

Destination Report: Grenada

Grand Anse Beach.

By Diana Kelly



Add some spice to your clients' travel plans by encouraging them to vacation on this Caribbean island

Grenada is known as “The Spice Island” because there are more spices per square mile here than any other place on the planet. When you drive through the island with the windows down, you can smell a mix of spices, which include nutmeg, cinnamon, mace, cocoa, cloves, ginger and vanilla.

Grenada is relatively new to the tourism scene for a Caribbean island, with tourism truly launching in 1984. It's the southernmost of the Windward Islands, just 100 miles north of Venezuela and 158 miles southwest of Barbados.

The location contributes to the island's unspoiled natural beauty, which includes verdant mountains, rainforests, waterfalls, natural preserves, and 45 white-sand beaches and nine black-sand beaches.

That's a lot packed onto an island just 12 miles wide and 21 miles long.

Grenada is part of the Grenadine Islands, which include sister islands Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Sighted by Christopher Columbus in 1498, Grenada changed hands between the French and the British until it was awarded to Britain in 1793. It became an independent nation in 1974.

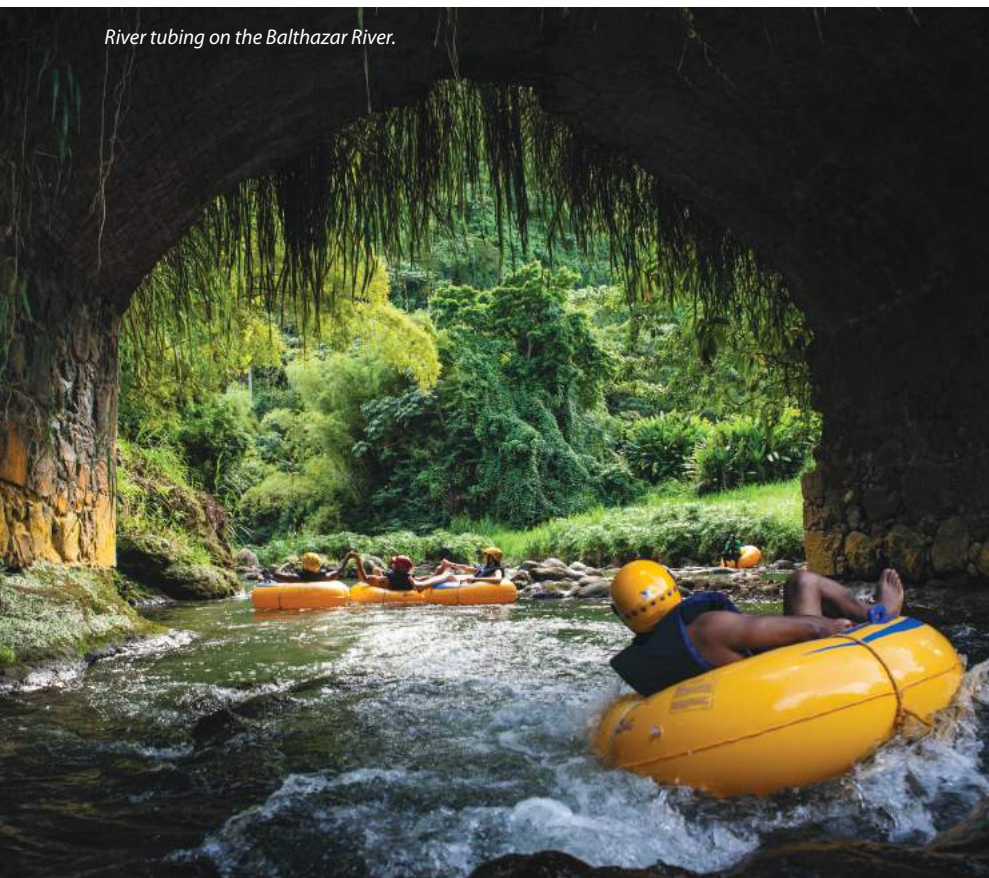
NEW AIRLIFT

With new JetBlue service from New York and a marketing push from the Grenada Tourism Board, this stunning island is a must-see, particularly for divers, families and wedding parties.

