

Grenada History

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Grenada was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1498 but remained uncolonised for more than a century. The Island was inhabited by Carib Indians who had migrated from the South American mainland, killing or enslaving the original inhabitants, the Arawak Indians.

The Island was originally known as 'Camerhogue', but Columbus renamed it Concepcion and passing Spanish sailors found it to be so evocative of Andalucia with its lush green mountainous scenery, that they called it Granada.

The Carib Indians successfully defended the Island from the aggressive attacks of the European invaders. Several attempts were made to settle from the early 17th Century, including an unsuccessful English invasion in 1609, followed by the French in 1638, but it was not until 1650 that a subsequent French expedition landed and made initial friendly contact.

Hostilities soon broke out however between the Caribs and the French when the latter endeavoured to exert their control over the Island. The Caribs fought a succession of battles but finally succumbed and the few remaining Indian defenders then jumped to their deaths from a precipice in the north of the island which the French named 'Le Morne de Sauters' (Leapers Hill).

Despite foreign aggression, the Island was held by the French for the next ninety years. In St George's Harbour, Fort George and Fort Frederick are historic reminders of fierce battles that took place between the French and the English at that time and still today, they command the strategic points of the horse-shoe bay.

In 1783, under the Treaty of Versailles, the Island was handed to the British. Once stabilised, the British brought large numbers of slaves to Grenada from Africa and the historic sugar plantations were created.

Inspired by the French Revolution, a black planter by the name of Julian Feddon rebelled against the British, leading to the violent uprising of the Island's slaves. Although this aggression was later defeated, it led to the abolition of slavery in 1834. Feddon's Camp is set high in the central mountains and can be visited to this day.

In 1877 under Queen Victoria, Grenada became a Crown Colony and remained so until gaining independence in 1974. Grenada is one of the smallest independent countries in the Western Hemisphere and is still part of the British Commonwealth.

Today, despite the long British rule, the Island's French heritage also survives in many ways, including the local French 'patois', many of the place names and a large Catholic population.

An attempt was made in 1979 to set-up a socialist/communist state allied to Cuba. Four years later, at the request of Sir Paul Scoon, the Governor General at that time, the United States under Ronald Reagan, together with Jamaica and the Eastern Caribbean States launched an intervention or 'rescue mission' and attacked the Marxist revolutionaries militarily. Order was quickly restored and by the end of 1984, a democratic government had been elected.

Since then, Grenada has enjoyed a peaceful and stable democracy which has brought about a vastly improved way of life with the creation of many new buildings and greatly improved infrastructure. The Grenadian propensity to work, prosper and to charm has since led to extensive progress both economically and culturally.