

2nd Report: Cayenne, French Guiana
04°51.1N 52°16.9W
Le Phare Bleu, Grenada
12°00.1N 61°43.4W
February 3 to April 9, 2013

Route Overview



Sunday, February 3. Today we bring a little order into *Silmaril* before we start on a trip to the Fourgassier waterfalls. On the way we have lunch in Roura, in the Restaurant Creola. We eat well and a lot. There is bush pig stew (*Potamochoerus larvatus*, maybe *porcus*) and lambis (the meat of the conch, *Lobatus gigas*). We talk to the other guest, a Frenchman, a strange guy who has lived here for over a year and hopes to establish himself in the neighborhood for good.

A brief visit to the church of Roura, which stands on the steep bank high above the river, surprises us with a great view.



The way to the waterfall takes us down, down on a red dirt road through dense forest. The falls are not really what we expect, not like Staubbach or Giessbach dimensions. The small stream flows gently through a clearing with picnic tables and on down ever a few feet over smooth round boulders. The tables are occupied by groups of people who enjoy their free day, the kids swim in the flowing water.



Two huge dogs trot behind their owners. I have never seen this kind of dog.

They are so-called *Napoletani*, as we are told. Everything is large on them, their heads, their paws, their tongue, even their coats are too big for their bodies. Long strings of spittle slobber from their lolling tongues. They are not aggressive at all, thank goodness. They move in slow motion and hardly ever leave their master.

We continue on the way down and arrive at a kind of camp according to the poster. It seems deserted and also a bit run-down.



On the way back Alex stops for a picture of an especially fine specimen of this heliconia. We smell carrion, the bushes at the curb look like something very heavy went right through them and down the slope. High above us, vultures circle. Could it be possible that a car or motorcycle lies hidden in the dense growth and no one knows?

Monday, February 4. We load two large bags of laundry into the car, drive to town and take Annette and Terry to the hospital. She had some exams and goes to get the results.

We go to look for the laundromat, Alex had detected before and succeed pretty

soon in finding it. Later on we meet with Annette and Terry in *Les Palmistes*, a very old restaurant, where we can send and receive e-mails. The newly acquired Orange stick does not work.

It's frustrating not to have an internet connection on the boat. But the place is very nice, we have a beer and eat a pizza when the work is done.

In the evening a few ibises and herons search for food at ebb tide.



They leisurely stalk through the mud looking for small crabs and all sorts of worms. They are such gracious birds.

Tuesday, February 5. We make another trip to the Orange Shop, they give us again another explanation for the malfunctioning and it still does not work.

Wednesday, February 6. We go shopping with Annette and Terry. This time the stick is working! Maybe it was indeed the server that was down, although we had not believed them.



Thursday, February, 7. Alex fetches three jerry cans of diesel. Tomorrow he will return the car.

In the afternoon we drive to Kourou with Annette and Terry to witness the first launch in 2013 of the Ariane 5 of the European Space Agency's successful Ariane Space program.

About twelve miles from the launch site, we wait on a small hill with hundreds of other spectators. Alex is ready with the telephoto lens; Annette and I observe the site through the binoculars.

Close by on a tree we sight a sloth. It half lays half hangs in a branch fork. It sports three long claws on all four legs. Its head is small, a little birdlike. It moves once in a while, very slowly, one foreleg, then a hind leg until, after a good hour, it reaches the next lower branch fork.



Far away the rocket stands between four antennas. At the right side of the picture the tall assembly hall sticks out of the forest. The Ariane 5 will carry two satellites of almost ten tons payload into orbit at 37000km.

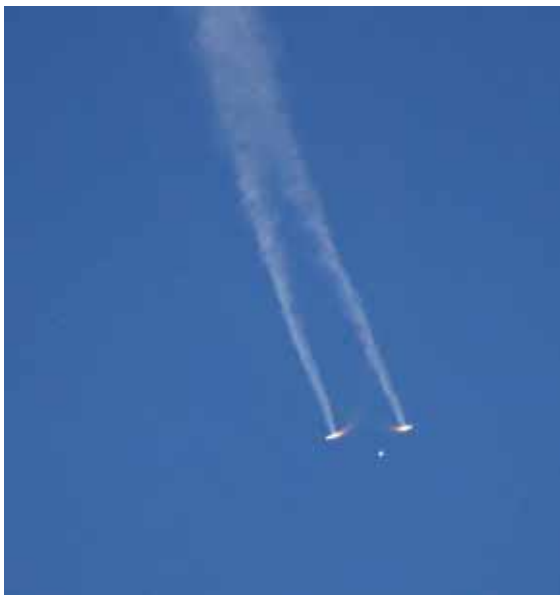


And finally we hear the last seconds of the countdown over the loudspeakers.

