

# Anguilla Island

## A spiritual experience



THE POOL At FRANGIPANI BEACH CLUB

Photos: copyright John Simone/ Anguilla Tourist Board of Canada.

Writer Lynne Gordon, pictured left, gets a kiss from a dolphin at Anguilla's Dolphin Discovery visit [www.dolphinfantaseas.com/locations/anguilla.htm](http://www.dolphinfantaseas.com/locations/anguilla.htm).

### REVIEWS & RELATIONSHIPS

LYNNE GORDON

Although I have traveled around the world, including many unusual Caribbean islands, I was amazed to find out that I had never heard of Anguilla. Actually, it is only a short ferry ride from the well-known island of St. Martin (Saint Maarten, half Dutch and half French).

When representatives from the Tourist Board of Anguilla decided to hold a press conference in Toronto, I was fascinated to learn that the decision to develop Anguilla for tourism was made about 30 years ago. It had come out of a troubled past and the idea was to go slowly and not rush into development that couldn't be controlled by government and locals. The dream was to maintain the existing tranquility and quality of life.

When I was invited to visit Anguilla, I said that I needed the freedom to "taste" the island both emotionally and physically. I wanted to make friends with the locals, many of whom were born there, and to hear their stories. I also wanted to see for myself a variety of sites that are so magnificently photographed in the promotional material and other official books of the Anguilla Hotel and Tourism Association.

A few amazing things happened when I reached the island. A whirlwind program of four days was planned by the tourist board, and Franklyn R. Richardson, the owner and driver of Brod's Taxi service, was to be my guide for the entire visit. What a blessing that was and what a great use of my short time on the island. He knew the people and the properties thoroughly and also had the imagination to take me to places I wanted to see off the beaten track and even off my planned itinerary. We started off on our adventure when he insisted I call him by his nickname "Brod" and I insisted he call me "Lynne."

The first place to go was to my host hotel: the Frangipani Beach Club, built in an attractive Spanish Mediterranean style. I was ushered into the penthouse suite, which had a huge bedroom, living room and dining room, two marble baths, a fully equipped kitchen, laundry facilities, and surrounding balconies overlooking the turquoise ocean and crystal white-sand beaches.

The very efficient manager, E. Valentin Davis, told me after I was rested that he would show me other units that consisted of one- two- and, three bedroom suites. There were also his restaurants, which served French Caribbean food, and a wine cellar featuring 200 bottles of wine. And then the beach and the tennis courts. Afterward, he recognized that I might need to rest and told me that I would be awakened the next morning with continental breakfast in my room. I very soon relaxed into the slower pace of the island and settled down to watch television, listen to music on the radio and stretch out on my king-size bed ...and then I fell asleep in "my home." Visit [www.frangipaniresort.com](http://www.frangipaniresort.com).

Brod showed up early to take me on tour. I will only be able to mention the places that I had time to experience. Since the island is only 16 miles long and three miles wide, it is easy to get around. This is especially true if you have a driver who knows how to navigate the dirt roads, which are mostly narrow two-lane roads, and you're in an area where you always must remember to drive on the left.

The Altamer Resort has a six-acre beachfront property that comprises three unique villas: the Russian Amethyst, the Brazilian Emerald and the African Sapphire. The names of the villas reflect their international concept and color scheme. Together they can accommodate 40 people. Butlers and chefs are available depending on whether you want all the villas for just two people, or you need it for a wedding, a conference or to share it with family and/or friends. If money isn't an object and privacy is what you want ...the property is breathtaking. Visit [www.altamer.com](http://www.altamer.com).

Rendezvous Bay Hotel and Villas is situated on a two-mile stretch of white-powder sand, and it's Anguilla's first beach

[www.WeddingsHoneymoons.com](http://www.WeddingsHoneymoons.com)

resort on 60 acres of unspoiled beauty. It was a perfect time to meet the manager of this locally owned and family-run property. He responded immediately to my passionate need to go dancing. He said that after dinner and a tour of the suites, villas and art collection, he would take me to one of the well-known hangouts: the Dune Preserve Bar, owned by the famous singer and guitarist, Bankie Banx. Sure enough, after a lovely dinner at the Cedar Grove Café, which offers gourmet dining on a breezy verandah or waterfront seating under the stars, my host Bart Van Deventer showed me rapidly through his villas and art gallery featuring local artists ... and then we were on our way! Visit [www.rendezvousbay.com](http://www.rendezvousbay.com).

The Dune Preserve Bar was in full swing when we arrived, and we were immediately welcomed by all the customers as well as host Bankie Banx and his trusty bartender, Elvis. My reputation for loving to dance preceded me, and Elvis grabbed my hand and steered me to the dance floor where to the astonishment of all, we danced non-stop for over an hour. At the end, I received an autographed CD of Bankie Banx singing the songs he composed. Thanks Bankie, Elvis, Bart Van Deventer and all the regulars who had become friends. Visit [www.dunepreserve.com](http://www.dunepreserve.com).

Scilly Cay Island Harbour is a gorgeous open-air panoramic view restaurant, and it's only a five-minute free ferry ride from shore. Scilly Cay is open for lunch, but you can also spend the day sunbathing, swimming or snorkeling, or just relax under the many thatched-roof-like huts along with a famous Scilly Cay rum punch. But be warned — it's potent. Host Eudoxie Wallace also calls himself "Gorgeous" and welcomes you with a hug. I was treated to some seafood I had never eaten, like the most delicious crayfish caught in the local waters, which is much sweeter and more delicate than even their excellent lobsters. Crayfish has no claws and no very hard shells to crack, so it's easy to just pick out sweet hunks of the meat ...but it's mainly found in local waters, unless it can be exported. Visit [www.scillycay.com](http://www.scillycay.com).

Unexpectedly, I had time to dance again. Sprocka, Anguilla's famous recording star, serenaded the guests with his romantic renditions on his guitar. I admit, I quietly started to dance close to my table so that I wouldn't interfere with his entertainment. He saw me and stood up to play louder for me and beckoned me to come out on the dance floor. I did. I received warm applause from the other diners and my day was now perfect. What is clear is that all the properties, sports, beaches and festivals are open to everyone on the island no matter how little or how much you spend on your hotel, villa, guest house, apartment or condo. The people are like your neighbors, and since they haven't been in tourism for such a long time, they consider themselves ambassadors of their homeland.

I made some wonderful memories in Anguilla. Back home, I was showing the brochures to my seven-year-old grandson Ethan, who asked "Is the sky really that blue, the ocean really that green, the beach that white and is the ocean safe?" When I replied, "Yes, everything is true, and someday I will take you there for your birthday to see for yourself." Now would I lie to a child?

### GETTING THERE

There are weekly flights available on Canadian charter companies that fly into St Martin, F.W.I.: Skyservice, Air Transat and Air Canada. Seats on these carriers are available through Conquest Travel, Signature Vacations and Total Vacations.

Other carriers from Canada require a change of planes. Once in the Caribbean, visitors can fly directly into Anguilla's Wallblake Airport. For information call 416.944.8105 (Toronto) or 1.877.462.6484 or visit: [www.go-anguilla.com](http://www.go-anguilla.com) or [www.anguilla-vacation.com](http://www.anguilla-vacation.com).

*Lynne Gordon is single and is looking for romance in all the right places! She is a journalist, author, consumer advocate, radio and TV host and travel reporter. Lynne can be reached at [tkalsi@tph.ca](mailto:tkalsi@tph.ca).*