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PLUS HONEYMOONS, BEAUTY, EXPERT ADVICE, FREEBIES AND MORE

Recipe for romance

A large helping of sunshine, a splash of azure blue waters and a pinch of spice add up to a recipe for romance on the Caribbean island of Grenada. Sarah Reeve reveals more...

Images courtesy of Grenada Board of Tourism and Mount Cinnamon Resort



Mount Cinnamon Resort and Beach Club

From the first, welcoming blast of warm tropical air to the mesmerising evening chorus of the whistling tree frogs and crickets, you'll be hooked on Grenada from the moment you touch down.

Welcome to island time – after all the excitement of the big day, be prepared to kick back and soak up all that the island has to offer. Still relatively unknown, this Caribbean gem offers an authentic experience for discerning honeymooners.

The volcanic island boasts pristine white and black sand beaches, washed by the azure Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean. The terrain is rich and varied, including mountain landscapes, crystal waterfalls and lush rainforest.

The diversity of the island means there's something to suit most tastes.

Honeymooners can enjoy lazy days on sun-drenched beaches, luxury accommodation, remote island retreats, spa treatments, or how about a romantic boat trip to Grenada's sister island of Carriacou – the quintessential Caribbean getaway? For thrill-seekers, there's a wealth of action-packed activities – river tube through the rainforest, charter a boat for a sailing adventure, snorkel or dive the myriad reefs, drifts and wrecks close to shore.

Whatever your agenda, allow plenty of time to do what the Grenadians do best – relax and savour all the sights, sounds and flavours that combine to create the island's

magical recipe for romance.

Long, languid evenings sipping rum cocktails spiced with Grenadian nutmeg are a must. Enjoy local seafood freshly cooked on the barbecue at one of the many beachside restaurants. Hang out at the Friday fish lime in Gouyave, a weekly culinary event where seafood delicacies of every description are available, cooked over open fires. Liming, the local vernacular for 'chilling', is a national pastime, firmly entrenched in the island culture. The Grenadians are happy to welcome visitors into the fold, so don't be shy, a fun evening can be had for very little cost, with great food, and company. It's hard to pass more than a few metres through any town or village on the island without encountering one of the many bars dotted along the roadside. Often little more than a shed, these no-frills watering holes frequently double up as a convenience store and meeting place.

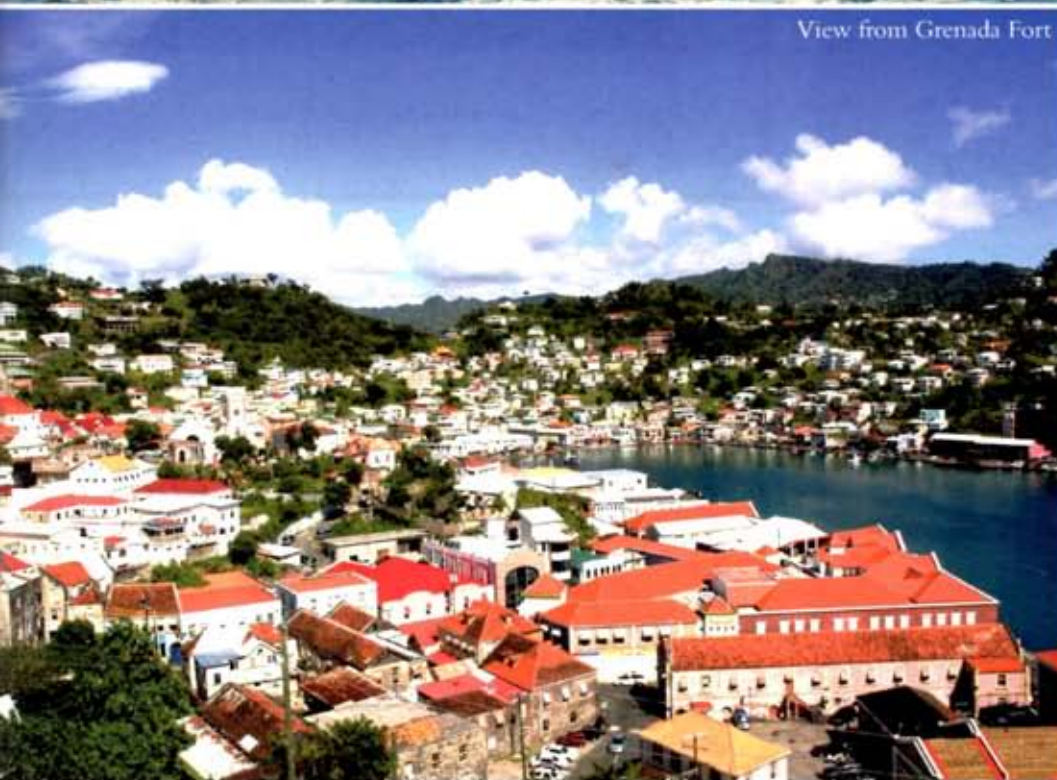
For honeymooners looking for a high-octane clubbing scene or designer shopping destination, Grenada is probably not for you. While tourism is vital to the island, it has managed to avoid over-commercialisation and retains the natural beauty, customs and authentic charm that lure visitors back time and time again. By

