

Going Back in Time

My wife, Wendy and I just returned from Anguilla to assess the damage from Hurricane Irma just three weeks after this 185 mph hurricane. We were amazed at the spirit and resolve of the Anguillian people. Our stay was both fun and productive. There were some challenges. 90% of the island is without electricity. Many places have generators including our villas, so we could run all lights, A/C, etc. Our villa did not have internet, but we had cell service. We could either roam or go to a place that had internet such as Flow in the Valley or Best Buy west end (they had wifi) to receive and send emails.

This trip reminded me of old Anguilla, 20 years ago BC (Before Cuisinart). At that time, there were 2 non-branded resorts, Cap Juluca and Malliouhana, which had limited restaurants, a few good local restaurants and beach bars like Johnno's, Uncle Ernie's and Smitty's, a few upscale restaurants like Mangoes, Blanchard's, old, small Straw Hat (dinner only 5 nights) and Malliouhana run by Jacques and Alain (who now own Jacala). If we rented a villa, we had to visit 3 or 4 grocery stores to find fresh milk. Occasionally the electricity would go down for a few hours. No golf course, no Four Seasons. No Sushi, few US brands in the grocery store. Still we loved it as the locals and expats would go to Johnno's on Friday night to hear the Mussingtons, dance together, drink beer or rum and have a good time. I enjoyed scuba diving most days with Dougie and Wendy would ride her bicycle around the entire island.

The beginning of the 2017/2018 season will be like Anguilla BC. The ocean is beautiful, beaches fantastic, natural activities are available such as diving, snorkeling, boat rentals and relaxing with nice people. Tasty's, Roy's and Johnno's are open now. On our trip, we saw a lot of our friends both locals and expats.

We had a fun dinner at Tasty's Friday night. Chef Dale had a crayfish special (\$5 per crayfish) with a DJ and he was packed. Saturday night, Carrie and Jerry the Owners of Veya cooked dinner for us at John and Tania Vasatkas and then we all went to Roy's Beach Grill, which now features live music Saturday nights with a band headlining Omari Banks and great local musicians. It was a lot of fun.

By Thanksgiving most of Anguilla should have electricity and internet restored. The roads are clear, grocery stores have food, gas stations have gas and there will be more restaurants open. Veya opens mid-December. The 5-star resorts will be closed until at least March, but I heard that Cuisinart will open the spa in November and golf course in December. The St. Maarten, San Juan and Anguilla airports are now open.

People expecting Miami Beach or 7 Mile Beach on Cayman Islands will be disappointed and shouldn't come until next year. People like us, who love local places like Tasty's, E's Oven, Nat's Place and Sunshine Shack with not too many loud tourists or crowds will really have a good time.

Wendy and I fell in love with Anguilla because of the crystal-clear ocean and gentle breezes, the surprisingly good restaurants, and most importantly, the friendly, helpful people of Anguilla. We have enjoyed the increased options offered by more restaurants, bars and 5-star hotels with their spas and activities. The increased crowds have been manageable. Nevertheless, we will enjoy the nostalgic feel of this quieter tourist season in Anguilla before Four Seasons, Belmond, Auberge, Cuisinart and Zemi Beach, all 5-star resort, reopen for the 2018/2019 season.

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