

Advertising Feature

PASSPORT to

DISCOVERY

There's more to Grenada than just spices

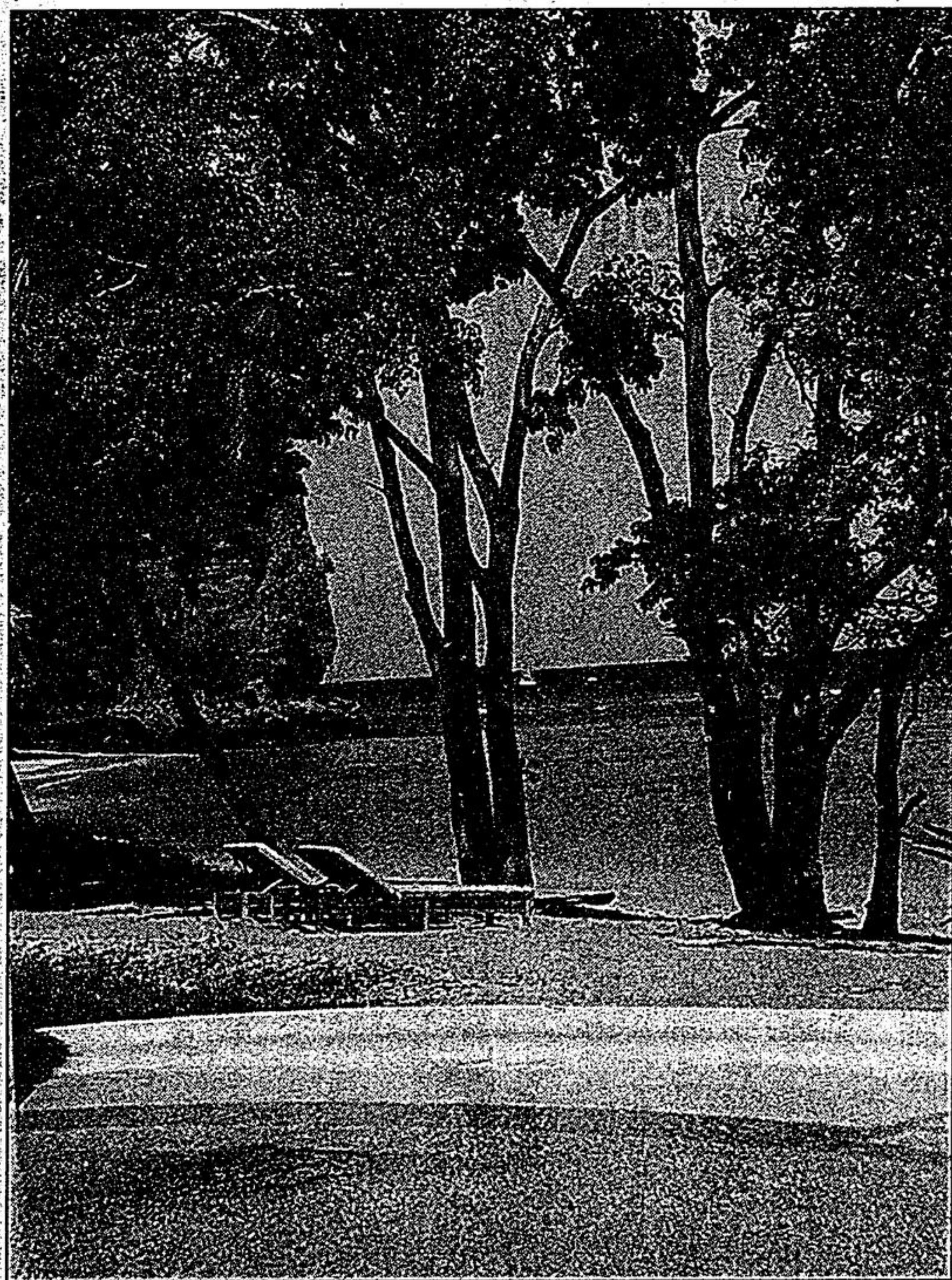
BY BART CARD
Contributing Travel Editor

As a native Bermudian, I've certainly experienced my fair share of the Caribbean. I've crisscrossed the Islands, in fact, spending time between Bermuda, Barbados, Jamaica and all points in between. Yet the nation state of Grenada, in the West Indies, has remained a tiny parcel of the Caribbean I had yet to relish the opportunity to fully explore.

Yes, I do recall a quick stint in Grenada once — a stay that lasted all of one day. As a passenger on a Holland American Line Cruise some 15 years ago, we dropped anchor and took a tender in to St. George, the island capital. A submerged volcanic crater forms St. George's naturally deep harbour. One of the most picturesque in the region, it is a port of call for several cruise lines, yachts, ferries, cargo and other boats. I do, of course, remember this as if it were present day because I have the scar on the bottom of my right foot to prove it.

