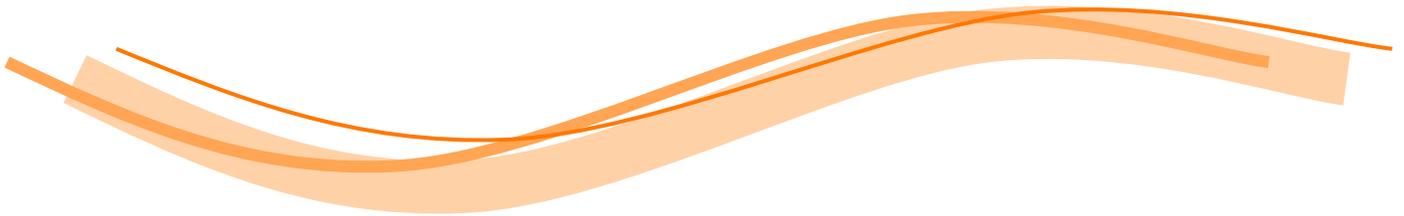




# **ST. MARTIN with WESTJET VACATIONS**





## **WESTJET VACATIONS**

**WestJet offers non-stop flights direct from Montreal**, plus a wide variety of hotel and resort options with **WestJet Vacations**. From the US to Mexico to the Caribbean - WestJet Vacations brings the same friendly, affordable and reliable service that guests are used to receiving on WestJet flights.

With WestJet Vacations your travel experience is fun and memorable from the moment you book, to the moment you return home. No wonder they have the highest satisfaction and loyalty rate of all of Canada's major Tour Operators.

This winter WestJet offers direct flights every week to both Turks and Caicos and St Martin.

### **St Martin**

The island of St. Martin – St. Maarten is divided between France and the Netherlands, but this little island offers the best of both cultures. It manages to pack a lot into just 87 sq. km., including 37 beaches, two distinct cultures and some of the Caribbean's best dining and duty-free shopping.

St. Martin, which makes up the island's northern half, is part of France. Small, low-rise hotels overlook serene beaches and candlelit restaurants run by Paris-trained chefs. It's the perfect setting for a romantic dinner for two.

St. Maarten, the island's southern half, is an autonomous country within the kingdom of the Netherlands. Livelier than the French side of the island – here high-rises, casinos, nightclubs and glittering boutiques compete for your attention.

On both sides of the island there are narrow roads that twist up and around dormant volcanic peaks – providing spectacular views of turquoise waters lapping against endless sandy beaches.

Choose from just about every warm-weather sport imaginable, including snorkeling, scuba diving, hiking, mountain biking, sailing, golf, tennis, kayaking, ziplining and sailing. Families can enjoy everything from Segway tours and parasailing to visiting St. Maarten Zoo - the largest zoo in the Caribbean.

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	<p><b>Turks and Caicos</b></p> <p>Turks &amp; Caicos is comprised of eight main islands and many smaller islands – but the best known are Grand Turk, North and South Caicos, and most tourists visit the island of Providenciales. Turks &amp; Caicos has some of the Caribbean's finest beaches. They're clean and surround each island like a white ribbon - and are the kind you dream of when you think of a sun holiday.</p> <p>Relaxation and watersports are the primary focus and popular activities involve getting out on the water – for instance, enjoy a sunset catamaran cruise, or snorkel around a pristine coral reef. On dry land and you can take advantage of great golfing, nature walks, tax-free shopping and dining. Don't miss the seafood and conch on many local menus.</p>
<p><b>WestJet</b></p>	<p>WestJet is Canada's most preferred airline, offering scheduled service to 81 destinations in North America, Central America and the Caribbean.</p> <p>Powered by an award-winning culture of care, WestJet has pioneered low-cost flying in Canada.</p> <p>Recognized nationally as a top employer, WestJet now has more than 9,000 WestJetters across Canada.</p> <p>Operating a fleet of 100 Boeing Next-Generation 737 aircraft with future confirmed deliveries for an additional 35 Boeing Next-Generation 737 aircraft through 2018 and plans to launch a low-cost regional airline in 2013, WestJet strives to be one of the five most successful international airlines in the world</p> <p>Website: <a href="http://www.westjet.com">www.westjet.com</a></p> <p>Connect with WestJet on Facebook at <a href="http://www.facebook.com/westjet">www.facebook.com/westjet</a></p> <p>Follow WestJet on Twitter at <a href="http://www.twitter.com/westjet">www.twitter.com/westjet</a></p> <p>Subscribe to WestJet on YouTube at <a href="http://www.youtube.com/westjet">www.youtube.com/westjet</a></p>
<p><b>Why choose WestJet Vacations?</b></p>	<p>WestJet Vacations is your home for picture perfect getaways to some of the most beautiful spots in Mexico, the Caribbean and the U.S. Their vacation experts work hard so you can play hard. In fact, they're always coming up with great deals and packages to suit all tastes, interests and budgets. And they stand behind every one of those packages because WestJetters don't just work for WestJet, they own it. And owners care.</p> <p>WestJet Vacations offer thousands of vacation packages, all backed by WestJetters who care.</p> <p>You'll experience WestJet's famous guest service when booking your vacation, at the airport and in the air.</p>

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	<p>WestJet's extensive and reliable flight schedule means your vacation can be 5, 7, 10 days...your choice.</p> <p>Get great deals such as free nights, room upgrades, free breakfasts plus free accommodation and meals for kids.</p> <p>WestJet Vacations' product buyers research hotels, activities, prices and overall quality to help you plan the perfect vacation.</p> <p>Fly on WestJet planes with comfortable leather seats, ample legroom and large overhead bins.</p> <p>And you can rely on WestJet to take care of you if there's a flight delay, even if it's mother nature's fault.</p>
<b>The WestJet Experience</b>	<p>WestJet strives to offer guests a friendly, efficient and relaxing experience from the time of booking to the final destination. Guests now have a variety of innovative options to make their travels as smooth as possible.</p> <p>At most airports, WestJet's check-in choices include web check-in, mobile check-in, self-serve check-in or traditional counter check-in. Flowthrough check-in, both cost-effective and space-saving, has also been adopted at some of WestJet's airports. In 2007, WestJet was the first airline in North America to launch the electronic boarding pass, which is accepted at all Canadian destinations.</p> <p>The WestJet experience is delivered by its people. At the heart of numerous awards and distinctions are more than 8,000 WestJetters working hard to deliver a world-class guest experience. With an average of 1,200 resumes received each week, WestJet is able to recruit and train fun, friendly and caring people.</p> <p>WestJet's fleet of Boeing Next-Generation 737 aircraft are equipped with increased legroom, leather seats and live seatback television provided by Bell TV. Guests can also enjoy all the comforts of WestJet lounges. These third-party owned and operated lounges are available at airports in Toronto, Calgary, Winnipeg, Vancouver and Montreal. WestJet lounges offer guests a quiet place to work or relax before their flight. See <a href="http://www.westjetlounges.com">www.westjetlounges.com</a> .</p> <p><b>NEW! Tablet rental program</b></p> <p>WestJet has introduced tablet rentals as they transition to their new inflight entertainment system in 2013. Tablets will be available on five of their newest aircraft instead of live seatback television for flights over three hours 20 minutes, not including red-eye flights. Guests will be able to rent a tablet preloaded with early-release movies and television shows. The rental price is \$10.</p>

