



Sailing to *Shoveling* in 24 hours



Standing in the airport waiting to go through Canadian customs, I turn to my wife and ask “are you rocking back and forth, too?” Seems it takes awhile to get used to walking on dry land when you have been sailing the ocean for the past 7 days.

“I went from sailing the British Virgin Islands to shoveling SNOW in less than 24 hours and boy, does it suck!”

Myself, my wife (Jocelyne), my business partner (Rob), his wife (Tina), and their daughter (Danielle), chartered a 44' ft catamaran named "Mustang Sally" to sail around the BVI this past January. The catamaran was crewed by Captain Douglas Moody, with first mate Wendy Bette and their 2 dogs, Willis and Rollie. We met Doug and Wendy in Tortola and started our sailing vacation with dark clouds and heavy rain. It really didn't bother me that it was raining, heck rain is better than snow in my opinion. I was just excited to be on a boat, on the ocean, in warmer weather, with no snow. We quickly learned that it was going to rain from time to time but it was just some squalls (as the sailing folk call them), and they blow over within a few minutes. Our catamaran was equipped with everything we needed, food, drinks, snorkel equipment, fishing rods, kayaks, beds, and heads. Oh yes, the heads (toilettes for the non sailing folk). These little evil things need some fine tuned instructions placed right on the inside of the lid. I mean FINE TUNED!!!! There is nothing more scary than "thinking" you have permanently clogged the toilette for the whole trip, within the first 15 minutes of meeting your hosts. Luckily, the captain came to the plunging rescue and saved us all from toilette doom.

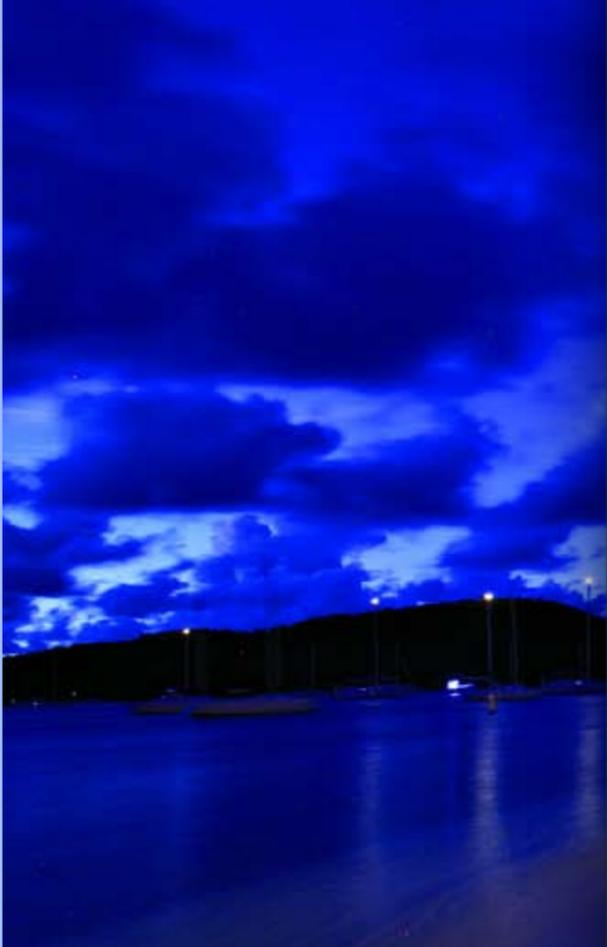
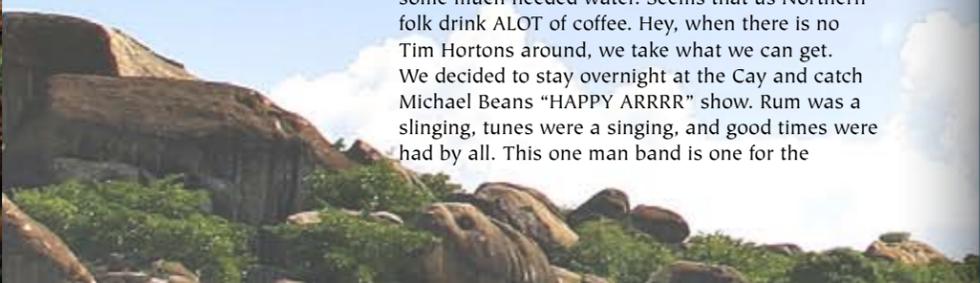
We immediately pulled anchor and headed off to Norman Island to do some snorkeling. Armed with my trusted Canon A75 point and shoot camera (with underwater housing), I immediately jumped into the blue ocean with delight (it was like -30 degrees Celsius back home), and was amazed at the sea life and activity under the surface. Wow, not even on the catamaran for two hours and already we were at our first spot and in the water exploring. After we quenched our swimming thirst, we headed off to overnight at Peter Island. We anchored in a calm spot along with several other catamarans, monohauls and a few very large yachts. My first night sleeping on the water was very relaxing. I am not sure if it was the easy swaying of the boat or the fresh air coming into our room from our port hatch, but sleeping on our catamaran was refreshing. Our room was also equipped with two small fans, so if it did get hot we were easily cooled off.

