

August 26, 2019 by Jefferson Vinall

Carriacou, Grenada, West Indies



Our visit to Carriacou was simply not long enough. Carriacou has so much to do and see, that it's mind-boggling. The island's name comes from the original Carib settlers, and it means "land of reefs." The colonial history of the island went through French, British, French (again), and finally Grenadian periods.

The island is known for its boat building tradition and the unspoiled nature of its beaches. And you'll find that it has some of the friendliest and kindest people in the West Indies.

Getting to Carriacou

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We arrived in Carriacou by ferry from St. George's, Grenada, on the Osprey Express. We chose

cost of \$80 EC per adult (as of July, 2015), and the crew will store your luggage in the hold.



the Osprey Express ferry

There was no charge for reasonable luggage, but if you're carrying something odd, you may want to check with the operators for special handling charges. If you have carry-on luggage, there are no storage bins, so you will have to keep it with you, usually on the seat next to you, or at your feet.

Departure from St. George's

The ferry departs St. George's at 9:00 am, Monday to Saturday, and 8:00 am on Sundays. It does not operate on New Year's Day, Good Friday, Christmas Day, and Boxing Day. They stick pretty close to that departure schedule, so don't be late getting to the jetty! Also, getting there early allows a better seating choice, as seating is on a first-come first-served basis.



We found the Osprey Express to be the cleanest ferry we've encountered to date. The crew are

Pro Tip: If you sit outside on the sundeck, you will get wet.

You have a choice of sitting outside in the fresh air and sea spray, or inside if you prefer to stay dry. The outer sundecks are windy and wet, though more-so on the front deck than the rear. We recommend sitting inside for the ninety minute ride, as you'll benefit from comfy, cushioned, chairs with headrests and fold-down armrests. Some seats also feature a table. The passenger cabin has air-conditioning for your comfort regardless of the weather outside.

The on-board concession offers snacks, hot dogs, soft drinks, and beer. The crossing can be a little bumpy, even in calm weather. For those prone to sea-sickness, bags are available, and the crew is very understanding. We watched one crewman lend assistance to an afflicted passenger, and his patience and compassion was obvious while he helped clean up.

Although there is a television in the passenger cabin, it only plays commercials. So, you may want to bring a book or some other entertainment. The view from the many windows can be spectacular, and it is rumored that dolphin and whale sightings occur.

Arrival in Carriacou

The Osprey Express arrives in Tyrell Bay, Carriacou. The crew will immediately unload your stored luggage. It is a quick process, taking less than fifteen minutes.

For up-to-date scheduling and other information, visit the [Osprey Lines website](#).



not dock there any longer, and now docks in Tyrell Bay where there is a special arrivals/departures terminal. This means that walking with luggage from the ferry to Hillsborough is not a desirable choice.

Once you leave the arrivals terminal, there will be several taxi drivers (some of them mini-buses) offering their services. Our taxi ride from Tyrell Bay to Hillsborough (two bays over) was only \$35 ECs, and took less than ten minutes. Our driver, Junie, made jokes while he drove, and provided some island facts and information about the various sites we were passing.

Junie's taxi doubles as a mini-bus (or is that the other way around?), so there is plenty of room for your bags. Junie happily assisted with our luggage. He was very helpful, and offered further services should we have a need.

Accommodations in Carriacou

If you're coming to Carriacou by the Osprey Express, they actually are affiliated with a hotel on the island, called the Town House Hotel. Located in the heart of Hillsborough, Town House is reasonably priced and very well located. A bank and ATM are located in the same building. We did not learn of the Town House until after we had already booked with our hotel, but we have some acquaintances who did stay at the Town House and they loved it.

There are many hotels and places to stay on Carriacou. Some popular choices include: Boggles Round House (Sparrow Bay), Cherry Hill Apartment (Craighton), Green Roof Inn (Hillsborough), Mermaid Beach Hotel (Hillsborough), Carriacou Grand View (Hillsborough), Paradise Beach House (L'Esterre Bay), Sunset Beach Paradise Inn (L'Esterre Bay), and Bayleau Point Cottage (Watering Bay).

The Mermaid Beach Hotel





We pre-booked lodgings at the lovely Mermaid Beach Hotel. This two story hotel is situated right on the beach and remains close-by all amenities on the island. There is a mini-market across the street, and within a two minute walk are ATMs, restaurants, the tourist information office, the police station, and immigration office. The hotel is also on a bus route, and taxis are easy to flag down.

The Mermaid Beach Hotel has a terrific view of the bay. Its rooms are meticulously clean, and well-appointed with free wi-fi, cable TV, mini-fridge, coffee maker, and air conditioning. The recently renovated bathroom is quite luxurious. Our queen-sized bed was super comfortable.