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<p><b>Reward Program</b></p>	<p>Vacationers can earn <b>WestJet dollars</b> by flying or by having the WestJet RBC MasterCard. With the WestJet Frequent Guest Program you earn WestJet dollars by flying and with the WestJet RBC MasterCard, you earn WestJet dollars by spending on the card and by flying with WestJet.</p> <p><b>\$1 WestJet dollar = \$1 CDN towards travel with WestJet</b>          WestJet dollars can be used like cash to pay for all or part of a WestJet flight or WestJet Vacations package. And \$1 WestJet dollar equals \$1 CDN towards travel with WestJet. Best of all, you can use your WestJet dollars at any time, to any destination, with no blackout periods. You can even use them on seat sales.</p> <p><b>Frequent Guest Program:</b> Earn up to 2.5% back in WestJet dollars when you fly with WestJet. Keep spending and earn additional WestJet dollars + bonuses like companion tickets, free lounge passes and advance seat selection.  <a href="http://www.westjet.com/guest/en/rewards/frequent-guest-program.shtml">http://www.westjet.com/guest/en/rewards/frequent-guest-program.shtml</a></p> <p><b>WestJet RBC MasterCard:</b> Apply today and get a Welcome bonus of up to \$100 WestJet dollars. Earn up to 1.5% back in WestJet dollars on everyday purchases and up to 2% back when you purchase WestJet flights or WestJet Vacations packages with your card.  <a href="http://www.westjet.com/guest/en/rewards/credit-card.shtml">http://www.westjet.com/guest/en/rewards/credit-card.shtml</a></p>
<p><b>Some WestJet Facts</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WestJet is one of the most profitable airlines in North America.</li> <li>• WestJet was inducted into the corporate culture hall of fame after being named one of Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures in 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008.</li> <li>• WestJet was named a J.D. Power 2011 Customer Service Champion.</li> <li>• WestJet employs more than 8,000 WestJetters.</li> <li>• WestJet flies a modern fleet of fuel-efficient Boeing Next-Generation 737 aircraft.</li> <li>• The longest flight on WestJet is approximately seven hours and two minutes from Montego Bay to Edmonton.</li> <li>• WestJet has three sizes of planes; 737-600 (119 seats), 737-700 (136 seats) and 737-800 (166 seats).</li> <li>• WestJet flies an average of 420 flights every day.</li> <li>• Approximately 82 per cent of eligible WestJetters own shares in the company through the employee share purchase plan (ESPP).</li> </ul>
<p><b>WestJet Milestones</b></p>	<p><b>1996</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WestJet founded by Clive Beddoe, Mark Hill, Tim Morgan and Donald Bell.</li> <li>• WestJet takes to the skies with 220 employees and three aircraft (Boeing 737-200s) with service to Vancouver, Kelowna, Calgary,</li> </ul>

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- Edmonton and Winnipeg.
- WestJet adds Victoria, Regina and Saskatoon to its network.
- 1997**
- WestJet adds an eighth destination with service to Abbotsford.
- 1999**
- WestJet expands its network to serve 12 Canadian destinations.
  - WestJet completes its Initial Public Offering of 2.5 million common shares
- 2000**
- WestJet begins service in Eastern Canada, adding Hamilton, Moncton and Ottawa to its network.
  - WestJet announces its first stock split.
- 2001**
- WestJet accepts delivery of its first Boeing Next-Generation 737 aircraft (a 737-700).
  - WestJet adds five additional routes, expanding its network to 20 Canadian destinations.
- 2002**
- WestJet launches service to Toronto Pearson International Airport.
  - WestJet successfully offers three million common shares, yielding net proceeds of \$78.9 million.
  - WestJet announces its second stock split.
  - WestJet named one of Canada's Top 100 Employers.
- 2003**
- WestJet expands service to 24 Canadian destinations, including Halifax and St. John's. For the first time, WestJet's network spans Canada coast to coast.
  - WestJet named Canada's second-most respected corp by Ipsos Reid.
- 2004**
- WestJet begins transborder service to seven U.S. cities.
  - WestJet announces its third stock split.
  - WestJet installs the first live seatback television onboard its Next-Generation aircraft.
- 2005**
- Adding service to seven new destinations, WestJet flies to 23 Canadian and 10 U.S. destinations.
  - WestJet named Canada's most admired corporate culture by Waterstone Human Capital.
  - WestJet retires the last Boeing 737-200.
- 2006**
- WestJet named Canada's most admired corporate culture for the second year in a row by Waterstone Human Capital.
  - WestJet introduces international service with flights to the Bahamas.
  - WestJet Vacations is launched in June.

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	<p><b>2007</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WestJet is named Canada’s most admired corporate culture for a third-consecutive year by Waterstone Human Capital.</li> <li>• WestJet introduces its community investment program, WestJet Cares for Kids.</li> <li>• WestJet is the first airline in North America to launch an electronic boarding pass.</li> </ul> <p><b>2008</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WestJet is named Canada’s most admired corporate culture for a fourth-consecutive year by Waterstone Human Capital.</li> <li>• WestJet adds eight additional routes to serve 30 Canadian, 14 U.S. and 11 international destinations.</li> </ul> <p><b>2009</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WestJet opens its new Calgary office building, built in accordance with the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System.</li> <li>• WestJet and WestJet Vacations announce service to 13 additional destinations, including Varadero, Holguin and Cayo Coco, Cuba.</li> </ul> <p><b>2010</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WestJet is named to the corporate cultures hall of fame after five straight years of being selected as one of Canada’s most admired corporate cultures by Waterstone Human Capital.</li> <li>• The WestJet RBC MasterCard and the WestJet Frequent Guest Program are launched.</li> <li>• In 15 years, WestJet grows from three aircraft, five destinations and 220 employees to 91 aircraft, 71 destinations and more than 8,000 WestJetters.</li> </ul>
<p><b>South Destinations</b></p>	<p>WestJet Vacations fly to a wide variety of southern destinations this winter 2012-2013:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bermuda</li> <li>Bridgetown, Barbados</li> <li>Cabo San Lucas, Mexico</li> <li>Cancun, Mexico</li> <li>Cayo Coco, Cuba</li> <li>Cozumel, Mexico</li> <li>Freeport, Bahamas</li> <li>Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands</li> <li>Holguin, Cuba</li> <li>Ixtapa/Zihuatanejo, Mexico</li> <li>La Romana, Dominican Republic</li> <li>Mazatlan, Mexico</li> <li>Montego Bay, Jamaica</li> <li>Nassau, Bahamas</li> <li>Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic</li> </ul>

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	<p>Puerto Vallarta, Mexico  Punta Cana, Dominican Republic  Samana, Dominican Republic  San Juan, Puerto Rico  Santa Clara, Cuba  St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands  St. Lucia  St. Maarten  St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands  Turks and Caicos, Providenciales  Varadero, Cuba</p>
<p><b>US Destinations</b></p>	<p>There are more vacation opportunities with this impressive list of WestJet destinations in the States:</p> <p>Albuquerque, New Mexico  Austin, Texas  Boston, Massachusetts  Chicago, Illinois  Dallas, Texas  El Paso, Texas  Fort Lauderdale, Florida  Fort Myers, Florida  Fresno, California  Honolulu, Hawaii  Houston, Texas  Jacksonville, Florida  Kauai, Hawaii  Key West, Florida  Kona, Hawaii  Las Vegas, Nevada  Los Angeles, California  Maui (Kahului), Hawaii  Miami, Florida  Monterey, California  Nashville, Tennessee  New Orleans, Louisiana  New York (Newark), New York  Orange County - Anaheim, California  Orlando, Florida  Palm Springs, California  Pensacola, Florida  Phoenix, Arizona  Reno, Nevada  Sacramento, California  San Diego, California</p>

