



Martinique

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Why Go?

Volcanic in origin, Martinique is a mountainous stunner crowned by the still-smoldering Mont Pelée, the volcano that wiped out the former capital of St-Pierre in 1902. Offering a striking diversity of landscapes and atmospheres, Martinique is a cosmopolitan and sophisticated island that boasts stunning beaches, superb hiking, top-notch culinary experiences, an enormous array of activities and rich cultural life.

While it suffers from overcrowding and urban sprawl in some places, particularly in and around the busy capital, Fort-de-France, life – and travel – becomes more sedate as one heads north or south through some of the island's alluring scenery. The rainforested, mountainous northern part is the most spectacular, but the south has its fair share of natural wonders, including lovely bays and miles of gorgeous beaches. Add to this a dash of Gallic joie de vivre and you'll understand why so many people love Martinique.

When to Go

Dec–May The dry season, and the busiest time of the year, although Martinique enjoys a year-round tropical climate. Expect the island to be crowded with French holidaymakers and hotel costs to be at a premium.

Jun–Nov The rainy season with heavy showers most days. September is the rainiest month and, along with August, is most prone to hurricanes – these are the better times to avoid Martinique.

Oct–May The best months for diving, although most dive schools run trips year-round.



Martinique Highlights

1 Grande Anse des Salines (p568) Swimming and sunning yourself at one of the island's most beautiful beaches.

2 Route de la Trace (p571) Driving the scenic road through the center of the island, stopping for a walk in the foothills of Mont Pelée.

3 Presqu'île de Caravelle (p574) Soaking up the sun and sand by day and the gourmet flavors by night.

4 Grand-Rivière (p573) Hiking the dramatic 20km trail along Martinique's pristine and dramatic northern coast.

5 Les Anses d'Arlet (p565) Enjoying a day on the

beach at a gorgeous cove in southwestern Martinique.

6 St-Pierre (p570) Seeing the devastation of Mont Pelée first hand in the former capital, .

7 Jardin de Balata (p560) Putting your botanist's hat on and exploring this excellent botanical garden.