

Chartering in the BVI's

ISLAND TIME

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MARCH 7, 2015 - TORTOLA, BVI

We arrived at Hodges Creek Marina, the MarineMax Charter base, an easy 15 minutes from Tortola's Beef Island Airport, to board our MarineMax 480 Powercat. This was our first experience chartering a powerboat — we'd always chartered sailboats in the past. Our plan was to stay on the powercat that night and get an early start the next morning. Ross, our captain and an old friend, joined us, as did our cook. While the boat was being provisioned we found our way to the bar at Hodges Creek for our first of many rum drinks, then it was on to dinner at Red Rocks, a few miles from the marina, for a great meal and lots of discussion about the week ahead. When we got back to the docks, the scene was hopping. It seemed as if every boat was being chartered and there was an exciting energy in the air.



MARCH 8, 2015 - COOPER ISLAND

The next morning we woke early to get a good start. Our whole group had finally assembled: 11 of us — nine adults and two kids, ages seven and eight — and we'd be spread across two boats along with assorted water toys and mounds of provisions from Rite Way and Good Moon Farm. Our first stop, Cooper Island, was only four miles away, and at nine knots it took us only about 45 minutes to get there. We grabbed a mooring ball (Cooper only has about 30, and anchoring can be tricky because of the sea grass) and jumped off the boat into the crystal blue water. This became our ritual every morning — a plunge into the sea, even before coffee. What a great way to start the day.

That night we decided to eat dinner on board, but we headed to Cooper Island Beach Club's new rum bar for happy hour and the perfect sunset, with the bar's signature Yellow Bird cocktails (three kinds of local rums, fresh juices and triple sec) firmly in hand. After a few of those, it seemed like a good idea to check out the boutique across from the bar. We did some damage on their excellent clothing selections for adults and kids. Then we headed back to our boats for a feast of fish, rice and salad.

MARCH 9, 2015 - SAVANNAH BAY ON VIRGIN GORDA

The next morning, two of us opted for a little exercise and swam from the boat to shore to score some coffee at Cooper Island Beach Club. Next, it was just a short cruise to the amazing collection of massive boulders known as the Baths on Virgin Gorda. Since the area around the Baths can be busy, we anchored off Valley Trunk Bay and dinghied over to the Baths.

There are new regulations that prohibit dinghies from pulling up on the beach, so now it's a fairly rough swim into the beach to get the trail to Devils Bay. The walk to Devils Bay is incredible, a scramble over and under huge rock formations while getting splashed by the sea spraying up through the holes. After about a 15-minute hike, the reward is a gorgeous beach, a protected harbor and a refreshing swim. Captain Ross picked us up at Devils Bay, then we cruised over to Virgin Gorda's Savannah Bay to anchor. A dinner on board of grilled steaks and fish was capped by an incredible moon rise over the hills.

MARCH 10, 2015 - ANEGADA

The next stretch, from Virgin Gorda to Anegada, would be our longest — 15 miles with four-foot seas. We arrived, without incident, after about two and a half hours and grabbed a mooring ball near Potters by the Sea. We were all anxious to start exploring Anegada, known for its huge spiny lobsters and friendly people. The island has a population of only 300, and is still a little off the standard charter route, so we felt like we had the whole place to ourselves. We rented scooters to explore Loblolly Bay, known for amazing snorkeling and also home to Captain Ross's friend JP's new bar: Daddy's Love Shack. It will not disappoint. It's right on the beach and the Hip Replacement rum punches have a 151 floater. Next door is the Flash of Beauty Bar, where the tasty strawberry daiquiris are finished with fresh nutmeg sprinkled on top.

On our way back, we stopped at the ever-popular hangout Big Bamboo, which has driftwood you can burn your name onto and then prop up around the bar. We burned "Marinalife" onto a long piece of wood and then carefully placed it above the bar.

For dinner, we'd arranged to have fresh lobsters at Potters — be sure to call in your order by 2 p.m. We found Sam Potter, the owner, with his hands in the lobster crate, picking out the best ones for dinner. My platter arrived with two huge lobsters, enough to feed a family of four. Though I can't say there were any leftovers when I was done. As we finished dinner, the DJ was just getting started, and we worked off our dinners on the dance floor, then returned to the boat and happily flopped into bed, exhausted from a long day of sun, sea, rum and lobsters.

