

WILD LILLIES OFFER

VIVID PHOTO

OPPORTUNITIES

excursions into the deepest jungles, or kayak trips on raging rivers, be consoled that the vast majority of eco-trekking is much more docile. A leisurely trip down a placid river within a wildlife sanctuary is as much an eco-tourism adventure as an eight hour hike to the summit of a rainforest mountain.

It has taken a number of years for the voices of a few environmentally concerned people to grow to a collective shout for environmental awareness. Today, virtually every island nation in the Caribbean is coming to

terms with their obligation to promote environmentally responsible policies.

The Cayman Islands have been a driving force in setting standards for protective marine legislation. In fact, their Marine Park Regulations, enacted in 1986, have served as a model for other Caribbean countries. Among the most noteworthy of these regulations are the more than 200 permanent anchor moorings put into place to eliminate damage from anchors to marine ecosystems. Ramada Treasure Island resort on Grand Cayman is proud to be a strong supporter of environmentally conscious policies.

In May of 1993, Grand Cayman will host the third annual Caribbean Tourism Organization Conference on Eco-tourism.



Explore the wonders of the Caribbean with LIAT

While many think of the Caribbean islands as ideal for 'sun, sea and sand' vacations (which, of course, they are), the archipelago is also noted for its eco-tourism appeal. Each and every island is unique in its natural charm, and all are easily accessible thanks to the region's airline, LIAT, which covers some 27 destinations from Puerto Rico in the north to Guyana in the south. Many of the region's islands recognize and treasure their natural assets and have taken measures to preserve and promote them to international visitors. One such island is the southern Caribbean island of Grenada.

In addition to boasting some of the Caribbean's finest and most picturesque beaches, Grenada is a land where natural wonders abound. Here is a place where rich, black volcanic soil nourishes the lush, tropical rain forests: where abundant varieties of tropical flowers touch the landscape with splashes of brilliant colour: where rivers and waterfalls make their descent to the sea over rugged mountain slopes. In short, Grenada is an eco-traveler's paradise.

Perhaps the island's most unique and interesting feature is that it has four crater lakes: Grand Etang, Lake Antoine, Palmiste and Levera.

Grand Etang, or "great lake", is situated to the northeast of Grenada's capital, St. Georges; and is 1,740 feet above sea level in the island's mountains. This area is a national park and forest reserve, called the Grand Etang Forest Centre. From here, you can see the mist shrouded summit of the 2,300 foot Mount Qua Qua.

Unlike Grand Etang, Lake Antoine is just 20 feet above sea level. The landscape is more pastoral here, with tree-lined hills and grassy slopes dotted with the occasional palm tree. This is another natural setting where peace and serenity abound.

Although the islands of Antigua and Barbuda are not so lush as Grenada, they have been blessed with more than a fair share of Mother Nature's bounty.

While Antigua is known for its 365 golden beaches and crystal

clear sea water, the island's interior has many natural treasures. Potworks Dam, is the largest area of fresh water in the Caribbean, and a major water bird sanctuary. The area of Gaynors and Collins, with its fine groves of Whitewood trees, often towering from 50 to 60 feet high, is a superb example of untouched riverian or riparian woodland. Offshore, one can explore the unspoiled underwater sanctuaries of the North Sound Islands and Green Island, or visit the bird watchers paradise, aptly named Bird Island.

Barbuda has been described as "one of the great ecological surprises of the West Indies." Rugged scenery, beautiful beaches and abundant marine life and wildlife grace this tiny island. By far one of Barbuda's most outstanding natural features is Darby's Cave—a 300 foot wide, 70 foot deep sinkhole created by karstic erosion of the island's limestone base. The only known specimen in the world of the Mari Mari tree is found at the sinkhole's bottom.

With its towering trees fed by subterranean waters, the cave's vegetation contrasts sharply with the surrounding dry woodland. Its floor is dotted with freshwater pools, which are home to a very rare species of freshwater shrimp. Darby's Cave is only one of the many natural wonders which make Barbuda an eco-tourist's paradise.

For the more adventuresome travelers, a trip to the Virgin Islands is an ideal way to discover the natural splendor of the Caribbean. Kayaking through the waters between these islands is becoming a popular pastime. The calm waters here afford visitors a short, easy trip from one sheltered lagoon to another—moving silently over the deep blue waters, at peace with the world while discovering the awe inspiring beauty of the "Virgin" Caribbean coastlines.

These exotic Caribbean islands are most inviting to the environmentally conscious traveler, and with the help of LIAT's network of conveniently scheduled flights to these and 24 other Caribbean destinations, it is possible to explore all the natural wonders that the region has to offer. ☺