



Travelling Hopefully in the Eastern Caribbean

By Martin Adams



St. George's Grenada. Photo by Martin Adams

In the [Lesser Antilles](#), the market of the hotel industry is geared to pre-booked travellers, with accommodation reserved in advance through US-based on-line agencies, at a price. On my recent assignment, I wanted to avoid holiday hotels and, where possible, find low-cost accommodation and use local transport. I travelled light with a small carry-on brief case and a knapsack. My aim was to manage on USD 75 per night. I stayed in down-town 'guest houses' and 'inns' and travelled in local minibuses. This brought me into contact with some interesting people. I can recommend this option for those of you who are lucky enough to follow in my footsteps.

I started and finished my journey at the University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad, where I stayed three nights for USD 50 per night in the friendly and comfortable *Shalom House B&B*, run by Michael Morgan and his wife Paula Morgan, UWI Senior Lecturer in 'Literature of the English Language'. My next stop was Grenada. On arrival at the Maurice Bishop Airport, I was handed an immigration form which required my 'place of stay', which I left blank. The immigration officer politely informed me that I could not be

admitted without entering my intended local address and he directed me to an airport office which could book me into a place of my choice. My specification was 'no more than USD 50, centrally located in St George's and with Wi-Fi'. The options were two. The first was fully booked and the second, *Deyna's City Inn* at USD 90 per night, had some space, but I was warned that it was at the Central Bus Terminal and very noisy. I bravely asked to be booked for four nights and I was allowed to proceed to the exit.

I was welcomed by a wiry, unshaven taxi driver, Kenneth, who offered to take me the 10 km to St George's at the cost of USD 20. 'No arguing!' He asked whether it was my first visit. 'The first since 1986', I replied and enquired where he hailed from. 'Grenville', he replied, which is the second largest town on the windward east coast. 'Did you know a lawyer called [Ben Jones](#)?' I asked. 'Of course, man', he said, 'he's died.' Not only had Kenneth known Ben, but he knew his personal assistant of 30 years, Shirley Perez, who had written to inform me of Ben's death in 2005. Kenneth told me where I could find Shirley in Grenville. In my youth, I had grown to know Ben well. Indeed,

he gave me my political education. Although he was more than 10 years my senior, we did 'A' levels together at Chiswick Poly in West London. He went on to read law at the Inns of

Court and, back in Grenada, earned a reputation as defence counsel of Gairy's victims in the High Court. Later he became Attorney

General and briefly Prime Minister of Grenada in 1989.

Deyna's was certainly noisy, on the waterfront more or less on top of the Bus Terminal, but for my purpose was well located and interesting. *Deyna's* café serves numerous bus passengers and provides a generous cooked breakfast to residents, enough to obviate the need for lunch. On my third day, Saturday, I jumped on a minibus to Grenville. Sitting in the front of the minibus, I endured a white-knuckled ride on the dangerously winding coastal road for an hour. My afternoon with Shirley was very fulfilling. As Ben's legal secretary for all those years, she has detailed knowledge of his career and is very well informed about the island's social and political history. She is now involved in advising the local community in all manner of problems.

My next stop was St Lucia, via a brief stopover in St Vincent. I arrived on a LIAT flight on a Sunday afternoon and checked into a place that I had booked on-line. *La Vista* 'guest house' at USD 55 per night turned out to be extremely dilapidated. It is close to Vigie Airport, so close in fact that I could walk the two km with my knapsack from the airport terminal and save a USD 10 taxi fare in each direction. The less said about the unfriendly *La Vista* the better, except that it is not far from the

capital, Castries, by local minibus. For me, St Lucia is interesting as I worked there on several occasions in the 1970s and 80s. There have been huge changes in Castries and the countryside. As in Grenada, St Vincent and Dominica, the loss of the UK banana market, following the UK's accession to the EU, has had a telling impact on rural livelihoods. Rural to urban migration has accelerated. Much of the rural land is now overgrown by bush. While the banana trade had its problems, so has mass tourism which has replaced agriculture as the principal contributor to the islands' GDP.

After three hot and sticky nights in an airless room at *La Vista*, I flew into Dominica. I improvised my 'place of stay' on the



Vigie Beach, St. Lucia. Photo by Martin Adams



Flight to Montserrat. Photo taken by Martin Adams

immigration form and joined three Peace Corps workers on a relatively luxurious minibus from Melville Hall Airport to the capital, Roseau. Although we were sharing the minibus, the rate was USD 80 each, but it was an hour's journey along a most beautiful route through the extensive mountainous forest reserve. At my request, the driver dropped me in the middle of the capital city, Roseau, at *Kent Anthony's Guest House*, where I stayed for three nights. The proprietor, Austel Anselm, for most of his long life involved in island politics, was welcoming, helpful and informative.

On my way to Montserrat, I spent a night at a B&B near Antigua's V C Bird International Airport. The following morning I left, sitting next to the pilot, on Montserrat Air's Britten Norman Islander, a 1960s light aircraft, familiar from my days in the Sudan. The flight took some 20 minutes to a small airstrip. I lodged at the *Erindell Villa Guesthouse*, USD 75 per night, recommended by my friend Sarah Holloway, who resides on the island. My two-night stay with the proprietors, Shirley and Lou Spycalla, was far too brief, but they generously drove me around those parts of the island that remain accessible. Two thirds of the island is within an 'exclusion zone', following the volcanic eruptions some 20 years ago, when this area, including the former capital, Plymouth, was buried under pyroclastic flows and volcanic ash. After the comfort and peacefulness of today's Montserrat, Antigua was a trial. I travelled around on local buses and on foot, staying in *The Wind Chimes* B&B, at USD 100 per night, the cheapest I could



My room in Kent Anthony's. Photo by Martin Adams

find. Of the islands I visited, Antigua was most disappointing. It has been completely spoiled by a seeming lack of planned development. Completing the circle, I once more enjoyed staying at *Shalom House* with Paula and Michael Morgan in Trinidad. On my second visit to the Eastern Caribbean for five days in June, I transited via Barbados and stayed at the friendly *Richview Guest House* close to Kingstown, St Vincent, and very good value at USD 62 dollars per night with a generous cooked breakfast, including fried plantain, and an extraordinarily beautiful view from the breakfast terrace. Over the 27 days spent in the Lesser Antilles, I managed to stay within my budget, averaging USD 68 dollars per night, and met some good people, not least Michael, proprietor of the *Richview*.



Shirley Perez on her veranda, Grenville. Photo by Martin Adams.



New government offices, Monserrat. Photo by Martin Adams.