As other passengers dashed off the Holland American to conduct their shopping and a trip to the local market, my eye caught a glimpse of the brilliant white, hot sand of the Grand Anse Beach. The two-mile beach was to become my first Grenada experience. I couldn't wait to stroll along Grand Anse and enjoy a dip in the cool blue waters before joining my fellow passengers in their shopping endeavours. Yet my agenda was quickly cut short as I suffered a slight injury — something sliced by foot and I knew in an instance that it couldn't be the work of a seashell. Looking down, I noticed a discharged and shredded 50-caliber shell casing.

Upon further inspection, of both my bloodied foot and the shell casing, my mind raced back to 1983 and 1984 when a military faction within Maurice Bishop's New Jewel Movement took control of Grenada. As a former soldier in the British Army, I'm always fascinated with



Photo/BART CARD

Laluna Hotel.

wartime activities. The turmoil and purported threat to the United States' medical students stranded on the island served as the catalyst for the famed rescue mission by U.S. forces a short time later. The overwhelming support for the action by the Grenadine population was evident from the start and has not subsided today.

When I was preparing for my latest travel assignment and mentioned Grenada to some of my friends, they replied "Where's Grenada? What does it have to

offer?" In reality, it is one of the best-kept secrets of the Caribbean. The three-island nation of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique in the Eastern Caribbean is the most southerly of the Windward Islands, located between St. Vincent and the Grenadines to the north, and Trinidad and Tobago to the south. Once the homes to Arawaks, Ciboneys and Caribs, it was sighted by Christopher Columbus on his third voyage in 1498. Following colonial wars in the 18th Century when France and

Britain traded the island back and forth, it became solely under British control in 1783, and achieved independence in 1974.

This time around, however, there was no rush for me to head to the Grenada beaches for I was prepared to spend a relaxing week on the Island soaking up the sun in addition to Grenada's rich history, fine food and accommodations.

My only discomfort was my journey to Grenada. Travel horror stories abound by travellers, including myself. Perhaps our lone outlet is to share these difficulties and I'll do that here. I suffered through a 12-hour delay in Toronto; only to arrive in Trinidad at 5 a.m. the following morning to be told my connecting flight to Grenada would not leave until 1 p.m. that afternoon. My ordeal didn't end with my eventual arrival, as my departure was actually delayed two additional days in Grenada because of flight problems. However, I'm so glad people will not have to experience a similar plight. Grenada desperately needed a direct flight from Toronto, and as of December 23rd, Grenada is the newest addition to Air Canada Vacations (ACV) Winter Program with weekly direct flights. ACV holidays include round trip air transportation, accommodation and land transfers between airport and hotel, while ACV offers a selection of six hotels in Grenada.

Despite my rocky travel itinerary, I quickly settled in for the majority of my stay at the Secret Harbour Resort (email secret@caribsurf.com), thanks in large part to Reservation Manager Peter Dragon. This tremendous facility has all the ingredients for a perfect tropical getaway, offering superb vistas of the sea from every deluxe suite. The Old World Mediterranean ambience is felt in sweeping patio arches and sunny, tiled terraces bordered with bougainvillea. This is a hotel with atmosphere and charm; a hotel made for romance.

Close by is The Moorings,

It is the friendliness of the locals. It's the popular activities — ranging from savouring the local cuisine to the sound of steel bands.

where people fly in from across the world to this spectacular marina, and board their yachts for outstanding sailing. Sailors find themselves drawn by the picturesque harbours lined with sun-drenched beaches, waterfalls cascading amidst lofty mountains perfumed by fragrant spices. It is here at The Moorings you sense the pastoral country life of the people — an easy-going spirit that greets your first step on these sparkling sands. Grenada is one of the few Caribbean destinations where eco-tourism is a main attraction.

Every article I have ever read concerning this fabulous destination makes reference to Grenada as 'Spice Island'. Yes, the smell of nutmeg wafts in the air, considering Grenada is the world's second-largest nutmeg producer, but the statement is a bit of hyperbole. Aside from the spices, Grenada is so much more. It is the friendliness of the locals. It's the popular activities — ranging from savouring the local cuisine to the sound of steel bands. A pastel rainbow of dockside warehouses surrounds St. George's harbour, while the Carenage on the waterfront has duty-free shops that offer great bargains. Other stops to note include the Concord Waterfall, Dougaldston Spice Boucan, Leaper's Hill, Morne Fenue Plantation House, the Levera National Park and the River Antoine Rum Distillery.

(continued next page)

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