The Carenage at St George's





View from Grenada Fort



low, buildings must be no taller than the tallest coconut tree, a quaint yardstick, but one the authorities enforce with rigour. There is also an active environmental programme to protect the natural habitat and wildlife, including the island's endangered Leatherback sea turtles.

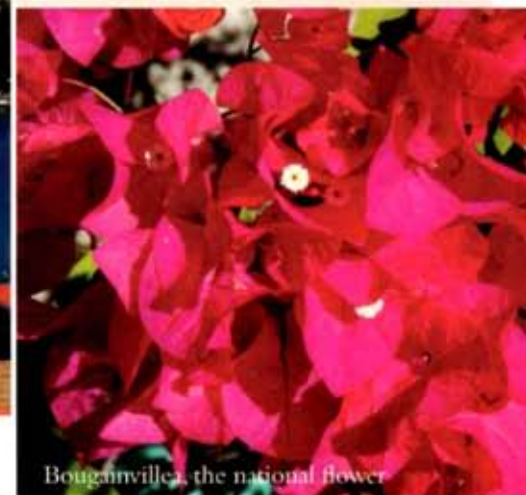
Driving is on the left, a bonus for UK couples looking to navigate the island. Roughly the size of the Isle of Wight, the entire island can be explored by car in a day. The road from the airport is the closest the island has to a main highway, local traffic is relatively light, motorists frequently honk their horns, as a greeting rather than a rebuke, and the nearest I came to a traffic

jam during my stay was a well-mannered five-car queue in the capital St George's.

There are a number of car-hire firms on the island, while taxis are readily available, reasonably priced and rates are set by the government. For value for money and a real taste of island life, the local buses are hard to beat. For just a few pounds you can get to the major towns and villages, take in a scenic route and strike up an engaging conversation into the bargain. The warmth and friendliness of the local people is one of the island's most endearing characteristics. The Grenadians are proud of their island home and are more than happy to sing its praises to visiting tourists.

At a glance

- ♥ **LOCATION** – The island lies in the south-eastern Caribbean, south of the Grenadines and just west of Barbados.
- ♥ **CLIMATE** – Outside the hurricane belt, the equitable climate is tempered by the north-east trade winds and is mostly hot and sunny with year-round temperatures around 28°C. The dry season is from around December to May time.
- ♥ **POPULATION** – Grenada and her sister islands of Carriacou and Petite Martinique have a population of about 110,000.
- ♥ **ECONOMY** – The main industries are the expanding tourism business and agriculture, with produce including bananas, cocoa, nutmeg and many other spices.
- ♥ **CURRENCY** – Eastern Caribbean Dollar. Also US dollars, Euro and major credit cards are accepted in most places.
- ♥ **BY AIR** – British Airways and Virgin offer direct flights from London Gatwick to Grenada. Inter-island carrier Liat connects to other major Caribbean islands.



