

30 May 2018

We left Bequia with a rapidly melting 'icebox'. This selling ice business is the biggest fraud in the Caribbean. In one day nothing's left and everything in the fridge- sorry, I mean Icebox, is hot and wet.

With Warwick's expert steering we sailed all the way into Charlestown bay, Canouan under sail, the autopilot was starting to freak out. What's going on?

This island boasts a couple of luxury resorts. The Pink Sands Club, the ultra exclusive Canouan Estate (Trump owned I believe) with an 18 hole golf course designed by Jim Fazio, whoever he may be. Naturally we didn't get anywhere near this exclusive place, we forgot to bring our golf clubs. We did, however, tie up at the 'truly charming' Tamarind Beach hotel and it sure is cute. They are also very nice & cool about us leaving our dinghy there.



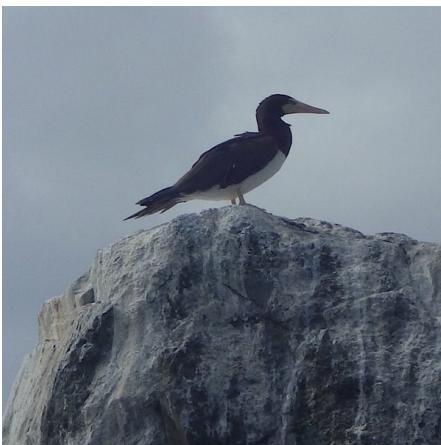
There seems to be absolutely nothing on the island for the budget tourist. In fact, the airport has been upgraded and is now called the Jetport.

I'm not sure what the locals think about all this because looking at their simple little village, in need of a good revamp, it seems like they aren't seeing much of the ultra exclusive dollars.

We found some ice, some fresh fruit and a roasted breadfruit. The locals were very nice, although later when Claire and Warwick went for a wander, a local lady apparently screamed at her not to take photos. She came back somewhat discouraged by this episode, especially as in all the other islands so far the people are so friendly and welcoming (and they can't wait to have their photo taken with you!) and also because she hadn't intended to include the lady in her photograph.

So I'm not sure we have any photos around Charlestown village- Claire?

We do, however, have photos of our first snorkelling expedition to White Rock.



I think White Rock is white thanks to the Brown Boobys and Orange footed Boobys who hang out there. It's definitely a good spot for fishing.



I hadn't really thought about little Sis & Warwick's snorkelling skills, so we plunged in the deep end, literally. We swam the 100 metres or so to White Rock from the boat, anchored in 6 metres of water.

In England one doesn't really get the chance, or the inclination, to go snorkelling. I remember my few dips in the cold sea on the south coast lasting no longer than a few minutes and my even briefer dips in the sea off eastern Scotland, a matter of a few seconds in and out.

By the time we made it to the rocks, Claire, who had been swimming very well, but not really using the mask, had a mild panic attack. I had another one because the rocks were full of long spiky sea urchins and she wanted to put her bare feet down...



Our first proper snorkelling expedition



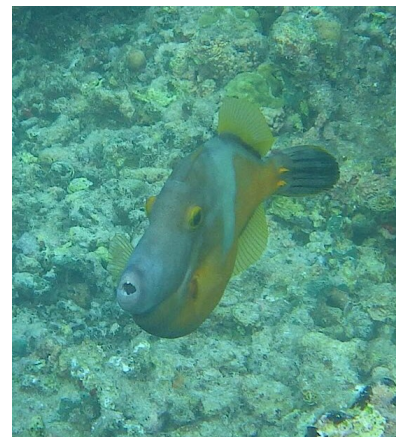
The moment of crisis passed and we took advantage of the lovely clear water to get some good underwater photos. Jean-Luc also swam back to fetch the dinghy for an easy return to the boat.



