



LATITUDE / ANDY

*At the base's opening celebration, a conga line snaked across the new plaza, while Mocko Jumbies on stilts danced to reggae.*

## **Bigger, Classier and Greener: The Moorings' New Flagship Base**

Normally, the opening of a new charter base wouldn't be huge news to us. But The Moorings' new digs at Tortola, BVI, are in a class by themselves — definitely something to crow about.

Having just completed a \$15-million expansion, the company's flagship base at Road Harbour is now not only the largest bareboat charter base in the world, but as far as we know, it's also the most elegant. In addition, the company has taken bold steps to make its operation as 'green' — that is, environmentally sustainable — as possible.

Currently celebrating its 40th year of operation, the company has long worked to position itself at the upper end of the bareboat charter market, offering tough-to-match guarantees of quality regarding both its yachts and customer service. While Moorings' pricing may be a bit higher than some of its competitors', the boats it rents are generally no more than three years old, and are carefully maintained. In fact, it's probably safe to say that during the company's four decades of operation, its boats and customer relations protocols have been the de facto benchmarks by which all competing operations are measured.

Company managers, of course, intend to keep it that way, and the new Moorings Village's up-market amenities go a long way toward cementing the top-tier

image. Although the original structures of the Moorings Mariner Inn remain, and are being systematically renovated, a whole new hotel building has been added with deluxe rooms and suites that feature panoramic views of the Harbour.

The breezy open-air arrival area has both a check-in desk, where the goal is a minimum-paperwork sign-in, and a concierge desk equipped to facilitate special requests such as slip reservations elsewhere, dinner reservations, flight changes, special equipment rentals and entertainment suggestions.

A large covered lounge area, nicely tiled with gray stone pavers, adjoins a landscaped plaza which would be ideal for public performances or ceremonies at special events. Along the perimeter of the plaza are an air conditioned chart briefing room — which will be especially appreciated during the summer

months — an upscale waterside bar and restaurant called Charlie's, dedicated to The Moorings' late co-founder, Charlie Cary, and a snack bar and boutique (also air conditioned) dedicated to Charlie's wife, Ginny. There you'll find an array of gelato and gourmet coffee. Free wi-fi is accessible throughout the Village. And anyone who's ever emerged from a steamy marina shower room hotter than when they entered will appreciate the air conditioned shower area equipped with fresh towels and private stalls.

The long sea wall that used to define the seaward edge of the yacht basin was removed, and a larger wall was constructed farther out in the Harbour — this job alone was an exhaustive undertaking. The space gained created an additional basin where ready-to-sail boats will be berthed, while those needing cleaning and/or repair will be brought in elsewhere — similar to the way car rentals are set up. This, and

*The waterside hotel is an elegant addition to Road Harbour. With construction of the new sea wall, the yacht basin seen here was created.*



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# OF CHARTERING

other considerations, are meant to make the arrival and checkout process as quick and easy as possible.

One of the features that *really* sets this base apart, though, is its on-site spa facility. Although perhaps a footnote to the hotel's master plan, it occurs to us that the offering of in-house massages, manicures, pedicures and facials might give some sailormen just the leverage they need to convince a reluctant wife to commit to a BVI sailing vacation. The artfully decorated, up-market rooms might also inspire charterers to stay a few extra days before or after a charter. Or, convince first-time charterers to consider a surf-and-turf vacation — i.e. three days in the hotel and four days on a boat. The large Mariner Inn pool still exists and a second pool may eventually be added next to the new hotel building.

Various 'green' elements have been incorporated into the master plan. Not only does the base's massive desal unit produce plenty of water for both hotel and boat needs, but all the laundry water for both sides of the operation is pro-

cessed and recycled — saving roughly 12,000 gallons a day. One eco-minded improvement that benefits the entire back-bay area (where the Sunsail operation and another marina are located) results from innovations in the new sea wall's construction. Two large 'free-flow' pipes allow sea water to circulate more rapidly throughout the marina area, plus, a monstrous dredge pump has been installed with a capacity of 50 million gallons a week — enough to flush the entire back harbor four times a week. The system is said to have substantially improved water quality in the back bay already.