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	<p>San Francisco, California          San Jose, California          Santa Barbara, California          Tampa, Florida          Tucson, Arizona          Washington, D.C</p>
<b>Canadian Gateways</b>	<p>And with this range of Canadian gateway airports, it's easy to arrange for groups of family or friends to get together in WestJet Vacations array of destinations:</p> <p>Abbotsford, British Columbia          Calgary, Alberta          Charlottetown, P.E.I.          Comox, British Columbia          Deer Lake, Newfoundland          Edmonton, Alberta          Fort McMurray, Alberta          Grande Prairie, Alberta          Halifax, Nova Scotia          Hamilton, Ontario          Kamloops, British Columbia          Kelowna, British Columbia          Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario          London, Ontario          Moncton, New Brunswick          Montreal, Quebec          Ottawa, Ontario          Prince George, British Columbia          Quebec City, Quebec          Regina, Saskatchewan          Saskatoon, Saskatchewan          St. John's, Newfoundland          Sydney, Nova Scotia          Thunder Bay, Ontario          Toronto, Ontario          Vancouver, British Columbia          Victoria, British Columbia          Windsor, Ontario          Winnipeg, Manitoba          Yellowknife, NWT</p>
<b>Responsible Travel</b>	<p>Since 2001, WestJet has spent more than \$2 billion upgrading its fleet to the more fuel-efficient Boeing Next-Generation 737-series aircraft. Emissions from these aircraft are 30 per cent lower on a per person basis than the fleet of 200-series aircraft WestJet replaced. WestJet currently has one of the youngest and most fuel-efficient fleets in North</p>

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	<p>America with most aircraft equipped with blended winglets, which significantly reduce fuel burn and emissions.</p> <p>WestJet is the world-wide leader and the first carrier in Canada to adopt Required Navigation Performance (RNP) approach technology to land aircraft. RNP utilizes Global Positioning System satellites to allow aircraft to fly direct and precise approaches to airports. This shortens flight time and miles flown, also reducing fuel burn and emissions.</p> <p>Construction of WestJet's new Calgary campus facility is complete. The building was constructed following the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) program, which promotes buildings that are environmentally responsible, profitable and healthy places to live, work and play. For more on WestJet's green initiatives, visit the Environment section on <a href="http://www.westjet.com">www.westjet.com</a>.</p>
<b>Contact</b>	<p>Telephone: 1-877-737-7001</p> <p>Website: <a href="http://www.westjetvacations.com">www.westjetvacations.com</a></p>

<b>HOTEL PRIZE PARTNER</b>	<p><b>Grand Case Beach Club, St Martin</b></p> <p>Grand Case Beach Club is an intimate resort - the secluded location provides a private, serene oasis where the only noise is the sound of the breeze through the coconut palms, and the lapping of the waves of the quiet Caribbean. Discover two private beaches, fiery sunsets, and a romantic atmosphere.</p> <p>Set along the two best swimming beaches in St. Martin, Grand Case Beach Club features breathtaking views of the Island of Anguilla. The resort is located in Grand Case, a small fishing village on the northwest coast of French St. Martin. Small wooden pastel-colored houses with elaborate gingerbread facades line the village's main road - this is the real French Caribbean.</p>
<b>Location</b>	<p>Located on the French side of St. Martin this resort is just 13km from Princess Juliana International Airport</p>
<b>Facilities</b>	<p>The tour desk can arrange for local sightseeing, including half day and day sails on a catamaran, snorkeling and scuba diving, as well as visits to the nearby islands of Anguilla, Saba, St. Bart's, and St. Eustatius. A unique feature of the resort is the Boardwalk, located around the hill between the two beaches and connected to the Sunset Cafe. It's a common sight to see guests sipping cocktails and watching the fish, especially the tarpon at night.</p>
<b>Accommodation</b>	<p>Grand Case Beach Club provides spacious rooms with views of the ocean or lush tropical gardens and offers a relaxing atmosphere where guests can rejuvenate, or get ready to explore the island.</p> <p>The 72 accommodations are a mix of studios and one and two bedrooms. Every unit, which features twin or king-size beds, has a</p>

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	refrigerator, microwave, toaster, coffeemaker, dishes, pots, pans, cutlery, and granite counter tops. Also provided are satellite flat screen color TV, safe, direct dial telephone, internet access, and state-of-the-art security. Each unit has a comfortable sitting area with sofa and easy chairs. Bathrooms have been upgraded in most of the units and feature mahogany countertops, indirect lighting, new commodes and mirrors.
<b>Children</b>	Babysitting services are available at a charge and there are rollaway cribs and high chairs.
<b>Activities</b>	The use of all non-motorized water sports equipment, including kayaks, float mats, snorkel gear, paddleboats and sailboat; tennis court and swimming pool is included. For the fitness room, there is a small charge.
<b>Restaurants</b>	The Sunset Cafe, open seven days a week for breakfast, lunch, dinner and Happy Hour, not only features excellent international cuisine with a Caribbean flair but also a superb view of the ocean a few yards away. Operated by Alexandre and Chantal, natives of France, the restaurant serves reasonably priced specials plus signature dishes in a casual setting. Alexandre's culinary background includes the Savoy and French Embassy in London, and extensive experience on St. Martin. Complimentary continental breakfast is included in all room rates. Room service is available for all meals.
<b>Tour Operator</b>	<b>WestJet Vacations</b> – pick up their Mexico, Caribbean and USA 2012-13 brochure from your local travel agent and check out <a href="http://www.westjetvacations.com">www.westjetvacations.com</a>

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<p><b>ST. MAARTEN</b></p>	<p>St. Maarten is the smallest landmass in the world to be shared by two different nations and its thirty seven square miles are divided between France and the Netherlands. The French territory covers about two thirds of the island and is technically a part of Europe and the European Community. On 10 October 2010, Sint Maarten became a constituent country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, making it a constitutional equal partner with Aruba, Curaçao, and the Netherlands proper.</p> <p>But this little island of only 37 square miles has big things to offer. There is no real border, so visitors to St Maarten can experience the best of both cultures – as well as the splendid beaches, fine restaurants, elegant casinos, spectacular nightlife and some of the best duty free shopping in the world. There is still plenty of untouched land and the varied terrain includes a mountain range and pretty villages.</p> <p>St Maarten also has the Caribbean’s largest lagoon - the Simpson Bay Lagoon - packed with luxury yachts. It is landlocked with the exception of two narrow channels with draw bridges. The Lagoon is large enough to have a real sail and is home to a giant fleet of yachts, which are either berthed in one of the luxury marinas or anchored in the sheltered waters.</p> <p>On the French half of the island you will encounter the level of luxury accommodation and superb cuisine that the French are famous for. Stroll the boulevards while taking in the aroma of freshly baked croissants and decadent French pastries, or sip on a café-au-lait at one of the charming cafés and bistros. Don’t be confused, however, by the strong French influence—you are still in the Caribbean, and the glory of the beach and sun will melt your troubles away. Meanwhile the cheaper Dutch side is easily accessible, offering great Duty Free shopping, casinos and bars. Sophisticated yet quaint, laid-back yet luxurious, this is the Caribbean that most people dream about...</p>
<p><b>Location</b></p>	<p>St Martin is situated at the northern tip of the Lesser Antilles archipelago. Hillside rising from the centre of this island are covered in sparse vegetation, comprised of shrubs and cacti. The island is divided in two parts, French (Saint-Martin, 55 km<sup>2</sup>) and Dutch (Sint-Maarten, 33 km<sup>2</sup>). The closest neighboring islands are Anguilla, Saint Barthelemy, Saba, Saint Eustatius, and Saint Kitts and Nevis.</p>
<p><b>Geography</b></p>	<p>With a total surface area of 90 square km, the island stretches 15 km at the longest point and 13 km at its widest point. Average altitude: 20 meters. Highest point: Pic Paradis at 424 meters</p>