A fire cloud engulfs the rocket.
And it takes off.

Gradually the
thunderous noise
rolls towards us.





After a few minutes, the rocket is no longer visible, the two boosters separate (they will be picked up from the water) and the second stage is ignited. It shows as a tiny light spot. In less than twenty minutes Ariane 5 has reached the geostationary transfer orbit. Ariane Space has now fulfilled its task and the constructors of the satellites take over the implementing of the instruments.

The long waiting time was worth it. The spectacle in the sky gave us goose bumps.

And the remaining traces of the rockets passage have formed wonderful cloud pictures.



Annette and Terry invited us for a scrumptious dinner in a Moroccan restaurant, where we celebrated the impeccable launch with a tajine à l'agneau and vegetable couscous.

Friday, February 8. Alex returns the car. Later on we help Annette and Terry to move *Kaisosi* alongside the service boat where we have been, since the second service boat is supposed to arrive and wants its place. So, we cast off, circle slowly until *Kaisosi* is securely moored and go along side her for our last night in Degrad des Cannes.

Alex takes one of the bikes from the locker and pedals to the Customs office for our papers. But on Friday, they close before midday and we decide to leave tomorrow even without the papers.

Annette invites us for dinner. They really spoiled us.

Saturday, February 9. We cast off as planned at 8 AM. The tide has begun falling a while ago and the water flows at a scary pace. Casting off proves rather difficult.

However, after a few anxious minutes we succeed with a small scratch from our anchor at *Kaisosi's* bow. We are terribly embarrassed.

With the current we motor out to the open water and head toward the Iles du Salut near Kourou.

Alex catches a beautiful fish on the way. After a nice day of peaceful sailing we drop anchor in the Baie du Cocotier of the Ile Royale. We enjoy a delicious fish dinner and marvel at the incredible sky.



During the night our sleep is disturbed, since wind and current move *Silmaril* so close to a large yellow buoy that it keeps bumping against the hull.

Sunday, February 10. Very early in the morning, unnerved we make fast on the buoy. We understand that it belongs to the police, but we tied the line through the ring and brought it back on deck, so we can leave in a few minutes.

Toward evening we put the dinghy in the water and go for a short stroll. A number of animals surprise us.

Iguanas run away from us, eye us inquisitively before they disappear into the water.

Agoutis are searching food under the palm trees.



The cute animals are vegetarians. They eat fruit, nuts, leaves, stalks and roots. They hold whatever they find between their paws to eat it.



They have very strong teeth.
We come across numerous
cracked and hollowed
coconuts.

The haughty rooster crowed
already early in the morning.



He runs after his harem and keeps exercising his
voice avidly. Not far from him, a heron struts near the
water.



Three small monkeys run
wild in the branches of a
nearby tree.
The animals are not very shy.
They only run when we get
closer than a few meters. We
can observe them really well.

We climb to the top of the
island, have a beer in the
restaurant and enjoy the nice view over the bay.



Silmaril is still tied to the police buoy unchallenged.

In the night wind and current push us again too close to it. We get up and push it away once in a while or let it tap on the hull.

Monday, February 11. The Army arrives in a fast boat and makes signs to leave the yellow buoy at once. We drop the anchor again.

Today we walk around the entire island and visit the remains of the original buildings. The French used the group of islands for their prisons until 1951. Henri Charrière's autobiographical novel *Papillon* made the place famous worldwide. Some buildings are still in use, others crumbled and only overgrown walls are visible. The cells where the prisoners were housed and the church are restored as an open-air museum. It is a depressing place. I don't want to imagine what happened here.

The walk on the old roads lets me forget the gruesome places.

Three macaws fly close by. They screech so loudly our ears hurt. They are too fast for good pictures.



Agoutis are searching for food everywhere, scores of birds racket about in the trees. Thousands of coconuts lie on the paths and in the forest, cracked ones, green and dry ones and sprouting ones. We reserve a table at the restaurant for tonight. It has been raining on and off all day. But we will risk it. Back on *Silmaril* we change, take a torch and a headlamp along and take again the dinghy to the plastic landing pontoon on shore.



