

St. Lucia 2005

We were lucky to have made our flight to St. Lucia considering Keeb's run-in with security and the fact that half the flight, including us, were sitting at the wrong departure gate.

Now, it was not Keeb's fault regarding security. I had forgotten to take the batteries out of my alarm clock after I had taken it offshore a couple of weeks before the trip. As luck would have it, just as my hand luggage was being scanned the clock started beeping. I was already through the scanning area and Keeb was nearest the bag and had no idea why it was making all that noise. The security personnel made him go through the bag until he produced the clock and turned it off. Security then sent us off to a different gate from the one indicated on our tickets. I was concerned that there was no Liat plane on the tarmac near our departure gate and that our monitor had a different flight number from the one we were supposed to be boarding, but Keeb felt that security must know why they re-directed us to this gate. When the boarding calls for our flight started to get more and more frantic and they kept mentioning our original gate we finally headed for the correct gate and boarded our flight. My working theory on why we were sitting at gate 11 instead of 7 is because they sounded alike to security on the public address system.

My first impression of St. Lucia was, wow, that's a lot of banana plantations. I was curious about the blue plastic that I thought were hanging over the bunches – turns out they grow the bananas in bags protecting them against pests. Our drive took us from Castries in the north of the island to Vieux Fort in the south where our resort was located.

The resort had once been a Club Med and had been through a few owners. We really enjoyed their waterpark including a narrow, sinuous pool with a current in it like a river that we went "tubing" along one day. There were two restaurants, an Italian and an Asian in addition to a casual buffet style eating area. We were treated to music and dancing acts in the night and one evening even got a taste of their theatre - it was very similar to our Best Village shows. I had a massage one day on a gazebo next to the beach and it was lovely hearing the sound of the waves. I played Scrabble with one of the staff members on another day. In the time we were there I read Bill Maher's "New Rules" and Khalid Hosseini's "The Kite Runner". The latter was a recommendation from a friend. It was extremely moving, and I learned a lot about Afghanistan from it. It was bit incongruous it be drawn into the darkness of the world described in the book each night, having spent the day in a tropical paradise.

Keeb was very happy with life at the resort but I was interested in seeing some of the island as well, so we took a tour to Soufriere that included a drive to see the Pitons. They were named a World Heritage site because of their geological significance and beauty. We also visited the Sulphur Springs and the Diamond Botanic gardens.

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The two Pitons, the Gros Piton and Petit Piton, were viewed best from different vantage points and the drive to them was picturesque. The Sulphur Springs is the world's only drive-in volcano and I guess years of working near the Pointe-a-Pierre refinery equipped me to manage the tour with no problem whereas poor Keeb found it horribly smelly. The Botanic gardens were set up by Louis XIV and Napoleon's soldiers used the baths there to recuperate. It was lush and included displays of fruits and vegetables as well as a gazebo and carved chairs. These gardens are featured in a scene from the movie "Superman II". In the scene, Superman flies down to a tropical garden and picks the flower for Lois Lane. The gardens also included the Diamond waterfall which is fed by water from the Sulphur Springs and reflects the colour of sulphur and iron it transported.