

21 April 2018

We have just seen our first guests off from Marie Galante on the ferry to Pointe a Pitre. They should be back in Naples by now.

Sabrina and Gino witnessed our last hiccups in Le Marin-

The desalinator refused to start and the windlass gave up the ghost. In fact, when I went to fetch them in Fort de France, Jean-Luc was ripping out the old windlass and having the new one installed....

We are now the proud owners of a 'dolly' windlass (or a windlass with a dolly? or dollie?) What might that be?

I'm not really sure but it should mean we can haul someone up the mast using the windlass motor instead of sweating at the winch & doing our backs in.

We have yet to try it out, but needs must and the anemometer is in need of attention with the worst scenario, an intermittent fault. Sometimes we have the wind speed and sometimes we don't, not to mention the direction, also hit and miss. Aaaagghh. Soon the dolly will be needed.

I was more interested in the possibility of raising the anchor with manual handles which the old windlass didn't have and seeing Jean-Luc haul up 60 metres of chain plus the anchor by hand in 20 knots of wind was a bit stressful. Letting it down again to anchor was probably even worse as it had no brake. Visions of missing fingers....yuk.

Well, happy to say, all went well and our new dolly windlass has the whole works: brakes, manual handles and the above mentioned dolly dollie? feature.

The guy who manufactures the desalinator called Jean-Luc and told him how to shunt start it. He will send a replacement part to Martinique but meanwhile it WORKS!

So, apart from Saint Anne, where we spent the first few days, we sailed to Anse d'Arlet to see the turtles but weren't too lucky with underwater sightings this time. Anse noir, where we were sure to see numerous turtles, was invaded by jellyfish and even Gino couldn't avoid them, so instead of turtle photos, we have jellyfish!



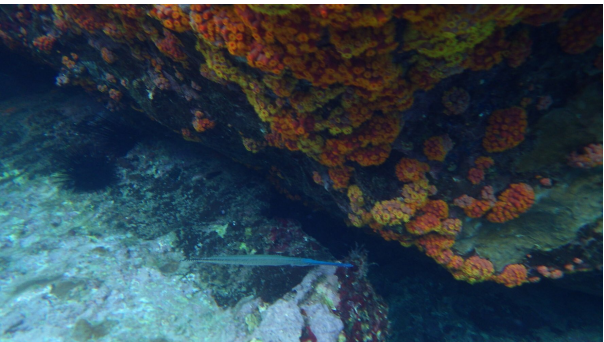
We had a great sail tacking in the bay of Fort de France and trying out the new mainsail, very impressive....but it makes us notice that the jib is old!

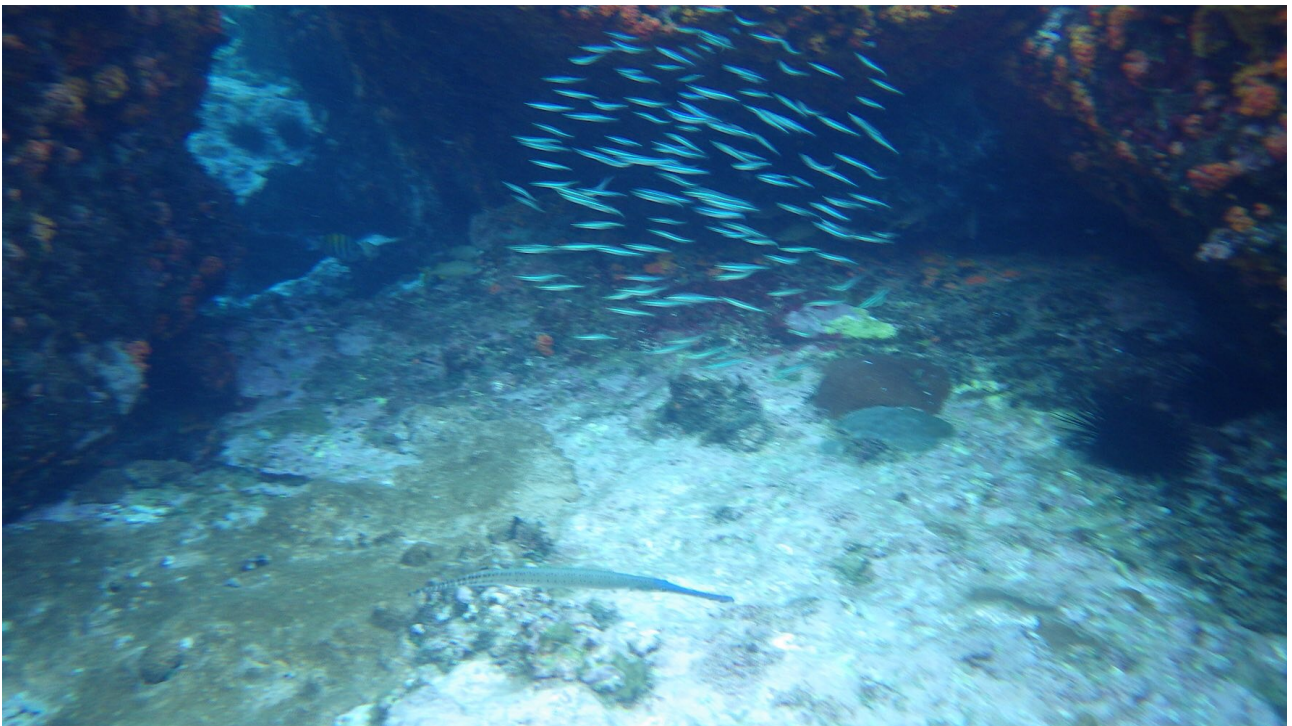
In the north of the island we stopped at St Pierre and visited the DePaz rum distillery.

