

The pretty and tranquil Ilet Ramville anchorage in the Baie de Robert



Baie de Robert, Martinique

 Not featuring in pilot books makes the Baie de Robert well worth the effort of getting there, says Kit Pascoe

Martinique is an island of two extremes from an anchorage point of view. While St Pierre, Fort-de-France, Ste Anne and Le Marin on the west and south coasts are packed with boats of all shapes and sizes, the east side of the island is the absolute opposite. The reef-lined, rugged coast has a multitude of tiny islands, a couple of true two-palm-tree cays and plenty of deserted anchorages for those willing to put in a bit of hard work. The secret to this coast's emptiness is simple; it's not in the pilot book.

Baie de Robert is large and has several good anchorages to protect you from any wind, and the outlying reefs cut off any swell. It's a full day's sail from Ste Anne and you may find it easier to pop into Le

Francois first, 10 miles south of Robert and closer to Ste Anne. From Ste Anne, it's a short beat around the southeastern tip of Martinique and then usually close-hauled all the way up. If the wind has any north in it, don't go – an ESE is your best direction. If there's a large swell running, this coast is best avoided.

Despite the reefy labyrinth, Baie de Robert itself is actually buoyed and easy enough to enter. To get there you can cut through the reefs at Passe de Caye Matin or just to the north through Passe du Loup-Garou but, in both cases, exercise caution. Good sunlight is important and once you're inside the bay, the entrances to anchorages aren't buoyed.

'It's as though you've got the tropics to yourself'

If your boat is under 40ft and there's no one else there, head for the anchorage just in the south of Ilet Ramville. It's imperative you have the light to see the reef, because the entrance is painfully narrow, but once you're anchored it's as though you've got the tropics to yourself. When you need a baguette, you can anchor off Le Robert town itself, but it shallows very fast and, except for a *boulangerie* opposite the dock, there's not much going on. There's no Wi-Fi here but you can buy a copy of

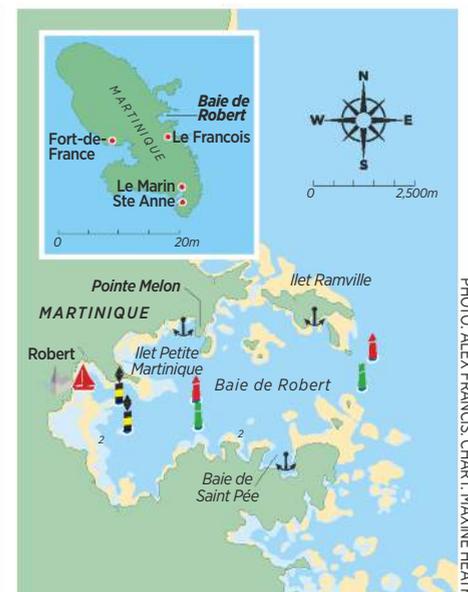


PHOTO: ALEX FRANCIS. CHART: MAXINE HEATH

the local paper, *France-Antilles*, to check the sea and wind conditions, which are published near the back.

There is another useful anchorage in the bay on the south side, Baie de Saint Pée, near to the entrance. It has an eelgrass bed just outside and a handful of local boats are usually moored there. While sheltered, the wind will come from any direction, so ensure you have plenty of swinging room.

For a really safe and easy anchorage, tuck up behind Ilet Petit Martinique and Pointe Melon; it's big, gently shelving and home to local yachts, which, it seems, are only used at weekends.

While Baie de Robert is not a place to visit if you are low on water supplies, it is exceptionally tranquil and offers good snorkelling. Be careful where you land your dinghy though, as the private islands allow people on beaches but not further inland. ▲