



Sint Maarten/Saint Martin, is a delightful *mélange* of Caribbean, French and Dutch cultures. This diversity is what makes this destination a stand-out. It's proudly manifest in different areas of the island in the customs, cuisine, attractions and offerings. The physical diversity ranges from gentle hills to forested mountains that tumble down to white sand beaches encircling the island.

Why two names? In 1648, one Frenchman and one Dutchman stood back to back at one end of the island and set off walking in opposite directions. The point where they met up at the other end of the island concluded the line of demarcation between Saint-Martin and Sint Maarten.

The uneven division was not without controversy. The Dutch accused the Frenchman, who had walked farther, of running. The French explained away the Dutchman's slower gate on his choice of gin over wine to hydrate. Nevertheless, the boundary was official, and the island is still divided roughly 61/39.



A week-long charter itinerary circumnavigating Saint Martin/Sint Maarten can be designed to suit. There is surf for surfing and kitesurfing, ripple-free shallows and snorkeling trails for kids, scuba dive sites, paddle board spots and miles of powder white sand for sunning, swimming and great food. The weather, water and air temperature (averaging between 77° and 84°) and dependable trade winds provide ideal conditions for all types of watersports all year round.

Watersports are by no means the only activities on the island. Walks and horse rides, bicycle touring and quad bike trails are exciting ways to explore the island. If you don't want to go it on your own, there are several tour companies with knowledgeable guides that add to dimension to your experience.

There are many family-friendly attractions, from candy shops to carousels to zip-lines. Groups of friends can explore clothing optional beaches, dance to live music and try their luck at glitzy casinos. Be romantic at cozy French cafés, indulge in spa treatments for two, and relax with cocktails on deck beneath the stars.

A Few Favorite Places



Marigot, St. Martin

For fine art collectors and admirers should visit the gallery of [Sir Roland Richardson](#), world famous for his colorful impressionist works. There's a small local market every morning by the waterside where you can buy local spices, clothes with bright Caribbean colors and motifs, and other trinkets for authentic souvenirs. If time permits, visit Fort Louis, a bit of a climb is rewarded by spectacular, panoramic views of the island.



Grand Case, St. Martin

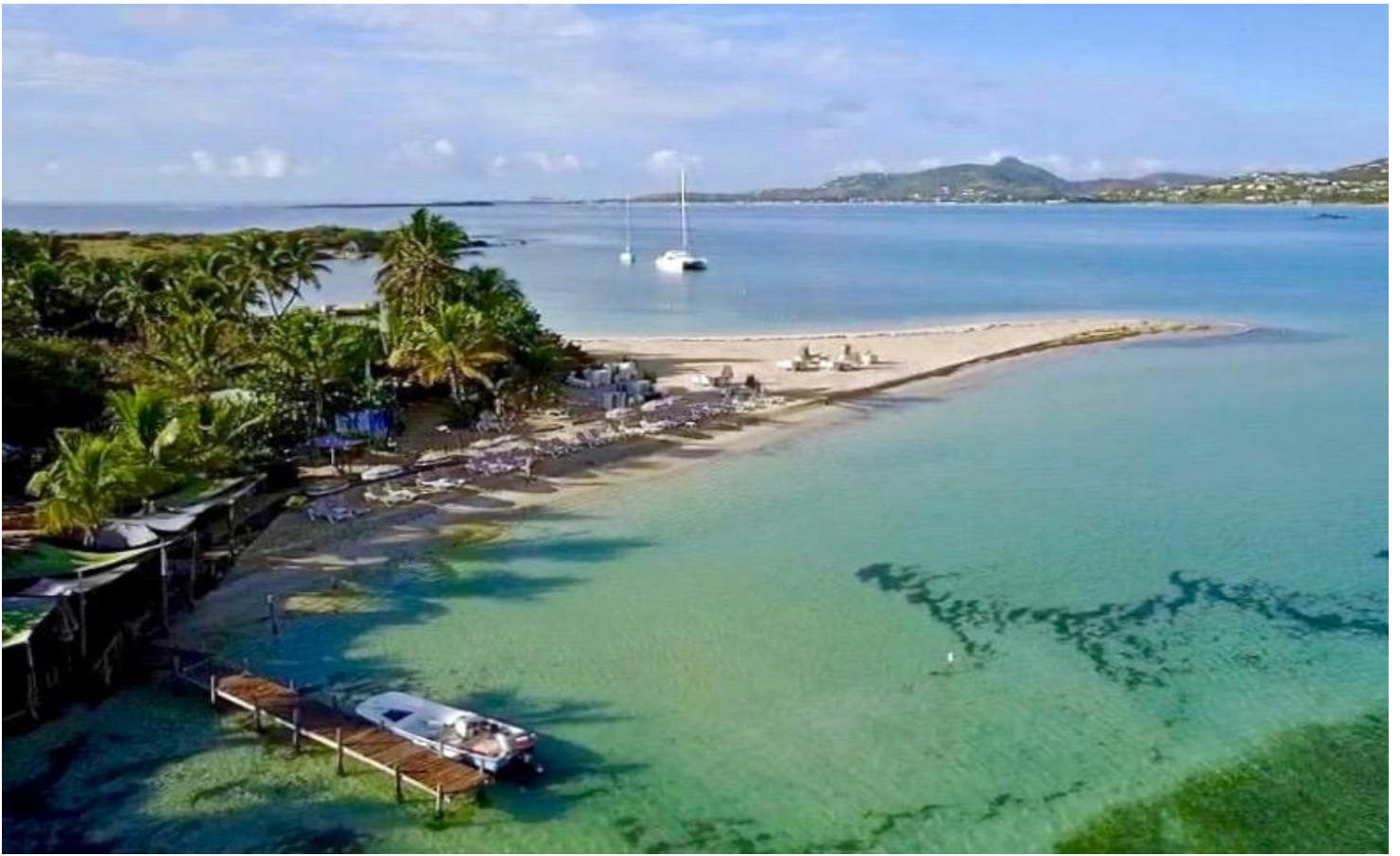
Nestled in a northern crook on the French side of Saint Martin, this enchanting seaside town's beachside road, Boulevard de Grand Case, is lined with gourmet restaurants, galleries and boutiques. Highly recommended French restaurants for fine dining are [La Villa Restaurant](#) and [L'Auberge Gourmande](#).



