

GO

THE CARIBBEAN IS WAITING FOR YOU

BY KIM-MARIE EVANS



Kim-Marie making sure the water is just right in St. Lucia • Prince Charles on his recent visit to Antigua



Look Before Book

Hurricanes Irma, José and Maria certainly battered the Caribbean. But there are plenty of islands that are open for business and are depending on your tourism dollars

Over the last few months, I've visited several Caribbean Islands, and the question I get asked more often than "Who is watching your children?" is "Are the islands really okay after the hurricanes?"

The answer is that the vast majority of the islands are open for business. The Caribbean covers an area of over 1 million square miles. That's almost one third of the entire United States. There are islands that are still recovering, and some may take a long time, but the media

has left many travelers with the impression that the entire Caribbean has been devastated. Not only is this misleading, it's damaging. The region supports more than 2.4 million tourism-related jobs and when travelers stay away unnecessarily, those economies suffer.

On a recent visit to Antigua to review the recently upgraded Curtain Bluff Resort, there was another well-known guest on the island, Prince Charles. *The Daily Mail* reported that the Prince was "cheering up those in the hurricane

LEFT: CONTRIBUTED; PRINCE CHARLES BY GETTY IMAGES/CHRIS JACKSON; MAP: TRAVELWEEKLY.COM



“THE BEST WAY TO HELP THE CARIBBEAN IS TO VISIT THE CARIBBEAN.”

above: Curtain Bluff is ready for you; right: Sarah Greaves-Gabbadon; below: How St. Lucians commute to work; bottom: Antigua



ravaged nation.” The story left the impression that Antigua was seriously damaged. Laying under a palm tree with nary a coconut out of place, I realized how misleading this was. Antigua’s sister island Barbuda, however, was almost entirely destroyed. Curtain Bluff recently

donated \$100,000 to aid in the rebuilding of the tiny island.

For a little insight, we spoke to travel writer and Caribbean expert Sarah Greaves-Gabbadon. She tells us, “It will likely be months before the hardest hit islands like Barbuda, Puerto Rico and some of the Virgin Islands will be ready for visitors. But from the Bahamas to Tobago, the Cayman Islands to St. Lucia, there’s still a lot of Caribbean to go around. The best way to help the Caribbean is to visit the Caribbean.”

While there are about half the usual number of available guest rooms on the British Virgin Islands, the BVI’s (along with St. Barths, St. Thomas and St. Maarten) will still host the Caribbean Regattas. Some smaller properties like Treasure Island and Sebastian’s were set to open this winter, but there has been no reopening date set for the Bitter End Yacht Club.

Yacht charter companies are also back in business. The Moorings, Marine Max Vacations and Festiva Sailing all reopened in December.

So pack your swim trunks, book your flight and know that you’ll be doing a good deed, all while getting a tan and enjoying a mai tai.

TOP: CONTRIBUTED BY CURTAINBLUFF; ALL OTHERS: KIM-MARIE EVANS

WHAT'S IN YOUR YARD?



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