The food is good, the waitress friendly and it keeps on raining. The way back to the dinghy is not a problem. We only encounter very large toads. They sit in the middle of our path and stare at us unmoving. Unfortunately the camera is on the boat. They are beautiful. Alex gives them a wide berth! We succeed in crawling to the dinghy on all fours on the jerky pontoon and the short trip back to the boat is uneventful despite the darkness and the driving rain. As soon as we are on the boat we take off our drenched clothes. Suddenly there is a lot of wind. Alex checks the plotter to see where we are floating. What a shock! The anchor must have dragged; we are far too close to the rocky shore. Stark naked we hurry on deck, plug in the hand-held flood light, start the engine and begin a very hectic maneuver: I steer full throttle toward the lights of the pier, Alex heaves up the anchor and, miraculously, he manages, we see the yellow buoy ahead of us, I drive towards it and Alex succeeds in grabbing the ring at the first go. *Silmaril* is fast! Alex frees the anchor of a huge palm leaf. This must have been the cause of the dragging. We dry off weak-kneed but overjoyed with the outcome and the smooth maneuver, we sit for a short while and imagine if someone had observed us, what a spectacle! Never mind, it was a close shave and we sleep peacefully despite the knocking of the buoy.

Tuesday, February 12.

Alex takes a picture of last night's track on the plotter. *Silmaril* was swinging a few times with the strong wind very close to the shallow shore, then the track shows the movement straight toward the lights on the pier, the short backward movement in front of the large boat on a buoy and the right-angle turn toward the yellow buoy.



And there is the Army again. We cast off and drive to the other

island, St. Joseph. There are grey buoys there, which we might be allowed to use. We would like to visit this island as well. But no luck. A very aggressive Frenchman arrives on a large catamaran and abuses us: this is his buoy; we better go where we come from!

That is it; we clear *Silmaril* and start on our trip to Trinidad immediately.

I take a last picture of the "bay of fright and adversity" with the plastic pontoon we used as dinghy dock and we are soon on the open water running the engine.



The sky is cloudy and suddenly we are enveloped in dense mist and sudden pelting rain, but no wind. We keep on motoring. But the Equatorial Current adds a good four knots to our boat speed and we sail with 9.1 knots toward Trinidad.

Rain is falling on and off during the night, the wind increases and Alex rolls out the genoa while I sleep for a few hours.

**Wednesday to Friday,
February 13 to 16.**

Squalls surround us all day, but no one really gets us. They move more to the southeast and are faster than we are. So we escape the rain, but profit from the steady wind they bring along. We take three-hour turns at the helm scanning the water for ships and the sky for squalls. So far the trip is easy. *Silmaril* runs smoothly with the swift current and little waves.



The morning sun conjures up beautifully warm colors in the sky. We run under genoa and for the first time with hoisted storm sail. We want to find out whether it helps to stabilize the rolling movement of the boat without hoisting the main sail.

We are satisfied with the result and will keep on using it in similar weather conditions. In the night to the 15th we are approaching the oilrigs off Trinidad. They stand in the black water covered in bright lights like Christmas trees, an impressive sight. The lights of Tobago far off cast a bell-like shine in the sky above the island. I am asleep while Alex sights "clown boats", white wooden boats flashing red and green lights at the same time. They must be fishing boats. Certainly no nautical standard!



Early morning brings a weird experience. We pass a tanker, bow pointing south but making slow progress westwards. He must have engine problems. The AIS information says: not under command! Soon it is time to take down the French courtesy flag. But we do not have the one for Trinidad. What to do? Alex has an old pair of red bathing trunks. They will have to be sacrificed. With bits and pieces of black and white ribbon I sew an acceptable version that we can safely hoist. I took me hours while we tugged along the north coast of Trinidad.



Passed "The Hat" we entered the approach to the Marina at Chaguaramas, close to the capital, Port of Spain. Hundreds of ships and boats are moored here, way out in the bay at anchor or in the various marinas and boat yards. There are tankers, cargos, tug boats, fishing boats and innumerable sailboats and motor yachts.

The marina with the customs pontoon is all the way at the back of the bay and we slowly make a way through the huge area covered with boats. We make fast at one of the hammerheads to go look for the customs office. It is still early afternoon and we are anxious to get the tedious paperwork done as soon as possible. We know that it may take hours!

On our search for TT dollars we meet a young sailor who suggests we go to the Tropical Marine, a small place run by people with Dutch ancestors. And sure enough, we get a very sheltered place next to Elsa and Jaap, a Dutch couple on their way to Panama.

