

PARADISE FOUND

The bays of Norman
Island offer calm
anchorage.

PHOTO BY JOEL W. ROGERS

British Virgin Islands

Trade winds and good weather lure sailors and sun-worshippers.



by Marlee Matlin

ON CHRISTMAS DAY 1993,

MY HUSBAND KEVIN HANDED me an elegantly wrapped gift. Inside was a photo album with pictures of a tropical isle and a lovely decorated home. On the back page, I was delighted to find two tickets for Tortola in the British Virgin



A free spirit plunges into the sea off Norman Island.

PHOTO BY BETH WALD/AURORA PHOTOS



Sailors find perfect conditions off Sandy Cay, Tortola.

PHOTO BY MAURICIO HANDLER/
NGSIMAGESALES

Islands, where we were going to spend a delayed honeymoon.

We flew out the very next day and landed on neighboring Beef Island. On deplaning I was immediately struck by that fragrance of flowers mixed with earth that you can only find in the Caribbean. We left the small airport and found ourselves at a toll bridge where an old man held out a pole with a coconut shell at its end for collecting the tolls (I seem to recall it was a U.S. quarter).

We passed through quaint little Road Town and soon found ourselves on a little winding mountain road. There, at the top, we found our remote villa sitting on two acres that overlooked the ocean. (Former villa guests have included Senator Ted Kennedy and advice columnist Ann Landers.) From



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the villa, we had 180-degree views of the water—but not one person or building.

Each day we awoke to warm salty breezes and at night watched the sky turn bright orange then deep purple. We dined on island favorites—fresh fish, collard greens, and fruits—on the balcony. Occasionally a bat flew over our heads.

One day we ventured down through the jungle to Cane Garden Bay, one of the best surfing beaches in the Caribbean, uncrowded



FAST FACTS

The British Virgin Islands—bordered by the Caribbean Sea on one side, the Atlantic Ocean on the other—comprise **16 inhabited** and more than **20 uninhabited** islands and cays, but their total landmass is only 59 square miles—**less than Washington, D.C.**

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(Tap each button)

and clean (though I'm more of a sit-and-tan kind of gal).

Unlike other Caribbean isles, Tortola was so much more off the beaten path; we felt as if we had the whole island to ourselves. St. Thomas, St. Barths and other islands in the area might be more “hip” (how many times have I seen stories of Mick Jagger, Sting, or Bowie spotted there?), but my husband and I discovered the true essence of Caribbean island life. We now have four kids and we'd love to return to show them what true paradise is like. ■

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Actress, author, and activist on behalf of children, MARLEE MATLIN received an Academy Award for Best Actress for her role in Children of a Lesser God. She has written three books for children and a memoir, I'll Scream Later.





The view is sweet from the Bitter End Yacht Club.

PHOTO BY KAOS01/SIME