Beach chairs are available to guests at no additional cost. You'll find the staff to be quite friendly and ready to serve.

 photo of Hillsborough Beach

Hillsborough Beach

Callaloo at the Mermaid (restaurant & bar)

The Mermaid Beach Hotel features an attached restaurant & bar, named Callaloo at the Mermaid. From the covered deck of the restaurant, you have a spectacular view of the bay, including the islands of Jack-A-Dan, Sandy Island, and Union Island (in the distance).



[image]

The bar manager of Callaloo, Kevin, made a special effort to ensure we were enjoying our time. The bar is fully stocked and any cocktail you may desire is available if the bartender is present, otherwise, you may be limited to nothing fancier than a highball or pre-mixed punch.



[image]



The Callaloo has a fully stocked bar.

The chef creates some delectable lunch and dinner specials, and they offer a full complement of menu choices for any palate. Breakfast features a good range of options.



[image]



Interior of the Callaloo

Immediately in back (beachside) of the hotel's restaurant is a tree swing, perfect for the kids, or the adults.

Hillsborough Beach

The beach is clean, with a mix of golden sand and volcanic black sand. There is a plethora of sea glass and shells for curious collectors. The Caribbean Sea is calm here, brilliant shades of blue-green, and wonderful for either a quick dip or a full swim.

The beach location is in central Hillsborough, which is close the immigration office, police

For a lot of digital nomads, a reliable Wi-Fi connection to the internet is a crucial feature of any hotel. The Wi-Fi at the Mermaid was reliable, fast, and worked as well in the restaurant as it did in our room. We didn't try it from the beach, though.

Overall, we were very pleased with our stay at the Mermaid Beach Hotel and we would absolutely book at this hotel again!

Things to do in Carriacou

There are many things to do and see when you are on this island. We definitely want to return for a longer time to visit more of what the island has to offer. Some of its many attractions include:

- **Carriacou Museum** – Situated in Hillsborough, the museum is housed in a building that was the second oldest cotton ginnery in the world when it closed in 1979. Museum tours are self-guided, though staff can answer any questions you may have.
- **Explore Hillsborough** – The town is lovely to stroll through, with many old buildings to observe, shops and markets to visit, and very kind-hearted people to meet. For photography enthusiasts, you'll get some great shots of colonial architecture. Residents here are very proud of Carriacou's super low crime rate.
- **Hillsborough Beach** – As mentioned above, this clean beach offers a relaxing and refreshing experience.
- **Paradise Beach** – located between Hillsborough and Tyrell Bay, is Paradise Beach. Everyone raves about the sand, the view, and the water. The few bars along this stretch of sand are known to be quite fun too.
- **Anse La Roche Beach** – A little way north of Hillsborough, many people say this beach is one you shouldn't miss. Well secluded, it is not accessible by vehicle, and requires a long hike. It is best accessed by boat. Fortunately, there are plenty of water taxi's to take you there if you don't have a boat of your own. If you like serenity, you'll love it. Don't forget the snorkel gear!
- **Hike the North Peak Mountain** – At somewhere over 950 feet in elevation, this is a workout. But the view is spectacular! You can see across the island and Petite Martinique, Union, Sandy Beach, and other sights.
- **Tours** – You can hike, you can taxi, you can boat, the option is yours. Either way, you'll find the rustic authenticity of Carriacou to be a real treat. The whole island is an

unspoiled haven. The views from sea are awesome.

some amazing snorkeling. Or, you can just lounge on the sand and enjoy the tropical view!

- **Boat Building** – Carriacou is known for boat building. The influences of Amerindian (Carib), Scottish, and Irish boat building techniques are still practiced today. Boats here are still made in the traditional way. Look for chances to see live boat building.
- **Regatta** – Every year, Carriacou hosts a regatta boat racing festival for four days. The event is claimed as the longest running of its kind in the Caribbean, was founded in 1965, and is now usually held in late-July, or early-August. The Regatta features boat races, street parties, greasy pole, donkey racing, varied land-based competitions, and of course, food & drink. Carriacou's Regatta is known region-wide to be great party!
- **Snorkeling & Diving** – The "island of reefs" is one of the world's top destinations for underwater viewing. Whether you do that from the surface with a snorkel set, or from below with your diving gear, Carriacou is one place (with over 30 dive sites for various-levels of expertise) you don't want to miss.

Departing Carriacou

Depending on your next destination, you might leave Carriacou by boat, ferry, or plane. Since we were traveling to St. Vincent & the Grenadines, we opted to depart by boat. A boat crossing was cheaper and more fun than flying.



[image]



Loading the M/V Lady J-J

We encourage you to read the blog post about [our crossing on the M/V Lady J-J](#). It was a fantastic way to travel!