The owner of the marina also has a small fishing company. For the special Friday dinner he offers "Bake and Shark", a large bun with grilled shark served with coleslaw if you want. The sharks are prepared for the meal right in front of our boat.



We profit from the opportunity to eat shark for the first time and in the welcoming company of an entire table of very friendly Dutch sailors.

Saturday to Sunday, February 17 to 24. Raymond and Anne, our dear friends from Norway have arrived by plane. They stay with Per and Elizabeth on *Oda* at first and move to *Silmaril* after a few days. We enjoy having them on board and doing some sightseeing with them.

We rent a car and drive to the bamboo jungle behind Port of Spain. Huge bamboo clusters reach way up above our heads into the sky. The stems are thicker than my arm!



In a fishing village with an extensive beach we find the frustration of the inhabitants spelt out in touching fashion:



In a small park we wonder at the size and shape of primeval trees, all carrying orchids, lichens and other plants growing on their branches.



**Born to fish . . .
Forced to work**

The little boat has an awning, it probably has to drive tourists around in order to make a living and would so much love to be a fishing boat!

Anne returns to her job on a huge Norwegian service ship. Raymond remains with us to sail up to Grenada. We work on the boat with his help. Alex and Raymond find a good way to fix the antenna that runs along the entire length of *Silmaril* below the wooden guardrail with screw-on cable ties. Alex has to work from the deck on his knees and bent over. He drops the screwdriver, but is confident to retrieve it with our very strong magnet. Unfortunately he also drops that!

Raymond dives and finds three things: the screwdriver, the magnet and a full can of polishing liquid! How lucky can you get!! That is typically Alex!

Working on the leaking water system, the two destroy their glasses! We drive to Westmall in Port of Spain to order new ones.

They will be ready on Friday.



We take advantage of the rental car and drive to an Indian burial temple, where they burn their corpses. It is built on pillars out in the water, since the government did not allow such a thing on land. We can only make out the silhouette against the cloudy sky.

Toward 4 P.M. we drive back to the bird sanctuary in the Caroni River to go on a tour through the swamps.

The family business is obviously doing very well.

We go aboard a flat-bottom boat with loads of other tourists and drive slowly through the narrow passages of the swamp toward more open water, where the scarlet ibises will fly to their home nesting for the night.



Our driver comments on the various mangroves, points out the tree snakes and the crabs that scuttle around the trunks as we approach and the few ibises quite far away in the trees. Only the termite nests on the trees and one ibis are really worth a picture.



We are a bit disappointed. We have seen such black lumps many times before and one scarlet ibis was searching for food in Cayenne. Crabs are around everywhere by the million and Alex is afraid of snakes! But what we experience once out of the narrow channels on the wide expanse across from the nesting trees of the ibises is simply not to be put in words.

The birds arrive in flocks, some huge, some small, they fly over the water in front of our boat and settle in the trees. They keep coming for half an hour until the light fades. Alex takes dozens of pictures.



Although Alex is shooting with the telephoto lens (we call it the "bird canon"), the individual birds are still rather small. But the picture shows scarlet adults and brown youngsters. Their long feet and curved beaks can be made out in some of them. The birds sleep in those trees and take off again around 4 A.M. to go feed further out in the swamps.



Words cannot describe our enchantment with this incredible spectacle. The full moon is already high up in the sky when we return to the landing and home to *Silmaril*.



Monday, February 25.

Elsa, Jaap and two other Dutch sailors from the pontoon have received a whole fish and invite us to share it with them with a regular full-moon grill party right in front of our boats.

Both our Cobb grills are in action to cope with all that fish.

We eat and drink for a long time and enjoy a very peaceful happy time.

Tomorrow we will sail *Silmaril* to Scotland Bay just a few miles north of Chaguaramas to relax away from the bustle of the harbor until the boys' glasses are ready on Friday.



Tuesday to Thursday, February 26 to 28. Raymond takes us out of the harbor into the channel between Trinidad and Monos Island, where we meet crazy winds from all directions in gusts or total calm. But we keep sailing. Alex and I learn a lot from Raymond's way of handling *Silmaril*, although we will stick to our own tested methods maybe with small variations.

In the bay a motorboat is moored close to the shore and has its radio going full blast. There is no escape, the sound carries over the water very far. They leave in the evening thank goodness and restore the bay to its natural peace and quiet.

The inflatable bottom of our dinghy is losing air.



Raymond is looking for the leak. The tiny hole is right in a seam and is difficult to close. We still use the dinghy and take a short trip to the small beach.

