

# Overview of St Maarten and St Martin

Known as the smallest landmass to consist of two countries, the island of Sint Maarten and Saint Martin is an alluring Caribbean getaway. The French and Dutch have shared this strip of paradise peacefully for more than 350 years, ever since a gin-drinking Dutchman and a wine-imbibing Frenchman allegedly walked around the island to see how much territory they could claim for their country in a day. The French won more land, but the Dutch lay claim to the most prized part.

The Dutch may well have a point. Sint Maarten is known for its beaches, casinos and rum-fuelled festive nightlife. Duty-free shopping is the order of the day for tourists filling the numerous condos and resorts. Those who find it overdeveloped and artificial can get a taste of a different side of the Caribbean on the quiet, picturesque beaches of Simpson Bay and Little Bay, while visitors looking for a more rugged holiday would do well to head north to the French side of the island.

Saint Martin is significantly quieter than its Dutch counterpart. The French side of the island is a lovely mix of white-sand beaches, small town centres and beautiful stretches of mountainside. Shopping is a more relaxed affair at the outdoor markets, offering up some of the finest Caribbean cuisine.

The island as a whole hosts 120 different nationalities, giving it a rich cultural heritage. Food, drink and friendly Caribbean hospitality are all on offer. Visitors can enjoy snorkeling, diving and jet-skiing on the coast, or they can head inland to hike in the mountains or zip-line through the treetops.

---

## Key Facts

### **Language:**

Dutch and English are the official languages. Locals commonly use a language known as Papiamentu, a mixture of Portuguese, African languages, Spanish, Dutch and English.

### **Passport/Visa:**

Travellers should note that for some nationalities visa and passport, requirements might vary between St Maarten and St Martin. Specific requirements should be checked for the desired destination. All tourists, regardless of which side of the island they are visiting, must have return or onward tickets, all documents needed for next destination and proof of sufficient funds. Passports must be valid for at least the length of intended stay, but six months of passport validity is recommended. As part of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), all travellers travelling between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, and the Caribbean region are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. If departing from the USA a valid passport will be required by immigration authorities. It is highly recommended that travellers' passports have at least six months' validity remaining after the intended date of departure from their travel destination. Immigration officials often apply different rules to those stated by travel agents and official sources.

### **Currency:**

The official local currency on the Dutch side is the Antillean guilder (ANG), and the currency on the French side is the euro. The US dollar is accepted everywhere on the island; local currency and US dollar ATM machines are situated throughout the island. Major credit cards are accepted in most tourist establishments.

### **Electricity:**

Electrical current is 220 volts, 50Hz. Standard, flat, two- and three-pronged plugs, as found in the United States, are used.

# Travel to St Maarten and St Martin

## Overview

Each year hordes of tourists flock to Sint Maarten and Saint Martin for the beaches. Long Bay offers peace, quiet and perfect sunsets from luxury resorts, while Anse des Peres is a family friendly affair in the northwest, with legendary Full Moon parties at Kali's Beach Bar.

Known as the Saint-Tropez in the Caribbean, Orient Bay is the haunt of celebrities and jet-setters, but suffered large damage by Hurricane Irma in 2017. Galion Beach is the domain of surfers and windsurfers; Little Bay is a haven for bird life. Visitors can also watch planes fly infamously close to holidaymakers as they come in to land over Maho Beach.

Marigot, the French capital, is a town full of trendy restaurants, traditional stalls and a lively market full of interesting colours and smells. Philipsburg, on the Dutch side, is the duty-free shopping capital, where jewellery and souvenir shops line the main street and weary travellers can recharge in the endless restaurants and bars. The village of Grand Case comes alive from January to April for the Harmony Nights Festival, a traditional Caribbean celebration of gastronomy, music and art.

Other attractions include treetop tours in the Loterie Farm and the colourful, soothing atmosphere of the Butterfly Farm, the first of its kind in the Caribbean. Young families will also enjoy the Sint Maarten Zoo, which has over 80 species of wildlife and a dedicated play area for children.

Two miles (4km) off the coast of Saint Martin lies the wild, rocky and uninhabited Île Tintamarre. It offers some great swimming spots, with lucky snorkellers potentially glimpsing turtles and other curious creatures. Visitors are advised to take supplies for the day, as there are no shops.

## Climate in St Maarten and St Martin

The island is sunny and warm all year round, with average monthly temperatures varying little throughout the year. Temperatures in coastal areas range from 72F (22C) to 86F (30C) and inland areas range between 66F (19C) and 81F (27C). Cooling winds buffet the island throughout the year. Showers can be expected at any time of year but rainstorms generally pass quickly. Hurricane season in the Caribbean lasts from June to November, with the most storms occurring in September. December to May is considered the dry season (though rain can occur at any time of year), and is considered the best time to visit St Maarten and St Martin. Winter and the Christmas, New Year holidays are traditionally the most popular time to visit the island, but summer can also be a good time to visit because lodging rates are much lower and the beaches, roads and restaurants are not crowded.

