

On The Hard In Paradise: A Caribbean Adventure

In the fall of 2019, my husband and I set sail from our home port in Florida, bound for the Caribbean. We had been dreaming of this adventure for years, and we were finally ready to make it a reality. We had purchased a 42-foot sailboat, which we had named "Tranquility," and we had spent the past few months preparing her for the journey. We had stocked up on supplies, installed new equipment, and completed all the necessary maintenance. We were excited and nervous, but we were also confident that we were ready for the adventure of a lifetime.



On the Hard in Paradise by Connie Fleenor

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

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Our Itinerary

Our plan was to sail south along the east coast of Florida, then across the Gulf Stream to the Bahamas. From there, we would island-hop our way through the Caribbean, visiting as many islands as we could before returning to Florida in the spring. We had a general itinerary in mind, but we

were also flexible and open to changing our plans as we went. We wanted to experience the Caribbean at our own pace, and we didn't want to feel rushed.

The Challenges of Sailing

Sailing is not always easy, and we quickly learned that there would be challenges along the way. The weather can be unpredictable, and we often had to deal with strong winds, high seas, and thunderstorms. We also had to learn how to navigate safely through unfamiliar waters, and we had to be prepared to deal with any mechanical problems that might arise. But despite the challenges, we loved every minute of it. We learned so much about ourselves and about sailing, and we grew closer as a couple. We also met some amazing people along the way, and we made memories that will last a lifetime.

The Islands We Visited

We visited a total of 15 islands during our time in the Caribbean. Some of our favorites included:

- **The Bahamas:** The Bahamas is a beautiful archipelago with over 700 islands and cays. We visited the islands of New Providence, Eleuthera, Harbour Island, and Abaco. We enjoyed the white-sand beaches, the crystal-clear waters, and the friendly locals. We also had some great snorkeling and diving experiences.
- **The Turks and Caicos Islands:** The Turks and Caicos Islands are a group of islands located southeast of the Bahamas. We visited the islands of Providenciales, Grand Turk, and Salt Cay. We loved the turquoise waters, the pink-sand beaches, and the world-class diving.

We also had some amazing encounters with wildlife, including dolphins, sea turtles, and whales.

- **The British Virgin Islands:** The British Virgin Islands are a group of islands located east of Puerto Rico. We visited the islands of Tortola, Virgin Gorda, and Anegada. We enjoyed the beautiful scenery, the lush vegetation, and the laid-back atmosphere. We also had some great hiking and sailing experiences.
- **The US Virgin Islands:** The US Virgin Islands are a group of islands located east of Puerto Rico. We visited the islands of St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix. We enjoyed the duty-free shopping, the historical sites, and the beautiful beaches. We also had some great snorkeling and diving experiences.
- **The Caribbean Netherlands:** The Caribbean Netherlands consists of three islands: Aruba, Curacao, and Sint Maarten. We visited the islands of Aruba and Curacao. We loved the Dutch architecture, the friendly locals, and the beautiful beaches. We also had some great snorkeling and diving experiences.

Our Experiences

We had some amazing experiences during our time in the Caribbean. We swam with dolphins, sea turtles, and whales. We snorkeled and dived in some of the most beautiful coral reefs in the world. We hiked through lush rainforests and explored ancient ruins. We met some amazing people and made lifelong friends. We learned so much about different cultures and ways of life. We grew as individuals and as a couple. We had the adventure of a lifetime.

Our Budget

We spent a total of \$30,000 on our Caribbean adventure. This included the cost of our boat, the cost of our supplies, and the cost of our repairs and maintenance. We also spent money on food, fuel, and entertainment. We were able to save money by cooking our own meals, anchoring out instead of staying in marinas, and taking advantage of free activities. We also found that the cost of living in the Caribbean is much lower than in the United States. Overall, we were able to live comfortably on our budget.

Tips for Sailing the Caribbean

If you are planning a sailing adventure in the Caribbean, here are a few tips:

- **Do your research:** Before you set sail, take some time to research the Caribbean islands you want to visit. This will help you plan your itinerary and avoid any surprises.
- **Be flexible:** The weather in the Caribbean can be unpredictable, so be prepared to change your plans as needed.
- **Be prepared to deal with challenges:** Sailing is not always easy, so be prepared to deal with strong winds, high seas, and thunderstorms.
- **Be safe:** Always wear a lifejacket when you are on deck, and be sure to have all of the necessary safety equipment on board.
- **Have fun:** The Caribbean is a beautiful and magical place, so be sure to take the time to enjoy your adventure.

Our Caribbean adventure was the trip of a lifetime. We saw amazing places, met amazing people, and had amazing experiences. We learned so

much about ourselves and about sailing, and we grew closer as a couple. We will never forget our time in paradise.



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