

Newlyweds fall for romance of British Virgin Islands

The Arnolds weren't the first newlyweds to run their toes through the sun-warmed sand on the private beach at the Fort Recovery Estates on the British Virgin Island of Tortola, and they won't be the last.

In two short days Jamie Hegwood's life had changed forever. She left the steps of the Garden City home where she grew up one Saturday, and by Monday she was Mrs. Nate Arnold, and found herself bumping along one of the "good" roads winding its way around the hilly coastline with her new husband.

The Arnolds enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere and the slow pace of this Caribbean paradise. They also appreciated the chance to explore the island on their own. As they recounted their experiences on Tortola and shared their photos, one thing was evident — they can't wait to go back.

Even before landing on Beef Island (connected to Tortola, and the only place flat enough to land) they got a taste of Caribbean hospitality.

"The pilot flew us all around the island, giving us a look at it," said Jamie.

Once their plane landed, they were greeted by a hot, humid breeze, and lots of chickens. "There were chickens running around everywhere," said Nate "and you could really smell the salty sea air."

The first thing the Arnolds did was to settle into their villa. "It was very romantic," said Jamie. "There were beautiful sunsets every night. Our resort was secluded and we had our own private beach. The islands are very green and lush, surrounded by blue waters and palm trees. It's a tropical place, with little lizards running everywhere. There was one in our room when we got there," she laughed.

Although there are not crowds of people on Tortola, there is plenty to do. "There are beaches, of course, hiking, parasailing, swimming, sailing, scuba diving and snorkeling too," said Jamie. "There's also a national park,

To plan your own romantic rendezvous first visit these web sites:

- www.fortrecovery.com or call toll free 1-800-367-8465
- www.bviiwelcome.com, an online magazine provided by the BVI Tourist Board
- www.britishvirginislands.com

Additional Tips:

- Plan on eating out a lot.
- Don't touch the coral if you snorkel or scuba dive. It will die if it's touched, and red "fire coral" can cause skin irritation.
- For TV and music schedules, pick up a copy of *Limin Times*, published each Friday.

and you can rent fully staffed charter boats and visit the surrounding islands," she added.

"There is a huge racetrack, but there are no horses on the island, so they bring horses in for a yearly race," added Nate.

Smuggler's Cove was the couple's favorite attraction. "It's a secluded beach on the other side of the island," said Jamie. "There are lots of great restaurants on Tortola and on the smaller islands too," said Jamie, who included trips to the island's quaint shops as definite "to-do" activities. "The 'Sunny Garb' was one I liked," she said. "It's a spice shop where they mix up their own spices for meat rubs and other things. You can get lotions and bath soaps there too."

The couple made a point to recommend a snorkeling trip to anyone visiting the islands, particularly at a popular spot called "the Indians," which are tall rock formations that jut out of the warm Caribbean water.

There is no golfing on the island, and only limited fishing. "Only the locals can eat the fish without getting sick," explained Nate. (Fish served at island restaurants are flown in.)

The Arnolds chose the British Virgin Islands for their honeymoon after researching a num-

ber of vacation spots on the Internet, and because of a recommendation from a friend.

The honeymooners extended their seven-day vacation package to take a three day cruise to surrounding islands including Virgin Gorda and Norman Island. "It was a lot of fun, but really hot," said Jamie. On Virgin Gorda the Arnolds enjoyed the "Baths," which are huge boulders deposited by a volcano, making mammoth caves and easy-to-access trails. "The boulders were so big, you felt miniature," said Nate.

Jamie's favorite dining spot was on Virgin Gorda, at a place called Mad Dog's. It sits on top of a hill and overlooks the island. "It was all open air, with a nice breeze blowing—I loved it," she said. "They serve a great BLT for about seven or eight dollars," she added.

For any who might be thinking of visiting, here are a few traveling tips. No need for visas or passports, just bring your birth



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certificate and photo identification. It's about a six hour flight from Michigan to the British Virgin Isles. Their busy season is from December to April, so if you want bargain rates, be sure to book your vacation from May to November. It's hot, humid and

windy, so take plenty of sun block. Plan on renting a vehicle, and "you can't be afraid to drive on little teeny, one-lane-looking roads," said Nate. "And, you'll have to watch for the cows, goats, chickens ... and speed bumps."

The water is safe to drink and the food is similar to what we eat in the states, with one big exception ... no fast food. The local women wear dresses, and the men wear shirts and casual pants or shorts.

Eddie Morelli and WPON-1460 AM
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