

## WELCOME!

St. Maarten is a very unique and wonderful Caribbean island with plenty of activities for visitors and residents alike.

St. Maarten.com provides valuable information about the island itself, dining and lodging, activities, events and services as well as many other topics to help everyone get to know the island they love.

StMaarten.com is the only website that covers both the French and Dutch sides of the island and offers tourism as well as local information. If you are traveling to the island you can find just about everything you need to plan a fabulous vacation on the Friendly Island. If you live on island, visit our residents section for pertinent information and services for daily life. Enjoy!



### Dutch Side...

❖ Dawn Beach	Beach: Quiet Water: Rough & Snorkeling
❖ Guana Bay	Beach: Deserted Water: Surfing
❖ Pointe Blanche	Beach: Small & Deserted Water: Rough
❖ Great Bay	Beach: Popular Water: Clear & Calm
❖ Little Bay	Beach: Picturesque Water: Snorkeling
❖ Pelican Key	Beach: Quiet Water: Usually Calm
❖ Kim Sha Beach	Beach: Popular & Sunsets Water: Water Sports
❖	Beach: Deserted

### Life's a beach ...

St. Maarten is blessed with 36 white, sandy beaches. All of them are beautiful and each has its own special charm and atmosphere.

You can choose from isolated, romantic, little coves to long, expansive beaches where the action is going on day and night. You will find beaches with waves high enough for surfers and calmer ones for families with small kids. There are nude beaches where naturalists enjoy clothing optional beach life. There are busy beaches as well as deserted beaches. Tiny beaches snuggled between rocky cliffs and some with large stretches of white sand.

<b>Bay</b>	Deserted Water: Usually Calm
<b>Burgeaux Bay</b>	Beach: Quiet Water: Rough
<b>Maho Bay</b>	Beach: Popular Water: Rough
<b>Mullet Bay</b>	Beach: Family Water: Surfing
<b>Cupecoy Bay</b>	Beach: Clothing Optional Water: Rough

### French Side...

<b>Long Bay</b>	Beach: Quiet & Romantic Water: Rough
<b>Plum Bay</b>	Beach: Peaceful Water: Surfing
<b>Baie Rouge</b>	Beach: Popular Water: Sometimes Rough
<b>Nettle Bay</b>	Beach: Quiet Water: Calm
<b>Friar's Bay</b>	Beach: Family Water: Calm & Clear
<b>Happy Bay</b>	Beach: Deserted Water: Calm
<b>Grand Case</b>	Beach: Quiet & Picturesque Water: Calm
<b>Anse Marcel</b>	Beach: Mostly Family Water: Usually Calm
<b>Pinel Island</b>	Beach: Island Water: Calm
<b>Orient Bay</b>	Beach: Popular & Clothing Optional Water: Water Sports
<b>Coconut Grove</b>	Beach: Family Water: Calm
<b>Oyster Pond</b>	Beach: Picturesque Water: Calm



There are plenty of activities to keep you busy at the beach if you want to do more than relax in the sun. You can enjoy horseback riding, volleyball, snorkeling, scuba diving, parasailing, surfing, jet skiing, body boarding, surfing, sailing...you name it!

In general, the beaches to the east, or windward side, of the island are windier and the waters of the Atlantic are rougher. The leeward beaches to the west and southwest are calmer, facing the Caribbean Sea.

The beaches here are unparalleled in the Caribbean: They are clean, their sand is white, and the sea is crystal clear and aqua blue. Whether you are vacationing on the island or are lucky enough to live here, try to enjoy the pristine waters of the island as much as you can!

Click on a name on the map, or on a link on the left side, and you will be guided from beach to beach around the island with photos and descriptions.

## SHOPPING

St. Maarten's economy went on an upswing after it became a duty-free port over fifty years ago and very little has changed since. Thousands of cruise ship passengers descend on St. Maarten each year specifically for the great deals to be had here, but tourists staying on the island are certainly welcome to get in on the St. Maarten shopping bargains as well. Duty-free St. Maarten shopping can save the buyer up to 50% regular North American prices, especially on luxury goods such as crystal, leather, jewelry, perfumes, and liquor.

The best places to find a cluster of St. Maarten shopping outlets are in Marigot on the French side and Philipsburg on the Dutch. Front Street is Philipsburg's main duty-free drag, with dozens of quaint shops and elegant boutiques to choose from. French St. Maarten shopping destinations provide a charming jumble of architecture houses the city's chic shops and duty-free boutiques.

