

Caribbean Islands - Owain

Our "cruise controllers" certainly chose the three Caribbean islands we have visited with some thought.

First we docked at Antigua, a former British colony, now independent, and unbelievably laid back. We sauntered into an open air bar, where the receptionist was asleep in her chair. After a while a waiter came to us, we ordered two black coffees which arrived after about a further 20 minutes. Whilst we drank the coffee, he wandered over again and said in almost a whisper - you guys want any smokes? I got the distinct impression that he was not offering cigarettes either!



The morning saw us buying local T shirts, and generally exploring this unique place. During the afternoon we were taken in a catamaran to an offshore reef where we could snorkel. But as the sea swell was strong, only the bravest and strongest swimmers took to the water, including Alvina! We

had the wind behind us as we left the reef, and made our way under sail to a lovely beach - the type you see on a brochure page.

As the Van Gogh was moored up only yards from the local eating and drinking places, we set off last night to sample them both - an experience we will remember for a long time. We landed up at the local Chinese restaurant, surprise surprise! Here, our meals were served up on two large square plates, and maybe they thought we were citizens of the US, as the amount of food on each plate would easily have satisfied a family of four!

Owain sampled the Caribbean beer called Carib, Alvina the local Vodka, and we both sampled one of the local spirits called Cavalier - nothing at all to do with Vauxhalls, but a very potent rum! The currency in Antigua is the East Caribbean dollar, but like most places the \$US is always accepted. Our total bill for food and drinks amounted to 55 \$Caribbean, and when we asked to pay by \$US, the converted amount came to a mere \$20 - so two huge meals and quite a few drinks for a little over £10!

Next island to visit was Guadeloupe - a true French colony. We docked at Pointe a Pitre in temperatures around 30C. This island is French owned and run, and really is like being in France - the houses, cars, and the shops are French, and of course the language spoken is French.

For those of you who like a tippie (yes including you Colin!) we returned to the ship today with a bottle of local rum, a full litre, and 50% proof, which cost the grand sum of 5.8 Euros, or around £4. Doubt if there will be any left by Easter! Only one snag, it tasted awful! That night we sailed off into the sunset, after our steel drum and BBQ party, where we had been asked to dress up in the loudest clothes we could muster - that was an invitation for me to buy a brightly coloured Caribbean shirt!



Lovely old cinema, Guadeloupe



Fish market, Guadeloupe

The following day we visited the island of Curacao, Dutch in every respect. The houses, the colours, the names of the streets and shops, maybe only the tulips from Amsterdam were missing. Well kept and clean, modest prices, and well organised as the Netherlands are.

During the morning we had a conducted tour, which included a trip out to sea in a semi submarine craft, where we saw at close quarters the marine life below water. In the afternoon we wandered around the streets and shops, stopped at a bar for some cool beer, and then back on board as the Van Gogh departed in the direction of Central America - Panama to be precise.



This really is the adventure of a lifetime!

