

February 2019

Our latest adventures were with Rossana. Since we came back to Martinique we've been working on the boat, getting everything fixed to leave. Now we're almost ready.

We did loads of stuff but never enough for Rossana, she's hyperactive! Then again, she needs to make the most of her holiday- we're always on holiday!

We toured the island by car for 2 days visiting the Clement rum distillery, which is also a sculpture park and art gallery, scaling the Vauclin hill (Le Calvaire) and discovering beaches and coves for snorkelling.

With Rossana in anse Michel, Martinique



View from Le Vauclin (Le Calvaire) Martinique



Vauclin -The top!



Le Diamant

Le Rocher du Diamant
Un haut lieu de l'Histoire

De janvier 1804 à juin 1805 : épisode historique célèbre !

Au début du XIX^{ème}, la guerre fait rage entre la France et l'Angleterre pour le contrôle des Antilles. Un amiral anglais, Samuel Hood, comprenant vite l'intérêt et la place stratégique du Rocher. En effet, prendre possession du Rocher du Diamant signifie contrôler le passage des navires qui viennent accoster à Fort-Royal (Fort-de-France) et ainsi harceler la flotte française !

Le 6 janvier 1804, le Rocher devient anglais. Ces derniers s'emparent de le fortifier. 100 à 200 hommes y ont vécu et installé les équipements nécessaires à leur survie : canons, citerne d'eau potable, vivres (chèvres, volailles) d'ortoir, hôpital, ateliers, etc. Le Rocher fut alors hissé au rang de navire de la Marine de sa Majesté sous le nom de HMS (Her Majesty's Ship) Diamond Rock.

Pendant 17 mois, les troupes françaises tentèrent en vain de reconquérir l'îlot jusqu'au 2 juin 1805, date durant laquelle le gouverneur de la Martinique Villaret-de-Joyeuse, aidé de l'amiral Villeneuve envoyé par Napoléon, parvint à reprendre le Diamant aux Britanniques.

De nos jours, seuls quelques vestiges de batteries anglaises, toujours présents sur l'îlot, témoignent encore de cette incroyable épopée militaire !



Anse Cafard, monument to the shipwrecked slaves



Le Diamant



Then we sailed past my favourite, Le Diamant, to Anse d'Arlet where Rossana had her first snorkelling with the green turtles experience right under the boat- with more to come at Anse Dufour and Anse Noir.



On to St Pierre where the huge volcano Mount Pelee destroyed the whole town in 1902. There was only one survivor and he was in the jail! We visited some of the ruins, including the jail.

St. Pierre, Martinique. Mont Pelée looking beautiful and innocuous...