Bougainvillea, the national flower



Balcony view from Mount Cinnamon



Where to stay

Editor recommends

MOUNT CINNAMON RESORT AND BEACH CLUB

www.mountcinnamongrenada.com

Set on a hillside among fragrant spice trees with breathtaking ocean views, Peter de Savary's Mount Cinnamon Resort and Beach Club ticks all the boxes as a romantic honeymoon getaway.

The boutique resort boasts 21 sea-facing suites and villas, in a secluded location allowing for privacy and the freedom to set your own pace.

Everything is on hand from the powder white sands of Grand Anse Beach, just a few minutes' stroll away, to the on site facilities including poolside cocktail bar, Savvy's Restaurant, which offers a varied menu packed with local specialities, gym and spa.

The unspoilt beach is undisturbed – noisy jet skis are banned from the area – providing a perfect haven in which to relax and unwind. Every need is catered for with kayaks, sailing and a host of other activities available. For lazy days soaking up the sun, you don't have to go far for a refreshing drink or fresh fish lunch, hot off the grill. Savvy's Beach Club and Cabana is open daily until the sun goes down, providing a shady retreat to chill out, eat, drink and take in the view. And if that's not enough to melt away any last vestiges of stress, there's always the thatched beachside spa cabana – perfect for a relaxing oceanside massage.

I stayed at the resort's brand new Cinnamon Heights, a luxurious two-storey villa with three-bedrooms, each with *modern en suite bathrooms, spacious lounges and balconies on both floors*

– ideal for couples planning a family-moon with their nearest and dearest. It also boasts its own private infinity pool looking out over the beach and beyond.

THE HONEYMOON EXPERIENCE

In July 2012, the resort introduced a new honeymoon package which includes:

- ♥ Seven nights stay in a luxurious suite
- ♥ Flowers, gourmet chocolates and chilled bottle of champagne on arrival
- ♥ Romantic day trip to the 17th-century Mount Edgecombe Plantation, including an infinity poolside picnic, speedboat transfer and return sunset cruise on board Savvy, a classic West Indian sail boat
- ♥ Private dinner served on the balcony with a personal butler
- ♥ Cinnamon signature massage for the happy couple
- ♥ Private luxury return airport transfer – what's not to love!

MY HIGHLIGHTS

♥ Snorkelling in the world's first underwater sculpture park in the bath-like turquoise waters at Molinere Point (www.underwatersculpture.com). Even for a novice like me, it was an amazing, if slightly eerie, experience. Located within a National Marine Park it's easily accessible – about a 10-minute boat ride from St George's. Created by British sculptor Jason deCaires Taylor the park promotes coral growth and attracts a wealth of marine life.

♥ A day at Mount Cinnamon's sister property, Mount Edgecombe (www.mountedgecombegrenada.com) – a fully operational plantation with imposing



Cinnamon Heights

Underwater sculpture park



Jason deCaires Taylor

colonial house and hillside infinity pool – the only nod to the 21st century. Janice, the resort's chef gave a mouthwatering masterclass in Grenadian cooking, which was not only inspiring but delicious too!

♥ Beachside massage and pamper session accompanied by the gentle lapping of the sea and chilling out at Mount Cinnamon's beach cabana, rum punch in hand.