Sabrina made us a gift of one of their best vintage rums.....

Grazie Sabrina!!

Snorkelling in St Anne & Anse d'Arlet





Trumpet fish

From St Pierre we had a pretty rough and patchy passage to Dominica 🇩🇲 where we stopped in Roseau on a mooring buoy in front of the Anchorage hotel. The Anchorage hotel is no longer operative after hurricane Maria and still has no roof. Our island visit with the SeaCat boys was something special. Greg, Mr Bean and our amazing guide Armstrong looked after us well and we managed to hike for 3 hours in the rain forest to see the Middleham falls, nearly 70 metres high-

Middleham falls



Kapok or cotton silk tree



Jean-Luc and I even braved a quick dip under Armstrong's supervision



Then off to the Ti Tou gorge where the water shoots down into a deep gorge, apparently almost a cave before the hurricane with all the overgrowth and now open to the sky slightly. Still quite eerie, luckily we had Armstrong towing us. This guy is mad! This was used as a set for Pirates of the Caribbean 3.



Ti Tou gorge

Keep right!



Lessons in botany-types of callaloo



And on to the hot sulphur springs



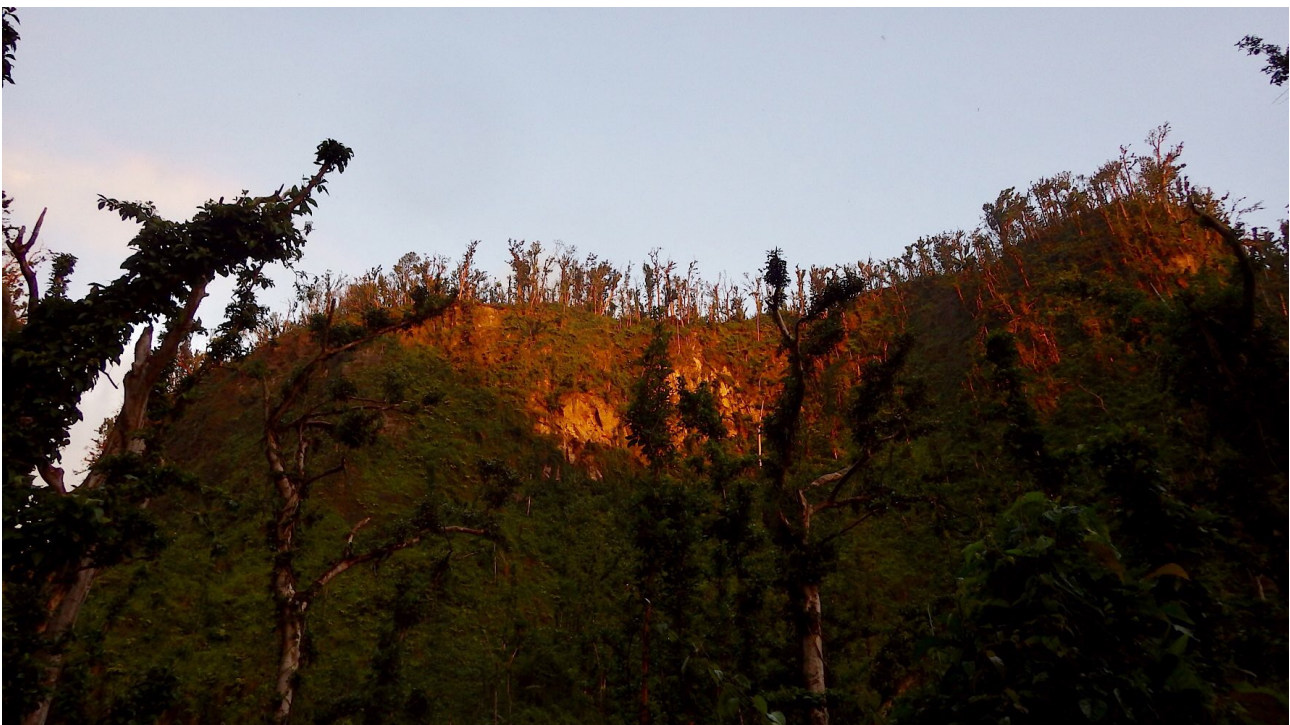
Armstrong in a rare serious moment

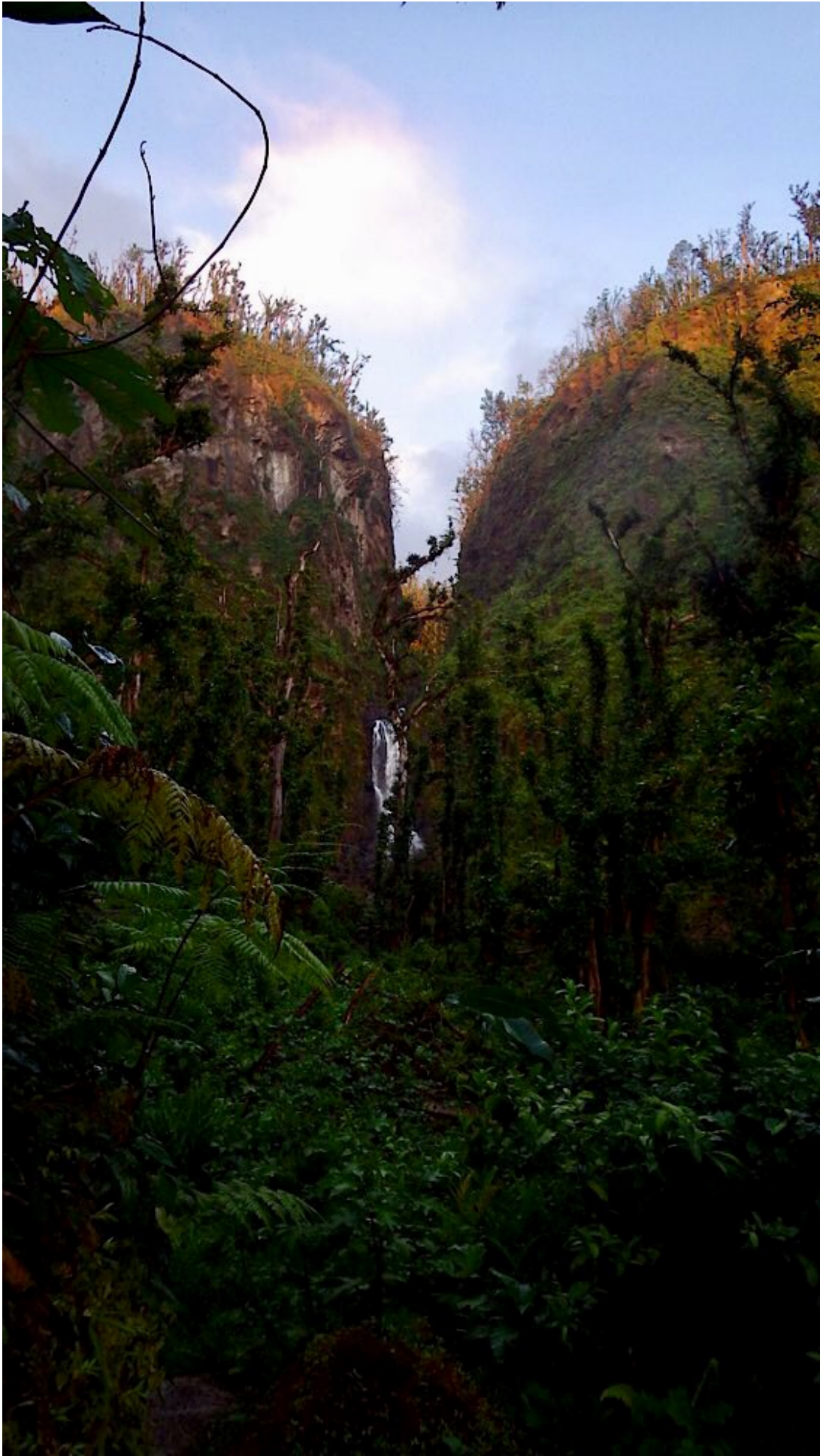


Next stop the Trafalgar falls-



Still in Dominica with our crazy guide Armstrong, to the magnificent Trafalgar falls, it's nearly sunset and he hasn't finished with us yet.





We still have to see the hot sulphur baths...in the dark, accompanied by the frog symphony orchestra- the screeching tree frogs start at sundown and scream until dawn. So they say. I haven't been awake long enough to personally witness this but they certainly scream until I fall asleep.



Dominica was badly hit in late September 2017 by hurricane Maria. The trees were stripped of their foliage, bent and tortured. Many were ripped out by their roots, roofs were torn off, houses were completely destroyed and others buried by landslides. People were killed and some went missing. Some of the missing have never been found.



The Anchorage hotel (left) still has no roof.

6 months on and the clean up job the Dominicans have done is amazing. Major work is still going on, roads are still being cleared and rebuilt. The botanical gardens have been tidied up and are ready for replanting. They lost all their giant cacti which will take years to grow again but everything is already looking green and lush. The tortured trees and forest are becoming green again. We did not see Dominica before the hurricane but we loved it. The people were so welcoming and our guide so positive and enthusiastic as well as being extremely knowledgeable.

We admire enormously these people who are so positive and pro-active in the face of such tragedy and who show enormous courage.



The gnarled tree landscape