

 PAUSE

 PLAY


GRENADA

Pause & Play

Whether you want to spice up your life or feed your soul, Grenada has all the ingredients, writes Jo Cooke

When you've travelled half way around the world, it's nice to know you needn't go much further to make the most of your holiday destination.

Measuring 12 miles wide by 21 miles long, Grenada is just about big enough to offer visitors a variety of distractions,

but is small enough that they're all within a half-day trip of the hotel. So whether your clients are beach bums who feel they ought to sign up for at least one excursion, or adventurers who want to slot in a few hours' sun-tanning time, they've come to the right place.

British Airways and Virgin Atlantic will get them there, and when they arrive, they should quickly feel at home. English is the official language, the Grenadians seem to share our British sense of humour, they drive on the left and UK plugs fit in the electric sockets. 

➔ The biggest difference – and a welcome one – is the weather. Grenada is one of the most southerly isles in the Caribbean, and hurricanes are rare. And with about eight hours of sunshine a day, the average temperature is 27C year-round.

► MORE, PLEASE!

Play: Grenada's nickname, the Spice Island, stems from its heyday as one of the world's pre-eminent growers of nutmeg, cinnamon, cloves and allspice. This island had quite a reputation, but now it's the cocoa groves that are the talk of the West Indies and beyond. Grenada is quickly establishing itself as one of the best chocolate producers on the planet. The production process, from farm to sweet shop, requires hard work and patience, as you'll discover if you visit the charming, 300-year-old Belmont Estate, a working plantation. The proof of the pudding is, of course, in the eating, so head on to the Grenada Chocolate Company for a factory tour and taste test.

Pause: If you'd prefer a white-linen table cloth and top-notch fare, head to the Gary Rhodes restaurant. It's located under a leafy arbor at the upscale Calabash resort. The celebrity chef is a huge fan of the high-quality fruit and veg that springs from Grenada's rich volcanic soil, and he uses it to give classic dishes tropical flair. Pumpkin, coconut and shrimp risotto melts in the mouth, as does beef fillet with sweet potato, and there's a decadent menu full of chocolate desserts to follow.



FAST FACT
BA and Virgin Atlantic fly twice weekly from Gatwick to Grenada, with return fares from £534 and £462 respectively



LEFT: Belmont Estate

► WATER WONDERFUL WORLD

Play: If you've never been to an art gallery where tropical fish are the main visitors, now's your chance. Just off shore at Molinere Bay, you can discover Grenada's Underwater Sculpture Park. Join a glass-bottomed kayak tour and paddle your way over the exhibits, or snorkel among them. You'll see a mesmerising mix of barnacled installations standing tall on the ocean floor, including a chap cycling, another at his desk with a typewriter, a still life of a fruit bowl and a ring of children playing.

Pause: If your idea of ocean life is having a rum punch in your hand, the wind in your hair and your pals or lover by your side, all while someone else takes the wheel, then Island Routes' Lover's Rock Sunset Cruise is for you (\$65). You'll get to see Grenada's emerald-green rainforest interior as you sail along the coastline, then as the light fades, the deck of your catamaran becomes a dancefloor and you can boogie to reggae, soca and salsa beats.

► PARK LIFE

Play: The jewel in Grenada's crown has to be Grand Etang National Park & Forest Reserve. This blissful, protected

ABOVE: Sandals LaSource

ABOVE RIGHT: Mona monkey



space is home to 1,500 hectares of raw nature that rises and dips between hills and valleys to reveal waterfalls, ancient trees, armadillos, hummingbirds and monkeys. Lose yourself in its majesty by taking a waterfall hike. Some trails are well trodden, others a little harder to follow, but guides are available at the park entrance, and double up as botanists, pointing out the native flora. The Seven Sisters and Concorde falls, with seven and three cascades respectively, are rewarding treks. Be sure to pack your swimwear, too, so you can cool off in the rock pools.

Pause: Love nature, but prefer to admire it from a picnic bench? Then get a taxi up to the enormous Grand Etang Lake. This peaceful pool of grey-blue water occupies a volcanic crater formed about 12,000 years ago. Linger a while and you may soon be in the company of the island's mona monkeys – pack a mango, as they're rather partial to fruit. If you'd also like to see a waterfall without embarking on a hike, head for Annandale, as it's just footsteps from the road and a short drive from the capital, St George's.

► HAPPY AS A SAND BOY

Play: Grenada's beaches rarely feel



The beaches rarely feel crowded, and even Grand Anse retains an air of sophistication in the hubbub of high season

crowded, and even the island's most popular, Grand Anse, on the west coast, seems to retain an air of sophistication in the hubbub of high season. A sweep of soft, white sand backed by low-rise hotels, most of which are set back discreetly from the water's edge, it feels undeveloped compared with many of the major resorts on Grenada's Caribbean cousins. Nevertheless, if you want to get stuck into some water sports and be just a stone's throw from a great selection of restaurants and bars, this is the spot to pitch your parasol.

Pause: Resorts such as Laluna and Sandals LaSource are set on sublimely secluded beaches, so if you're seeking complete rest and relaxation, they could be exactly what you're looking

for. If you want to go one step further than that in your quest for serenity, venture out to La Sagesse. You'll find it on the south-east coast at the end of a country lane. This bay is so tranquil, it's as if time is standing still. The palm trees seem to sway in rhythm with the ebb and flow of the waves, and a sleepy restaurant serves simple fare to the other beach aficionados who've made it here.

► CITY SLICKERS

Play: Boasting one of the most attractive capitals in the Caribbean, it would be rude not to grace St George's with your presence, however fleetingly. You can see the main attractions on foot within a couple of hours, moving between the bustling market with its produce and craft stalls, the cathedral, churches and national museum, then taking the short march uphill to the 18th-century Fort George for photo opportunities and a bird's-eye view of the skyline.

Pause: If you don't fancy gadding about town, you could always just browse the shops along the Carenage (marina), which are set in restored Georgian warehouses. If even that feels too much like hard work, settle at a waterfront restaurant and indulge in that all-important pastime, people watching. **TV**

Win a holiday to Grenada

To mark the 30th anniversary of the first British Airways flight to Grenada on April 1, 1987, the Grenada Tourism Authority and the airline have a dream holiday to give away to a lucky agent!

Book a holiday to Grenada and log it via MyBookingRewards, and you could win a seven-night holiday for two to Coyaba Beach Resort, with BA flights. Thirty runners-up will receive a Pure Grenada gift bag containing chocolate and hotel goodies.

The Grenada team is also looking for BA crew or travel agents who might have worked on or booked passengers on the first flight to the island. Email gta@eyes2market.co.uk. puregrenada.com