

A wanderlust cure in this self-imposed hegira

Story and photos
By BETTIE CANNON

Barboating in the Virgin Islands is not a nude encounter at sea. It's a do-it-yourself cruise for a week or two in the water of your choice in a rented boat.

The only things missing are a skipper and crew and whatever clothes that can be spared. Everything else is furnished by the rent-a-yacht people — anchors, sails, dinghy, safety equipment, snorkel gear, linens, and food and drinks.

You furnish the captain, crew and sailing expertise. If you are a sailor with hands-on knowledge of big boat handling or know one who will take you along, start packing the duff. But think again if experience is limited to day sailing a Sunfish on Walnut Lake or

racing a Windsurfer on Cass.

Charter agents get nervous if a person can't maneuver a 30-51-foot craft (they're in unfamiliar waters. They'll ask if you can approach a dock under power or sail and whether you can leave the dock intact.

There will be charts to read and you should be able to pilot across reefs in the sun. Knowing how to anchor in all kinds of ground and in all kinds of sea is a handy skill, as are radio operation and first aid.

When renting a yacht, the agent will ask for documented sailing experience. Don't fake it. He will, and should, insist on hiring a captain if his suspicions are aroused by your ignorance of a self-furling jib's purpose.

When qualifications have been satisfactorily met, the next step is choosing

the destination. You choose the Virgin Islands for swimming in the aqua/ tender Caribbean during the morning, snorkeling, sunning, or shopping in the afternoon, barbecuing at sunset, and sleeping under the stars at night.

There are many boats to choose from and the soft-shouldered isles are only a morning's sail from each other. The storied trade winds blow all year at a steady pace and the temperature hovers at 75 or 80 degrees. And, the cruising ground is protected from the heavy swells coming down the Atlantic from the north.

WHEN TO GO? Any chance which surfaces, some say. For novices, the best bet may be spring and summer when winds are gentle, 10-18 knots, and harbors less crowded. The price is

right, too. You save \$220 to \$350 per week off season, which runs April through November.

Three years ago, on my first voyage, I sailed with husband Chuck, and friends, Ed and Eleanor Mooney of West Bloomfield.

We caught the winds, sometimes gusting to 35 knots, and chop every morning for four days, until we were anchored, happy to be warm and dry in some protected cove. Now we all carry four weather gear, remembering that first experience.

Twenty charter agents operate out of the Virgin Islands, making it the largest industry there. The following three companies, in our experience, provide safe, well-maintained boats and provide reassuring services for the first time charterer:

• **CARIBBEAN YACHT** Charter, Inc., a long taxi ride from Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, is small enough for personal attention and big enough to have a fleet of 19 Morgan Out Islanders. The taxi ride shows the backside of the island, which you miss staying in town, shopping and dining at tourist spots.

We rented a 36-foot Morgan, Kona Kai, with split cabin and two heads. Kona Kai means big wind, which for us was a small prophecy. Each couple had a roomy cabin, but the arrangement sleeps six comfortably.

The center cabin galley accommodates the early morning rush when some want to sleep and some want hot coffee. There is plenty of seating room in the cockpit and a bimini top is furnished.

Like all boats rented by major agents, these boats have plenty of tank space for fuel, for drinking and showering water. Toileto space is adequate and ice is available on all large islands.

• **CARIBBEAN SAILING** Yachts, Ltd., is the biggest charter agent in the area. Its fleet of 60, 33-44-footers, especially designed and built by CSY, is Tortola-based.

Beginning a cruise in the center of the island chain at Tortola, instead of off St. Thomas at the far eastern end, is a time-saver for a seven-day cruise. Whether you pick up your boat on St. Thomas or Tortola, there are direct routes to St. Thomas from Detroit on most major airlines.

You can stay in Charlotte Amalie for a day or two and you can taxi out to the boat on the assigned day. Or you can fly out of Charlotte Amalie in a pontoon boat on arrival day.

Board the sea-plane downtown on the waterfront in Charlotte Amalie. The charter agent picks you up in Roadtown, Tortola, for the ride to your boat, which sails out the same day.

THE MOORINGS, Ltd., provides a complete resort service on Tortola for their customers. You fly into Roadtown

Traverse City is site of sailing seminar

Sailboats already have made their appearances on the Detroit River and inland lakes located about, signaling the opening of the sailing season in lower Michigan.

For people anxious to brush up or improve their sailing skills, or to charter a skippered cruise, "Sail Plan '79" may be of interest.

The symposium will include all aspects of sailing and techniques for beginners as well as the experienced. It will be held May 4-6 at the Park Place Motor Inn in Traverse City, with accommodations available at the hotel and local affiliated campgrounds.

The weekend will combine a party Friday night with a film presentation, lecture series Saturday and Sunday, banquet Saturday night, exhibits and racing presentation Sunday afternoon. Fees range from \$45 to \$60 for the full program, and tickets may be purchased for individual activities.

early and swim in their pool, play tennis, dine in the dockside restaurant and watch as your boat is checked out and provisions.

The Moorings has Morgans and Gulfstar 37s and 50s, all rigged for easy cock-pit handling. Some cruising groups return to the Mooring's eight-acre complex mid-cruise to have a hot shower, a game of tennis and to get their land legs before starting out again.

BAREBOATING DOESN'T mean bare cupboards. For a fee, agents fill your larder and stock whatever liquids you order. CYC provides a looseleaf notebook with all menus written out and food stored in order of use.

Provisions are plentiful. The Moorings once gave us so much food we gave it away to a man who had run away from home and job and was sailing the Caribbean single-handedly.

Charters include full or split provisioning plans. You may prefer to buy your own food, but cruise once or twice to get to know the territory beforehand. Some experienced bareboaters bring food from home.

