



# St-Martin/Sint Maarten

POP ST-MARTIN 36,824; SINT MAARTEN 40,917 / 📶 ST-MARTIN 590; SINT MAARTEN 1-721

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## Why Go?

The world's smallest area of land divided into two nations, this half-French, half-Dutch island's fascinating cultural mix incorporates a rich African heritage and 120 different nationalities speaking 80-plus languages, giving rise to some of the finest cuisine in the Caribbean.

A major cruise-ship port and air hub, St-Martin/Sint Maarten's number-one focus is tourism. Spread out around the island are 37 white-sand, palm-fringed beaches, from busy stretches lined with pumping bars to tranquil hidden bays and coves. Water sports from snorkeling and diving to Jet Skiing abound, along with land-based adventures like hiking and treetop ziplining.

It's a remarkable recovery for an island that has been ravaged by hurricanes. In the last two or so decades alone, it's experienced eight ferocious storms including 1995's Luis, which decimated large swathes of the island and left thousands of residents homeless, and 2014's Gonzalo. Today, you'll see signs of ongoing reconstruction as rebuilding continues.

## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Le Pressoir (p716)
- ➔ Le Shambala Restaurant (p716)
- ➔ Côté Plages (p718)
- ➔ Canoa (p719)
- ➔ L'Escargot (p709)

## Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Le Temps des Cerises (p715)
- ➔ L'Esplanade (p715)
- ➔ Les Balcons d'Oyster Pond (p719)
- ➔ Marquis Boutique Hotel (p718)

## When to Go

**Feb–Mar** The party's in full swing during the Heineken Regatta and Carnival festivities.

**May–Jun** Capitalize on reduced prices and quieter beachscapes before hurricane season roars up.

**Nov–early Dec** Stop by just before the massive crowds roll in for the holiday season.



## St-Martin & Sint Maarten Highlights

- 1 Loterie Farm** (p714)  
Flying through the treetops on a zipline or lounging in a cabana by this oasis-like plantation's spring-fed pool.
- 2 Topper's Rhum** (p710)  
Bottling your own rum as part of a behind-the-scenes tour of Topper's distillery in Simpson Bay.

- 3 Îlet Pinel** (p710)  
Hopping on a boat for a day of snorkeling and sunbathing on this tiny islet off St-Martin's northeast coast.
- 4 Corail Helicopters** (p714)  
Swooping over the dazzling turquoise waters aboard a helicopter departing

from the Aéroport de Saint-Martin Grand Case.

- 5 Flavors of St Martin** (p708)  
Setting off from Philipsburg's Amsterdam Cheese & Liquor Store on an island-wide food tour with plenty of tastings en route.