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<b>Name</b>	Columbus sighted the island on November 11, 1493, the feast of St. Martin, and named the island accordingly.
<b>Population</b>	41,000 people live on St. Maarten and 36,000 on St. Martin for a combined total of 77,000. The island is a melting pot of 100 different nationalities.
<b>Language</b>	Officially, French is the language of St. Martin and Dutch in St. Maarten, but almost everyone speaks English, and many speak Spanish as well. French Creole and Papiamentu, a Creole language of the Netherlands Antilles, is spoken here locally, especially in the southern parts of the island
<b>Currency</b>	The euro is the legal currency on the French side, but US\$ are also commonly used on both sides of the island, especially the Dutch side. \$1 CDN = 0.75 Euro as at 24 January 2013 On the Dutch side the official currency is the Netherlands Antilles florin: \$1 CDN = 1.78 florin
<b>Tipping</b>	Hotels on the French side typically add 5% occupancy tax per person, but a small gratuity is greatly appreciated for exceptionally good service. Restaurants also add a service charge to the bill. For taxi drivers it is customary to tip between 50 cents and a dollar, while porters at the airport usually get \$1 per bag.
<b>Government</b>	French St. Martin is part of the préfecture of Guadeloupe and is considered part of France while Dutch St. Maarten is a constituent country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.
<b>Documentation</b>	Canadian citizens require <b>one</b> of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A valid passport and a return/continuing ticket.</li> <li>• A certified copy of birth certificate, a photo identification and a return/continuing ticket.</li> <li>• Canadian residents who are not citizens require a Permanent Resident Card with valid passport and return/continuing ticket.</li> </ul>
<b>Time zone</b>	Atlantic Standard Time, year round.
<b>Health</b>	St. Maarten Medical Center in Cay Hill and L'hospital General de Gaulle in Marigot, St. Martin offer first class services, but the island has no significant health hazards and no inoculations are needed.
<b>Safety tips</b>	Though St. Maarten is generally a safe place, like everywhere else in the world there is crime, and you should be aware of your surroundings at all times.

<b>CLIMATE</b>	
<b>General climate</b>	Sub-tropical, with trade winds from the Caribbean Sea. The island has a year-round temperature of approximately 27°C.
<b>Today's weather</b>	Philipsburg in St. Maarten is 26C and sunny (26 January 2013)
<b>Best time to visit</b>	The island has a lovely climate year round but there is an obvious enhanced attraction for Canadians in the winter months!

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	Rainy season runs from late May to mid-November. This doesn't mean it rains for days at a time or even every day. But this also roughly corresponds to the official Atlantic hurricane season, June 1 to November 30.
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<b>GETTING AROUND</b>	
<b>Getting There</b>	Flying time is 4 hours 20 minutes from both Toronto and Montreal. When leaving St. Martin by plane, travelers pay an exit tax at the Phillipsburg airport. Travellers departing on international flights pay US\$30.
<b>Cities</b>	<p>There are no cities on the island – it is part of the attraction of the place. The two capital towns are not much more than large villages: Phillipsburg on the Dutch side and Marigot on the French side.</p> <p><b>Philipsburg</b>, capital of the Dutch side, is named, perhaps surprisingly, for an 18th-century Scottish governor. The town has always enjoyed an uncommonly lovely setting at the headlands of Great Bay, on a spit of land separating the Caribbean from the Great Salt Pond. Its superb, deep natural harbor can accommodate such enormous cruise ships as the Queen Mary II. There are many handsome colonial buildings, including the ornate white 1792 Courthouse (still in use) replete with cupola at Wathey Square, which roughly bisects Front Street, the main drag.</p> <p>Over the last several years, Philipsburg has undergone a beautification project. The face-lift added a delightful beachfront red brick boardwalk (Great Bay Beach Promenade), with newly planted royal palm trees, clock towers, and old-fashioned cast-iron street lamps and benches. The beach side of Front Street is now a pedestrian-friendly place to stroll, goggle at the cruise ships and mega-yachts, walk in the sand, or enjoy the sunset over an umbrella-shaded concoction in one of the many inviting cafes.</p> <p>The continuing makeover includes a revamped tourist office, marinas, and expanded ferry and cruise dock, and the rejuvenation of Back Street, which now has improved pavement and sidewalks, the underground placement of electrical cables, newly planted trees and shrubs, and new streetlights.</p> <p><b>Marigot</b>, capital of the French side, is one of the Caribbean's more charming towns: gas lamps, sidewalk cafes, and traditional Creole brightly hued, gingerbread-trimmed wood houses ringing a lovely harbor, as well as a separate marina, Port la Royale. Aside from drinking in the marine activity (and kirs or rum punches), there are several boutiques and galleries worth exploring. The waterfront Market is a hub nearly every day for vendors and farmers. It's busiest early</p>

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	mornings as islanders converge to buy fresh-caught fish, fruits, vegetables, and herbs. A crafts market is there on Wednesdays and Saturdays, vendors sell colorful dolls, spices, drums, trinkets, clothing. A steep trail runs from the harbor-side Sous-Préfecture (by the splashy West Indies Mall) to Fort Louis. Better preserved than its Dutch side counterparts (forts Willem and Amsterdam), the 1767 bastion was erected to repel English incursions. Its hilltop situation rewards hikers with sensational 180-degree vistas of Marigot, Simpson Bay lagoon, and most of the French coast, with Anguilla shimmering in the background.
<b>Distances</b>	The whole island is only 15 km by 13 km, so nowhere is too far away from wherever you happen to be! Although the traffic can be chaotic, so allow more time than the short distances suggest.
<b>Ferries</b>	There's a daily ferry to Anguilla, every 30 minutes from 8am to 17:30pm (departure at the Marigot Water Front) St Martin/Anguilla : \$ 20 or € 20 round trip per person, children under 12 years pay half price
<b>Jitneys</b>	An inexpensive way to get around the island is hopping aboard the little vans that are the usual mode of transportation for the islanders. The "jitneys" have signs that indicate where they are going and you can hail them to pick you up. Your colorful ride will be to the accompaniment of native zouk and soca music. Max taxi cost is around \$25.
<b>Car Rental</b>	Rental agencies are located at both airports and at the major hotels. Driving is on the right side of the road, and most of the roads are in fairly good repair
<b>Buses</b>	Traveling by minibus or minivan is a reasonable means of transport on St. Maarten/St. Martin if you don't mind some inconvenience and overcrowding. Buses run daily from 6am to midnight and serve most of the major locations on both sides of the island. The most popular run is from Philipsburg on the Dutch side to Marigot on the French side. Privately owned and operated, minibuses tend to follow specific routes; the fare is \$1.50 (buses accept both dollars and euros).