A swing hangs from a tree branch, a small grill is stuck in a forked branch. People must come here regularly, fishermen and day-trippers.

Even an outhouse stands a short distance in the trees.

The trash is unbelievable. Plastic everywhere. My heart aches to see such beautiful places covered with garbage.

We take a short stroll into the forest and hear one of the loudest voices around.



Sure enough, the screeches of those two macaws



drown the voices of all the other birds.

Late at night we sit in the cockpit. All of a sudden we hear a swooshing sound right next to the boat. We think that these must be black skimmers (*rynchops niger*), birds that feed flying low over smooth water and catch small animals with the tip of their lower mandible skimming the surface, as we read about them in our nature guide on the birds of Trinidad and Tobago. I get the camera, point it in the direction of the swooshing sound in the darkness and keep clicking.



And the pictures reveal bats dragging their feet over the water full of tiny fish!



The pictures are not great, but these creatures are definitely not black skimmers. I could not find them in my bird book, no wonder. Despite the garbage the place spoiled us with its natural beauty and protected water and we loved it.

We return after three days and a last dinghy tour to the Tropical Marine in Chaguaramas. Time flies. Alex and Raymond get their glasses, meanwhile I have my hair cut and buy a bikini, and then we do some minor work, go provision shopping, fill water and on

Saturday, March 2 we leave Chaguaramas and sail along the northern coast of Trinidad on our way to Grenada.

In La Vache Bay we anchor very close to the tiny northern beach. For the sake of a peaceful night's sleep Raymond brings out the stern anchor with the dinghy.



We are all alone. Only a faint light at the other beach suggests that some people are spending the weekend here. All is quiet, the small waves and the light breeze sing us their lullaby.

Sunday, March 3. We are up before 6 weighing both anchors and starting at 7 sharp. After a short time sailing along the northern coast, we decide to head directly to Tobago. Wind and current should be favorable. The trip is rough, however, but with Raymond's expert trim and the occasional help of the engine, we manage the crossing in about eight hours and drop anchor in Mt. Irvine Bay among some other boats.

Monday, March 4. We take a taxi to Scarborough to register with Customs. The officer does not want to give us the papers; we are supposed to go to Charlotteville as our clearance papers from Trinidad suggest. Well, we wander through this crazy town full of cars and people and music in the narrow streets and return by taxi. On our way we see all kinds of dwellings from the most modern to the most decrepit.



Back on *Silmatil* we take the dinghy and drive to a tiny beach just around the corner of rocky point at the north end of the bay. The outing develops into a little disaster. When we are all three out of the dinghy and near the beach in the very narrow entrance, the waves increase and push us toward the rocky beach. We fight to keep the dinghy well clear, but are all three thrown onto the submerged rocks. Alex has scratches on his back, Raymond on both legs and I have a pretty nasty cut on my foot. With the next series of smaller waves we all three crawl into the dinghy in haste, Raymond starts the engine and we escape from the wave trap without further trouble. What a stupid thing to do. I can still feel the panic in my bones. Water has such incredible force.

Tuesday, March 5. Next stop is Parlatuvier Bay. Shortly before our arrival a large fish is on the hook. It is a beautiful Mahi-mahi. Its lemon color stays for quite some time, which gives me time to take pictures and measure it in its splendor. It is almost three feet long from mouth to tailfins.



Alex cleans it and Raymond cuts the filets on the fender plank. The filets go into the fridge, the carcass goes back into the water, and food for whatever will eat it.



We anchor in the small bay behind the fishing boats rather close to the rocks. Alex and Raymond go for a swim with snorkel and goggles, I remain on board and watch the fishermen return with their boats toward evening, everyone to his particular buoy.

On the near cliff a flush of water squirts through a hidden hole forced through it by the occasional tall wave on the other side!



The small fishing village with its colorful houses and huts lies on a shallow sandy beach surrounded by rather high mountains, all covered by dense forest. Most of the inhabitants are fishermen.



At dusk all the buoys are occupied and the fish brought on shore.

A group of men haul in a large net, I cannot make out whether there are fish in it at all. Small fish are usually caught for bait.

We have mahi-mahi filet, boiled potatoes and green salad for dinner. Red wine in a carton from Chile is not at all bad! We sit and talk; evenings are peaceful in protected bays.

Wednesday, March 6.

