



THE CARIBBEAN
Bible.

THE CARIBBEAN / DESTINATION GUIDE

Sint Maarten

Your island guide.



Colin Hobson / Unsplash

Two sides of one island.
A new bay every day.

BEACHES · EXPERIENCES · STAYS · LOCAL KNOW-HOW

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START HERE

An island, at your pace.

A practical guide to Dutch Sint Maarten and French Saint-Martin: beach days, good food and short island journeys, with the practical differences clearly marked.

Start with the price key, choose a base, then build days around nearby places. The recommendations are editorial selections for different travel styles. Leave time for the island between bookings.

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KEEP A COPY OFFLINE

Price key: page 3. Emergency contacts: page 20. Check the safety notes on page 19 before exploring. Contents and numbered source references are clickable.

This guide follows the destination scope used on The Caribbean Bible website. It is researched travel guidance, not a claim of personal inspection or guaranteed availability.

01 / PRICE OVERVIEW

Price overview

Use the dollar symbols to compare expected spending within each category. They are planning estimates, not live quotations.

\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
BUDGET	MODEST	MIDRANGE	PREMIUM	LUXURY

A free-to-enter beach can still cost money for chairs, shade, parking or lunch. Ranges show different ways to visit, such as independent access versus a guided tour. The symbols do not represent fixed US-dollar bands or a quality score.

Compare like with like

Stays: an entry room or accommodation category per night. Season, occupancy, meal plan and room type can change the tier.

Food: an ordinary meal with a soft drink, excluding alcohol and tasting menus.

Beaches: basic access and a chair where relevant, excluding meals or premium cabanas.

Experiences: an adult ticket or standard outing; private guiding and transfers can change the total.

Shopping: the scale of a likely purchase; browsing is generally free.

MONEY ON THIS TRIP

Dutch Sint Maarten uses the Caribbean guilder, XCG; French Saint-Martin uses the euro. US dollars are widely accepted, but conversion and change vary by business. XCG replaced the old Netherlands Antillean guilder in 2025. Check the currency on menus, taxi quotes and card terminals every time you cross sides. [04]

Before paying: ask which currency is being quoted, and whether taxes, service charges, transport, deposits and equipment are included. Use the final total for your exact dates when comparing offers.

02 / BEFORE YOU GO

Before you go

Prepare the official paperwork and the first transfer before leaving home.

Complete the SXM entry form

Use [entry.sx](#) for the official entry form when arriving through Princess Juliana Airport. Complete the required traveller details and save the confirmation offline, including when your accommodation is on the French side. Follow the portal's current timing and instructions for your journey.

[01] [02]

Check both jurisdictions

Dutch Sint Maarten and French Saint-Martin have different entry and visa rules. Verify both if your trip uses both sides; an open land crossing does not cancel document requirements. A visa for mainland Europe is not automatically the correct permission for every Caribbean territory.

[01] [03]

Documents for every traveller

Check passport validity, visa eligibility and any transit-country requirements for each nationality in your party. Carry your accommodation address and onward or return booking. An arrival form does not replace a visa. Follow the entry permission actually granted at the border.

[01]

Children and consent

Check the destination's rules when a child travels alone, with one parent or with another adult. Ask the airline what originals are needed. Pack relevant consent and custody documents where required, plus copies stored separately; matching surnames alone do not establish permission.

[01]

Insurance and first night

Cover treatment, evacuation and the activities you intend to book. Save the insurer's assistance number offline. Send your driver the airport code, flight number and exact accommodation address. Keep arrival day light and retain a payment method for unexpected costs.

[07]

Pack the useful essentials

Bring sun protection, suitable footwear, prescribed medicine in original packaging, a charger, adaptor and refillable bottle. Add insect repellent and a small first-aid kit. Keep essential medicine and documents in hand luggage, and leave a little spare room for local purchases.

Use the official links. Recheck requirements before departure, particularly when your party uses different passports.

03 / CHOOSE YOUR BASE

Choose your base

Choose the beach and evening atmosphere you want nearby. Crossing the island is easy to imagine but traffic can reshape the day.

AREA	A GOOD FIT FOR	PLAN AROUND
Simpson Bay	Restaurants, boat departures and Dutch-side convenience.	Traffic, aircraft noise and the exact beach access.
Maho / Cupecoy	Airport proximity, dining and southwest beaches.	Aircraft activity, evening atmosphere and road congestion.
Philipsburg / Little Bay	Town shops, boardwalk walks and nearby resort beaches.	Cruise-day crowds and the setting of the particular hotel.
Grand Case	French-side food, a village atmosphere and beach stays.	Restaurant-night parking and a planned return ride.
Orient Bay	A developed French-side beach setting with food nearby.	Wind, beach activity and the precise accommodation location.
Anse Marcel / quieter north	A more secluded hotel or villa stay.	Hilly access and transport for meals beyond the property.