<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	Westjet Vacations offer all-inclusive and semi-all inclusive packages on both sides of the island and weekly direct flights from Montreal and Toronto.
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<b>LIFESTYLES</b>	
<b>Kids</b>	<p><b>Butterfly Farm</b>, Rte. de Le Galion, Quartier d'Orléans, Phone: 590/87-31-21. Daily 9AM-3PM. Stroll through hundreds of colorful butterflies under a tented mesh. It's a fun outing for \$12. When I was there, a number of chrysalides were opening up.</p> <p><b>Kid Connect</b>, (599)526-6152. An activity centre for kids open daily from 9:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. and until 11:00PM on Friday and Saturday. Kid</p>

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	<p>Connect is located on the Dutch Side across the street from Caribbean Cinemas and not too far from both Paradise Plaza Casino and Tropicana Casino.</p> <p>Children can dip their toes in the calm, clear waters at <b>Le Galion Beach, St. Martin</b>: It's not called the "children's beach" for nothing. Gentle waves lap a white-sand beach, where the shallow waters seem to go on forever. It's the perfect place for kids to learn the delights of swimming in the sea.</p> <p><b>Aqua Mania Adventures</b> offers a plethora of pleasures out of Pelican Marina, Simpson Bay tel. 599/544-2640; <a href="http://www.stmaarten-activities.com">www.stmaarten-activities.com</a>. Kids can take turns piloting the <b>Calypso</b> in Simpson's Bay's serene waters (\$20), then bombard a small wreck with water balloons. Prizes and bobbing blow-up animals keep things happy. Or the family can frolic just offshore on Playstation (\$15 for a half-day; 9:30am-4:30pm), a converted colorful "swing, slide, and splash" catamaran that resembles an avant-garde art installation. The platform includes Tarzan swings, several slides, and plenty of room to clamber.</p>
<b>Teens</b>	<p><b>Loterie Farm</b>, Rte. de Pic du Paradis, Phone: 590/87-86-16 or 590/57-28-55; features Hikes and Ecotours on a 150 acre preserve and "The Fly Zone" a fun <b>Zip Line experience</b> with rope zips and an obstacle course high up in the trees. Also has a "Ti' Tarzan" zip course for the kids and "The Fly Zone Extreme" a new Zip that goes up over 100ft.</p>
<b>Romance</b>	<p>Try a romantic horseback ride along the beach with your loved one. You actually dip into the water astride your horse during rides with Bayside Riding Club on the French side and Lucky Stables on the Dutch side (the latter also offers rugged 2-hr. jaunts down to Cay Bay).</p>
<b>Honeymoons &amp; Weddings</b>	<p>Wedding Requirements for St. Maarten:          Couples planning on getting married on St. Maarten must be at least 18 years of age. Requests must be submitted at the least 14 days prior to the scheduled ceremony to be conducted by the Registrar.          The following notarized original documents must be submitted to the Registrar with your request:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A full abridged birth certificate to prove the legality of the same. These documents should be provided with an "Apostille" stamp. The "Apostille Stamp" can be obtained in Canada at the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Dutch Consulate has to legalize said documents.</li> <li>- Unmarried persons must present a declaration of marital status not older than 3 months;</li> <li>- Persons must be 18 years of age;</li> <li>- Address of both parties;</li> <li>- Names of parents and maiden name of mother;</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Date and Place of birth of parents</li> <li>- Professions of bride and groom and of parents</li> <li>- Six witnesses if the marriage is performed outside of the Marriage Hall. Non-Dutch witnesses must present a valid passport or a birth certificate with a picture I.D.</li> <li>- If widow(er), a death certificate;</li> <li>- If divorced, a divorce certificate or a final judgment decree;</li> <li>- A valid passport is required;</li> </ul> <p>Original documents other than Dutch or English need to be translated into the Dutch language</p> <p>The cost for contracting foreign marriages is US\$286 and includes civil ceremony, marriage book, stamps and certificate.</p> <p>Marriages will be performed after all documents are found correct by the Civil Registrar.</p> <p>Questions can be directed to: Chief Registrar - Census Office Soualiga Road, Philipsburg, St. Maarten Fax: + 599-542-4267</p>
<b>Seniors</b>	<p>St Maarten is very suitable for senior travellers. It has great dining, civilized resorts and long beaches that are perfect for gentle strolls. It is also manageable in terms of size and nowhere is more than short taxi drive away.</p>

<b>UNIQUES</b>	<p>St. Maarten is the smallest landmass in the world to be shared by two sovereign nations, the Netherlands and France.</p>
<b>Surprising</b>	<p>St. Maarten has the reputation of being the dining capital of the Caribbean with wonderful cuisine from France, Italy, Germany, Argentina, India, Vietnam, China, and of course great Creole and Caribbean dishes.</p>
<b>History</b>	<p>Archaeological excavations in progress here since the 1950's have revealed the presence of <b>Amerindian</b> civilizations, which succeeded each other from 2000 B.C. to the 15th century AD. Between 800 BC and 300 BC, <b>Arawak Indians</b> arrived on the island. Two groups have settled on the Hope Estate site (situated in the hills opposite what is now the Route de l'Espérance leading to Grand-Case airport) at different periods, one group between 300 B.C. and 200 B.C. and the other between 300 A.D. and 500 A.D. It seems that these first semi-nomadic inhabitants came from South America and survived by hunting, fishing and gathering. Other migratory waves of fishermen and horticulturists settled in villages. More than thirty pre-Colombian locations have been discovered around the island, amongst them one in Bay Rouge in the Lowlands, which continues to increasingly interest archaeologists.</p> <p>In 1400 A.D. a fearsome tribe of cannibalistic warriors arrived, and wiped out the Arawaks. According to historical studies, the <b>Tainos</b> were the last Amerindian inhabitants to live here in the 1500's. They were</p>

