

cing. In the limbo a gentleman known as King Kabouka performed the seemingly impossible. The report that cruise purser Robbie Rutt was observed practising limbo with a view to producing the ship's own Caribbean show must be treated with reserve.

#### Colourful markets

The following morning early *Reina del Mar* tied up at Pointe-a-Pitre, the port of Guadeloupe. Here the quay is almost at the foot of the main street, a fact which was much appreciated by those who wanted to go shopping, and indeed strolling around streets teeming with life on this busy Saturday morning was a fascinating experience, particularly in observing the crowded and colourful street markets, where every variety of vegetable produce, chickens and other small livestock was sold. In the afternoon the streets quietened and many people made for the beaches of Grand Terre. Others had already gone on the long full day excursion to Basse Terre, the other half of the Butterfly island of Guadeloupe, where the scenery is dramatic, with tropical forests rising up to the Volcano. With these two contrasting areas, each enhancing in its own way, allied to Creole cooking and French ambience, Guadeloupe is as attractive an island as any in the Caribbean.

We made Martinique the next day, where for the first time the ship remained at anchor and passengers went ashore by launch. The island is also French and has the same Gallic atmosphere as Guadeloupe. As we arrived on Sunday, opportunities for shopping were limited. It was unfortunate that, for one reason or another, Martinique did not appear to sell itself to *Reina del Mar* passengers to the best advantage, although it is perhaps the most beautiful of all the islands we visited. It is difficult to put one's finger on the reason for this lack of contact; perhaps it was the arrival on a Sunday, perhaps it was the absence of the gleaming white palm-fringed beaches we had come to expect (Martinique beaches being of grey volcanic sand) or perhaps that there was only one shore excursion available and that a half-day one.

#### Road trip rewarding

However, some were fortunate enough, as was the writer, to see the island more fully. They took the beautiful coast road to St. Pierre, the former capital, now rebuilt after being destroyed by a volcanic eruption earlier in the century, then ventured into the mountains and valleys of the interior, rich with a profusion of tropical fruits and flowers. For these, Martinique proved full of interest: it will certainly repay another visit, even if it has to be missed out on the next *Reina del Mar* cruise.

Finally we came to Barbados and there the stern call of duty compelled the writer to leave the ship and fly back to London.

Barbados is not in fact a scenic spectacular, the general effect being pleasantly pastoral rather than dramatic, but it is blessed with a succession of beautiful beaches, a busy shopping centre in Bridge-



town (complete with Trafalgar Square and a statue of Nelson), plenty of hotels and tourist attractions and, not least, an ideal climate with hot sunshine tempered by the trade winds whose almost constant flow ruffles the sugar canes and sets the island trees bending one way.

#### More time at sea in 1974 itinerary

Thus ended the West Indian chapter of the cruise but for the passengers there was still the return voyage via Madeira and the pleasant run of shipboard life and entertainment. Looking at it with hindsight, one realises that four ports on successive days, arriving each morning at seven, was a rather wearing operation both for passengers and crew. For this reason the itinerary of the 1974 Caribbean cruise, which is already nearing completion, will be amended so as to allow more sea time between calls.

Now that *Reina del Mar* has made her debut in the Caribbean there is little doubt that she will become as popular and familiar there as she has been on her regular cruises from UK and on the run from Cape Town to South America.

■ Above: unusual company for the white-hulled Cunard Ambassador (right) in harbour at Barbados, as *Reina del Mar* ties up for her first cruise call there.

■ Below: nowadays a great yachting centre—English Harbour at Antigua, where the lovingly-restored Nelson's Dockyard is on every visitor's itinerary. Both pictures from colour slides by K. J. Brett.

