



## **ON A CLEAR DAY... ST. JOHN, USVI**

**5/28/21-6/4/21**

**BY CINDY CRANE**



**Friday 3/26/2021** ~ As we were having dinner with Rob & Donna Reiley at Margarita's before we went to the play, they told us about this beautiful villa that they had rented in St. John and asked us to go with them. Of course, we said yes right away. This was something that Rob had put in a bid on at a charity auction and won a couple of years ago. They had postponed their trip two times because of the pandemic and are now scheduled to go this year at the end of May. We began our plans right away and booked our plane tickets.

**Sunday, 5/23/2021** ~ We took our COVID tests at the San Marco Road Walgreens. It is a requirement to have a negative COVID test 5 days prior any trip to the USVI. Once you get the results of your COVID test, you must fill out something called a Travel Portal and be approved before you can come.

**Monday, 5/24/2021** ~ We drove Rob & Donna to the Miami airport so they could fly down to begin their vacation. They are staying at a nice condo with purple roof in Cruz Bay for 4 days before they check into the villa "On A Clear Day..." There were no problems with the trip and when we arrived back in Marco, we had a nice breakfast at Red Rooster. As of now, Kim and Gary Bill have cancelled their plans to join us because Gary has knee surgery scheduled for 6/2/21.

The rest of the week went smoothly with negative COVID results and Travel Portal approval with a green code scanner by Thursday. On Thursday night Kim called to say that they have changed their minds and are now coming on Saturday. Gary will do his knee surgery when he returns back home. Great news!!

**Friday, 5/28/2021** ~ We left Marco Island @ 7:30am, for the drive to Hilton Blue Lagoon to park our car. The trip was uneventful and we got to the airport in plenty of time. When we checked in, we had a bit of a scare because the ticket agent looked at our paperwork from the COVID test and said that the results were more than 5 days old. That was not possible because our appointment was at 1pm on Monday, 5/23/2021 and our plane was scheduled to leave at 1pm on Friday, 5/28...5 days exactly. But our agent was very nice and let us go anyhow and even used our Global Entry cards to get us both TSA Pre-Check through security. I did set off the alarm with my new knee when I went through the regular X-ray machine and had to go through a special one. Our Flight was uneventful and my new Bluetooth earphones worked very well. (As it turns out the report said 10am Pacific time, which was 1pm our time. So, no problem after all.)

Once we arrived in St. Thomas, we picked up our checked bag and got into a taxi to Red Hook. There were 12 people and it was very crowded. So much for "social distancing". After the exciting ride up over the mountains of St. Thomas, we arrived at the east end of the island called Red Hook. We managed to get onto the 5pm ferry to St. John and began the easy 30-minute ferry ride. During the ride, we got another text from Kim that now they were not coming after all due to the knee. Gary saw his doctor who said the trip was a bad idea for him. Too bad!!

We met up with Rob & Donna in Cruz Bay at High Tide Bar for drinks and apps. After our drinks we stopped in a grocery store for some essentials...rum, wine, eggs, etc....then we took our yellow jeep

home to “On A Clear Day...”. This was quite a scary and exciting ride with lots of very steep hills and hairpin turns. We went up to the top of a mountain overlooking Francis Bay. OMG this place is beautiful! It looks even better than the photos in the website. We each took a second floor en-suite bedroom with fabulous views. There are 2 more beautiful bedrooms, a great room with a Big Ass Fan and views to die for, a formal dining room that seats 8, a screened dining porch, a huge fully equipped kitchen and laundry room, giant storage closets, a state-of-the-art exercise room, plus another ½ bath. There is a beautiful pool with plenty of seating around and even a big shaded area. There is a big outdoor grill. The house is “totally green” with all sorts of special things to preserve the ecology.



We enjoyed wine and rum drinks and sat around reminiscing about how lucky we all are to be here. After a couple of hours on our screened patio, we all went to bed and had a great night’s sleep. Each bedroom has its own separate AC unit and it was very comfortable cool sleeping.