The trip to Charlotteville takes only two hours, but the reaction to Raymond's "stand by to back" is a bit slow! In Charlotteville we drop anchor in about 35ft of water among other sailboats behind the fishing vessels. The entire bay is rather deep here. The forest behind the little town is dotted with splotches of red crowns of trees in flower. They are called "immortelle" here. We have seen them on all the islands since Cayenne. We spy the boat of the nice young sailors who came to tell us where to anchor back in Mt. Irvine Bay. Their boat is very peculiar, a catamaran with two masts, but only one forestay, actually more like two monohulls tied together with ropes.



Raymond has seen such a boat before. To us it is new and we do not know the name of such a construction.

Registration is nerve-racking and a real trial of patience. The officer is very aggressive. He accuses us of delayed paperwork. Alex responds in kind: "we have a sailboat, we cannot fly". The problem is eventually solved when the man deigns to call Scarborough to make sure we had been there and were granted to take our time coming up here. Well, the heated exchange costs us over an hour waiting in an office with no other people to be served!

The gorgeous colors of the evening sky sooth our tempers and we have mahi-mahi filet for the second time. We stay for another day, explore the little village and the nearby beach. In the evening there is just a light meal of some cheese, olives and crackers before we turn in very early. We will sleep for a few hours and start around midnight in order to arrive in Grenada in the daytime.



The parasailor is on deck, all the necessary lines in place, so we can hoist it as soon as we have enough light and favorable winds.

Friday, March 8. Shortly after midnight we are up and getting ready to go. It is pitch black, the surrounding boats are hardly outlined. Raymond already hoists the main sail while Alex is still fiddling with the anchor. There is very little wind and my nerves are not really overtaxed. We motor into the dark night on our way to Grenada.

Around 7:30 we hoist the parasailor. It pulls us with steady speed and little movement of the boat for many hours toward our destination, the Le Phare Bleu Marina.

During the day the sun is very hot, but under the bimini it is not uncomfortable to catch a few hours of sleep in the shade.



Suddenly we hear a funny sound in the pantry, something between whistling and spurting. And Alex detects a leak in a plastic valve squirting a fine jet of water into the bilge. He starts to repair the damage, but Raymond offers to take over. He is a professional plumber and feels at ease with all sorts of water systems in the tightest places! He rips the plastic valve off the hose with brute force and installs a spare metal one in no time.

Soon the bilge is dry again and we, Raymond and I, relax under the bimini and the improvised sun sail, while Alex works on the logbook.



We arrive at Le Phare Bleu around 4 P.M. A dinghy meets us spontaneously and we make fast alongside the floating pontoon on the outer pier.

The place is truly one of a kind. Dieter and Jana, the Swiss owners and managers have created an enchanting little resort in the small bay between two tiny sand beaches.

The old refurbished Swedish fire ship *Västra Banken* houses the toilets and the showers for the sailors. There is also an excellent restaurant on the first floor with a terrace for drinks one more ladder up, a lounge with library and rental videos, the marina office and accommodations for the staff.

Looking for a special vacation on the south coast of Grenada in one of their bungalows?



Check their website: <http://www.lepharebleu.com>

Saturday, March 9. Today is Raymond's last day with us. Alex has a bad pain in the back. He lies down for most of the day, that's the way he can cope. He still gets up for the dinner and live concert with Dieter on the keyboard and Kay's voice. But before our food arrives he is in agony and Jana sends us to the hospital. Alex suffers hellish pains, but they soon give him strong medication and suggest keeping him for the night. The emergency doctor believes that kidney stones cause the pain. Alex is still convinced it is his disk hernia. The medication puts him asleep and I return to the marina. I cannot stay with him, the key to *Silmaril's* companionway door is in my pocket and Raymond must take a taxi to the airport around 5 A.M.

Back in the marina, Dieter and Kay are still going strong playing really good jazz.



Raymond and I enjoy the performance immensely knowing that Alex is fast asleep and carefully watched.

Sunday to Friday, March 10 to 22. Raymond left at 5 A.M. and I called the hospital and received good news: Alex slept the whole night and has almost no pain. I take a taxi and go to see him. I stay until next day; a second bed in his room is made for me. We discuss the cause of the pain and cannot decide between back problem and kidney stones. In any case, Alex is a lot better and we return to *Silmaril*.

The following days are filled with work, but Alex is still taking it easy. We also make a few trips to St. George's.

Every so often we catch an unconventional ride for the long, steep and hot way to the bus station.



On the main road minibuses come along regularly. They take us downtown for a small fee and a break-neck ride: their drivers enjoy speed and the streets are narrow, steep and busy.