The tab for full provisioning (three

meals) per person, per day is from \$9.75 to \$12; \$7.75 to \$10 per person per day will give you breakfast, lunch and snacks.

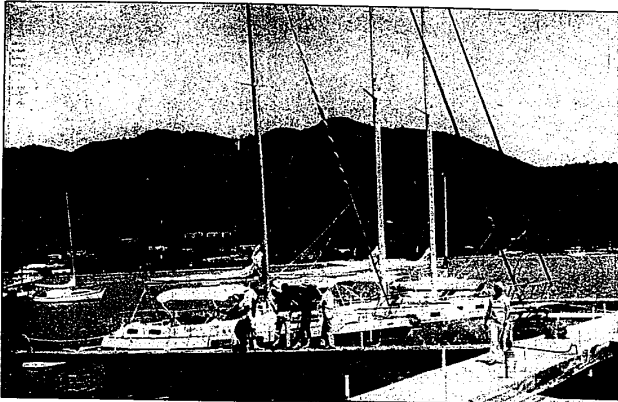
Dinner is on your own. You may choose the Peter Island Yacht Club, where \$100 will get you dinner for four and no wine. Jackets and a ties are required.

Or choose Fox's on Shore. Van Dyke where you dinghy into just in your cut-offs and where there are no doors to post "you must wear a shirt and shoes" signs.

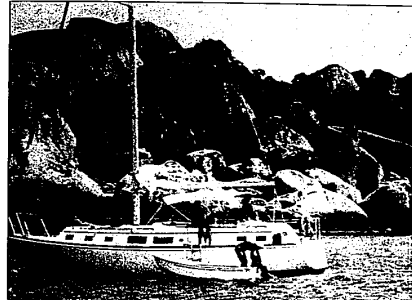
Dinner is served outdoors on wooden tables and dancing is done on sandy floors. The cook is an independent soul who will cook your dinner to order, if the right fish can be caught that day and if there are enough people to make it worth her while.

Barboating is an encounter at sea and it can be anything you make it. First, you must have seven days, two or three weeks to spare. Then charter a boat.

If you've been messing about in boats for a long time and still feel unsure — go ahead and hire a skipper. Or be your own. Anyway you do it, do it. The Virgin Islands are too good to miss.



At the Moorings, yacht charterers ready their craft for the cruise from Tortola.



Soft-shouldered islands provide constant and scenic sights over the rail.

TRAVEL LOG of Iris Jones



'Hello, I must be going, I came to say, I cannot stay I must be going...'

—Groucho

How many times have you watched that scene on the screen? The heroine decides, for whatever reason, to catch the first plane out. She walks into an apartment, transfers clothes haphazardly from drawers to suitcase, snaps the suitcase shut with a dramatic click and walks out.

When you and I try that, we get a handful of unwashed underwear and forget to pack our shoes.

Hollywood-style packing may not be as easy as it looks, but skilled travelers can pack a suitcase in a hurry if they know the rules.

• Know what clothes travel well. Buy them for home and vacation wear.

• Pack in your notebook beforehand.

• Have everything cleaned and mended before the suitcase comes out from under the bed.

• Think small. Think comfortable.

When friends ask, "Why are you spending all that money for a week in Mexico City?" You reply: "I'm buying these clothes for when I get home." Clothes that travel well by land and sea, go equally well from suburb to city, office to cocktail party, to home.

Men usually buy clothes for active living. They pick a single color scheme, and choose a suit as well as a jacket-and-slacks set that fits it. Shirts and ties coordinate with both outfits. Socks are black; the overcoat matches everything. That is why a man can wear a suit, pack an extra outfit, throw the miscellaneous into the suitcase pocket and go.

Women, too, can do it if they pack a single color

scheme. Shoes, handbag and other accessories will go with everything toned to one color. Pack a dress and matching jacket, add slacks or a skirt to wear with the same jacket, a long skirt or an uncrushable long dress and go.

What about jewelry, cosmetics, accessories, etc.? Simple continues to be elegant. One set of gold jewelry goes with everything. Everyday cosmetics stored in a travel bag are ready to go any time. This is not a packing list, it is a principle: coordinate a basic outfit and don't add anything that match. Only the most super-organized woman can get this out of bed and go to work every morning without doing this at home.

Make up a packing list in your notebook: coat, basic outfit, matching accessories, etc. Don't take the padded housecoat or the ruffled blue dress which need constant care. Note anything that needs washing, mending, cleaning, star anything that you must buy before you go.

If your list is complete, and your washing is done, you can come close to packing Hollywood style. Place everything on the bed, lay it flat in the suitcase, put hard or awkward things on top, snap the lock dramatically and, with determination in your step, off you go.

If you forget something, live without it or buy it at your destination. The last time I traveled to New York City on business, I was explaining my packing system to a woman in the airport when I remembered something — I forgot to pack my toothbrush again. Even Hollywood heroines do that.

People who live in glass houses...

...or at least rent space in them are responsible in part for the restoration of the Old State House, Connecticut's state capitol building (foreground). A volunteer tax on window glass, modified from a colonial tax, was employed and business leaders responded favorably to a viewing tax per window. The city of Hartford is confident the building will be restored to its original grandeur in time for re-dedication ceremonies May 19.

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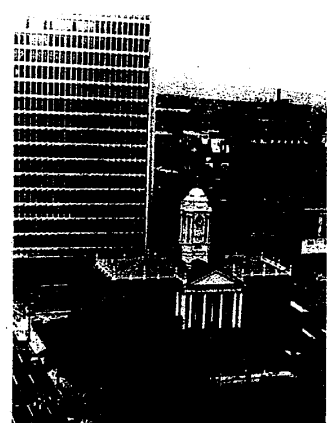
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