The Saint Pierre Theatre ruins

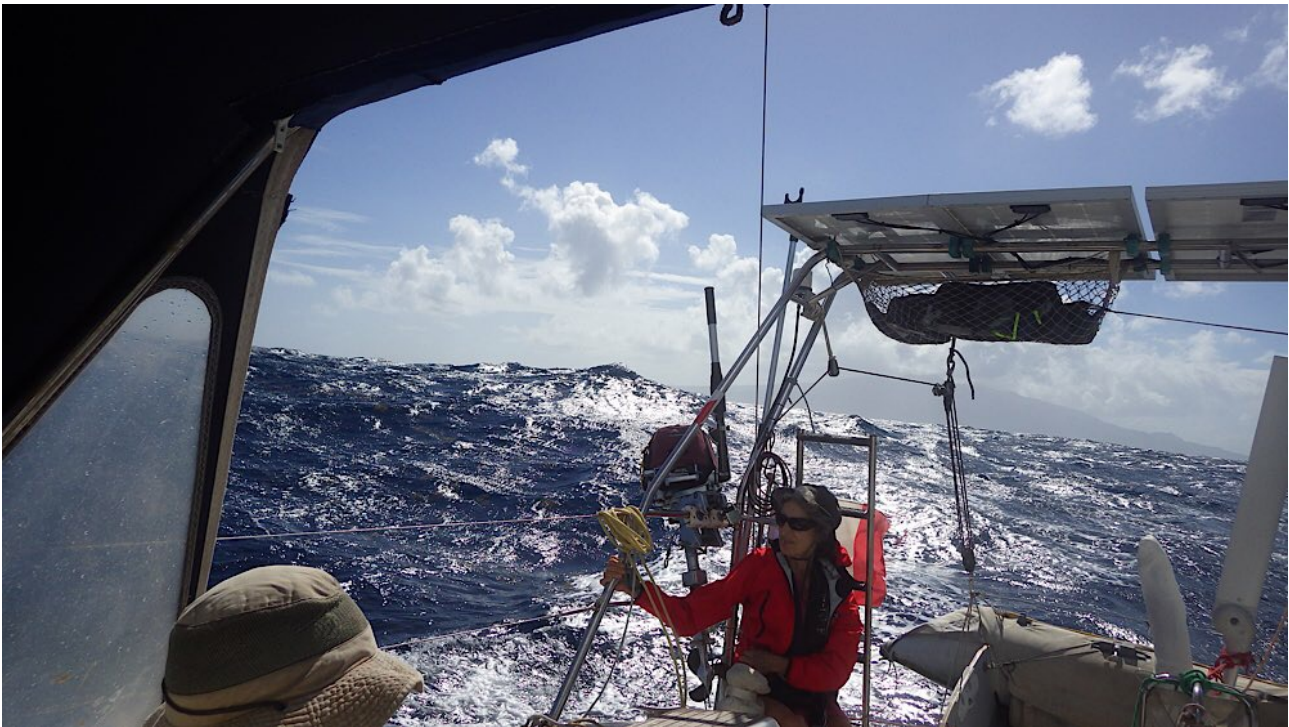


The prison backs onto the theatre wall-

L'église du Fort ruins. Unfortunately many people had taken refuge here in the church to pray.



From St Pierre to Roseau, Dominica



On the crossing from St Pierre to Dominica Rossana was sick. It was pretty rough.

Roseau rainbow



In Roseau we sent Rossana on the wonderful tour we did last time with Sabri & Gino, the waterfalls and hot springs. She thoroughly enjoyed her day.

That was my birthday & Jean-Luc wanted to take me for a fancy lunch at the old fort hotel restaurant but our crazy guide Mr Bean suggested a snorkelling trip to see the Soufriere underwater sulphur bubbles & a few relics from shipwrecks. That sounded more exciting so I opted for Mr Bean.

Mr Bean of the Sea Cat boys, Roseau



The snorkelling trip was wild, the waves and current were against us and he had us swim about 200 metres, stopping to show us various fish along the way. Then he'd dive & fill up his tuba with hot sulphur water & pour it over our heads.

His enthusiasm is admirable. The reef was totally destroyed 18 months ago by hurricane Maria and now the corals and sponge tubes are just starting to grow again, which means that the colourful coral eating fish are coming back too. For the moment they're still quite small, but it's a protected area so it will be a rapid recovery.



He tired us out & then took us for the highlight of the day, a lie down in the hot sulphur pool on the ragged little Soufriere beach, where there's a tiny shack bar which serves rum punch. The water was so hot that we thought it would be impossible to lie in, but actually it gradually becomes very comfortable. Especially with the rum punch..

Soufriere beach hot pools & rum punch bar...



We are not used to this crazy speed!



This time we stopped in Portsmouth and booked a tour to visit the north part of the island with Providence, recommended by the Sea Cat boys. Our guide was Deon, a great driver and local botanical expert, who also speaks French (for Rossana).

He picked all sorts of fruit, roots and leaves which we rarely managed to identify and presented us with the lot, assuring us he knew all the relevant landowners. We later got confirmation that he does, as he stopped on the way back when he saw one of our mornings' victims...who was wondering who'd been digging up his garden!

Dasheen, used in my favourite Callalou soup



I wrote everything down and still can't identify these!

This one we managed to identify- ginger.

Talking of landowners, there are many foreign investors in Dominica, building huge hotels and 'Resorts' which Deon is very cynical about. We thought that it would be welcomed by locals as it creates jobs but he showed us a Moroccan project which has been 'under construction' for 10 years. Just on the other side of the promontory is a new Indian venture & we won't mention how many Chinese projects are underway. These, however, tend to get completed- but that's another story...

Suffice to say that when you ask what the main industry on Dominica is, the reply is: 'Selling passports' - and he's not joking.

These tiny pineapples have been left unpicked because they are too small to sell. They taste divine!

Cinnamon-



Some of our booty



The northern part of Dominica is dominated by the Morne Diablotin which soars to 1447 metres.



The original name of Diablotin was Waitukubuli, now used for the National hiking trail to the mountain. And of course for the local beer...



This is it's little sister Morne aux Diables, 861 metres.



The scenery is lush and the views breathtaking



We are on our way down to La Chaudiere, a rock pool which is alimeted by a small waterfall. The trees are recovering from Maria.

