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PORT EXPLORER



PHILIPSBURG ST. MAARTEN

Philipsburg is the capital of Dutch St. Maarten. It a popular port of call for cruise ships, a center for duty free shopping and the commercial hub of the island.

Though the island is basically divided in half, between the north and the south, visitors will not find any border crossings or passport control stations. Once the French and Dutch got everything worked out by treaty in the early 1700s the two countries have cooperated and gotten along well ever since.

The Dutch side of the island is to the south. Though it is relaxed, there is more of an activity oriented atmosphere. There are many popular beaches where swim suits are actually worn (optional on French beaches), numerous casinos and a vibrant partying nightlife.

In the north, the French side of the island is casual, elegant and peaceful. Marigot is the capital where the smell of freshly baked baguettes combines with the fresh scent of tropical flowers floating on the sea air. It has world class shopping as well as restaurants and cafes that serve some of the best food imaginable.

Both St. Maarten and St. Martin are wonderful and the people are as genuinely warm and inviting as the weather.

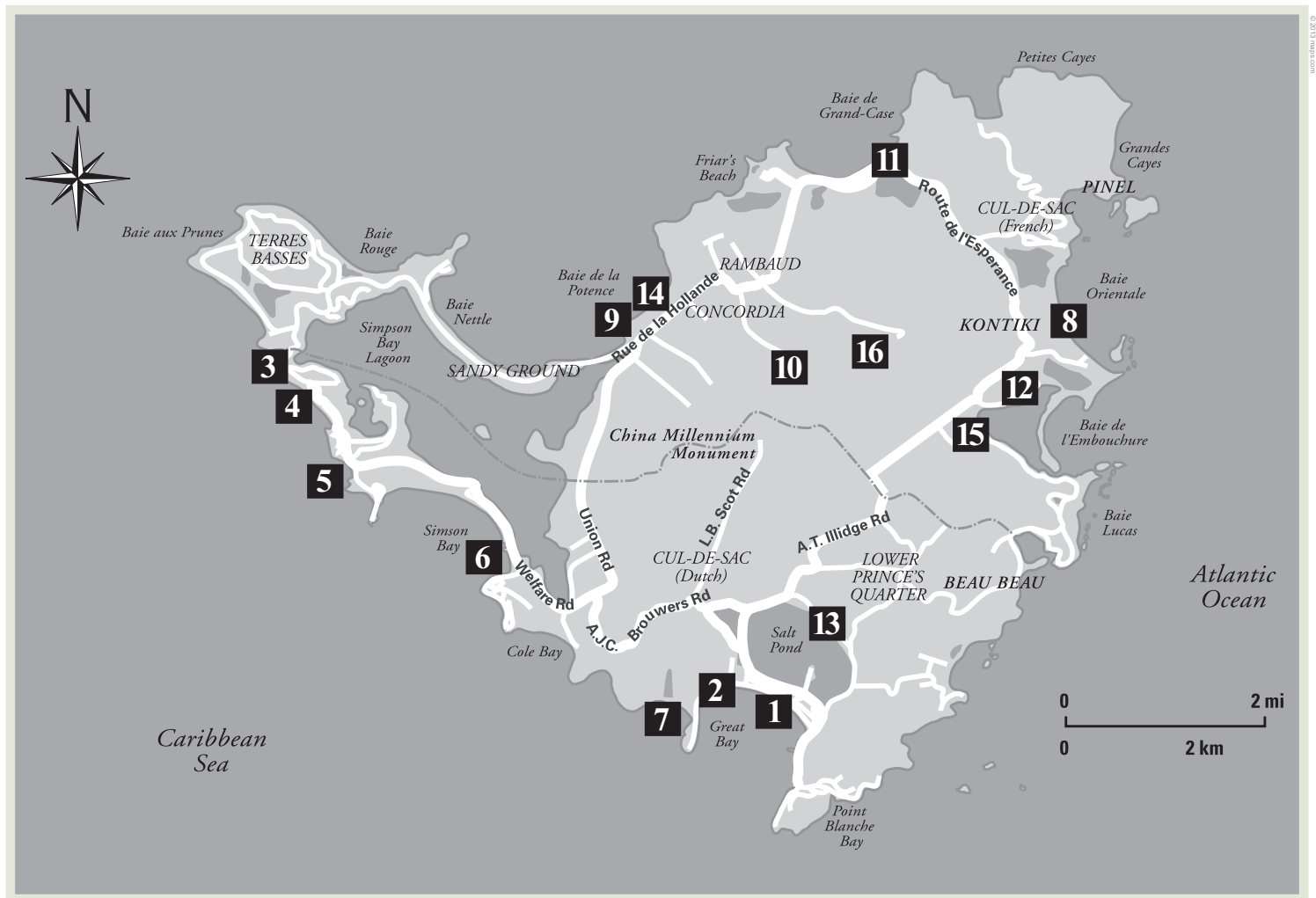


HISTORY

Long before the first European ever sailed these waters the island now known as St. Maarten/St. Martin was inhabited by a tribe of Indians called the Arawak. According to the accounts written by the early Europeans the Arawak were a peaceful, generous and friendly people. The tribe had originally come from the northeast coastal region of South America. Over many generations they had settled throughout most of the islands of the Caribbean. The Arawak had three problems however. The first problem was the fact that apparently the women of the tribe were known for their grace, beauty and hard work. The second problem was the fact that Arawak men were not fighters. And the third problem for the Arawak people was that the Carib Indians, also from the coastal regions of the Amazon, were fierce warriors ...and they were following the path of the passive Arawak north through the islands...slaughtering the Arawak men and enslaving the women as they went.