JetBlue launched nonstop flights from JFK to Maurice Bishop International airport (GND) last June. The 4.5-hour flight departs both ways Thursdays and Sundays, making it ideal for four- and seven-day vacations.

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River tubing on the Balthazar River.



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American Airlines offers frequent flights on weekly basis from Miami, Delta offers seasonal flights from New York-JFK, and Caribbean Airlines offers regular weekly service from JFK, Toronto, and Trinidad.

VISITOR SURGE

Increasing numbers of travelers are discovering Grenada. Visitor arrivals increased by 12.7 percent in 2015 to more than 440,000. Cruise passengers represented 63 percent of arrivals, followed by stayover visitors (32 percent), and yachters (5 percent).

Once your clients are there, they'll likely seek out Grand Anse Beach on the southwestern coast, which is surrounded by mountains and dotted with a few hotels, restaurants and shops.

SNORKELING AND DIVING OPTIONS

The Underwater Sculpture Park, believed to be the world's first, is a can't-miss attraction for both snorkelers and divers. A series of sculptures about 22 feet below the surface act as artificial reefs, so sea life grows on and swims around them.

The sculptures can be seen from the water's surface and enjoyed by snorkelers, but there are also more than 30 dive sites between Grenada and Carriacou that include wrecks, coral reefs and walls.

For hikers, there are plenty of trails of varying intensities to trek with or without guides.

Annandale Falls is a short drive from the capital city of St. George's and is a picturesque, peaceful destination where visitors can hike and take a dip in the natural pool at the bottom of the falls.

Historical and cultural places to visit should include Fort Frederick, which dates back to 1791. This fort boasts a panoramic view of St. George's and was the headquarters of the People's Revolutionary Army during the 1983 intervention.

RUM AND CHOCOLATE TOURS

Rum lovers will enjoy River Antoine Rum Distillery in St. Patrick, which has been around since the 1800s (a guided tour is about \$2 per person).

Chocolate lovers will appreciate the tour at Belmont Estate in St. Patrick. The 300-year-old plantation shows visitors how organic chocolate is made and encourages them to help "turn the beans" and taste fresh hot cocoa and dark chocolate.

Be sure to tell clients not to miss the river tubing experience along the Balthazar River with Adventure Tours. The fun hour-long tubing tour through the Grand Etang Rainforest Reserve is followed by a complimentary rum punch.

For more information on the island, visit the Grenada Tourism Authority's website at www.puregrenada.com.

Where to Stay

Sandals LaSource Grenada Resort and Spa:

This adults-only, all-inclusive couples resort has 225 rooms and suites (69 with butler service), seemingly endless activities and 12 dining options, including sit-down restaurants like Butch's Chophouse and a hibachi eatery. The resort is located on Pink Gin beach in St. Georges, a five-minute cab ride from the airport. Rooms range from simple guestrooms with garden views to luxurious accommodations with private pools on waterfront terraces that come with butler service. Rates start at \$340 per person, per night.

www.sandals.com/main/grenada/lsource-home/

Spice Island Beach Resort:

Located on Grand Anse Beach, this boutique all-inclusive luxury hotel has 64 suites – and 32 are beachfront so guests can literally step from their room right onto the sand. The family-friendly property allows children under 5 to stay for free. It has a children's activity center, and babysitting is available through the concierge. Rates for an Oleander Garden Suite in the off-season start at \$887 per person, per night.

www.spiceislandbeachresort.com

Calabash Hotel:

This luxury hotel in St. George's has 30 suites, each with its own balcony or patio. The property houses the Rhodes Restaurant, which is open for dinner daily and run by U.K. celebrity chef Gary Rhodes. It was named one of the top 50 restaurants in the Caribbean in 2013 and 2014. Rates for a double-occupancy junior suite in the off-season start at \$349 per night and include breakfast; all-inclusive packages are available.

www.calabashhotel.com

Radisson Grenada Beach Resort: A more affordable resort on Grand Anse Beach, this property has 229 rooms and suites. Just a seven-minute drive from the airport, this resort has onsite tennis courts and a PADI scuba diving center. Room rates start around \$218 per night.

For more information, visit www.radisson.com/st-george-hotel-gd/grdgrgr