On Monday we sailed to the "Baths" and quickly found a mooring ball after racing another catamaran for the last one. The Baths are filled with giant boulders along a sandy beach. You can walk in between these rocks as they are piled on top of each other creating small caverns and caves. This was a great place as it had everything for a great excursion.

Great snorkeling and swimming, sandy beaches, adventurous exploring, and much more. This is one spot that is a must stop when exploring the British Virgin Islands.

Later that evening, we headed off to Saba Rock to catch an amazing sunset, snag a cool beverage, and capture some amazing images.

The next day we were off to the Marina Cay for some much needed water. Seems that us Northern folk drink ALOT of coffee. Hey, when there is no Tim Hortons around, we take what we can get. We decided to stay overnight at the Cay and catch Michael Beans "HAPPY AAAAA" show. Rum was a slinging, tunes were a singing, and good times were had by all. This one man band is one for the



entertainment books. From playing the guitar to stomping on his milk crate, Michael's charisma and enthusiasm had the bar a shaking. Don't forget to come up with your own toast for a free shot of rum, or practice your Conk blowing skills for the evening contest.

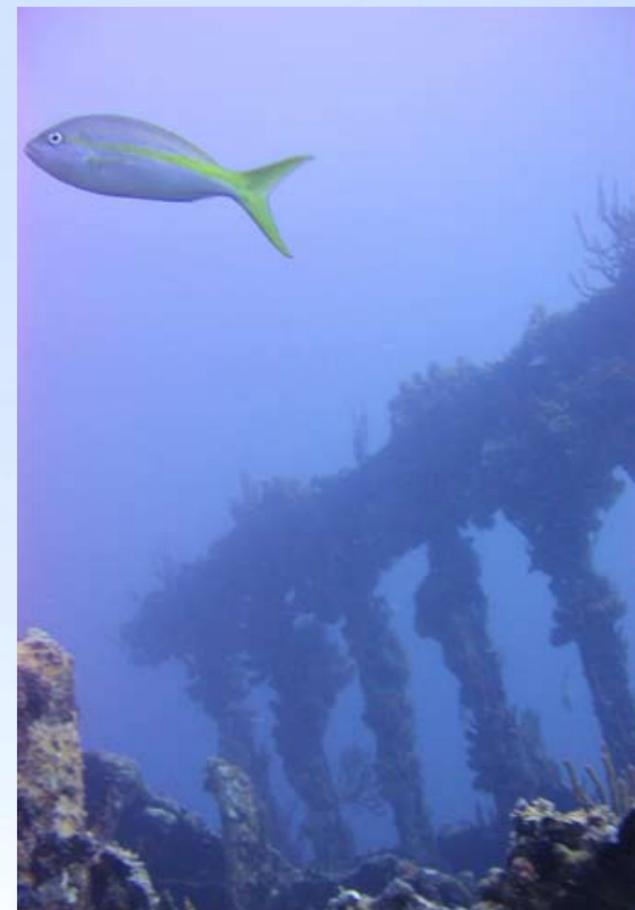
The morning arrived with its usual pattern. Wake up, have a coffee or 12, jump in the lake, I mean ocean and go snorkeling. Get out, shower off, visit the evil head, have some breakfast