The installation of holding tank pumpout stations is a goal which will hopefully be realized in the not-to-distant future. We should clarify that the holdup does not lie with charter companies, but with the territory's lack of treatment capacity. Sadly, the same is true throughout the Eastern Caribbean.

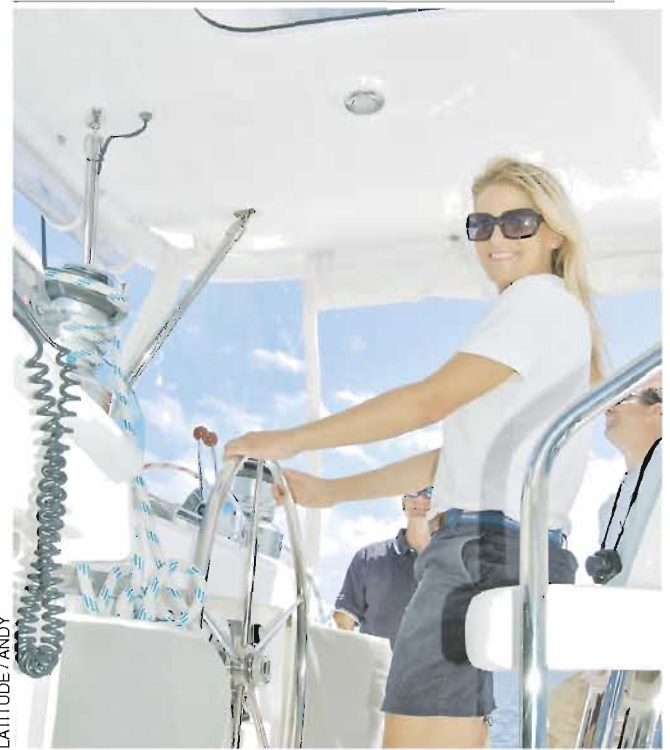
Hung on a wall near the new hotel's reception area is a gallery of vintage black and white images of the then-youthful Carys and their fledgling operation back in the late '60s. As longtime sailors may recall, they'd bailed out from corporate life and, with robust entrepreneurial spirit, came down to the islands

***This beefy pump helps Mother Nature circulate sea water through the marina.***

looking for opportunities. Their original fleet consisted of six Pearson 35s, which were then berthed at the Fort Burt Marina, whose docks still exist on the west side of Road Harbour.

A deal struck with Charlie Morgan lead to a new line of cruising yachts appropriate to chartering. Years later, Beneteau became the prime producer

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***We recently checked out the new Moorings 4600 cats. Their elevated helm stations give great visibility over the house.***

of Moorings' monohulls, a relationship which is still very strong today.

In fact, while in Tortola last month, we sea-trialed the sweet-sailing, award-winning Moorings 43.3 sloop. Beneteau USA President Wayne Burdick explains that many of the refinements applied to it and other recent models resulted from the input of Moorings charterers and fleet managers. With any given model undergoing thousands of weeks of chartering, there is no greater means of real-world testing.

Since The Moorings entered the catamaran market in the early '90s, the South African firm Robertson and Caine has been its major multihull supplier. Here too, suggestions and observations from countless weeks of charter have led to a variety of refinements. The new 4600, for example, has an elevated helm station which gives drivers excellent visibility across the top of the house — undoubtedly making it safer, as the classic catamaran 'blind spot' is eliminated.

We'd always wondered why charter cat bridge decks have gotten progressively lower, and R&C President John Robertson finally gave us the answer: When transoms were high and galleys were below decks you had to negotiate 27 steps before you could grab a beer. On the newest models that number has been reduced to three! Hey, sailors do have their priorities.

— latitude/andy



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