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	<p>decimated then, in turn by the arrival of the first European settlers carrying disease and viruses.</p> <p><b>November 11th 1493</b>, Christopher Columbus discovers Saint Martin          The Spanish navigator Christopher Columbus docks on the island on November 11th 1493, on St-Martin's day, during his second expedition to the Caribbean. This was a breakthrough for the Western world. He named the island Saint-Martin. Throughout the 16th Century, an era of infamous piracy and buccaneers, the Spanish, French, Dutch, English, Portuguese, and Flemish all coveted the island for its protected anchorages and its salt deposits. The island earned its nickname Soualiga, Land of Salt from this latter characteristic. It was during this same century that the last remaining Amerindians were reduced to slavery and deported to neighboring islands. Then the island became too small for the conquistadors, losing all interest for the Spaniards who deserted gradually.</p> <p>Aside from asserting title to the place, the Spanish never took much interest in St.Martin, so the <b>Dutch</b>, seeking an outpost halfway between their colonies in Brazil and Nieuw Amsterdam (now New York), occupied the island in 1631. The Dutch West India Company installed Jan Claeszen van Campen as governor, erected their first fort on the site of Fort Amsterdam, and began to mine salt. Before long, however, the Spanish, who wished to maintain their state monopoly in this essential preservative, became aware of the incursion and in 1633 they recaptured the island, expelling all of the Dutch, who then moved on to occupy Curaçao.</p> <p><b>How the Dutch and French finally partitioned the island</b> makes for a great story. Supposedly, the two groups held a contest. Starting at Oysterpond on the east coast, they would walk westwards - the French along the northern edge, the Dutch along the southern - and where they met they would draw a dividing line across the island. The French set off, having fortified themselves with wine, the Dutch with gin. The ill effects of the gin, however, caused the Dutchmen to stop along the way to sleep it off; consequently, the French were able to cover a much greater distance. In truth, though, the French had a large navy just off shore at the time the treaty was being negotiated, and they were able to win concessions by threat of force. The treaty was signed on top of Mount Concordia in 1648, but despite the reputation for peaceful cohabitation, the border was to change another 16 times until 1815 when the Treaty of Paris fixed the boundaries for good.</p>
<b>Books</b>	<b>Frommer's Guide: Portable St. Maarten/St. Martin</b> , Anguilla & St. Barts
<b>1000 Places to See Before You Die</b>	<b>La Samanna Resort</b> , northwest of Mullet Bay: Caribbean magic with a Moroccan flair on 55 beautiful beachfront acres

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<b>Must Sees</b>	<b>Pic du Paradis</b> , Route de Pic du Paradis from Friars Bay Beach. Pic du Paradis is the highest point on the island (1400ft/427m) with two viewing areas that provide great views. The road is steep and isolated and four wheel drive is required. I loved walking about the summit in the wind with views in every direction.
<b>SPORTS ACTIVITIES</b>	The 12 Metre Challenge America's Cup sailing is a huge attraction on the island.
<b>Golf</b>	<b>The Towers at Mullet Bay</b> <a href="http://www.towersatmulletbay.com">www.towersatmulletbay.com</a> , a timeshare condominium complex on the Dutch side, is where you'll find the island's only golf course. It's an 18-hole Joseph Lee-designed course. Mullet Pond and Simpson Bay Lagoon provide both beauty and hazards. Greens fees are \$60 for 9 holes or \$88 for 18 holes, for players who opt to walk instead of ride. Renting a two-person electric cart will cost an additional \$8 to \$18 depending on how many holes you play. Club rentals cost \$21 for 9 holes or \$26 for 18 holes.
<b>Fishing</b>	The offshore waters offer a wide and challenging variety of gamefish including <b>marlin, tuna, dolphinfish, barracuda, and kingfish</b> . The Marlin Cup occurs in the month of May and the Saint-Martin Billfish Tournament takes place here every year in the month of June. Boats can be chartered at reasonable rates.  <b>Billfish Tournament.</b> One of the Caribbean's most prestigious fishing competitions lasts nearly the entire week, attracting anglers from Europe and the Caribbean. About 30 fishing boats battle at the Marlin Boulevard area, rich fishing grounds about 48km east of St. Maarten. Go to <a href="http://www.billfish-tournament.com">www.billfish-tournament.com</a> for details. Usually second week of June.
<b>Horse riding</b>	Several riding centres offer you rides; you can swim with the horse or ride by the sea, at sunset time. Ride along St. Martin's most beautiful bay. One and a half miles of white sand beach and scenic trails wander through the Island's Nature Marine Reserve. The highlight of the two hour ride is swimming with your horse in the calm crystal waters of the bay. Stop for a complimentary drink at Tropical Wave, a restaurant set at the far end of this majestic beach with Bayside Riding Club
<b>Hiking</b>	There is a 40 km network of marked out paths. Walks are short, between 1 hour and 4 hours or more; there are clearly defined footpaths running through the mountains and along the shore.
<b>Watersports</b>	<b>Windsurfing:</b> at the Flamboyant Resort <b>Kite surfing:</b> At Baie Orientale <b>Sailing:</b> For racing enthusiasts, a number of regattas are held here every year usually at the end of March. The Golden Eagle is a 76ft Catamaran that will take you to Tintamare Island to see flying fish and dolphins

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<p><b>Diving</b></p>	<p>Scuba diving is excellent around St. Martin, with reef, wreck, night, cave, and drift diving; the depth of dives is 6 to 21m. Off the northeastern coast, dive sites include Îlet Pinel and Creole Rock, for shallow diving; Green Cay, a barrier reef; and Tintamarre, for sheltered coves and geologic faults. To the north, Anse Marcel and neighboring Anguilla are good choices. St. Maarten's crystal-clear bays and countless coves make for good scuba diving as well as snorkeling. Underwater visibility runs from 23 to 38m. The biggest attraction for divers is the 1770 British man-of-war, HMS Proselyte, which came to a watery grave on a reef 2km off Philipsburg in 1801. Other excellent sites include Tugboat Annie, Frenchman's Reef, Lucy's Barge, Pelican Rock, the double pinnacles of One Step Beyond, Moonhole (a large crater with caves and walls of sponges), and the intact fishing vessel Fu Cheng 36m down.</p> <p>Memorable sightings amid virtual mountain ranges of coral with crevices, ledges, and drops galore include schools of vibrantly colored fish from grunts to queen angels, sea fans beckoning like come-hither courtesans, stingrays, mantas, moray eels, barracuda, tarpon, banded coral shrimp, Caribbean spiny lobsters, endangered turtles (green, leatherback, hawksbill, loggerhead), and reef and nurse sharks. Most of the big resorts have facilities for scuba diving and can provide information about underwater tours, photography, and night diving.</p> <p><b>Scuba Fun Dive Center</b> has offices at Marina Port Lonvilliers, Anse Marcel (tel. 590/87-36-13; <a href="http://www.scubafun.com">www.scubafun.com</a> ), and Dock Maarten Marina, Great Bay, Pointe Blanche (tel. 599/542-3966). Morning and afternoon dives in deep and shallow water, wreck dives, and reef dives cost \$45 per dive (certified divers only).</p>
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<p><b>CULTURE</b></p>	
<p><b>Arts</b></p>	<p>There is a thriving arts and culture scene with events like the St. Maarten Book Fair and the St Maarten's Art Trail.</p>
<p><b>Music</b></p>	<p>Free entertainment abounds in the St. Maarten resort areas. Most restaurants (notably at Simpson Bay) and beach bars (especially on Orient Bay) host rocking live bands at least once a week. Hotels sponsor beachside barbecues with string bands.</p> <p>Then there are the regular community jump-ups. Friday nights, the Philipsburg boardwalk along Front Street percolates with activity, as does Marigot's waterfront market Wednesdays and Sundays in season. Tuesdays from January to May, the "Mardi de Grand Case" (aka Harmony Night) explodes with color and sound: brass or steel drum bands, dancers, street performers, local crafts booths, and mouth- (and eye-) watering barbecue.</p>

