

Three Generations...One Sailboat: *Chartering in the British Virgin Islands*

By Tony Miró

About a year before my 40th birthday, I started dreaming and talking about celebrating it by sailing with my family and some of my friends, down in the British Virgin Islands.

After months of planning, lots of e-mails, and many phone calls, my dream became a reality. Even though my wife and I have chartered in the BVI before, this was a very special charter because it was the first time that my wife, my kids, and my dad and his wife were together on a sailboat. What follows is a summary of our adventure, which physically started on Sunday June 8, 2003, but in our minds and hearts it started way before that...and its memories will last a lifetime.

THE PLANNING

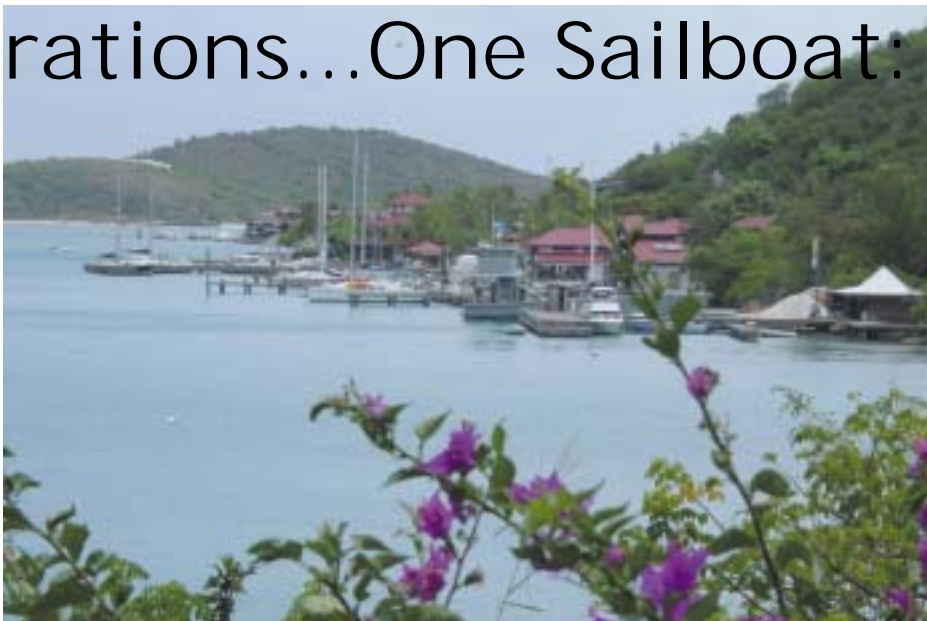
We started our adventure by sending a few questions via e-mail to get a feel for places people wanted to go, things they wanted to do during our charter, the type of boat they wanted to sail, the amenities they thought the boat should have, and the number of days they wanted to sail.

After a few e-mails we decided to stay within the BVI and not sail to the USVI or Anegada, sail as much as possible (and motor if necessary), eat all dinners ashore and breakfasts and lunches on the boat, get a monohull and not a catamaran, get a boat with A/C and a generator, and finally, since I do so much racing here in Florida, favor comfort over performance. We also decided to do our own limited provisioning.

With those parameters in mind we sent out information request e-mails to various charter companies and charter brokers. After analyzing their responses and the costs, we decided to go with Sunsail out of Hodges Creek Marina in Tortola.

THE BOAT

Our sailboat of choice was a 2002 Jeanneau 43 DS. We selected this boat due to its flexible layout (can be changed from 4 cabins down to 2 by removing bulkheads), its bright and airy saloon, and of course, its looks! Sunsail offers various lines of sailboats, and we decided to go with their Platinum line. The Platinum sailboats are boats that have A/C and generators as



Sunsail's Hodges Creek Marina at Maya Cove



3 Generations...1 Sailboat

well as many other amenities not commonly found in other charter sailboats.

THE WAIT

The six months before our charter were the longest months of our lives! At least for me they were. Now that we had selected a company, a boat and the dates, the next thing to do was to plan the itinerary to make the best use of our 10 days in the islands. In order to decide which places (beaches, marinas, restaurants, etc.) to go, we visited lots of different Web sites and read the *Cruising Guide to the Virgin Islands* from cover to cover at least twice! (Please check out the list of resources included at the end.)

THE CREW

Our crew consisted of Tony, age 40; Maria, age 30-something (wife); Tony Sr., age 65 (dad); Matsey, age unknown (dad's wife); Natalia, age 7 (daughter) and Danny, age 5 (son).

As you can see, there was a big difference in age among our crew members.

CHALLENGES AND GOALS

Our main challenges were trying to decide how to keep the kids entertained and how to make sure the three generations were going to get along for nine days on a 43-foot sailboat.

Since my dad lives in Puerto Rico and we do not get to see him often, our main goal was for all of us to spend some quality time together, bond as much as possible and make some memories to last a lifetime.

Without getting ahead of myself, I want to say that the challenges mentioned above did not prove to be challenges and that we definitely reached our goal and already started talking about another charter in a couple of years!

THE ITINERARY

All the research we did was used to plan our itinerary. The itinerary was planned around entertainment at places we wanted to visit. It worked so well that we did only minor changes to it as we sailed along the islands. We were blessed with 20-25 knots of wind every day which made for some fast sailing!

Day 1: Flight from San Juan, Puerto Rico, to Tortola and sleep aboard at Maya Cove; dinner at the Calamaya Restaurant.