[Loterie Farm](#) is a favorite attraction for all ages, is easily reached from Marigot or Grand Case. Plan to spend at least a couple of hours. There are zip lines, hiking trails, the excellent Treetops restaurant, a Jacuzzi and spring fed swimming pool with rental cabanas.

Pic Paradise Hike

Park at Loterie Farm to access a great hiking trail. Switchbacks and rock scrambles are challenging, so appropriate footwear and water is essential. This is a long, sometimes difficult hike, but you'll be rewarded with beautiful views of Orient Bay, Gallion, the Orleans Quarter, Oyster Pond and St. Barths. Alternatively, drive up for a short hike at the top.



Pinel Island

Located in the heart of the Marine Park of St Martin, the beach has calm, crystal clear water, a snorkel trail and Le Karibuni Restaurant and Beach Bar, a 5-star favorite (photo above). Please be aware that Pinel Island is a clothing optional beach, especially on the north side.



Le Galion Beach

This slice of paradise features a northern end of brilliant sands and calm water so shallow you can wade out thirty yards without getting your suit wet, perfect for toddlers, children and non-swimmers. Le Galion is a popular hangout for surfing, kite-boarding, and windsurfing enthusiasts due to the trade winds along the Atlantic coast.



Phillipsburg, Sint Maarten

Phillipsburg is the Dutch Capital, which has now become the independent country of Sint Maarten. Typical Antillean architecture is painted in a rainbow of color. This is ground zero for duty-free shopping. Overlooking the beach and boardwalk, the [Ocean Lounge Bar and Restaurant](#) at the Holland House Beach Hotel is popular with residents, local power brokers and savvy businessmen.

Simpson Bay, Sint Maarten

Go for a family walking tour down to the St Maarten Yacht Club on Simpson Bay. Watch boats large and small make their way through the lift bridge at 4.30 and 5.30 pm. Then continue on to the Carousel Ice Cream Bar where an indoor carousel whirls children around on gaily painted horses.

Want to have an adult beach day on gorgeous Simpson Bay? [Karakter Beach, Lounge & Restaurant](#) serves breakfast, lunch and dinner on the beach, with live music every night. If you're comfortable with an uber-stylish young adult crowd and a never-ending party vibe, head to [Roxxy's Beach Restaurant](#).



Before your flight home, spend your final moments at the Sunset Bar & Grill, right at the end of the runway of Princess Juliana International Airport. It could blow you away. Literally.