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<b>Films</b>	<b>Speed 2: Cruise Control</b> , the 1997 sequel to Speed, starring Sandra Bullock was partly filmed in St Martin.
<b>Museums</b>	<p><b>St. Martin Museum</b>, "On The Trail Of The Arawaks" At the southern end of Marigot, next to the Marina Port la Royale, is a museum dedicated to preserving St.Martin's history and culture. A new building houses a variety of pre-Colombian treasures unearthed by the Hope Estate Archaeological Society. Among these are a reproduction of the 1,500 year old burial mound that was only discovered in 1994, artifacts dating back as far as 1800 BC, and some beautifully adorned ceramics from around 550 BC. A colonial exhibit details the history of the plantation and slavery period, and early 20th Century photographs provide glimpses into the island's modern development. It is open daily free of charge.</p> <p><b>The St. Maarten Museum</b>, Front Street, Philipsburg The Sint Maarten Museum reflects both the history of the island and its inhabitants from prehistoric to modern times. Here, visitors can peruse artifacts and pottery from the island's original inhabitants, the Arawaks, and learn about cargo that was salvaged from a British man-of-war HMS Proselyte which sank off the coast in 1801.</p>
<b>Festivals</b>	<p><b>Carnival.</b> Festivities on St. Martin last for nearly 2 months starting the second Sunday in January with parade rehearsals and band tryouts. Carnival reaches its frenzied peak on the French side in February, with jump-ups, barbecues, and pageants. It all leads to J'ouvert, the weekend before Mardi Gras and lasts until Ash Wednesday. The wild dancing-in-the-streets parades represent the culmination of an entire year's preparation from creating the feathered, sequined costumes to writing the unique musical themes. The streets are crowded with young and old following trucks with enormous sound systems in Marigot until everyone congregates at "Carnival Village" come nightfall for concerts and events, including the crowning of the Carnival King and Queen.</p> <p>The Dutch side chimes in in April with its own, even more extravagant version, beginning the Wednesday after Easter Sunday and continuing for 15 riotous days of beauty pageants, costume and calypso competitions, Mas bands, parades, shows, and assorted revels. The Carnival Village features stands dishing out spicy local fare and an enormous stage where local and international musicians perform nightly. J'ouvert, the opening jump-up, showcases local and international bands and thousands of revelers line the streets and follow the bands until they arrive at Carnival Village. More parades are held the next morning, and the grandest of all takes place on the Queen's Birthday. Crowds pack the streets of Philipsburg</p>

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	<p>ying for a spot to see the musicians, the outrageous costumes, and the colorful floats. The Last Lap, the grand finale of the Carnival, includes a symbolic burning of King Momo, a straw figure who embodies the spirit of Carnival. Island legend claims that burning the King in effigy will purge the sins and consequent bad luck of the village. Check <a href="http://www.stmaartencarnival.com">www.stmaartencarnival.com</a> for more information.</p> <p><b>Heineken Regatta</b> in March This annual series of major boat races debuted in 1980. More than 200 vessels, from converted family fishing dinghies to race prototypes, compete in several categories. It's a prime excuse for partying, particularly on the Dutch side. For details, go to <a href="http://www.heinekenregatta.com">www.heinekenregatta.com</a> . First weekend of March.</p> <p><b>St. Maarten's Day.</b> Christopher Columbus named the island St. Maarten/St. Martin because he discovered it in 1493 on November 11, the feast day of St. Martin of Tours. Island residents on both sides still celebrate it as an official holiday, organizing various sporting events, parades, and jump-ups over 2 to 3 days. November 11.</p>
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<p><b>ATTRACTIONS</b></p>	<p><b>Grand Case:</b> small typically Creole village, by the sea, with its gourmet and local restaurants and its arts and crafts. From January to May, on Tuesdays, the “Mardis de Grand Case” or the Harmony Night festival, with brass bands and West-Indian orchestras, you will discover the local craft, the local or gourmet cuisine in a festive, family and convivial environment.</p> <p><b>Orleans:</b> The French Quarter The quiet little fishing village of Orleans, also called the French Quarter, is located on the eastern side of the island just north of the border with St.Maarten. It was the original settlement of the French in St.Martin and some of the original seventeenth-century structures are still preserved here.</p>
<p><b>Beaches</b></p>	<p>Beaches are a main attraction on the island. It has <b>37 beaches</b> total, with hotels holding property on most of them. Beach Bars and Cafes are very popular attractions on the island. They offer exquisite cuisines with European and Caribbean inspiration. Frozen cocktails are also a trendy treat to keep down the heat.</p> <p><b>Orient Bay</b>, for example, has an underwater marine reserve where snorkeling and other water sports are available. All the beaches of Saint Martin are fine for swimming and sun bathing. The island caters to all, with beaches of fun things to do as well as secluded and more private ones.</p> <p>This being a European island, topless sun bathing is frequently seen. Completely nude sun bathing is also accepted but for the most part is</p>

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	<p>limited to a section of Orient Beach on the French side of the island and Cupecoy Beach on the Dutch side. One particularly famous beach is <b>Maho Bay</b> beach. The beach is situated at the end of the airport's runway, meaning large aircraft fly just feet over your head.</p> <p>Just beyond Maho Bay is <b>Mullet Bay</b>; some say it has the nicest beach on the island, with food and drink vendors and beach lounge rentals but few facilities. Watersports and parasailing are widely available.</p> <p><b>Cupecoy Beach, St. Maarten:</b> This Dutch-side beach boasts gorgeous multihued cliffs pocked with caves, and the occasional green flash sighting at sunset.</p> <p><b>Dawn Beach, St. Maarten:</b> The views of St. Barts, great beach bars, excellent windsurfing, and superb snorkeling enchant at any time of day.</p> <p>My personal favourite is <b>Guana Bay</b>, just north of Philipsburg up Pondfill and Guana Bay roads. It is long, wide, windswept, and usually deserted (aside from a few surfers). It's topless; the southern section is often clothing-optional. The Atlantic swells are to be respected, and it lacks shade and facilities, but the rugged beauty, seclusion, and smashing St. Barts views compensate wonderfully.</p>
<b>Wildlife</b>	<b>Sint Maarten Park:</b> More than one hundred fifty animals of eighty different species of Amazonian jungle live in relative liberty in the safari reserve.
<b>Plantations</b>	<b>The Mont Vernon Plantation:</b> on the way to Orient Bay takes you back to the yesteryear of the Caribbean. On more than two hectares of a magnificent park among plantations of cotton, coffee, manioc, tobacco, corn, sugar cane and spices gardens, you will discover the trade secrets of rum production, the coffee roasting art, and the mysteries of indigo.
<b>Gardens</b>	<b>St. Maarten Zoological and Botanical Garden, Madame Estate</b> Visitors to the St. Maarten Zoological and Botanical Garden will gain a new-found understanding of plants and animals that are indigenous to the Caribbean and the American tropics. Discover over 80 different species of animals, including the largest display of exotic parrots in the Caribbean. Take a stroll through the reptile house, come up-close and personal with tropical birds in the walk-through aviary and admire an endless variety of tropical flowers in the Park's botanical gardens. <a href="http://www.stmaartenpark.com">www.stmaartenpark.com</a>
<b>Historical Sites</b>	<b>Fort St. Louis:</b> Overlooking Marigot Bay on the leeward side of the island sits the imposing figure of Fort St. Louis, the largest historical

