOLDEN COMPASS:

Camper & Nicholson, Janina Martinsen  
[jmartinsen@camperandnicholsons.com](mailto:jmartinsen@camperandnicholsons.com)

Tel: (954) 524-4250

[www.camperandnicholsons.com](http://www.camperandnicholsons.com)

**ON Charterfleet.com**

EXPLORE MORE DOWN ISLAND

> **7 DAYS EXPLORING ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

> **5 DAYS IN GRENADA**

> **7 DAYS IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**