



A PASSIVE ADVENTURE

LOSE YOURSELF ON A CATAMARAN CRUISE

—BY SHAWN HEWSON

“Cocktails in 15!” I hear from the boat, as I stand alone in my flippers on the shore of an uninhabited island. This directive represents the level of scheduling in my life right now: I haven’t thought 15 minutes into the future in days. Life on a 70-foot catamaran is funny that way.

I’m midway through a Tradewinds Cruise Club luxury yacht charter touring the French Antilles, and I’m beginning to realize that I may just be enjoying the most luxurious experience of my life. Designed by world-renowned yacht-building firm Fountaine Pajot, our catamaran is a

specimen of luxury and style: All six guest suites include private ensuite bath and showers, and the galley is the size of a kitchen in a downtown condominium. The two prime seats at the bow extend over the water, beyond the two massive hulls. A little further back, you can stretch out on the bow’s mesh trampolines, where reading, sunning and watching the ocean below can consume an entire afternoon.

Each time we pick up anchor and the crew begins to hoist the cat’s massive sail, I almost feel a touch of guilt. At the beginning of this trip, I had every intention of taking up

the captain’s generous offer to learn the art of sailing, but as our voyage continues, the likelihood of my learning anything about skipping is becoming increasingly remote. I’m far too busy sipping cocktails, devouring meals of fish, French cheeses, baguettes and pastries and snacking on fresh fruit.

After our daily wake-up swim one morning, I overhear a casual conversation referencing the fact that Guadeloupe, where we are moored, is in fact not a colonial French island but rather an Overseas Department—a domestic flight from Paris. “Well, I wonder what the *pain au chocolat* is »



» like around here,” quips a party to the conversation. Five minutes later, the dinghy is headed for shore, and the ship’s chef soon returns with some of the best *pain au chocolat* and croissants I’ve ever tasted.

Somehow, I’m not the least bit surprised. After a couple of days on-board, I’ve not only become accustomed

to the gentle sway of the sea (much more subtle on a giant catamaran than on a single-hull yacht), but also to impeccable, made-to-measure service.

The next day, the Captain gathers us for a briefing about the day’s itinerary. I’m catching about 30% of what he’s saying “OK, today...then maybe some scuba or snorkelling...turquoise

water and white sand...no one else around ... lunch...stars tonight...night swimming...” As I look around the table at my fellow travelers, all of whom are wearing woozy gazes much like the one I imagine I’m wearing, I suspect they’re on the same page. We’re all content to be passive participants in this adventure. Now that’s luxury.