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## Personal Journey: Enjoying the gift of wind

By Allan Lynch  
For The Inquirer

As a kid, I watched the TV series *Adventures in Paradise*. As an adult, I got to live it on the tall ship *Caledonia* in the warm waters around Guadeloupe and Dominica.

*Caledonia* is a barquentine - piratelike square sails on the front and racing-type sails on the other masts. It is 248 feet long, has 17,000 square feet of sail, 32 cabins, and 22 crew members. For the nautically challenged like me, the ship looks like a cross between the *Bounty* and a schooner.

There is nothing like the feel of a sailing ship slicing the waves, tilting under the weight of wind-filled sails. Sailing ships are romantic and appeal to those of us who don't want the crowds on floating resorts. A tall ship provides intimacy, elegance and activity.

The *Caledonia* is perfect for the active, semi-active or gregarious traveler. Having just undergone a \$9.5-million retrofit, the cabins and suites were well-appointed, with flat-screen TVs to watch videos from the ship's library, and generous en suite baths with plenty of hot water.

And the food was fabulous. Dinner entrees included seared beef tenderloin, braised short rib, and cornmeal-crust mahimahi. On deck, tire-size wheels of baked brie were appetizers.

Our cruise began in the colorful port city of Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe. It's a small city, reminiscent of New Orleans, filled with fish, flower and craft markets, and a Caribbean hip-hop vibe.

After a night cruise, we woke at Malendure Beach on Guadeloupe's west coast. Like all of our ports of call, we reached Malendure by Zodiac. There were a bunch of dive shops along the palm-lined beach, because of the nearby Jacques Cousteau Underwater Reserve.

Some passengers went diving in the reserve, others took a glass-bottom boat tour and snorkeled. A few of us added a stop for a Carib beer in a Heineken green-colored bar where a loud yellow-and-black bird frolicked in a dish of salt used to trim margarita glasses.

Our second port of call, the very laid-back Terre-de-Haut on Iles des Saintes, is a popular stop for day-trippers from Pointe-à-Pitre. Some of us strolled across the island, from the Caribbean to the Atlantic coast. Others hiked the hills to Fort Napoleon or rented scooters to discover deserted beaches.

From Guadeloupe we sailed to Dominica. If you've seen *Pirates of the Caribbean*, you've seen Dominica - much of the film was shot there. And as locals bragged, "Oprah loves Dominica. She has land here. No house. Not yet, but we hope. Now she stays on a yacht."

It was in Dominica that we met the Rastafarian entrepreneur Cobra, who took us to play in a secluded waterfall and later hosted us at a Caribbean barbecue at his Bush Bar. The real magic was the trip back to the coast, rowing in silence down a moonlit river.

Heading to the island of Marie-Galante, the morning was under sail, the afternoon under the sun: diving, sea kayaking, and wandering the near-empty beach.

The joy of this type of cruise is the intimacy and pace. Our speediest times were spent being pushed by the wind. We saw flying fish, whales, coral, exotic birds and plants. We experienced Carib, French, Creole and island cultures, and were entertained by Creole and calypso bands.

For me, it was paradise found.

Allan Lynch lives in New Minas, Nova Scotia.

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The barquentine *Caledonia* is 248 feet of elegance afloat.

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