The food on Mustang Sally is something that cannot be described in text, although I will try, it still does not do it justice. Wendy created some outstanding and tantalizing dishes that left us wanting more than our bellies could afford. Every meal we had while on board was perfection. We would joke to her about writing her own cookbook for catamaran sailors and she would laugh, but we were serious). Ok, so after breakfast Rob and I headed off to dive the wreck RMS Rhone that Doug had setup for us via Dive BVI . This was my first wreck dive and it was awesome!! There was plenty of artifacts to see including the 15ft propeller and the massive dive shaft. Swimming through the interior of the vessel adds a whole new feeling to the dive. That afternoon it was off to the next stop, Monkey Point, and no, there are no monkeys on Monkey Point to my wife's disappointment. If you're looking for a different experience in snorkeling, then this is the place to check out. Snorkeling through a curtain of small fish only to have them

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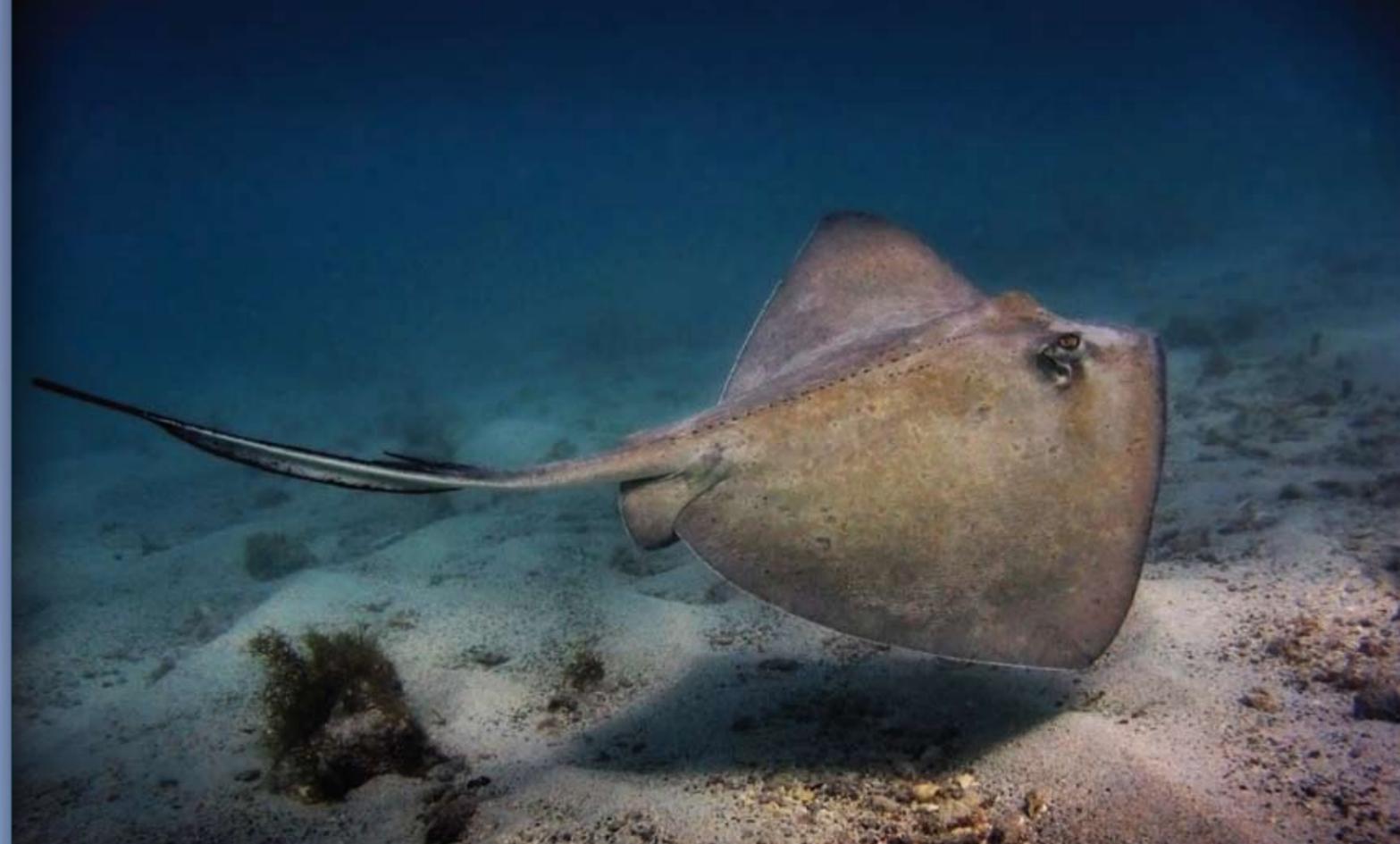


part ways to reveal schools of tarpon patrolling the reef was something that took me by surprise. The coral there is vibrant, the different colored fish abundant, and the resident sea turtles are graceful. This is a diamond in the ruff, in my opinion, and I wish we would have stayed longer than one day and night, as I'm sure there was much more to explore on this tiny island.



