

Sauteurs — Grenada's Newest Anchorage

by Lexi Fisher



Sauteurs is a historic, rural town. Situated at the very northern tip of Grenada, it seldom sees tourists other than those visiting nearby attractions. But now, the recent addition of a breakwater, intended to protect the beachfront businesses and main street from erosion, has created a lagoon big enough for several yachts. The people of Sauteurs are warm and welcoming, and local businesspeople are excited to be able to host visiting yachtspeople.

The area is largely uncharted, so use caution, but a number of nearby historical and ecological attractions make it a worthwhile stop for experienced sailors. The Sauteurs harbor provides a convenient jumping-off point (no pun intended — sauteurs is French for “jumpers”) for exploring the north of the island, or a stopover on your way north to Carriacou.

At the time of this writing, heavy seas were causing waves to break at the end of the unfinished breakwater, although the completed structure should remedy this. There were not yet any channel markers, and although the lagoon was recently dredged to 15 feet, shoaling is still occurring at an unknown rate — use caution.

The breakwater's developers assured me that the bottom is all sand, and we found this to be true when we visited. Since the construction of the breakwater, the eastern end of the beach has widened considerably (see “Shaping Our Coastlines” in last month's *Compass*). This may change with continued construction and dredging.

Local fishing boats moor and anchor within the lagoon. Give them plenty of room and be watchful of their moorings, as some are small and hard to see.

Pull your dinghy up on the beach.

Services

Jason Electrical specializes in appliance repairs and may be able to help with other problems. Find him in the restaurant at the top of the hill. If you have engine problems, he can point you in the right direction.

There are two ATMs, both on the top side of town, as are several pharmacies. New Life Medical Center is on the hill, does blood testing, and has doctors available.

Restaurants & Provisioning

A number of large, well-stocked grocery stores lie along the main road, generally open from 0800 to 1800 hours, with reduced hours or closed on Sunday. The Marketing Board (MNIB) has a large outlet here, almost directly across the street from the base of the breakwater. They have the best selection of fruit and vegetables. For fresh fish, check the fish market at the end of the fishing dock. Availability is erratic and the best time to check is in the morning.

The main road is dotted with rum shops and small restaurants, most selling local dishes for very reasonable prices. Helena's, almost at the top of the hill, is popular and has a few tables on a small balcony overlooking the harbor.

For a great country meal while here or on a day tour, visit the Petite Anse resort, which has a delightful location, hanging over its own beach, a five-minute drive west of Sauteurs. Sailors Phillip and Annie Clift built this boutique hotel after crossing the Atlantic on the ARC and chartering for some years. You can swim in the pool and walk in the beautiful garden, heading down past cottages tucked amid flowers and trees to the beach.

They serve fruits and vegetables from their own garden, fish and lobster from local fishermen, and much of their meat is from local farmers. The restaurant, with its wide-ranging menu, is popular with both locals and visitors. They offer yachtspeople their local rate for a weekend escape.

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Navigation

Sauteurs has a consistently strong onshore wind and swell, so entering the harbor is only advisable in good weather, and best when you can clearly see the reefs on either side of the entrance. One lies along the shoreline to the west, the other is directly outside and along the breakwater. Both should be easy to avoid.

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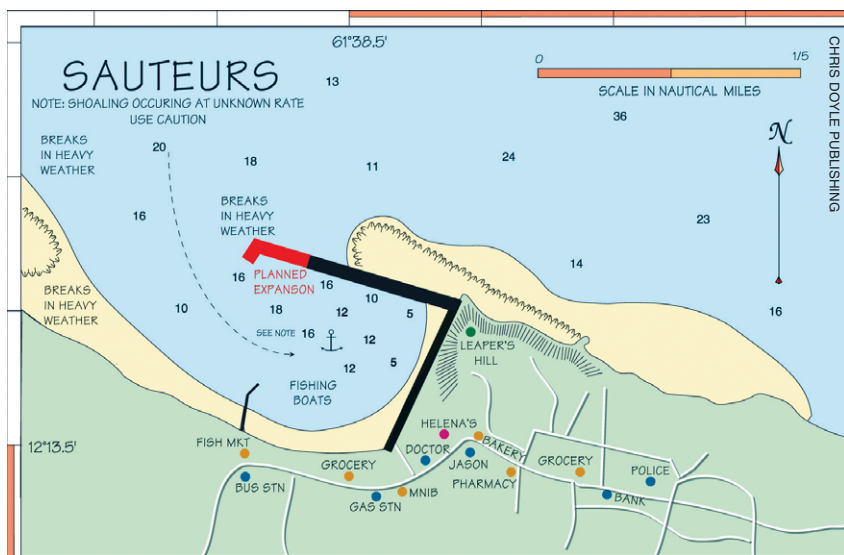


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Ashore

Leapers' Hill (le Morne des Sauteurs in French, also known as Caribs' Leap) overlooks the harbor to the west and is one of the island's most popular historic sites. After continuing conflict between French colonists and the indigenous Caribs throughout the early 1600s, the Carib population had been decimated by the French's superior weaponry. In 1651, the last remaining Caribs sensed a losing battle, and rather than be captured and killed by the French, jumped to their deaths from this high cliff to the sea below. To get to the site of this sad occurrence, turn left on the main road from the breakwater and follow the signs up from the top of the hill.