Quality St. Maarten handicrafts are few and far between, so if your St. Maarten shopping trip needs to include local goods, you may be disappointed. One local product worth making a detour for is Guavaberry liqueur, a combination of rum and guavaberries made at the Guavaberry Company Shop in Philipsburg.

Not only is St. Maarten a free port, but it has no local sales taxes. Prices are sometimes lower here than anywhere else in the Caribbean, except possibly St. Thomas. On some items (fine liqueurs, cigarettes, Irish linen, German cameras, French perfumes), we've found prices 30% to 50% lower than in the United States or Canada. Many well-known shops on Curaçao have branches here.

Except for the boutiques at resort hotels, the main shopping area is in the center of Philipsburg. Most of the shops are on Front Street (called Voorstraat in Dutch), which stretches for about 2km (1 mile) and is lined with stores. More shops are along the little lanes, known as steegijes, that connect Front Street with Back Street (Achterstraat), another shoppers' haven.

In general, the prices marked on the merchandise are firm, though at some small, very personally run shops, where the owner is on site, some bargaining might be in order.

## Customs

### Customs For Returning U.S. Citizens

Recent changes in customs regulations have made shopping on St. Maarten even more attractive. Loose gemstones, for example, are exempt from customs duties. That means unset precious stones (diamonds, tanzanite, rubies, sapphires, emeralds) do not count toward the allowance total. Spend as much as you like on a loose diamond, for example, and you won't pay a penny of duty.

### Customs Guides: Know Before You Go

Returning from the Netherland Antilles (St. Maarten) your allowance includes \$600 per person exemption, ie; \$2,400 for a family of four. Included in the exemption is a max of two liters of alcoholic beverages, (as long as one of the liters was produced in the Caribbean Basin Countries). Guavaberry Liqueur is a good example of a locally produced alcoholic beverage. And 200 Cigarettes - 1 carton.

### How Much Am I Saving?

St. Maarten is the Caribbean's only true duty-free destination. What does that mean? It means the price you pay does not include all those government taxes imposed on imported foreign luxury items. How much can you save by buying duty-free items? Below are typical savings on St. Maarten, compared with U.S. retail prices of major brand-name products.

Transactions in the main hotels, shops, and restaurants on both sides of the island can be made in US dollars. On the French side, you may receive your change in Euros. Traveler checks and major credit cards are widely accepted. ATM machines are located all over the island.

## Transportation

St. Maarten is a relatively small island with an area of only 37 square miles, however to really enjoy the island you need some form of transportation. There is an inexpensive bus system that connects most of the various communities and major points of interest along the main roads that operates during the daytime and early evening hours. To really get the most out of your visit you should consider other forms of transport that offer more freedom such as rental cars, scooters, motorcycles or bicycles. There are also numerous taxis that can be arranged to take you anywhere on the island.

## Entertainment

St. Maarten has plenty to keep you entertained. For all evening entertainment such as live music, nightclubs, casinos and more just pick the type of entertainment you are looking for or the area of the island to see a list of what's available. Or choose the venue by name to find out more about a particular hot spot.

## RESTAURANTS

St. Maarten is widely known as the dining capital of the Caribbean and in 2005 a team of four chefs from our island proved that when they won a Caribbean-wide competition for a demanding panel of judges held in Miami, Florida. The variety of food offered by these talented chefs and their brethren on the island is truly overwhelming, whether your taste is for our island rib-shacks or haute cuisine. With literally hundreds of international restaurants to choose from, intrepid gourmets staying on St. Maarten can keep themselves busy with a new and exciting dining experience every day.

## Marine



St. Maarten has become a very well known port of call in the Caribbean over the last two decades and our marine community has plenty to offer the full time or vacation sailor. Whether you require a power or sail boat rental or a marina to keep your own boat, maintenance services, provisioning or other services, if it happens on the water, you can find it here. This is also the place to find information on boating day trips and ferries to nearby islands.

## Banking

Both sides of the island have numerous banks and ATM machines. Banking hours are typically Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm and Saturdays from 8:30 am to 12:00 pm. These hours vary depending on the banking institution. ATM machines are located at every bank as well as many grocery stores and shopping areas.

## Business Hours

On the Dutch side most businesses operate from 9:00 am or 10:00 am until 5:00 pm or 6:00 pm and do not close at midday. On the French side many businesses close for lunch between noon and 1:00 pm for at least one or two hours. However many of these businesses that close remains open later, until 7:00 pm or 8:00 pm. Most stores remain open on Sundays if they are located in populated shopping areas like Philipsburg and Marigot. Businesses are required to close for some religious and state holidays that vary depending on the side of the island.