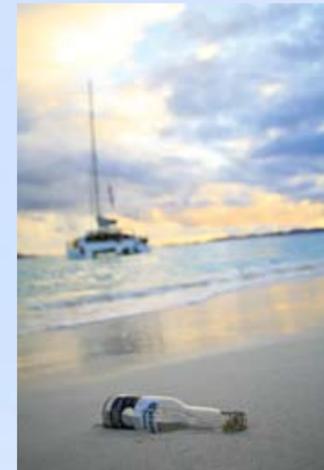
Next stop was Green Cay/Sandy Cay. This is one of those small (very small) islands that you see in the comics. You can jog around the whole island in under three minutes, and the water surrounding it is the clearest I have ever seen. Plenty of reefs to snorkel and explore, surfing if you bring your board, tanning on the white sandy beach or catch some zzz's in the shade of a palm. At Dougs suggestion we anchored a little bit deeper towards the sandy bottom so that we could track down some sting rays. Within 2 minutes of jumping in I spotted my first ray and within one minute of that, I spotted another. I quickly grabbed a few images with my Canon P&S and hurried back to the catamaran to see what I captured. After showing the rest of the party my images, we quickly geared up again and headed back out to spot some more, and we were not disappointed as we spotted several more

We woke up to another beautiful day in the B.V.I., the sun was shining, the water was calling, and the smell of breakfast was making my stomach grumble. I quickly gobbled down the goods and headed out in one of the kayaks for an early morning paddle to talk to some people who were fishing off the shoreline by our catamaran. I discovered that they were fishing for barracuda (and anything else that might come their way). As I was talking to one gentleman, I noticed two small nurse sharks swimming



underneath and around my kayak. I have never seen a nurse shark this close before, and I guess they come into the sandy area to feed. After lunch, we headed to shore to stroll over to the "Bub-ly Baths" This is a specific spot on the island where the waves come crashing through a crevice of rocks into a small pool where you can swim. It was fun to see how long swimmers can hold on to the rocks while the waves came crashing through the rocks. Later that afternoon, we overnighted in White Bay where we were going to spend our last day.

Our last day had us anchored at White Bay, which is blessed with it's long, white, sandy beach, and was the perfect spot to sit and relax, and soak up some sun. Populated by a few restaurants and bars like the Soggy Dollar Bar (known for their Painkiller drinks) this quaint little beachside rendezvous proved to be a hotbed for local boaters. I managed to get out for a little crapsheet (walking around with camera in hand and trying to capture anything and everything that was interesting) and was delighted to find numerous things to satisfy the photographer in me. From the local shops, to the green rocks, the long beaches, and the boats in the bay, I quickly filled up my flash card. If you're planning on staying or visiting at White Bay, be sure to make reservations at the Soggy Dollar Bar for the beachside BBQ. I have never seen Kabobs as big as the ones served on my plate.



Sunday morning came too soon. It's hard to think about going back to the cold and snow after every day in B.V.I. was so hot and sunny. Sailing back to Tortola I reflected on the past week's events, the new friends we made, my new found love for sailing, and the memories I captured on my camera. Thanks to Captain Doug (Captain Dougy!) and Wendy, our vacation was one of the best we have ever experienced. The professionalism that these two bring to the charter have you at ease the minute you step foot in the little dingy that Doug picks you up in. Their attitude and demeanor quickly envelope

you in an environment of friendship. I cannot say enough about Doug and Wendy, but I know it was because of them that our vacation was as much fun as it was. You not only get them as your crew, you get them as your guides, teachers, chef, captain, nurse, dive master, snorkel buddy, and friends. Until next time everyone; I'm off to shovel my damn driveway.

See you next year Doug & Wendy. James Hodgins www.hodginsphotography.com