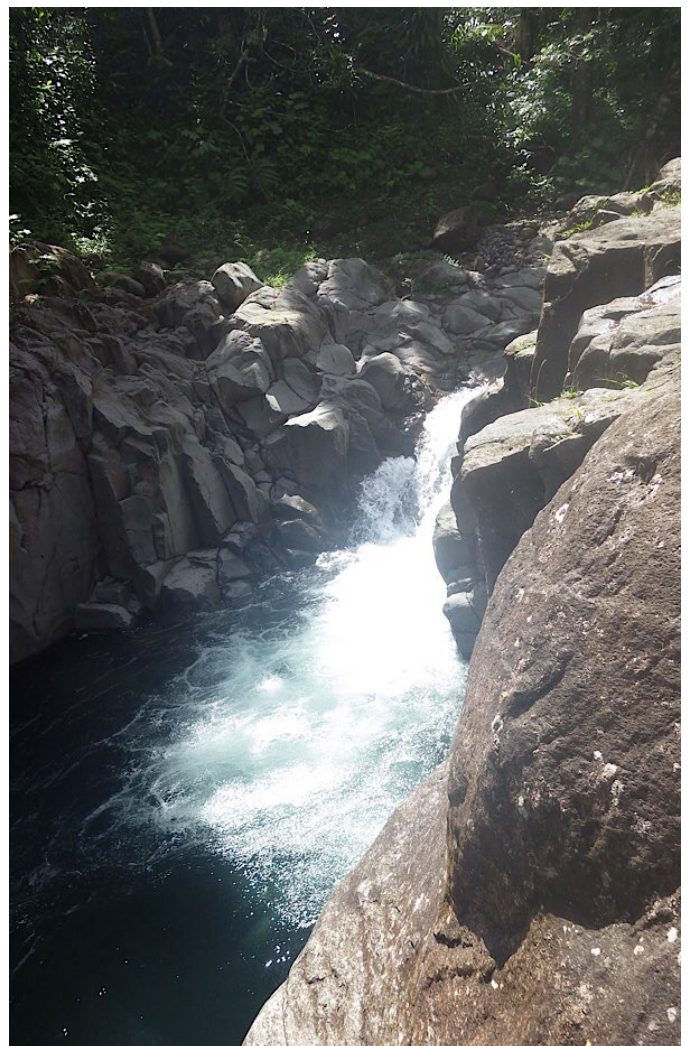
Deon is demonstrating how the women (it's always the women who work hardest on these islands!) carried their loads on their heads by using the dried plantain leaves as a cushion.



A great spot for a picnic and a refreshing dip, the Chaudiere pool was worth the walk...



Deon and Jean-Luc braved the jump... Rossana and I took the long way in



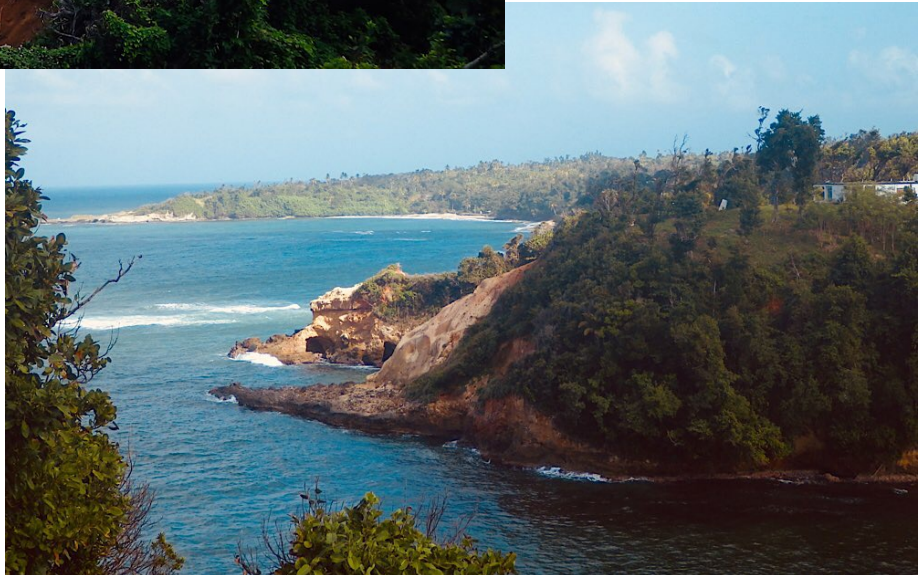
Back on the road again where we appreciate the effect of the hurricane on the trees.



The fabulous views from the northern coast



Pointe Baptiste, the red rock dunes-



And an impromptu stop at our request to get closer to the red rock dunes- and thanks to Deon, we discovered this beautiful beach hideaway, sadly derelict but still very pretty.



With a stunning beach



That's Rossana braving the waves out there!



Wow!



So now it's time to head back... for rum punch and music on the beach-

Deon presented Rossana and I with these bouquets he composed beautifully from flowers picked along the beach path, a really nice thought.