## Credit Cards

Most stores and restaurants accept Visa and MasterCard. American Express is not as readily accepted and very few places accept Discover Card. There may be a service charge associated with using a credit card at some establishments. Traveler's Cheques are usually accepted like cash with identification (passport recommended).

## Currency

The official currency of the French side is the Euro. The Euro fluctuates and is roughly 1 Euro = US \$1.25. The official currency on the Dutch side is the Netherlands Antilles guilder (florin). The guilder is constant with the dollar at NAF 1.80 = US \$1.00. The US dollar is accepted everywhere on the island and the conversions will be done for you when you pay. Most prices will be listed in the local currency on either side of the island.

Currency Converter

## Departure Tax

St. Maarten requires a departure tax be paid when leaving the island. Airport departures from princess Juliana International Airport are US \$30.00 for all flights to non-Antillean destinations and US \$10.00 for all Antillean destinations (Saba, St. Eustatius, Bonaire, and Curacao). Many airlines such as Air France, American Airlines and USAir include this tax in the ticket price. Ask when you check in to be sure. If you are departing from a ferry terminal the tax is typically US \$3.00 or Euro 2.50 depending on the side of the island.

## Dress

The dress code is casual, shorts, t-shirts, sundresses. Jackets and ties are not required anywhere. Bathing suits should be confined to beach areas and not worn in town.

## Drinking Water

Tap water on the island comes from desalinated sea water or filtered rain water and is drinkable. Bottled water is also readily available and inexpensive.

## Electricity

The Dutch side has 110v electricity (North American) and most of the French side has 220v electricity (European). Many newer villas and hotels on the French side have 110v electricity instead of or in addition to 220v. Transformers and converters can be bought at hardware stores on either side of the island.

## Language

Dutch is the official language of St. Maarten and French is the official language of St. Martin. English is spoken by nearly everyone and Spanish is also widely spoken. Papiamentu, a local language based on Spanish and Dutch is spoken on the Dutch side as well. You may also hear Italian, German, Creole, Chinese, Hindi and many others.

## Post

St. Martin and St. Maarten both have post offices in major areas of the island. Overnight shipping services are also available.

## Public Holidays

A plethora of holidays bring fun and festivities to St. Martin. But they also bring many closed businesses on public holidays and during Carnival. Check with your hotel's front desk if you have any questions. Easter Monday is observed on both sides of the island the day after Easter Sunday. The Queen's Birthday (Dutch) is observed on April 30, while the French side observes Bastille Day on July 14. On November 11, the Dutch side celebrates St. Maarten Day and the French side observes Concordia Day. And Boxing Day is observed on the Dutch side on December 26. We will try to have a full list of holidays on this web site shortly.

## Religious Services

There are Catholic, Methodist, Seventh Day Adventist, Baptist and other Christian churches on both sides of the island. There is a mosque in Bel Air on the Dutch side.

## Tipping

On the French side a 10% - 15% service charge is included in the menu price or at the end of your bill as required by law. A small additional tip is appreciated for good service. On the Dutch side including service charge is optional and will be clearly stated on the menu or on the bill.

## Important Telephone Numbers

Telephone numbers below are written as you would dial them when on that side of the island. To dial the Dutch side from the US or Canada dial 011 599 before the number and from the French side or Europe dial 00 599 before the number. To dial the French side from the US or Canada dial 011 590 before the number leaving off the first 0 written below. From the Dutch side or Europe dial 00 590 before the number leaving off the first 0 written below.

### Sint Maarten (*Dutch*)

#### Emergency Numbers

- Emergency 911
- Ambulance 542-2111
- Fire 120
- Hospital 543-1111
- Police 542-2222

### Saint Martin (*French*)

#### Emergency Numbers

- Emergency 18
- Ambulance 29 0404
- Fire 87 5008
- Hospital 29 5757
- Police 87 5010

### Airport

- Customer Information Desk 545-5757
- Tourist Information Desk 545-4211

### Other useful information

- Animal Welfare of St. Maarten 542-5705/542-0600
- Chamber of Commerce 542-3590
- Directory Assistance 150
- Post Office 542-2289
- St. Maarten Hospitality & Trade Association 542-0108
- St. Maarten Tourist Bureau 542-2337
- Weather 123

### Other useful information

- Association of the Protection of Animals 0590 87 4817
- Directory Assistance 1012
- Hotel Association AHSM 0590 87 1300
- Post Office 0590 87 5317
- St. Maarten Tourist Office 0590 87 5721