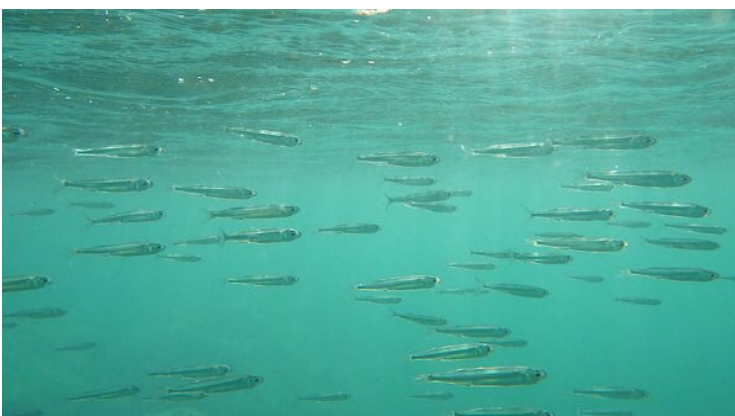
I don't know this one



Spanish hog fish



File fish







That's more like it!

Brain corals



Vase sponge



Branching coral



Sea whip





Well, that's a relief. Happy to be back from our first snorkelling outing.



The Tobago Cays await us and here the snorkelling is amazing. Our first anchorage at the horseshoe reef proved to be very windy and not easy to swim from the boat. We landed the dinghy on Baradal and our snorkelling expedition was a bit disappointing as the water was turbid and the turtles were on strike. Palometas, however, were everywhere.



Claire and David Bailey hiked up to the top of Baradal for the wonderful views over the Cays- and for a Photo shoot.



Meanwhile Jean-Luc checked out the snorkelling on the windward side of Baradal (nowt today) and an Ovni bravely (or madly?) came in to anchor in the shallow channel behind Baradal, very close to the reef.





We decided to find a more sheltered anchorage and next morning moved to the entrance just north of Petit Bateau. We climbed to the summit of Petit Bateau (44metres!) which gave us magnificent views over the Cays.

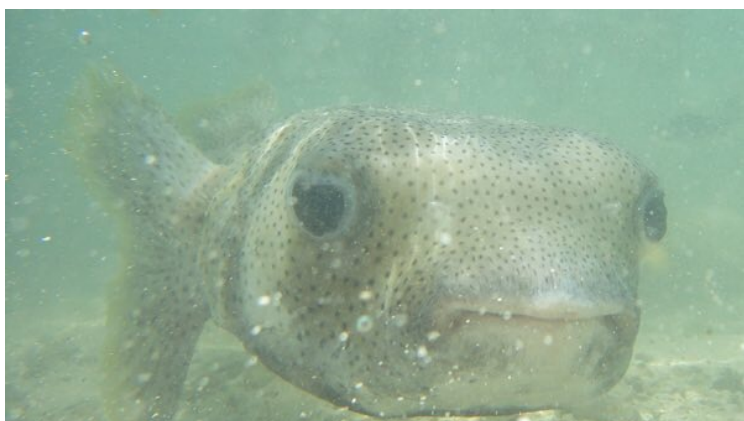




Now for some serious snorkelling. On this side of Petit Bateau there are puffer fish everywhere, rays galore, schools of palometas and jack fish, trunkfish, sergeant majors (damsels), parrotfish, to name but a few. The stars of course are the turtles.



The puffers look harmless enough- but apparently can be lethal. Most pufferfish species are toxic and some are among the most poisonous vertebrates in the world. In certain species the internal organs, such as liver and sometimes their skin, contain tetrodotoxin and are highly toxic to most animals when eaten. Nevertheless, the meat of some species is considered a delicacy in Japan and China. It has to be prepared by specially trained chefs who know which part is safe to eat and in what quantity. Other pufferfish species with nontoxic flesh, such as the northern puffer, of Chesapeake Bay, are also considered a delicacy. (Thanks Wikipedia)



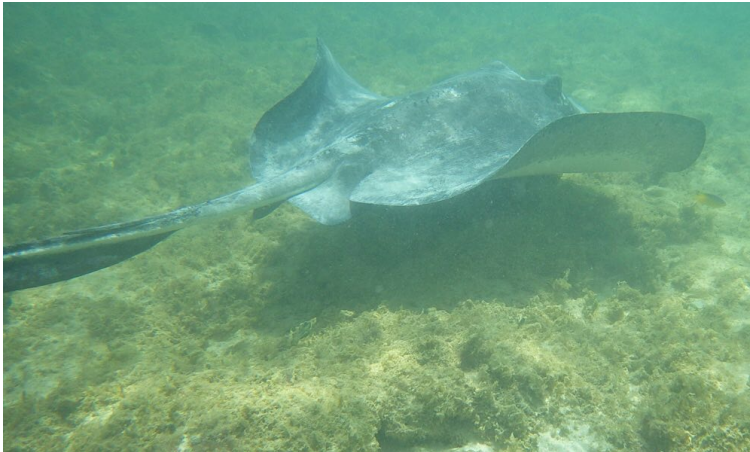
Puffers belong to the Tetraodontidae family. The name refers to the four large teeth, fused into an upper and lower plate, which are used for crushing the shells of crustaceans and mollusks, their natural prey.

