

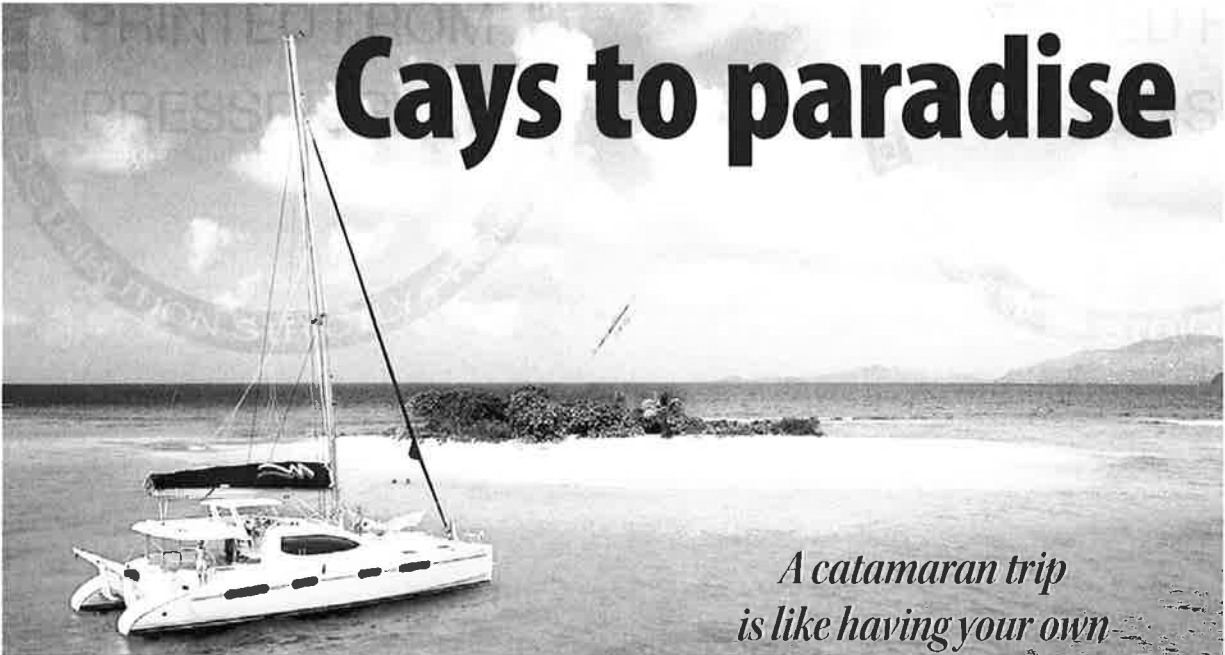
WEEKEND TRAVEL

B13 The Telegram
Saturday, March 2, 2013
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Cays to paradise

A catamaran trip is like having your own private three-bedroom, two-bath floating villa

By **STEVIE MACNAUL**
SPECIAL TO THE TELEGRAM

It's Day 2 aboard the Believe. The sails are at full mast and she's starting to giggle. It's the term given to that blissful state when a catamaran hits cruising speed and the boat 'giggles' in a trifecta of wind, water and sail vibration.

"See, I told you sailing forces you to relax," Captain Greg Marlo reiterates to us.

We don't even have to answer.

Our contented lounging on the foredeck is response enough.

The champagne that was popped for the sail away party is still partially sloshing in the glass and we are soaking up the sun en route from Man-O-War Cay to Great Guana Cay in the Bahamas' Abaco Sea.

This experience is the farthest thing from traversing the water in one of those mega cruise ships.

The Believe is a 39-foot catamaran and we're already likening it to our own private three-bedroom, two-bathroom floating villa.

On board there's only my wife and I, another couple and Cap-

tain at the Believe's aft deck dining table the captain tells us more and more people are choosing this bespoke way of seeing the world.

"It's a step up from the regular all inclusive resort vacation most Canadians go on," he says.

"It's unique and customized and personalized."

No kidding.

We're on an itinerary that takes us to small islands accessible only by small boat and the mode of transportation we're using is as much an attraction and novelty as the places we'll visit and explore.

This week of specialty cruising starts at \$800 per person based on a group sharing a three or four bedroom catamaran.

Flights, food and booze are all extra.



based business called Yacht Solutions that hooks people up with customized catamaran and sailboat vacations using the internationally-renowned Moorings and its sister company Sunsail.

While Captain Greg manoeuvred in and out of ports we indulged in the aforementioned champagne sail away parties.

We put in a lot of hours lolling on deck being whisked over

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TRAVEL

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Captain Greg Marlo. — Photo by Steve MacNaull/Special to The Telegram



Reporter Steve MacNaull shows off the starfish he found snorelling off the catamaran at Elbow Cay. — Photo by Kerry MacNaull/Special to The Telegram

Gently rocking cataraman ideal for a great night's sleep: author

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My job was making sure the cooler was full of ice so the beer and wine was cold.

And all of us took turns winching to hoist the main sail when the wind was right and tying and untying lines when we docked and departed.

The best discovery was Nipper's, a cliff-top bar overlooking a spectacular beach on Great Guana Cay.

Johnny Roberts, the great grandson times 10 of the first white man to step foot on the island in 1773, is the proprietor and he makes a mean Nipper's Tripper.

The drink comes in an innocuous plastic cup and is a pretty pink colour, but it's secret frozen blend of four types of rum and various fruit juices is lethal.

Of course, we swam in the ocean off the beach below after consuming our Nipper's Trippers under umbrellas at the bar's multi-coloured picnic tables.

No booze on Man-O-War

Man-O-War Cay, population 350, is a small boat building and maintenance port where the Albury ferry service, that operates between the Abaco Islands, is based.

There we wandered the town. There's only a few streets, marvelled at the empty beach and ate blackened fish for lunch at Dock N Dine on pilings over the water.

Note: Man-O-War is a dry island, meaning no liquor is sold there.

Luckily, we'd stocked up at Tippi's Liquor Store in Marsh Harbour and Dock N Dine was happy to open our sauvignon blanc for us to enjoy with lunch.

Elbow Cay is home to cute little Hope Town, it's candy cane striped lighthouse and Tahiti Beach at the southern tip of the island, which is considered the best strip of sand in the Abacos.

Treasure Cay was perfect for another swim stop at Coco Beach and dinner of grouper at Treasure Cay Resort's Spinnaker restaurant.

When not in port, the snorkelling off the boat in clear



The top of the catamaran is the place to catch some rays. — Photo by Steve MacNaull/Special to The Telegram



Travelling by catamaran allows you to get to off-the-beaten track locales like Nipper's Bar on Great Guana Cay, where Caroline Franco will fetch you a Nipper's Tripper.

— Photos by Steve MacNaull/Special to The Telegram

shallow water revealed a multitude of shells, sea urchins, sand dollars and plump starfish.

The sailing was easy and the sea calm.

The islands in the Abaco chain are all close together and protected where the Atlantic Ocean meets the Abaco Sea and the Caribbean Sea beyond.

By the way, overnighting on a gently rocking catamaran with only the sound of lapping water falls into the category of best sleeps ever.



The catamaran performs best at sail.

— Photo by Steve MacNaull/Special to The Telegram

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