

Glorious Grenada

With more flights, new hotels and fresh attractions, Grenada has plenty to offer travellers this winter, says **Nigel Tisdall**

There's a lot going on right now in the tri-island nation of Grenada that will make it a standout Caribbean destination over the coming months. First up is increased flight capacity, with Virgin Atlantic adding a third service from Heathrow that will operate from December 8 to March 29, 2024. This complements British Airways' thrice-weekly route from Gatwick and reflects the continuing appeal of the 'Isle of Spice'.

"The number of UK visitors to Grenada in the first six months of this year is up 17.3%, compared with the same period in 2022," says Lennox Andrews, Grenada's minister for tourism. One reason is because Grenada feels very safe – the minister reports that "there was not a single act of violence during this summer's carnival".

Another attractive aspect is that it is not overdeveloped, with just 126,000 islanders spread across Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, which together cover an area slightly smaller than the Isle of Wight.

On the main island, the colourfully painted capital St George's has one of the prettiest harbours in the Caribbean, while inland lie forested mountains blessed with abundant waterfalls and a fertile soil where cacao, nutmeg and clove trees thrive.

Grande Anse Beach offers two miles of well-kept sands and there are plenty of other engaging sights on the island that can be covered on a day tour, such as the Nutmeg Processing Station in Gouyave, which appears to be unchanged since its opening in 1952, and the Belmont Estate, which produces high-quality organic chocolate.

NEW ATTRACTIONS

The enhancement of Grenada's Underwater Sculpture Park in the Molinière-Beauséjour marine reserve, completed in October, is welcome news – with 31 new statues, some standing in water just 10ft deep. The emphasis is on figures that reflect Grenadian culture, including Grenadian carnival characters such as the devilish Jab Jab and the Shortknee musical troupe. ➤

DESTINATIONS

CARIBBEAN | GRENADA



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Drone view of one of the island's beaches; statues in Grenada's Underwater Sculpture Park; Spice Island Beach Resort; capital St Georges PICTURES: Shutterstock/R Gombarik, Nancy Pauwels; Dylan Cross/Dragonfly Image Partners

Next month Grenada will also host its first Sea Spice seafood festival, running December 6-10. Centred on the Mount Cinnamon Resort in Grande Anse, the free-entry event will offer cooking demonstrations and a beach barbecue while promoting local marine conservation efforts.

In 2024, expect Grenada to be in high spirits around February 7 when it celebrates 50 years of independence. A commemorative 50 East Caribbean dollar note (about £15) is being issued and the island's carnival, known as Spicemas (August 1-13), is expected to be especially exuberant – an unmissable event for clients intrigued by culture.

HOT HOTELS

For a luxurious stay right beside Grande Anse, five-star Spice Island Beach Resort reopened on November 1, with 64 suites, expanded pool and dining areas plus enticing all-inclusive rates that cover premium drinks, children's activities and green fees at the Grenada Golf & Country Club.

If clients are concerned about sustainability, True Blue Bay Boutique Resort near St George's is eco-sensitive with electric vehicles, ethically sourced woods and no single-use plastic. For fine food and a civilised ambience, the family-run Calabash (set by a small beach in Lance aux Épinés) has new-look suites and three restaurants including one inspired by Japanese izakaya (informal bars).

“Six Senses La Sagesse is on a headland with walkways made from nutmeg and cocoa shells

Scheduled to open in early 2024, Six Senses La Sagesse will be the brand's first property in the Caribbean, offering 56 rooms set on a headland with walkways made from nutmeg and cocoa shells, a jungle gym and candlelit yoga. Silversands Beach House is coming in March, with 28 rooms beside Portici Beach. Another two properties, Kimpton Kawana Bay and the InterContinental Grenada Resort, are expected in 2025.

NICHE MARKETS

Grenada is a good pick for clients with a taste for the unusual. Real ale fans should visit the West Indies Beer Co near Lance aux Épinés, which has a popular microbrewery, while rum connoisseurs will be fascinated by the waterwheel-powered River Antoine distillery, which was founded in 1785. Green-fingered visitors can take tours to private homes and nurseries where blooms for the island's flamboyant, gold medal-winning displays at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show are nurtured. For something different book afternoon tea made with butterfly pea flowers at the Tower Estate, a grand 1913 house filled with family treasures. **TW**

ASK THE experts

Petra Roach
chief executive, Grenada
Tourism Authority



“Grenada is not a mass tourism destination and we don't want it to be one. There is no sense of 'them and us' here and tourism is everybody's business. We've trained more than 1,400 people in how to offer excellent customer service. Being the shipwreck capital of the Caribbean, we are currently teaching 100 Grenadians to dive. We're also enhancing tourism sites including Bathway Beach in the north and Paradise Beach on Carriacou, and plan to offer free internet access at many points. In the capital, Fort George is now being restored as a major attraction with a view to achieving Unesco World Heritage status.”

BOOK IT

Gold Medal has seven nights at True Blue Bay Boutique Resort from £1,769 per person with breakfast, including Virgin Atlantic flights from Heathrow on March 15, 2024, plus transfers. Book by November 30. goldmedal.co.uk

Elegant Resorts has seven nights at Spice Island Beach Resort from £4,685 per person all-inclusive, including Virgin Atlantic flights from Heathrow on January 16, 2024, UK airport lounge passes and transfers. elegantresorts.co.uk