Day 2: Boat briefing, upwind motor sail from Maya Cove to Savannah Bay, Virgin Gorda; broad reach from Savannah Bay to Virgin Gorda Yacht Harbour; dinner at The Rock Café & Restaurant.

Day 3: Broad reach from Virgin Gorda Yacht Harbour to The Baths; reach/close reach/upwind from The Baths to The Bitter End Yacht Club; limbo Party at The Bitter End.

Day 4: Rest day at The Bitter End; hike to Biras Creek; famous



View of Mood Indigo docked at The Bitter End Yacht Club, Virgin Gorda

Bitter End buffet.
 Day 5: Broad reach from The Bitter End Yacht Club to Marina Cay; dinner at the Pusser's Rum Restaurant at Marina Cay.
 Day 6: Broach reach/run from Marina Cay to Green Cay/Sandy Spit; run down to Great Harbour, Jost Van Dyke; dinner at Ali

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BVI CHARTER

Baba's and live music at Foxy's.

Day 7: Close reach from Jost Van Dyke to Cane Garden, Tortola; dinner and live music at Paradise Club.

Day 8: Broad Reach from Cane Garden Bay to Soper's Hole, Tortola; dinner at Piscis Restaurant.

Day 9: Upwind motor sail from Soper's Hole to Cooper Island; dinner at Cooper Island Beach Club.

Day 10: Screaming reach! From Cooper Island back to Maya Cove.

THE MEMORIES

There were so many wonderful moments in the 10 days that we spent on the islands sailing aboard *Mood Indigo* that it is hard to write about them in a few paragraphs, so I decided to share some highlights of our experiences instead.

- Sailing with my dad again after a 10-year break.
- Sailing upwind with the kids in large swells and hearing them laugh and saying that they were riding a roller coaster!
- Watching my dad's big smile as he steered *Mood Indigo* for the first time on a reach in 20+ knots of wind.
- Spending 10 full days and nights with my wife, my kids, my dad and his wife.
- Snorkeling with the kids for the first time and seeing their faces and hearing their comments the first time they saw fish.
- Steering *Mood Indigo* and surfing down the swells on the way to Marina Cay doing 12.5 knots!
- Sipping Painkillers and other tasty drinks while looking at the sunset with my family.
- Eating at great restaurants wearing shorts and sandals.
- Making new friends, who we can stay in contact with via e-

mail, such as Andrew, Julie and their kids, whom we met at The Bitter End, where they renewed their wedding vows while on their BVI charter

- Meeting wonderful, friendly people everywhere we went, who were always willing to help with big smiles on their faces-like Tracy, our waitress and bartender at Calamaya, or Julian and Fillmore from Sunsail, who docked our boat in reverse a few times, or people like Johnny, who has worked at the Virgin Gorda Yacht Harbour for over 20 years and is always willing to help you.
- Learning new home remedies, from people like Roxanna in Virgin Gorda, who recommended home-made garlic soup for hangovers.
- Running into people you know, like Rombi, an American Eagle pilot I know, whom I ran into at Maya Cove, or meeting someone who knows some of your friends-like Karen from J/Boats in San Diego, who sailed with my friend Jose aboard his J/109 in Key West Race Week 2002.
- Sharing sailing stories or mooring nightmares with sailors from all over the world, such as the group from Argentina, who were part of the Sunsail flotilla we met in Virgin Gorda.
- Being so relaxed that you start forgetting what day and what time it is.
- Dancing calypso, reggae and limbo to great tunes by Clinton, who performs with his cousins at The Bitter End and also tends the bar at Biras Creek!
- Jumping off the dock at The Bitter End or from the boat's swimming platform holding hands with my kids and my dad while yelling Ya-ya!!!

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- Enjoying a "chocolate storm" dessert, made with Godiva chocolate, at Marina Cay while enjoying a beautiful view of the islands with my family and friends.
- Talking with great people like Roger and Sandy, who manage Marina Cay, and daydreaming about having their jobs.
- Spending Father's Day with my son and my dad aboard a beautiful sailboat.
- Hearing my dad and my kids say that this was the best vacation of their lives!!!
- Doing nothing at all.

CONCLUSION

The BVI are a group of beautiful islands blessed not only by their scenery, but by the friendliness of their people and the people who have made them their home.

We strongly recommend a charter down at the BVI if you are in need of some rest and relaxation or if you simply want to bond with your loved ones.

Our successful charter proved that sailing with kids and adults with an age difference crossing three generations is not only possible but enjoyable and very rewarding.

Regarding the overall charter experience with Sunsail, the services were so good and the boat was in such good condition, that we definitely will charter with them again in the near future.

If I can be of any assistance in planning your next charter, please do not hesitate to send me an e-mail at sailboatSpecs@yahoo.com. You can see photos of our charter and also get more detailed information about chartering in the BVI at our Web site: <http://www.sailboatspecs.com>

Tony Miró is a software developer and a sailor, who currently lives with his family in NW Tampa. He has cruised and raced in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands since the mid-70s. When he is not spending time with his wife and kids, he is either cruising or racing aboard the J/109 Mariah with his friends at Davis Island Yacht Club.

Any comments or thoughts about this article, or the subject matter? *Southwinds* would like to hear from you. E-mail letters to the editor: editor@southwindssailing.com

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Maggie, Henry, Danny & Natalia aboard Allimata Two at The Bitter End Yacht Club, Virgin Gorda



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