St. George's is a very lively city. Cruise ships arrive here and unload thousands of tourists. In the afternoon the schools close and great numbers of pupils in uniforms fill the sidewalks and some stores. Many well-dressed people go home from their jobs.



We observed all that traffic from the terrace of the "Schnitzelhaus", a lovely little restaurant on the first floor of an old building with a view over the Carenage. A very nice German couple runs the establishment, she is the cook and looks like it and he is at the bar and also looks like it. We had great fun eating their homemade and organic food and drinking their draft beer.

In the marina lots of things went on during these days.

Peter comes along in his self-made beautiful little sailboat . . .

Doc Adams, the chiropractor in the marina, and Tommy give a concert in the Pool Bar Restaurant . . .



. . . and during the "happy hour" in the bar we hear about the sinking of *Raindancer*. The story is unbelievable. The beautiful old wooden sailboat had its permanent place here in the marina.

It took some people to the Dinghy concert in February that Dieter organizes a few times a year (google Dinghy Concert for pictures). The young German couple, Arlette and Michael and their four-months old son Leonard were among them. On their way back to the marina the helmsman missed the buoyed channel through the reef and ran aground. A number of private dinghies went out in the night to rescue the thirteen people on board. All went well, despite the awkward position and the jerky movements of *Raindancer* with the tall waves. Next morning, Dieter tried to haul the boat away from the reef with his tugboat, but to no avail. *Raindancer* was too damaged and sank. When we arrived on March 8, we passed the boat at anchor with the salvage crew on board who were still diving for reusable goods. They only left around March 20.



Arlette and Michael, our neighbors on their *Nieves II* on the same pontoon, told us that they took a good while to cope with the memories. Their boat is for sale now.

Little Leonard visits us from time to time, when people interested in buying are on *Nieves II*. He is a very quiet little boy, he looks around in our cockpit or he sleeps peacefully.



He is now five months old and has seen so much already. He is also with us at the Steel Pan Jamboree. Arlette covers his ears because of the incredible volume or takes him farther away from the bands.

Alex is taking pictures and Michael and I are talking to Dieter, who had installed the electronics for one of the bands.



During our time in Le Phare Bleu, two regattas arrive to stay over night.

On **March 23**, the Medi-Voile comes to the marina. Their arrival is pure harbor cinema. We watch and comment their maneuvers with glee. It is incredible how clumsily some of the crew handle the dock lines. They obviously are guests on a fun outing rather than a serious regatta.

One of the boats even ran onto the reef next to the marina and had to be rescued, but suffered no real damage fortunately.



In the evening all 26 boats are moored. There are usually only *Nieves II* and *Silmaril* on this pontoon. The large Catamaran hides most of *Silmaril*. Only the tiny red speck, the Swiss flag, can be seen.



Next morning they all leave again. One after the other is heading for the starting point.

On **March 27**, we suddenly sight a boat on the reef, where *Raindancer* had run aground.

Alex runs for the camera with the large telephoto lens, our "bird canon". I get the binoculars. We can hardly believe our eyes, but no doubt, this boat lies on the reef. We spy the Swiss flag on it and wonder!

The mayday call is heard in the marina and Dieter speeds with his powerful dinghy to the stranded boat. He catches a halyard (a line running from the top of the mast) from one of the crew, attaches it to his dinghy and pulls full throttle. At the first attempt, the line breaks, as he later on explains. But with the second try, he succeeds in heeling the boat until it floats. Ebb tide has only just begun, so there is still enough water for the rescue.



He is able to pull it away from the rocks. It is not the first and certainly not the last boat he will get off the reef. Dieter is a real wizard.



The boat arrives in the marina. It is Willi Leu, a Swiss and two crew on *Mr. Blues*, who are on their last leg of ARC World 2012/2013. In the marina on top of everything, he catches a mooring line. But Alex and Michael succeed in freeing the propeller, thrilling harbor cinema again!

Safely moored, Alex helps Willi to make sure that there is no water entering. Relieved they announce: "No water, all dry." Michael checks the damage, part of the rudder is missing and there are fine cracks along the top of the keel. Michael gets putty from his store on board and applies it, just in case.

Willi will only have to repair the rudder and will be ready to leave again to his great relief.

The shock of the mishap is slowly abolished with detailed discussions and beer during the "happy hour".

On **Sunday, March 7**, we fetch Rico, our friend and landlord from Untersiggenthal, at the airport. He will sail with us for the next three weeks.