Buses run from 0600 until 2000 and will take you west (the Number 5 bus) all the way to Grenada's capitol, St. George's, or east (the Number 9) along two routes — to Hermitage, where you can visit Belmont Estate, or to River Salée, where you can ask to be dropped at Levera or Bathway beach for an additional charge. Catch the buses at the bus terminal at the western end of the main road.

Levera National Park, where leatherback turtles nest between March and August (book a tour in advance at [473] 442-2721), is a 1.5-hour walk, or short bus ride away. From here you can hike up to Welcome Rock for a spectacular view of Sugarloaf and the surrounding islands.

The Sulphur Springs, Hermitage waterfalls (a 40-minute hike), River Antoine Rum Factory, Lake Antoine, and Belmont Estate are all worthwhile destinations and a short taxi ride away. Helena, at Helena's Restaurant, can arrange a taxi for you.

Lexi Fisher is a writer and partner in Chris Doyle's Cruising Guides. The 2019-2020 Windward Islands edition, which includes this new chapter on Sauteurs, will be available from chandleries starting this month, and online from www.cruisingguides.com.

Caribbean Bound? Help Track Troublesome Seaweed!

by Joan Conover

Massive quantities of floating sargassum seaweed have inundated shorelines throughout the Caribbean recently. The effects on wildlife, fisheries, and tourism have been adverse, as the seaweed accumulates in piles as high as six feet (two metres) or more on many windward beaches and gives off potentially toxic levels of hydrogen sulfide gas as it rots.

The 2017-2018 period has been significantly worse than previous years. In the short term, warning at-risk locations of approaching quantities of seaweed — sometimes described as “mats the size of islands” — would enable communities to take pre-emptive action and prepare for proper removal before any aggregation becomes too much to tackle.

In the long term, knowing more about this seaweed would help scientists figure out why it is increasingly prolific. More real-life information on the spread and timing of sargassum's migrations, and validation of the plant's growth stages, are critical.

What can sailors do to assist with both short- and long-term efforts to lessen the impact of sargassum on Caribbean coastlines? Take photos and note the location of any floating sargassum you see on your voyages, especially while crossing the Atlantic, and send them to researchers at the dedicated sargassum reporting website!

Research facilities have been developing technologies to identify the location of seaweed masses based on satellite imagery (see <https://eos.org/features/sargassum-watch-warns-of-incoming-seaweed>). While this seems simple, it has required on the ground — or in this case sea — knowledge of where volumes of weed are. This then allowed comparison to satellite data, to develop suitable applications.

For several years, private “citizen scientists”, including cruisers and other sailors, have reported their sargassum sightings to the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory's (GCRL) sargassum research group, headed by Senior Scientist Jim Franks of the University of Southern Mississippi.

Jim asks sailors to input data about sargassum sightings — including latitude and longitude, photographs if possible, and comments — to a website designed for reporting pelagic sargassum observations. This year's reported data included close-up photographs of the weed brought on deck and placed on a dark background (such as a black garbage bag), to allow identification of the stage of development of this mobile seaweed.

Data provided to this site will continue to be used by GCRL scientists and colleagues throughout the region to identify the source of the sargassum, examine its movements, and discover the causes of the extraordinary recent infestations.

File your report at <http://gcr.usm.edu/sargassum/sargassum.observation.form.php> as soon as you are able.

Another effort, to provide a satellite tracking application, has been developed by Dr. Chuanmin Hu's group at the University of South Florida. This website shows satellite imagery of sargassum that can provide “early warning” of where and/or when this seaweed will impact an area. While still in the development stages, this is a huge step forward for projecting where the weed is and where it might go, and could allow countries in the impact areas time to prepare. Check out the online Sargassum Watch System (SaWS) at <http://optics.marine.usf.edu/projects/saws.html>, which distributes daily images with surface currents, so others can visually estimate sargassum aggregation and movement directions.

The actual sargassum route and life cycle are not well known, but does seem to be increasing with each season's influx. Theories on why include increasing weather extremes of heat and/or additional nutrients introduced into the Atlantic, which create or enhance massive blooms of this seaweed. Recent research also suggests Atlantic algae respond positively to increased CO₂ and acidity in seawater, a major change in the former theory of slower growth. Thanks to Dr. Hu's work, along with that of Jim Franks, the sargassum's migration paths and patterns are becoming better known; ongoing research — with your help — will allow better understanding of variation and aggregation patterns.

More data points mean more accurate prediction models, and there are still various other parts of the tropical Atlantic to be added. This is especially critical for the equatorial sailing passage regions from Africa to South America, where transatlantic voyagers, such as participants in the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers, the RORC Transatlantic Race, and others, can provide valuable first-hand observations — but can also face serious impacts. Donna Lange's sailboat, during her solo 2015-2016 circumnavigation, was trapped in a huge mat of sargassum off Africa. Using a machete, she had to cut herself free from a foot deep, horizon-to-horizon mass of the seaweed.

Becoming proactive, keeping informed as to the location of floating bus-sized or larger seaweed mats, will be the new reality for sailors in the tropics. This sargassum issue will not go away, but we can help warn at-risk locations (including sailing routes) about it and help researchers learn about it.

Get the word out to other concerned people and report the weed! Especially helpful will be close-up photographs. All information goes to researchers at the University of Southern Mississippi and the University of South Florida when posted at <http://gcr.usm.edu/sargassum/sargassum.observation.form.php>

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