On the 11th of November, 1493, the Roman Catholic day celebrating Saint Martin of Tours, Christopher Columbus and the fleet of his second voyage to the New World discovered the island he would name in honor of the saint. By the authority of Roman Pontiff Alexander VI and without ever going ashore, Columbus claimed the island in the name of the Spanish crown and then promptly sailed away to continue his voyage towards the presumed treasures awaiting his discovery in Hispaniola. Spain was not impressed with her new acquisition however. The Spanish were too busy to concern themselves with St Maarten. There was too much treasure to be plundered elsewhere. Consequently St Maarten remained an undisturbed dot on the navigational charts of European sailors for over a century. In the 1620s the Dutch discovered on the island what the earlier Arawak had known about all along...an abundance of valuable sea salt.

The Spanish suddenly had a change of heart and drove the Dutch off St Maarten in 1633. But a little over a decade later the Spanish decided



they did not want the island any more. The French and Dutch quickly moved in and in 1648 divided the island between them. What was to have been a friendly relationship rapidly soured and over the next century-and-a-half St Maarten/St. Martin underwent a tug-of-war that saw the island change hands... sixteen times. The line of demarcation was eventually established by the 1815 Treaty of Paris. In the mid 1800s slavery was abolished in St Maarten and the prosperous economy collapsed. The island would not begin to recover till it was established as a duty free port in 1939.

ST. MAARTEN PLACES OF INTEREST

1 The **St. Martin Museum** relates the history of the island dating back to the Arawak Indians who first came here nearly 4,000 years ago. Through artifacts and exhibits the museum covers the arrival of the Europeans and the development of the plantations under slave labor.

2 **Fort Amsterdam** was built by the Dutch in 1631. The Spanish took the fort when they drove the Dutch from the island but shortly abandoned it when they decided in 1648 that they were no longer interested in keeping St. Maarten.

Beyond Philipsburg

St. Maarten/St. Martin have some wonderful beaches. Just a few of the most popular include:

- 3** **Cupecoy** is unspoiled and near the west side of the island. This is not a family beach as clothing is optional.
- 4** **Mullet Bay** is a favorite swimming location.
- 5** **Maho Beach** is popular and a great spot to lie on the sand and let the Jumbo Jets fly directly over head.
- 6** **Simpson Bay** is simply another wonderfully quiet and unspoiled beach.
- 7** **Little Bay** is a favorite spot for snorkeling.

8 **Orient Beach**, or as it is called in French "Baie Orientale", is a stunningly beautiful white sand beach. There are a variety of water activities such as para-sailing and snorkeling as well as great cafes and bars. Swimwear is optional.



