Gardener's world

As the inaugural Grenada Flower & Garden Festival gets underway, **Christine Morley** finds out why the island is in full bloom this winter

Arriving at the door of a grey-stone Edwardian mansion, I could almost be in rural England. Yet the scent of nutmeg, the buzz of cicadas and the towering palm trees framing a sapphire sky make this unmistakably Grenada.

I've come to The Tower Estate, a short drive from the white-sand beaches of Grenada's south coast, to explore its special garden. It's one of the featured venues in the new Grenada Flower & Garden Festival, which has its inaugural event from November 8-15, bringing together tours, experiences and workshops rooted in nature, heritage and floral displays.

PLANT PARADISE

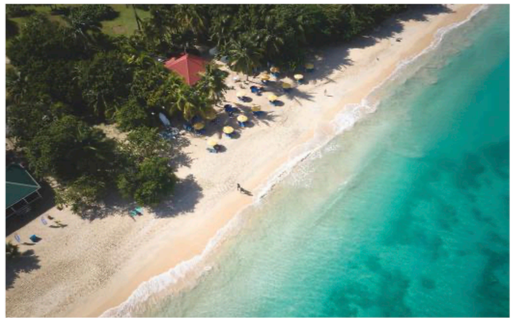
Upon arrival, I'm welcomed by Isabelle Slinger, whose family has lived in this grand house for three generations. She hosts visitors on themed tours and experiences (from $15 per person, booked in advance), including afternoon tea on the veranda with dainty sandwiches and home-grown 'blue pea' herbal tea.

The house, built in 1913, feels lost in time, with wood-panelled rooms dotted with china ornaments and faded family photos. Outside are two acres of gardens featuring 2,000 species of flower. "The garden was started by my grandmother, Vera, and I'm carrying on her vision," says Isabelle. "It's my goal to be in the garden from six in the morning until six at night!"

As we cross a well-kept lawn, exuberant plants tumble from borders: purple orchids, yellow heliconia, scarlet hibiscus. Isabelle pauses by a dangling nutmeg fruit. "It's called the lazy man's food, because the fruit splits open and the spice drops to the ground for easy picking," she explains. She points out a miniature wild pineapple plant that went on display at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show – where Grenada has been awarded an impressive 19 gold medals – while delicious scents waft over from the West Indian bay tree, which smells like an expensive cologne.

Another contributor to Grenada's Chelsea success is Smithy's Garden, perched on the hilly spine of Morne Jaloux. Originally planted by Cynthia 'Smithy' McIntyre in the 1950s, the garden is tended by her green-thumbed daughter Anne Campbell and florist granddaughter Claire. Anne leads me around the plot, pointing out red-and-yellow spider orchids and heart-shaped red anthuriums. Smithy's is as fruitful as it is beautiful, and we nibble on French

The lush gardens of Sandals Grenada
PICTURE: Dietmar Denger







CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Grand Anse Beach, location of Mount Cinnamon; Anne Campbell, proud owner of Smithy's Garden; organic cocoa farm Belmont Estate

PICTURES: Gregory Parris; Dwain Thomas Photography

WHERE to STAY

Mount Cinnamon Beach & Wellness Resort

This 36-room resort overlooks Grand Anse Beach. Stylish and spacious, the resort has tennis and volleyball courts, a pool, gym and spa, while two restaurants cover all bases: casual shoreside meals at Beach Cabana and refined dining at The Flying Fish. Rooms from $325 per night.
mountcinnamon.com

True Blue Bay Boutique Resort

This family-friendly, 62-room resort has a dockside restaurant and dive centre. There's no beach, but a free minibus runs to Grand Anse and Morne Rouge beaches. Guests can also dip into four pools, take free yoga classes and try chocolate-making workshops. Rooms from $169 per night.
truebluebay.com

WHAT'S NEW



"We currently have 1,800 hotel rooms, but next month will see the 120-room InterContinental Grenada Resort & Spa open, plus Silversands is adding another 30 rooms and Calabash recently added four suites. We'll be doing a lot of promotion of the island during the flower festival, and will try to get more UK agents to Grenada on fam trips, so they can see what distinguishes us from other Caribbean islands."
Randall Dolland, chairman, Grenada Tourism Authority

cashews and mango as we walk. Tours of the garden, afternoon tea or a Caribbean breakfast accompanied by the song of hummingbirds can be arranged via local operator Caribbean Horizons, with 8% commission for trade partners (from $95 for Grenada Garden Tour & Breakfast with the Birds). Meanwhile, Anne and Claire will regale visitors with the ups and downs of growing plants and flowers 250m above sea level, coping with drought and occasional storms.

FOODIE FEAST

Grenada's fertile volcanic soil produces more than medal-winning blooms. Grenada grows around a fifth of the world's nutmeg, earning it the title 'Spice Island'. This abundance feeds directly into the local cuisine, which bursts with freshness and flavour.

Belmont Estate, an organic cocoa farm in the cool uplands of Grenada's northeast, was a slave plantation in the 18th century but now offers a host of immersive experiences, including a tree-to-bar chocolate tour (from $65 including three-course meal). It begins with sampling raw cacao, then helping to dry the beans by turning them – a laborious task done every half-hour, by hand, for six days.

While sipping cocoa tea spiced with cinnamon, bay leaf and bergamot, we watch whole roasted beans being ground into a liquid and set into bars. It's a fascinating process that naturally stirs the appetite, so we decamp to the estate's open-sided restaurant for a lunch that showcases Grenadian ingredients: green banana soup, garden salad, rice and tuna, followed by stout-flavoured ice cream. To continue my tour of Grenada's food culture, I head to Mount Cinnamon, a boutique resort on the silky sands of Grand Anse. Guests can visit the restaurant's organic garden then join head chef Janice Edwards to prepare a seasonal three-course lunch ($94 per person).

"Our gardener, Mr Lincoln, grows what we want, from kale to tomatoes, basil and lemongrass," Janice explains. "Everything else comes fresh from the market."

Today's menu features coconut pumpkin soup, followed by swordfish steak with pineapple salsa and dauphinoise potatoes. It's a relaxed, hands-on introduction to hyper-local ingredients and is utterly delicious – I even find room for a dark chocolate mousse to finish.

The island's bountiful interior offers a true taste of nature, so for those customers keen to go beyond Caribbean beaches, Grenada's gardens are a good place to start. TW

BOOK IT

Tui offers a seven-night stay at True Blue Bay Boutique Resort from £1,635 per person, based on two sharing. Includes breakfast, transfers and flights from Gatwick on May 23, 2027. **tui.co.uk**

Kuoni sells a seven-night stay at Mount Cinnamon Beach & Wellness Resort from £2,379 per person, based on two sharing. Includes breakfast, transfers and flights from Gatwick on February 17, 2027. **kuoni.co.uk**







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