We will leave here only on Wednesday, since we want to see the arrival of the *Oyster* Regatta on Tuesday.

So, a tour around the island per taxi is planned for tomorrow.

Monday, March 8. Rock is our driver. He is very knowledgeable, talks about history, places, plants, animals and answers our many questions.

First we visit the nutmeg factory in Gouyave on the west coast. The harvest of the entire island is here prepared for export.



The fruit hang on the tree like small yellow balls.

The farmers pick the ripe fruit up from the ground, take off the pulp and bring the seed to the factory. The pulp is used for syrup and preserve.



The red mace covers the dark seed. The whole thing is carefully dried . . .



. . . the mace removed and the seed cracked open in machines making an incredible racket.

The mace is also used as spice.



Women separate the cracked outer shell from the actual nut by hand and sort them into buckets of different qualities. They are paid by the weight. Grenadian nutmeg is sent out to many countries.

Hurricane Ivan destroyed a large number of nutmeg trees in 2004. They say that the production is slowly recovering.

We continue along the coast and catch glimpses of blue water and the distant Grenadines.



Grenada is also famous for its chocolate. We visit the Belmont Estate, a former 17th century plantation, where it is produced from organic cocoa grown on the estate.

The ripe cocoa pods are yellow, red and black ones are unripe.

The pod contains the slimy white sweet fruit flesh with dozens of seeds embedded in it.

We taste the fruit flesh, but are not advised to bite on the beans, they are very bitter.



The content of the pods is fermented, the fruit flesh liquefies in the process and the beans are ready to be dried.

The old construction of the drying facility is still partially in working order. But over part of it, the new sheds were built, permanently covered to shelter the beans from rain.

The dry beans are polished, today no longer with bare feet, but with machines.

After the interesting tour we head for the restaurant where a scrumptious lunch is prepared for the visitors.



The Creole cook surprises us with a cocoa drink for starters, unknown tubers with fish, chicken or goat à la Créole for the main dishes and a choice of sweets for desert. We have a feast.

Our next stop is the traditional River Antoine Rum Distillery.



The waterwheel drives the machine that crushes the sugarcane.



Three men work feeding the press. The juice is collected below in a stone basin and runs through pipes into large vats to be boiled down to syrup over a fire fed with wood and the dried leftovers of the press, called "bagasse".



The cold syrup is filled into tanks where it ferments spontaneously. The fermented liquid is then distilled.



Nothing is wasted, the "bagasse" is used as fuel for the fire, as mentioned, or applied as fertilizer. The distillery produces two kinds of rum, 72%, 43% and a rum punch. I only taste the weaker kind and this already burns my mouth. The strong one cannot be taken into an airplane!



Once more we get out of the taxi and stroll through the garden at the Annandale Waterfalls. A wealth of flowers catches our eyes:

. . . the impressive crab claw heliconia . . .



. . . the red ginger lily . . .



. . . the datura its pink set off by blue-black large leaves of some sort. . .



. . . and others I cannot name.

Down at the waterfall we reach an enchanted place.



Two young people in their Sunday finery eat lunch on the boulders. She left her shoes on more level ground.



Back on the boat, Rico spoils us with spaghetti Bolognese and mushrooms on a green salad. Delicious.

Tuesday, April 9. During the day the *Oyster* regatta will arrive. We are getting ready to leave Le Phare Bleu early tomorrow morning while we are anxiously waiting for the first boats. There are some large ones among them, 72ft. beauties.

Quite a number of the participants take a mooring buoy outside the marina; others come in and fill the pontoons.



Silmaril is hiding behind the one with the hoisted main sail.

Dieter entertains his guests with live music. The steel pan band "The Wizards" is installed on his tug boat *Calico* and play with unparalleled energy while Dieter drives around in the marina and out to the mooring buoys to everybody's great pleasure.

He finally drops anchor behind the fire ship and the band keeps on playing for a while.



We spend the last evening in Le Phare Bleu eating out with Arlette, Michael and little Leonard. The local restaurant "The Little Dipper", run by Rock's wife, serves us the Grenadians' favored meal, "oildong" as a special request. The food requires some getting used to. The various tubers, the breadfruit, the plantain and the vegetable-coco sauce are very good, but the so-called dumplings are large tough dry lumps of a mixture of boiled flour and water with no particular taste. We still enjoyed learning about the renowned "oildong".

Tomorrow morning, the secretary will be at the office early and we will pay and leave before the host of regatta boats.

More about our sailing with Rico in my next report.