Our planning pick: one base for 5–7 nights. Ask for the real peak-time journey before committing to a restaurant across the island or an early ferry connection.

04 / SIX BEACHES TO KNOW

Six beaches to know

These six give you different island moods. Check wind, swell, parking and swimming conditions on the day.

DUTCH SIDE

Mullet Bay

A southwest-coast beach for open sand and a slower afternoon. Swell can change swimming conditions, so reassess when you arrive. Confirm chair prices and the return pickup point, and keep valuables out of sight before parking.

\$-\$\$\$ · [15] [16]

FRENCH SIDE

Orient Bay

A French-side beach with restaurants, beach clubs and water-sports options. Choose the specific section and check wind conditions before booking an activity. Ask what a chair package includes and respect the customs and signs of the area you visit.

\$\$-\$\$\$ · [15] [16]

FRENCH SIDE

Anse Marcel

A northern cove to compare for a quieter, more planned beach day. Check public access and any beach-restaurant booking requirements before driving there. The approach and return need time, especially when you are unfamiliar with the hills.

\$\$-\$\$\$ · [15]

A photograph cannot show current surf or jet-blast risk. Follow local warnings and keep the day's swimming separate from an aircraft-viewing stop.

PRICE LEVELS: \$ budget to \$\$\$\$ luxury, within each category. See page 3.

DUTCH SIDE

Great Bay

A Philipsburg beach that pairs easily with the boardwalk and town. Expect a busier atmosphere on cruise days. Separate swimming space from boat activity and compare chair-and-drink packages carefully; convenience does not mean every service is free.

\$-\$\$\$ · [16]

FRENCH SIDE

Grand Case beach

A useful choice for combining sea time with the village's food scene. Pick a safe access point and keep clear of boats. Reserve dinner separately if it matters to your plan, and arrange a return ride before the evening gets busy.

\$-\$\$\$ · [15]

DUTCH SIDE · AIRCRAFT VIEWING

Maho Beach

Visit for the aircraft setting, with strict respect for airport warnings. Never hold the fence or stand behind departing jets: jet blast can cause serious injury. Keep roads clear and choose a safe viewing position; it is not the island's most relaxing beach day.

\$-\$\$\$ · [16] [20]

05 / ON AND AROUND THE WATER

On and around the water

Nearshore trips offer plenty of variety. An international ferry excursion requires a separate document and timing check.

FRENCH-SIDE ISLAND DAY

Pinel Island

A short-island outing from the French side, with beach time and food depending on your chosen arrangement. Confirm the current boat or kayak access, facilities and last return. Do not assume an afternoon crossing will still operate if wind increases.

\$\$-\$\$\$ · [15]

NEAR GRAND CASE

Creole Rock snorkelling

A guided Grand Case-area outing can suit travellers wanting a shorter water trip. Tell the operator your swimming ability and ask about flotation and time in open water. Enjoy the reef without standing on or touching living coral.

\$\$-\$\$\$ · [17]

END THE DAY AFLOAT

A sunset sailing trip

Choose a shorter coastal sail when you want an easy evening rather than a full excursion day. Compare departure marina, route, group size and food. Keep the return ride arranged and accept a changed route when the marine forecast requires it.

\$\$\$ · [17]

Choose the operator, conditions and return arrangements before the photograph. Ask about lifejackets, boarding, shade, toilets, group size and the weather cancellation policy.

A PROTECTED COASTAL SETTING

Tintamarre by boat

Choose a managed excursion that respects protected areas and wildlife. Ask about passenger numbers, landing arrangements and how conditions affect the route. Turtle sightings are never guaranteed, and responsible operators should not encourage chasing or handling animals.

\$\$\$ · [17]

SIMPSON BAY AREA

A lagoon kayak tour

An organised paddle can offer a different view of the Simpson Bay area. Ask about the exact route, wind, boat lanes and the skill required. Treat it as a guided paddling outing rather than assuming every part of the lagoon is suitable for swimming.

\$\$-\$\$\$ · [17]

LEARN WITH AN INSTRUCTOR

An introductory dive

Choose a qualified dive operator and complete its health questionnaire. Ask about instruction, site conditions and equipment before paying. Discuss flying-after-diving intervals for your actual itinerary, including any short flight to another island.