MARCH 11, 2015 - ANEGADA TO BITTER END YACHT CLUB, VIRGIN GORDA

The next morning we climbed back on our rented scooters and headed out to Anegada Beach Club, located at the far end of the island down a very sandy, bumpy road. If you need a break from sleeping on your boat, their new, beautifully appointed safari tents overlooking the ocean could be just what you need.

We returned back to the boat and set off on the two-hour trip to the Bitter End Yacht Club on Virgin Gorda. It felt good to be tied up at a dock for a night and the onsite emporium was critical, as we were running low on wine and beer. We made the fun, easy dinghy trip to Saba Rock for happy hour and the nightly feeding of tarpon, then enjoyed a fabulous dinner at the Bitter End's Clubhouse Steak and Seafood Grill — don't miss the Key lime pie!

MARCH 12, 2015 - GREAT HARBOUR AT JOST VAN DYKE

After all our eating and drinking, we decided we better take advantage of the hiking trails that wind through the hills near Bitter End. We followed a beautiful trail that passed [Biras Creek Resort](#) and ended at the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda, one of the host's of the Loro Piana Caribbean Superyacht Regatta, which was underway that very day.

We shoved off from Bitter End, and Captain Ross did an amazing job of getting us front-row views of the large regatta yachts flying through the water in perfect wind conditions. After the race, we headed to Jost Van Dyke, where we found an isolated anchorage near Little Jost's B Line Bar. Captain Ross suggested avoiding anchoring near White Bay Beach, our usual spot on Jost, because the cruise ships now anchor in this area and shuttle people into the Soggy Dollar Bar.

The B Line was just what the doctor ordered — a supremely laid back vibe, delicious Dark & Stormies, corn hole, Chinese dominoes, and a gorgeous beach. From this area you can dinghy to Foxy's Taboo and Diamond Key to hike to the Bubble Pond, but after several Dark & Stormies we decided to forego the hike, and instead anchored in Great Harbour for a festive evening of dinner and dancing at Foxy's. Beware the Friggin in the Riggin, a potent frozen banana drink that actually made an excellent dessert.

MARCH 13, 2015 - SCRUB ISLAND

In the morning we made our way toward [Scrub Island Resort, Spa & Marina](#). As we approached, we could see the resort perched on the hills, and we could barely wait for our pending spa treatments, the pool slide, the water trampoline, and the swim-up bar. We spent the day successfully sampling all the wonderful amenities — the kids probably went down the pool slide at least 100 times. We ate dinner at Tierra Tierra, the resort's casual restaurant, and had local fish cooked to order. Scrub Island's more formal dining experience, Caravelle, also got rave reviews from whomever we asked. Scrub Island has 52 guest rooms and four villas, and they run a water taxi every hour to Trellis Bay by the airport. For a small fee, boaters can tie up for the day and take advantage of all the amenities.

MARCH 14, 2015 - NORMAN ISLAND

For our last night in the BVIs, we cruised to Norman Island and grabbed a mooring ball up-wind from the infamous — and noisy — Willie T's floating bar. The water was perfect for our last snorkel of this trip, and we jumped in amidst a school of purple, blue, and yellow fish swimming around purple coral. It's an easy dinghy ride to the nearby caves made famous by Robert Louis Stevenson's Treasure Island. After our snorkel we dinghied to Pirate's Bight for sunset drinks — the entire place has been rebuilt after a fire a few years back. We took loads of pictures to capture our last night in this incredible landscape. For dinner we feasted on all the remaining provisions, and prepared for the busy day ahead of catching flights and transitioning back to reality.

MARCH 15, 2015 - HODGES CREEK MARINA

It was an easy one-hour cruise back to Hodges Creek Marina the next morning. After a last-minute packing scramble, we were on our way to the airport for flights home. Even though we were leaving, we had incredible memories to take with us, and I vowed to savor the "BVI Island Time" attitude for as long as I could!