Must visit

- ♥ **GOUYAVE** – a popular fishing town, famous for its weekly seafood event, known locally as Fish Friday, and home to Kirani James, the 2012 Olympic mens' 400m winner – the island's first-ever gold medallist. A street in St George's has now been named in his honour and by all accounts, the islanders partied for days after his victory.
- ♥ **THE FALLS** – the island has a number of spectacular waterfalls including the easily accessible Annandale Falls. Just a 15-minute drive from St George's, it's a great place for a swim and romantic picnic. For the more adventurous, the remote Tufton Hall Waterfall in St Mark's, Victoria, is a demanding three-hour hike, so pack your walking boots. Local guides are available to help.
- ♥ **THE CARENAGE** – a lively focal point of historic capital St George's, full of colour and atmosphere with its colonnaded buildings and maritime history. Get up early to watch the local fishermen sell their catch straight from the boats or visit the spice market for an authentic island experience.
- ♥ **PORT LOUIS MARINA** – this maritime haven looks set to become a hotspot. A work in progress, it encompasses a world-class Camper & Nicholsons marina – well worth a visit if only to drool at the pleasure boats of the rich and famous. Overlooking St George's, the development is evolving to provide a mixture of luxury hotels, spas, tax-free shops, villas, penthouses, trendy eateries and bars – watch this space! Visit the website www.portlouisgrenada.com to find out more.



Must do

- ♥ **SNORKELLING** – Get up close and personal with some of the island's exotic marine life. I enjoyed a memorable encounter with a shoal of brightly striped Sergeant Major fish, while snorkelling in Flamingo Bay. Remember to wear a T-shirt or pile on the sunscreen beforehand to avoid sunburn. Dive Grenada (www.divegrenada.com), based at Grand Anse Beach, provides snorkel and scuba diving excursions to the island bays, coral reefs, Marine Protected Area, wrecks and underwater sculpture park.
- ♥ **SAILING** – Hire a boat for a short beach trip, full-day charter or enjoy the whole island experience taking in the Grenadines and beyond. For the ultimate romantic indulgence, why not take in a sunset tour along the coastline, complete with champagne? There are a number of companies on the island offering everything from catamaran tours, motor boat cruises, island excursions and more, skippered or fully crewed, so you don't have to do the hard work.
- ♥ **CUISINE** – A fish-lover's paradise, sample chargrilled mahi mahi, yellow-fin tuna, freshly caught Caribbean spiny lobster in season and conch, a delicacy known locally as lambie. Feast on oil down, Grenada's national dish – a hearty, one-pot meal of breadfruit, callaloo and other vegetables stewed in coconut milk, herbs and spices.
- ♥ **WILDLIFE** – Spot the Mona monkeys in Grand Etang National Park.
- ♥ **FLORA AND FAUNA** – Explore the vibrant rainforest that covers most of the island's interior, bursting with bright blooms and rare birds.
- ♥ **PLANTATION TOUR** – See chocolate made from bean to bar with a chocolate tour at the Belmont Estate in St Patrick, a working plantation set in 400 acres of lush hills.

For further information visit www.grenadagrenadines.com

What to take

- ♥ Plenty of high factor sunscreen – one with added insect repellent is a good idea. Even when the weather's overcast, the rays can be fierce.
- ♥ Sun hat and plenty of loose fitting cover-ups; linen, cotton and natural materials are best.
- ♥ Insect repellent – maximum strength if, like me, you're easy prey.
- ♥ An insect bite treatment pen - the mosquitoes were the only bothersome thing I encountered during my stay. I never went out without mine, and it worked wonders.



Boots Bite & Sting Relief Liquid Pen 14ml, £3.69 www.boots.com

What to bring home

- ♥ Organic chocolate from the Grenada Chocolate Factory (www.chocolatetrading.com). Fast becoming the island's calling card, this is a treat not to be missed – a world away from the ersatz varieties.
- ♥ Local rum – the island's favourite tippie – knockout juice!
- ♥ Nutmeg, cinnamon, ginger and other local spices.
- ♥ Nutmeg jam, it's delicious on toast.
- ♥ A beautifully hand-decorated calabash bowl.
- ♥ Loads of fabulous photographs for the honeymoon album.