If it is not sand and surf you are interested in there are plenty of other things on the island to see.

9 **Marigot** is the capital of French St. Martin. It is a charming town dotted with high end boutiques and inviting cafés.

10 Colombier is a lovely valley just north of Marigot. This is a peaceful setting with fields and meadows surrounded by shade trees and tropical plants.

11 Grand Case is a beautiful little fishing village at the northwest end of St. Martin. Grand Case has colorful Caribbean Style buildings and a number of very good cafes and restaurants.

12 The Butterfly Farm is a lush tropical garden that provides a perfect setting for hundreds of colorful butterflies. The facility also has a snack bar and gift shop.

13 St. Martin Park is another gorgeous setting and home to numerous colorful macaws and parrots. Throughout the park visitors will find close to 100 different species of birds and animals

14 Fort St. Louis was built in 1767 and named for French King Louis XV. During the reign of Louis XVI (derisively referred to as "Louis the Last") as the French Revolution was beginning to slowly come to a boil the Dutch took control of the fortification. The hilltop setting provides great views of Marigot Bay.

15 Orleans, often referred to as the French Quarter, is a small fishing village on the eastern side of the island. This was the first French settlement in St. Martin and a number of the buildings date back to the 1600s.

16 Pic Paradise (Paradise Peak) is in the middle of the St. Martin. At an elevation of 1,400 feet the observation points offer great views of the island and the surrounding blue waters of the Caribbean.

SHORE EXCURSIONS

To make the most of your visit to Philipsburg and surrounding areas we suggest you take one of our organized Shore Excursions. For information concerning tour content and pricing, consult your Shore Excursion Order Form or contact the Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, be advised to take only necessary items and secure any valuables onboard.

SHOPPING

In Philipsburg the main shopping area is Front Street. St. Maarten is a duty-free port of call with a wide selection of luxury items from around the world. Some of the most popular products include: jewelry, perfumes, leather, electronics and international fashions. In French Marigot the downtown area near the waterfront is the primary shopping area.

LOCAL CUSTOMS

Bargaining: Prices are generally fixed. Local vendors may bargain.

Tipping: Restaurants add 10-15% service charge. The same percentage is appropriate for taxis.

LOCAL CUISINE AND DRINK SPECIALTIES

The island's traditional cuisine is a combination of French, West African influenced Caribbean and a touch of Spanish

mixed in for good measure. Some local favorites include: Callaloo Soup, St. Maarten's national dish, combines callaloo (a type of green that is grown in the islands), okra, kale, onions, hot pepper, thyme, pork, salt pork and chicken stock. Johnny Cakes are sweet flat fried dough. Stuffed Crab combines a sautéed mixture of boiled crab meat, butter, tomato, chive, bread crumbs, pepper and onion then spooned back into the hollowed out crab shell and broiled.

Guavaberry Liqueur is St. Maarten's national drink. Don't confuse guavaberry with guava...absolutely no relation. The small berries are soaked in rum then combined with ginger root, brown sugar, raisins, cinnamon bark, prunes and vanilla beans then cooked down into syrup and mixed with more rum.

LOCAL CURRENCY

The Netherlands Antilles florin (NAF) is Dutch St. Maarten's official currency. In French St. Martin, the Euro is the official currency. U.S. dollars and major credit cards are accepted throughout the island.

POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE FACILITIES

The Philipsburg Post Office is located at #2 N. Debrot Street.

Place a call with your personal calling card using the following access code:

AT&T: 001.800.872.2881

TOURIST INFORMATION

In Philipsburg the Tourist Office & Visitor's Center is located in the Vineyard Office Park Building, W.G. Buncamper Rd #33. In French St. Martin the Tourist Office (Office du Tourisme) is located on Route de Sandy Ground, Marigot.

TRANSPORTATION

Taxis and rental cars are available. The law allows drivers to present either a valid international license or a valid license from your country of origin.

LOCAL DIALECT

Though Dutch and French are the official languages of St. Maarten/St. Martin, English is spoken throughout the island.