**Saturday, 5/29/2021** ~ We woke up to an amazing view of Francis Bay with 5 boats moored, one of which was a very big yacht with water slide and swimming pool off the back. We enjoyed a delicious light breakfast of muffins, bacon, and grapes. Eddie and Donna took a “little walk” down the driveway and back up, about ¼ mile which almost killed them. There will be no steep hills for Cindy and Rob’s bad knees! We all spent some time in the pool enjoying the magnificent view. We enjoyed a brief shower



under our covered porch where we had our firsts breakfast beers. Then we changed clothes and took a jeep ride into Coral Bay. This road was also pretty scary with very steep hills, big drops, great views, and hairpin turns. We saw donkeys, lots of goats, chickens, and even a mongoose. We drove by Maho Bay which is now crazy busy with tons of jeeps parked everywhere, food trucks, vendors, and tons of people all crowded together on the little beach. Too crowded for us! When we arrived at Coral Bay, the restaurant Skinny Legs was packed with cars everywhere...too much of a crowd to wait. We drove over to Aqua Bar, which was unfortunately closed, so we had 4 beers at Salty Mongoose Bar for \$28 (yikes!),



and there was a musician playing. (We went into the little store there for drink supplies then we drove back home to OACD ...where we had a nice lunch of hot dogs. We spent the rest of the afternoon vegging out by the pool. We now have nice Reggae music playing on the 60" TV in the great room. This afternoon Rob made us all Painkillers and we saw our next beautiful sunset over Francis Bay. Dinner tonight was excellent steak on the grill with sauteed mushrooms and mashed potatoes. We ate in the formal Dining Room...lovely!

**Sunday, 5/30/2021** ~ This morning Donna took the steep walk down the driveway and did the Francis Bay Trail. Breakfast was muffins, bacon and grapes again. After breakfast we took the jeep down to the beach where we enjoyed the day on Francis Bay. It was a beautiful beach and not very crowded. I saw a



huge iguana trying to get into someone's beach bag. There was a guy who had a very cool type of wind surf board and he was having fun flying between the moored boats. A funny note is that, prior to the trip, Gary had said that we all needed to get a special kind of suntan lotion that didn't have 3 top ingredients which harm the reef system. So, I went online and researched this topic and ended up buying a very expensive lotion made by Neutrogena which was mostly zinc. Well, this stuff was

nasty! It would not rub into your skin, especially if your skin was moist, and it made you look white like a ghost. It would not come off, no matter how hard you rubbed your skin. We all laughed about it, but after putting it all over me and sitting mostly in the shade for a couple of hours on the beach, sure enough I missed a few spots close to my underarm and got too much sun. Go figure! After a while we came back up to the villa where we had frozen drinks in the pool in their own little floats that looked like palm trees. There are now about 25 boats moored in the bay. Guess it is so busy because this is Memorial Day weekend. We had a late lunch of steak and cheese sandwiches. We all enjoyed sunset by the pool with drinks and nice island music playing. You can see the lights of St. Thomas in the distance. This view is just mesmerizing! Today has been a very beautiful day with nice breezes all day. Early to bed tonight for the big sleep.



**Monday, 5/31/2021** ~ This morning we had a delicious breakfast of egg and bacon sandwiches. We relaxed a little before our ride into Cruz Bay. Did mention that the roads here are incredibly scary? Well, they are!! The roads are about one and a half car widths wide with incredible switchbacks, lots of big bumps, and holes and they are going over incredibly steep mountains. Oh also, one had to drive on the left side of the road! Capt. Rob did an excellent job on this white-knuckle ride. Many of the locals drive like maniacs too. We made it into town and finally got a place to park behind Mongoose Junction.



We did a little shopping there, then had a beer at the Tap Room @ St. John Brewery. We stopped in a cute little storefront that was an art gallery (very expensive) and a run tasting bar. What a fun place this was! Eddie bought a tasting and we all sampled a delicious exotic rum from Puerto Rico. We walked around Cruz Bay a while and then went to 420, our favorite "dive bar" for an early dinner. The sandwiches and waffle fries were delicious and we had a very nice waitress named Ally. She gave us all coozies. We stocked up on adult beverages at one of the local grocery stores and began our ride back home. This road was

equally scary. After all the hairpin turns and steep hills where it looks as though the road drops out from under you, we turn onto the “private” road to OACD...which is really more potholes than pavement. Our driveway is so incredibly steep that Rob really deserves a drink after this! Back at home, we had some boat drinks...banana daiquiris...yummy! When we arrive back home, the house was pretty warm, but the Big Ass Fan cooled it down right away. We all relaxed quite a bit this evening.

**Tuesday, 6/1/2021** ~ This morning Eddie and Donna did their walk. We had a nice breakfast and then started out on our day’s adventures. Today Eddie drove, and he did an excellent job! We went to Hawksnest Beach and found a nice spot in the shade where we enjoyed the uncrowded beach. There was a very brief shower but we got under the shelter where there were picnic tables. After this beach we took the Peace Hill Trail and shot some nice photos at the top with the ruins of the windmill. Next, we walked the Cinnamon Bay self-guiding trail to the ruins of an estate house. This was a great place!



When we returned to OACD...Rob made banana daiquiris for us and we had a lovely happy hour. We floated in the pool for a while as the temperature was perfect! We had a great dinner of beef tenderloin with 3 salads. Tonight, we were late getting to bed.



