FYI Travel: Quiet Caribbean island beginning to make some noise

by Tom Roebuck

The island of Grenada in the eastern Caribbean is experiencing a period of new development and luxury accommodations, and general tourist attractions are being upgraded as well. The Mount Edgecombe Plantation project aims to restore a beautiful working plantation in St. Mark's parish. Through this project, the western coast of Grenada will be revived with the growth of every fruit and vegetable that can grow on the island. Added initiatives include Grenada's first eco-holistic spa that will be in addition to the spa and well-being center at Port Louis. It will include 20 guest rooms and spa services that will take visitors back to the serene and organic ideals of nature, while being pampered in a rain-forest atmosphere.

HOLD YOUR FIRE - Fort George in Grenada, overlooks the new cruise ship pier in St. George's Harbor. CNS Photo.The Grand Etang Welcome Center and Park, along with Fort Frederick and the Annandale and Concord Falls, have been refurbished and continue to welcome visitors. In preparing to host major sporting and cultural events in 2007, specifically the Cricket World Cup, the construction of a state-of-the-art, 15,500-seat national stadium is almost complete. A home-stay program is also being implemented to accommodate visitors coming for the events. More than 1,000 rooms have been approved that visitors will be invited to choose from, allowing tourists to feel at home during their visit.

The Port Louis Project in St. George's was put into action in late 2006 and will offer a wide range of options, not only for tourists, but for investors, yachtsmen and prospective home buyers as well. Once completed, Port Louis will include a 350-slip, world-class marina, yachting facilities for yachts up to 90 meters, 36 estate lots for individual houses and 280 residential units, and a 120-room, five-star hotel including a spa. Along with these seafront renovations, a midrange, 120-room hotel will be built. The project will also revitalize Pandy Beach, including extensions, diving, water sports and more.

FYI: For more information on Grenada's growing tourism sector, call the Grenada Board of Tourism at 473-440-2279 or visit www.grenadagrenadines.com. For more information on Port Louis, visit www.portlouisgrenada.com.

TRANS FAT-FREE AT SEA

The luxury line Crystal Cruises has announced that, effective immediately, all food served aboard Crystal Serenity and Crystal Symphony will be trans fat-free. According to the National Academy of Sciences, trans fatty acids are not essential and provide no known benefit to human health. While both saturated and trans fats increase levels of LDL (bad) cholesterol, trans fats also lower levels of HDL (good) cholesterol, increasing the risk of coronary heart disease. Crystal's crew galleys are now trans fat-free as well.

FYI: Crystal Cruises, 888-799-4626, www.crystalcruises.com.

IRISH MERRIMENT AT THE MERRION

The St. Patrick's Festival, March 14 to 18, is Ireland's largest annual party, featuring music, theater, carnivals, comedy, street arts, visual arts, dance, a treasure hunt and vintage cars, with most activities taking place just steps from Dublin's most stylish five-star hotel, The Merrion.

The Merrion's St. Patrick's Day Shamrock Package, available March 16 to 18, features two nights in a superior or twin room in the contemporary Garden Wing, full Irish breakfast daily, The Merrion's signature Black Velvet cocktail, two grandstand tickets for the St. Patrick's Day Festival Parade and a special picnic box with snacks to take to the parade. The package is $1,035 per couple, a savings of 29 percent.

The Merrion's St. Patrick's Day Festival Special Offer, available March 16 to 18, features overnight accommodation, full Irish breakfast and a Black Velvet cocktail for $462 per night for a superior room or $488 per night for a deluxe twin room in the Garden Wing, a savings of 27 percent. Rates are based upon double occupancy.

Opened in October 1997, The Merrion was created from a row of four restored Georgian town houses and a specially commissioned contemporary Garden Wing, with 123 guest rooms and 20 suites.

FYI: For more information and reservations contact The Merrion directly at 011 353-1-603-0600; e-mail reservations@merrionhotel.com; or visit www.merrionhotel.com. Reservations can also be made through The Leading Hotels of the World at 800-223-6800.

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