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	<p>monument in St.Martin. Named for the famous crusading king of France, it was originally built in 1767 to protect the settlement at Marigot from foreign invaders.</p> <p><b>Fort Amsterdam:</b> Built in 1631 on the peninsula between Great and Little bays as the Caribbean's first Dutch bastion, Fort Amsterdam was promptly captured by the Spaniards, who made it their most important garrison outside El Morro in San Juan before abandoning it in 1648. Only one small intact storage building, a few walls, and rusted cannons remain, but it's most noteworthy for its smashing views of Philipsburg</p> <p><b>The Old House</b> is a restored 18th-century green-and-black sugar plantation greathouse, the Old House has an interior that carefully replicates the life of a typical planter: with period furniture and original family portraits and personal objects preserved for six generations. The museum's complementary second half retraces the history of rum, from the first voyages of Columbus, through the buccaneer days and the rise of the sugar plantocracy, up to the effects of Prohibition.</p>
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<b>OTHER ACTIVITIES</b>	
<b>Shopping</b>	<p>One of the great attractions of the island has been the duty-free shopping available on both sides of the island. Luxury items from all over the world, French and Italian clothing fashions, Dutch and Japanese electronics, Indonesian batiks and Chinese embroidery, jewelry, leather, crystal, liquors, and fine porcelain, free of all taxes and customs, are regularly offered at bargain prices.</p> <p><b>Front Street in Philipsburg</b> is a mind-boggling display of rampant consumerism. And it's all duty-free, from luxury watches to diamonds to Delft china.</p>
<b>Markets</b>	<p><b>The Market in Marigot</b> features fruits, vegetables, fishes, spices, and craft every day.</p>
<b>Nightlife</b>	<p>There's a surprisingly large number of hot nightclubs in St. Maarten. Many places also provide music for dancing, as do the many nightclubs around the island. Bands play a variety of zouk, calypso, reggae, jazz, and pop.</p> <p><b>Oualichi Club.</b> The only club in Philipsburg. Easy access on the Boardwalk. Easy private parking. Indoor and outdoor dance floors with views of great bay and the cruise ships. Open every Friday and Saturday night 10PM -3AM.</p> <p><b>Privé.</b> Trendy sky Bar and lounge, indoor with an open terrace on the top of the Mega Yacht Building and views of Simpson Bay strip and</p>

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	<p>lagoon. Open 6PM - 3AM every day. On the Simpson Bay strip at the top of the Market Garden Supermarket</p> <p><b>Bliss Night Club.</b> At Caravanserai Beach Resort. Not far from the Princess Juliana International Airport Has restaurant, 2 bars, cabana seating around a pool and ocean views.</p>
<b>Casinos</b>	<p>French St. Martin does not have any casinos; however, there are 14 casinos on the Dutch side. Most hotels provide round-trip transportation to the casinos.</p> <p><b>Casino Royale,</b> St. Maarten (tel. 599/545-2590), is the island's largest and glitziest casino, but really gets the nod over its competitors for its Vegas-style showroom and upstairs high-tech disco throwback, Q-Club.</p>

<b>CUISINE</b>	
<b>Food</b>	<p><b>St. Maarten, the culinary capital of the Caribbean,</b> is a gourmet paradise. Aromas blend in the air as chefs combine sweet and spicy Caribbean flavors with sophisticated recipes from Europe and Asia. French, Italian, Continental, Creole... With more restaurants than days in a year, dining on this island is a culinary experience to remember. Known as the "Gastronomic Capital of the Caribbean", St. Maarten offers perhaps the widest variety of cuisine and prices of any other island in the world. It boasts well over 300 restaurants serving anything from local BBQ ribs and chicken, to first class French fare cooked by famous chefs imported for the season from Paris. It is said that one such chef, searching for a lighter side of French cooking for those vacationing in warmer climates, invented Nouvelle Cuisine right here.</p> <p>Other than local style and French culinary delights, worldwide cuisine is well represented on the island with choices from Italian, Tex-Mex, Thai, Vietnamese, Indian, Japanese and Chinese, to name but a few. There are also a number of outlets that specialize in health foods and vegetarian menus. And you will be astounded by the extensive wine lists and cocktail menus offered by many of the island's dining havens. And yes, there are McDonalds, Burger King, KFC and Subway's for those of you that must have a fast food fix every couple of days. One could eat at a different restaurant every day of the year and never repeat once.</p>
<b>Rum</b>	<p>Local distillers blend or infuse Caribbean rums creatively. Look for <b>Rum Jumbie</b>, whose flavored varieties include coconut, mango, vanilla, and pineapple. But its trademark is Guavaberry liqueur (incorporating citrus, spices, and passion fruit), sold in sculpted brown figurine bottles.</p>
<b>Restaurants</b>	<p>The island has some <b>300 restaurants</b> with a wide variety of offerings available to both tourists and locals. The French cuisine and local fare is an exciting experience to most, but if you are apprehensive about trying</p>

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	<p>new things, there are other restaurants. The island has restaurants that are American, Mexican, Chinese, Italian, vegetarian and more. Here are some excellent recommendations from our good friends at Frommer's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Temptation</b>, Cupecoy, St. Maarten, lives up to its admittedly silly if appropriate name with the island's most creative fare, not to mention an incredibly hip space. I have yet to experience a bad dish, let alone a mediocre meal.</li> <li>- <b>Rare</b>, Cupecoy, St. Maarten, is the other brainchild of Temptation's wunderkind chef/owner, Dino Jagtiani. Aside from the witty decor and winning beef selection, his delightful side dishes are fun and inventive.</li> <li>- <b>L'Hibiscus</b>, Grand Case, St. Martin, is tiny and on the "wrong side" of Grand Case Boulevard, so it gets overlooked. But not by savvy locals, including rival restaurateurs, who appreciate the flavorful blend of classic French and Creole fare.</li> <li>- <b>Spiga</b>, Grand Case, St. Martin, proves that Grand Case (and St. Martin) can cook Italian with equal panache. From tuna carpaccio to tiramisu, everything is perfection.</li> <li>- <b>Lolos</b>, St. Martin/St. Maarten, is a term for the basic outdoor shacks dishing out heaping helpings of heavenly Creole fare at unbelievably fair prices. The biggest concentration lies along the beach in Grand Case.</li> </ul>
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<b>MORE INFO</b>	
<b>Brochures</b>	Pick up the Westjet Vacations brochure from your local travel agent. St Maarten Tourist office: Vineyard Office Park, WG Buncamper Rd. #33, St. Maarten N.A Tel: +599-542-2337 E-mail: <a href="mailto:info@st-maarten.com">info@st-maarten.com</a>
<b>Websites</b>	<a href="http://www.WestJetVacations.com">www.WestJetVacations.com</a> <a href="http://www.vacationstmaarten.com">www.vacationstmaarten.com</a> <a href="http://www.st-martin.org">www.st-martin.org</a>

<b>AIRLINE PRIZE PARTNER</b>	<b>Westjet</b>
<b>2013 Flight details</b>	Sundays from Montreal

<b>PERSONAL EXPERIENCES</b>	Paradise Peak; Philipsburg; Butterfly Farm – near Orient Beach The Devils Cupper – cliffs, rocks; Guana Bay – deserted beach Orient Beach; Grand Case; Marigot – the St Tropez of the Caribbean
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