## Health Notes when travelling to St Maarten and St Martin

The Manchineel tree grows all over the island and mainly along the beaches, and is extremely poisonous. Its sap and fruit, which look like small green apples, are caustic and burn the skin. The water is safe to drink and medical care on the island is good, but patients are likely to be transferred to the US for anything serious. Comprehensive travel insurance is strongly advised. Travellers should protect themselves from mosquito bites at all times, as there's a risk of dengue fever and chikungunya. Proof of vaccination is required if visitors are coming from or have transited through an airport of a country where yellow fever occurs.

## Safety Notes when travelling to St Maarten and St Martin

Most visits to the island are trouble-free, but petty crime is present and visitors shouldn't leave valuables unattended on beaches, in cars or in hotel lobbies. Care should be taken to keep rooms and cars locked, and visitors should refrain from carrying large amounts of cash. Burglaries and break-ins occur sometimes at resorts, beach houses and hotels, and there have been incidents of armed robbery. Precautions should also be taken against car theft, and insurance cover is advisable.

## Customs in St Maarten and St Martin

Island culture on Sint Maarten and Saint Martin is very relaxed, and there are few dress codes aside from high-end restaurants and clubs. Though many residents speak English, visitors should not assume this and a little effort to speak French or Dutch is greatly appreciated.

## Duty Free in St Maarten and St Martin

Non-residents who are 18 or older don't have to pay duty on any goods in Sint Maarten. Visitors to Saint Martin who are 18 or older must follow the same regulations that apply for travel to France.

## Doing Business in St Maarten and St Martin

On Sint Maarten and Saint Martin things are fairly informal, but jackets and ties should be worn by men for meetings. English is spoken widely throughout both the French and Dutch regions and is often the language used in meetings. Business hours are generally 9am to 6pm from Monday to Friday, with a break from 12pm to 1.30pm.

## Communication in St Maarten and St Martin

The country code for Sint Maarten is +1 721 while the code for French Saint Martin is +590. Phoning from one side of the island to the other is considered an international call. Mobile network coverage extends across both parts of the island, as does internet and WiFi coverage, especially at cafes, bars and restaurants.

## Tipping in St Maarten and St Martin

On the Dutch side of the island, hotel bills include a tax of five percent and often a service charge of 15 percent. Waiters and bar staff should be tipped 10 to 15 percent if a gratuity is not included in the bill.

On French Saint Martin, hotels usually add five percent occupancy tax per person, but a small gratuity is appreciated for good service. Restaurants and hotels usually add a service charge of 10 to 15 percent to the bill, and it's always best to check for this before adding a tip. Taxi drivers and porters expect to be tipped, particularly if they have handled luggage.

## Passport/Visa Note

Travellers should note that for some nationalities visa and passport, requirements might vary between St Maarten and St Martin. Specific requirements should be checked for the desired destination. All tourists, regardless of which side of the island they are visiting, must have return or onward tickets, all documents needed for next destination and proof of sufficient funds. Passports must be valid for at least the length of intended stay, but six months of passport validity is recommended. As part of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), all travellers travelling between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, and the Caribbean region are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. If departing from the USA a valid passport will be required by immigration authorities. It is highly recommended that travellers' passports have at least six months' validity remaining after the intended date of departure from their travel destination. Immigration officials often apply different rules to those stated by travel agents and official sources.

## Entry Requirements

### Entry requirements for Americans:

United States citizens require a valid passport that is valid for the duration of their stay. No visa is needed for a stay of up to 180 days.

### Entry requirements for Canadians:

Canadians must have a passport that is valid for the duration of their stay. No visa is needed for a stay of up to 90 days.

### Entry requirements for UK nationals:

British citizens require a passport that is valid for six after their date of entry, but do not require a visa for a stay of up to 90 days.

### Entry requirements for Australians:

Australians must have a passport that is valid for the duration of their stay. No visa is needed for a stay of up to 90 days.

### Entry requirements for Irish nationals:

Irish nationals must have a passport that is valid for the duration of their stay. No visa is needed for stays of up to three months.

### Entry requirements for New Zealanders:

New Zealand citizens must have a passport that is valid for the duration of their stay. No visa is needed for a stay of up to 90 days.

### Entry requirements for South Africans:

South Africans must have a passport valid for the period of intended stay, and a visa for entry.

## **Tourist Offices**

Office of Tourism for Saint Martin, Marigot, Saint Martin: +05 9087 5721 or St Martin: [qww.stmartinland.org](http://qww.stmartinland.org)

### **Tourist Authority Offices in the United States:**

St Martin Promotional Office, New York, United States: +1 212 838 7855 or [newyork@stmartinland.org](mailto:newyork@stmartinland.org)

## **St Maarten and St Martin Embassies**

### **In the United States:**

Royal Netherlands Embassy, Washington DC, United States: +1 202 244 5300.

### **In Canada:**

Royal Netherlands Embassy, Ottawa, Canada: +1 613 237 5031.

### **In the United Kingdom:**

Royal Netherlands Embassy, London, United Kingdom: +44 (0)20 7590 3200.