Pascal and Barbara told us a story of a fellow cruiser who had the bright idea of putting his finger in the goofy looking mouth of a puffer fish.

Needless to say, it cost him a finger. (The cruiser happened to be a surgeon). Puffers are not usually aggressive, they will puff up like a ball and their spikes emerge as a defence, but that poor puffer was provoked.



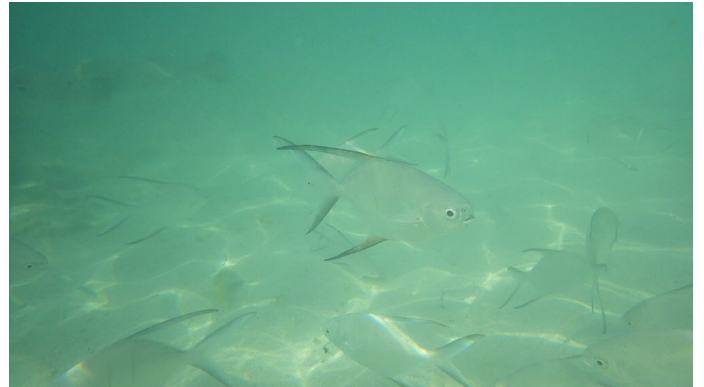
More from the Cays- Ray



Green turtle



Palometas



We are now heading for Mayreau, Saline Bay. It is a tiny island with 270 inhabitants only a few miles from the Cays, renowned for it's bars and parties. Claire, Warwick and I headed inland to explore





It's true that there seem to be more bars than residents but perhaps the morning isn't their busy time- this is the Paradise Restaurant, which doubles as a bar and also sells local crafts, with the artist at work on site.



Up at the top of the hill is the tiny Catholic Church, which boasts fabulous view over to the Tobago Cays ( if these tourists hadn't got in the way ) and heading back down the hill, a great view over to Union Island. I can't resist those wires- they're trying to compete with France!





5 June 2018

Well, it's now time to backtrack and head north to St Lucia for Claire and Warwick's flight on 10 June. So, after a couple of nights in Bequia, it's back to Cumberland where the real Joseph is around to help us moor this time.

Claire has organised to take a trip with Carlos, who is the partner of her new Cumberland friend Dian, to Walliabou in his motor launch. Dian has agreed to take us to the waterfall. We sped around the point to be confronted by the coast guards who brought Carlos to a halt.



After heated confabulation all was explained, although only Carlos understood, and we're on our way again. Dian came to meet us at the beach, where we wandered into part of the first Pirates of the Caribbean film set, all a bit dusty and tired now, much like it's actor hero.





Dian was a very good guide and knows all the plants and fruit along the way to the waterfall.



She picked us wax apples and sorrel and showed us leaves which react to your touch by closing immediately



The much awaited waterfall was but a trickle but the resulting rock pool was a refreshing dip.





Carlos is waiting for us at the quay, so after a bit of local artisan jewellery shopping we sped back to Cumberland



Well, in expert hands we are heading back to Rodney Bay. We don't need an auto pilot anymore, let alone a wind pilot- at least not until Warwick has left.





We made it to Rodney Bay a day early because Soufriere didn't want us to get in and chased us away from shore with the wind straight at us through the Pitons. We will sneak in closer next time.



One last beach & shopping day in Rodney Bay for Claire and Warwick and then back to sunny England. We will be heading back to Martinique to get that fridge fixed.

All considered, 3 weeks of confined space, water rationing and extreme heat and humidity, it was quite an achievement to have narrowly avoided a family crisis.

I think I can safely say a good time was had by all...

Relief all around and I'm trying to make this one of my new mottos, stolen from the trinket and bread guy in Bequia. It's taking a while as old habits die hard. Especially bad ones.

