

ST. ANNE

PHYSICAL AND FRENCH

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ELLEN BIRRELL



The anchorage at St. Anne viewed from the east

Hiking trails, endless walks on sandy beaches, quaint village life, French sensibilities and calm anchorages – mais oui, St. Anne is physical and oh so French!

Long time live aboard cruisers Phil Cook & Di Kilbrade of *Matira*, choose St. Anne. When Di worked for Island Water World in Rodney Bay, St. Lucia, their idea of a good but short get-away was to sail over to St. Anne for great food, music, hiking and relaxation. “We hike along with our hammock and picnic at one of the beaches. When we find the right shady spot for the hammock, we lounge, read, swim and nap.”

Located in southeastern Martinique, it is not exactly in line with island hopping down the leeward side of the Caribbean chain. From Anse de Meunier, adjacent to St. Anne, the current flows strongly northwestward toward Pointe du



Worshippers leaving church fill the main square with a cacophony of color and joy

Diamant. Sailing south to St. Anne can be a trudge, but one that is worthwhile.

The 8-20ft deep anchorage sprawls. Covering an area nearly one mile wide and a half-mile out from shore, the protection here is particularly good from northerly winter swells. Holding in sandy bottom is good.

In the Village

Dinghying ashore, choose from public and private restaurant docks or beach your dinghy near Paille Coco restaurant. Paille Coco offers free, if unreliable, WiFi if you patronize them. Twist my arm – their bakery offers quiche, chaisson pomme (apple pastry), flan and baguettes or a thimble of café noir for two Euros.

More consistently reliable WiFi is found at La Dunette, a waterfront restaurant with dock. Use the dock or WiFi only if you patronize them ... a five Euro fresh fruit salad will do it. Boubou Ice Cream Internet Café offers 15 minutes for one Euro for each computer, power included. Three Euros buys you one scoop of ice cream. Located one block east of the cathedral, Boubou's background music plays softly. The café has great airflow, and is clean and cheerful though it borders a busy street.

Recommending a tiny and intimate restaurant with few but wonderful offerings, our favorite, Le Sud, is tucked away on the back street. For 28 Euros, my three course lobster dinner was magnifique!

Conveniently located, the Post Office and ATM can be found on the waterfront road east of the town center.

French Catholics have a great system of penance for Saturday night partiers. Shortly after day breaks each Sunday, percussive cathedral bells peel. Endlessly.

When the church service is over, worshipers pour into the main square of St. Anne, filling it with a cacophony of color

and joy. Streets are narrow, sidewalks narrower and dock-side dining abounds.

St. Anne is a resort community. Everything is priced accordingly. The shoreline is nicely kept. You pay for that. Hit nearby Le Marin for value-priced provisioning and services.

A few negatives dampen the St. Anne scene. The locals enjoy amplified music. No kidding. Not alone amidst West Indian anchorages for late night annoyance, if it has to be blaring! I'll take cool French over Soca and Techno-Rap anytime. For those of us trying to stretch our U.S. cash, the Euro puts a squeeze on ... think petite/quality versus quantity when in St. Anne. Lastly, depending on wind direction and currents, the water can get noisy.

Hoofing It

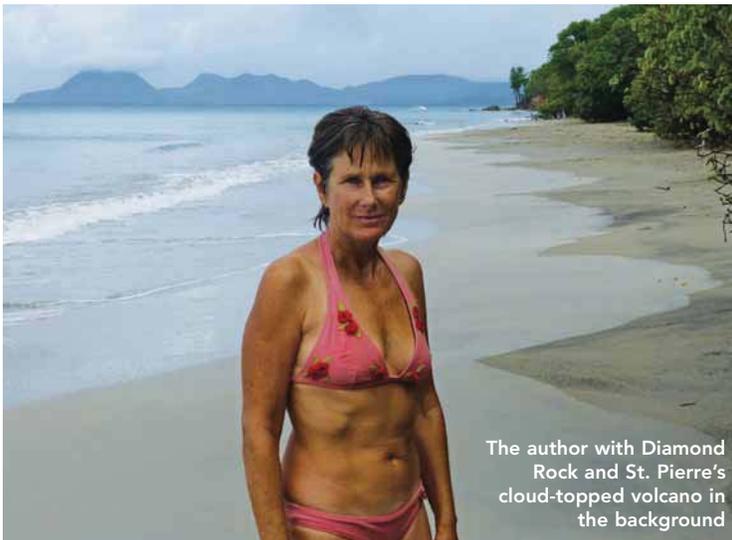
For a pleasant half-day get-away, take the following route which turns into a four-mile walking loop. Leaving the southeastern edge of the village on the road heading south, you experience French countryside. Beige droopy-eared cattle stand aimlessly in verdant pastures; that is, until they turn to glare at an infrequent passerby. After approximately a mile-and-a-half, take a right hand turn off the main road. It is still farmland until you reach the long dirt roads leading to Anse de Saline and Anse de Meunier. These beautiful white sand beaches meet crystal clear water. Enjoy panoramic views south to St. Lucia or north to the Dr. Suessian peaks of Martinique's St. Pierre where its volcano sports a white cumulous cloud cap.

The single-track meanders the wooded coastline until it eventually loops back on a northerly approach into St. Anne. The trail is high enough to give you sweeping views over the bay to St. Luce. Benches located at scenic look-outs allow you to rest. The last half-mile back into town is on shaded dirt road where red land crabs and beefy snails amble across the path. Escargot anyone?

Leaving St. Anne in the opposite direction (east) leads to the long stretch of beach reaching towards Club Med. Like Grand Anse of Grenada, sections of the beach are buoyed for swimmer safety. Enjoy a long swim parallel to shore without fear of getting run over by motorized craft.

We've also ridden our folding bikes into Le Marin. A modern bike path for the first few miles disappears before reaching Le Marin. The rest of the ride is sketchy amidst fast moving cars, not recommended for the joy rider.

Physical and French. Muscle your way through music, crowds and cuisine then strike out for solitary time amidst green pastures and pastel beaches. This is St. Anne, Martinique. 



The author with Diamond Rock and St. Pierre's cloud-topped volcano in the background

Ellen Birrell and her partner Jim Hutchins live and cruise aboard their Sun Odyssey 40 Boldly Go. Visit: www.boldlygo.us