**Wednesday, 6/2/2021** ~ We slept in a little later today. After breakfast, we started on another great adventure. We all walked the Francis Bay Trail where we could get a great photo of our villa up on top of the hill. Eddie drove again today and we had a BIG adventure. We drove east and went to Little Lameshur Bay, a very remote area where we walked through the ruins and then drove by Great Lameshur Bay. The “road” to get there was truly

amazing...dirt ruts mostly with sharp rocks sticking out. It was all our little yellow jeep could do to make it. Even the paved areas of road were extremely narrow with lots of potholes and many hairpin turns. It



was very, very steep! We saw goats, chickens, a donkey and a beautiful deer. We went past Coral Bay, past Haulover Bay, and all the way out to Hansen Bay. This is a very fun place, owned by two sisters, Doonia and Thalia, who used to live in NYC and

then they found out that their family owned this land on St. John. They stay here all day and greet the guests, who leave donations and rent kayaks, etc. After Hansen Bay we went back to Skinny Legs, which was very crowded. They said it would be at least an hour wait. We decided to go to the grocery store, buy something to cook at home, and headed back where we could all drink and relax. We had a delicious dinner of bacon cheeseburgers. Wise move, since it gets dark pretty early on St. John and we didn’t want to try and navigate those crazy roads in the dark.



**Thursday, 6/3/2021** ~ This morning we had a delicious brunch of steak, bacon, and eggs with muffins. Spent the day again at Francis Bay beach. Rob, Donna, and Eddie snorkeled a little., while Cindy enjoyed the beach. Back home at the villa, we packed up most of our stuff and got cleaned up for our big dinner out at Morgan's Mango Restaurant. We had a taxi driver pick us up and he came at 6:30pm in a pick-up truck. It was surprisingly smooth ride into Cruz Bay. We stopped at Mongoose Junction for drinks

where Cindy had a Bushwhacker. Then we walked down to the restaurant which was lovely. We had a delicious meal and drinks toasting our wonderful adventure. After dinner we walked down to the ferry dock and waited to get a ride home. Finally, our van showed up and it was a very nice ride back home and to bed.



**Friday, 6/4/2021** ~ All good things must come to an end, and so we finished packing up, filled up the yellow jeep with our bags and the trash and began to make our way back to Cruz Bay. We bid a fond farewell to "On A Clear Day..." and started our drive at 10:15am. Rob dropped off the jeep and since we already had purchased our ferry tickets online, we walked over to The Tap & Still for delicious burgers, fries, and beers. The second leg of the journey was the ferry boat ride back to St. Thomas which was uneventful. We were able to get a taxi back across St. Thomas to the airport. The ride from Red Hook to the airport was exciting, but not quite as scary as the roads in St. John. The next part of the journey is where things start to fall apart...checking into the St.

Thomas airport. This airport is not for sissys! There were big lines of people all trying to figure out how to use the one kiosk that was actually working. We finally got up to a ticket agent who checked us in and "checked our bag", Eddie and I were in the TSA pre-check line, Cindy with both our carry-on bags and Eddie with our checked bag. Cindy got to the point of security and Eddie was behind her until he suddenly disappeared. Seems that the agent said since he had a checked bag, he had to go all the way back to the end of the huge line. Cindy went through the metal detectors and went into the one very large waiting room. Eddie, Rob, and Donna were nowhere in sight. I waited and waited and they finally got through the process and joined me in the waiting room, aptly named as we waited there for many, many hours. Our plane kept getting delayed over and over. The waiting room was packed and the seats were very hard. Plane after plane boarded and soon there were only a few people in the waiting room, all waiting for our plane which finally arrived after well over two hours late. When we were finally allowed to board, the plane ride back to Miami was non-eventful and I watched several programs on my iPad. We arrived in Miami and finally made the long trek to baggage claim. At the airport, we finally found the right spot to wait for the van which picked us up and drove us back to the Hilton Blue Lagoon. Our car was waiting for us, but of course there was one final snag...when Eddie went to have the prepaid parking ticket validated, the lady said that they had run out of vouchers since they were very busy that night with graduation proms and we would just have to go to the gate and call them back so that someone can get us through the gate. It was touch and go for a few minutes at the gate since no one came on the speaker to talk to us, but the gate finally opened and we were on our way. The last part of the journey was the two-hour ride from Miami back to Marco Island. Eddie did a great job driving through the Everglades and we dropped Rob and Donna off at their home and finally arrived back at our home at 1:45am the next day...15 ½ hours!!

All in all, it was a very excellent vacation...relaxing, exciting, great food and drinks with great friends!