### **In Australia:**

Royal Netherlands Embassy, Canberra, Australia: +61 (0)2 6220 9400.

### **In Ireland:**

Royal Netherlands Embassy, Dublin, Ireland: +353 (0)1 269 3444

### **In New Zealand:**

Royal Netherlands Embassy, Wellington, New Zealand: +64 (0)4 471 6390.

### **In South Africa:**

Royal Netherlands Embassy, Pretoria, South Africa: +27 (0)12 425 4500.

## **Foreign Embassies in St Maarten and St Martin**

### **American Embassy**

American Consulate-General, Willemstad, Curacao (also responsible for St Maarten/St Martin): +599 9 461 3066.

### **Canadian Embassy**

Canadian Consulate, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago (also responsible for St Maarten): +868 622 6232.

### **British Embassy**

British Consulate, Willemstad, Curacao (also responsible for St Maarten/St Martin): +599 9 461 3900.

## Currency

The official local currency on the Dutch side is the Antillean guilder (ANG), and the currency on the French side is the euro. The US dollar is accepted everywhere on the island; local currency and US dollar ATM machines are situated throughout the island. Major credit cards are accepted in most tourist establishments.

## Port of Call - Philipsburg

In Dutch St Maarten, the port city of Philipsburg has become one of the most popular cruise destinations in the world. Grown from a Dutch colonial past the picturesque bay city has been rebuilt as a tourist haven. The most loved activities in Philipsburg are shopping and enjoying the pretty beaches, and both shops and beaches are in good supply. The Dr A. C. Wathey Cruise & Cargo Facility is a small city in itself. The cruise passenger service section, named Harbour Village and John Craane Cruise Terminal, consists of restaurants, shops and an entertainment centre so entertaining that some passengers don't ever leave the cruise terminals. About four cruise liners can dock at once, with additional cruise ships anchoring in the bay and tendering passengers to the Tender Jetty.

### Shopping in Philipsburg

Shopping in Philipsburg is rewarding for bargain-hunters looking to take advantage of the island's duty-free status. Shoppers are first introduced to Harbour Village shopping centre at the cruise docks but the best shops and markets are found in the city centre. Front and Old Streets are great for window shopping and higher-end boutiques and many of the connecting alleys offer lovely crafts and souvenirs.

**Best Buy:** Rum

### Dining in Philipsburg

Mark's Place - Caribbean cuisine in a convenient central location Daniel's By the Sea - good seafood and western favourites right on the beach Greenhouse - Lively haunt with local and international dishes

**Best Dish:** Lobster Thermidor

# Overview of the Attractions in St Maarten and St Martin

Each year hordes of tourists flock to Sint Maarten and Saint Martin for the beaches. Long Bay offers peace, quiet and perfect sunsets from luxury resorts, while Anse des Peres is a family friendly affair in the northwest, with legendary Full Moon parties at Kali's Beach Bar.

Known as the Saint-Tropez in the Caribbean, Orient Bay is the haunt of celebrities and jet-setters, but suffered large damage by Hurricane Irma in 2017. Galion Beach is the domain of surfers and windsurfers; Little Bay is a haven for bird life. Visitors can also watch planes fly infamously close to holidaymakers as they come in to land over Maho Beach.

Marigot, the French capital, is a town full of trendy restaurants, traditional stalls and a lively market full of interesting colours and smells. Philipsburg, on the Dutch side, is the duty-free shopping capital, where jewellery and souvenir shops line the main street and weary travellers can recharge in the endless restaurants and bars. The village of Grand Case comes alive from January to April for the Harmony Nights Festival, a traditional Caribbean celebration of gastronomy, music and art.

Other attractions include treetop tours in the Loterie Farm and the colourful, soothing atmosphere of the Butterfly Farm, the first of its kind in the Caribbean. Young families will also enjoy the Sint Maarten Zoo, which has over 80 species of wildlife and a dedicated play area for children.

Two miles (4km) off the coast of Saint Martin lies the wild, rocky and uninhabited Île Tintamarre. It offers some great swimming spots, with lucky snorkellers potentially glimpsing turtles and other curious creatures. Visitors are advised to take supplies for the day, as there are no shops.



## Public Holidays in St Maarten and St Martin

	2020	2021
<b>New Year's Day</b>	Mon. January 1	Mon. January 1
<b>Good Friday</b>	Wed. April 10	Tue. April 2
<b>Easter Monday</b>	Sat. April 13	Fri. April 5
<b>King's Day</b>	Sat. April 27	Sat. April 27
<b>Labour Day</b>	Wed. May 1	Wed. May 1
<b>Ascension Day</b>	Tue. May 21	Mon. May 13
<b>Whit Sunday</b>	Fri. May 31	Thu. May 23
<b>St Maarten Day</b>	Mon. November 11	Mon. November 11
<b>Christmas Day</b>	Wed. December 25	Wed. December 25
<b>Boxing Day</b>	Thu. December 26	Thu. December 26
<b>Emancipation Day</b>	Mon. July 1	Mon. July 1