

Cruise Corner

Sailing through the Saints

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The following day we docked at Dominica, the nature island. Island tours in chartered vans provide a great view of this mountainous island where you will not want to miss the twin waterfalls at Trafalgar Falls, one of which is more than 60 feet tall. The volcanic island offers benefits such as natural hot springs where the temperature is roughly that of a Jacuzzi. Another must-see is Emerald pool where you can swim at the base of the waterfall in cool refreshing water.

Known for the spectacular and very dramatic volcanic mountain peaks, the Pitons, St. Lucia is also famous for its beautiful beaches, lush tropical forests, banana plantations, and celebrity vacation homes. Featured on the last season of *The Bachelor*, St. Lucia has a rich culture, history, and heritage begging to be explored. One of the can't-miss sites to see there includes the world heritage site of Soufriere, a sleepy former capital of St. Lucia, which has the stunning twin peaks of the Gros and Petit Piton volcanoes framing the town. Nearby is also a drive to a dormant volcano named Qualibou where you can see and smell the sulfur springs which are bubbling away at 212 degrees and see the steam rise from holes in the earth's crust. You can also take a mud bath there, reputed to be therapeutic and heal-



Feeding a green spider monkey in Barbados as we stop by one of the roadside stands.

Michelle Teel
One of many stylish lounges aboard the *Carnival Victory*.

A Caribbean Island packed with history and culture — that's Barbados! Visit a sugar plantation, see the oldest operating windmill in North America, go to the beach, or watch a polo match. There's no shortage of fascination in Barbados. Our recommendation: if you've never been to Barbados, take the full island tour. There are just too many facets you won't want to miss. End your day at Lobsters Alive sampling the local seafood right on the white sands of Carlisle Beach. Look for the unusual green monkeys that live on the island. If you are lucky, you will be able to see one in the trees; if you are very lucky, you can hold one while it eats a mango, like we did. Some roadside vendors have the monkeys for pets and they will allow you to hold theirs.

ing. Not far from there we took a swim in the pool beneath Toraille Falls — refreshingly cool. A botanical garden there holds lovely tropical flowers and hummingbirds. Very friendly St. Lucians make for a wonderful, warm, and memorable island visit.

We spent our day at St. Kitts on Cockleshell Beach, aptly named because of the thousands of beautiful seashells strewn on the beautiful, soft white sand. It is easy to imagine you are visiting a tropical paradise reminiscent of the South Pacific. There are many ways to enjoy the lovely weather when visiting there: shopping, golf, touring historical sites such as old forts, bird watching, snorkeling and diving, and participating in adventure tours or water sports.

French Saint Martin/Dutch St Maarten is unique because there are two separate sides to the island, each with its own currency, language, architecture, government, and history. The island is only 37 square miles, but contains two nations and more than 80 nationalities. The flavor of the island is definitely European, but English is the most common language. This island has the best beaches of all of the beautiful Caribbean islands we visited on this cruise. Crystal-clear turquoise blue waters, spectacular white sand, gentle surf, and fabulous sunshine leave you feeling relaxed and refreshed; the island was a perfect ending to a fantastic cruise.

As always, a travel agent can be an invaluable source of information to book a trip. The pricing is no different than that of internet sites such as Travelocity. This is by design and mandated by the cruise lines, so why not take the free advice and get a package perfect for you or your family. We can recommend first-hand those you see in *Recreation News*.

By Michelle and Karl Teel

Inaugural Cruise Pros and Cons

With new cruise ships taking to the seas every year, you may have considered booking an inaugural cruise to be among the first to experience a ship. You probably won't actually be the first as cruise lines typically host media and travel trade folks before selling tickets to the general public but it may still be a thrill. The folks at AllThingsCruise.com say it could be a great idea as long as you temper your expectations.

The cruise lines realistically expect there may be some problems to be worked out and will oftentimes compensate for what they expect to be minor inconveniences with lower "introductory pricing"

Shipboard routines are still being established so service and continuity may not be what they will be in later voyages. Because the ship's staff is still finding out what passengers want and need, it is more likely to be flexible with things like menus, seating arrangements, and the scheduling of on-board activities

Each port is a new stop for a ship on an inaugural cruise so often its arrival becomes a local event including politicians and local celebrities, often with music and other festivities. Not every port will do this, but it's sure a sight to see when they do!

The cruise lines are looking for positive word-of-mouth comments generated from this first cruise and may provide you with extra special food, entertainment, keepsake items, and activities

Everyone likes the feeling of enjoying something that's absolutely brand new, whether it's a whiff of that new car smell or the thrill of a huge ocean liner!

There is something special about being on board a cruise ship during the inaugural cruise but they do fill up early. To find out more about the cruise ships launching this year, visit the new Inaugural Cruises section on AllThingsCruise.com.