\$\$\$ · [17]

PRICE LEVELS: \$ budget to \$\$\$\$ luxury, within each category. See page 3.

06 / BEYOND THE BEACH

Beyond the beach

Historic towns, green hills and the island's communities add another layer to the beach holiday.

FRENCH-SIDE HISTORY

Fort Louis and Marigot

Visit the fort above Marigot for its setting and views, allowing for a climb, sun and uneven surfaces. Take water and use safe access. Pair it with a town stop rather than squeezing it between several distant beach appointments.

\$-\$\$ · [17]

HISTORY AND A HILLTOP VIEW

Emilio Wilson estate

Visit the estate's historical displays and compare the available park experiences. The story of the land and its people deserves attention alongside the view. A scenic chairlift ticket and an adventure activity may have different age, health and access requirements.

\$\$-\$\$\$ · [19]

FRENCH-SIDE TOWN ATMOSPHERE

Marigot at a slower pace

Make a daylight visit for the waterfront, market area and a café stop. Ask what is locally made and enjoy the town beyond a hurried souvenir purchase. Choose a known parking place and keep the return plan simple.

\$-\$\$ · [17] [33]

These are suggestions for separate outings. Compare the map, opening arrangements and your group's energy before combining them into one day.

DUTCH-SIDE TOWN LIFE

Philipsburg heritage walk

Explore the town's historic streets and include a local museum visit when open. A guided walk can explain more than the shopping façades alone. Keep the route comfortable in the heat and allow for cruise-day crowds and ordinary traffic.

\$-\$\$ · [17]

FRENCH-SIDE GREENERY

Loterie Farm

A green inland option with hiking and leisure activities that need separate checking. Ask about current trail access, guiding, physical demands and the package you intend to buy. Bring suitable shoes and do not turn a forest visit into an improvised remote hike.

\$\$-\$\$\$\$ · [18]

FOOD AS PART OF ISLAND LIFE

Grand Case village evening

Build an evening around a walk in the active village area and a booked meal or lolo stop. Check the current events rather than assuming a street festival happens every week. Use a known driver when staying elsewhere on the island.

\$\$-\$\$\$ · [21] [26]

PRICE LEVELS: \$ budget to \$\$\$\$\$ luxury, within each category. See page 3.

07 / A TABLE FOR EVERY MOOD

A table for every mood

A shortlist for local flavour, an easy lunch and a meal worth planning around.

FRENCH SIDE • LOCAL GRILLS

Grand Case lolos

Choose one of the casual open-air grills and ask what is cooking fresh. Check portions, sides and the currency before ordering. This is a good way to keep room for local food alongside the island's more elaborate restaurant evenings.

\$\$ · [21]

DUTCH SIDE • ESTATE SETTING

Emilio's

A restaurant at the historic estate in Dutch Cul de Sac, useful for a planned lunch or dinner. Check service times independently from the adventure park. Compare the menu and give the setting time rather than treating it as a rushed attraction snack.

\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ · [23]

DUTCH SIDE • SIMPSON BAY

Skip Jack's

A Simpson Bay lagoon-side choice for a seafood-led meal. Ask about the day's availability, portion pricing and any market-priced items before ordering. It suits an evening near Simpson Bay, with a return ride arranged if you are drinking.

\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ · [25]

Ask about allergens, the day's availability and the full bill. Service charges and tips are not interchangeable; check the receipt before adding more. Arrange a non-drinking driver for evenings out.

FRENCH SIDE • SPECIAL DINNER

Le Pressoir

A Grand Case option for a dinner that is the evening's main event. Reserve ahead and discuss allergies and the current menu. Allow time to enjoy the meal and organise the return journey rather than making a last-minute taxi search afterwards.

\$\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$ · [22]

DUTCH SIDE • GREAT BAY

Ocean Lounge

A Philipsburg option overlooking Great Bay at Holland House. It can pair with a town day or become a reserved evening meal. Ask about seating and the current menu; beach views and a central location do not imply a casual-price bill.

\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ · [24]

FRENCH SIDE • TOWN LUNCH

A Marigot lolo or café

Choose a currently operating waterfront lolo for a local meal, or a café for a shorter break. Ask what is available and check the currency. Keep it part of a relaxed town visit rather than crossing the island solely for an unconfirmed table.

\$-\$\$ · [21] [26]

PRICE LEVELS: \$ budget to \$\$\$\$\$ luxury, within each category. See page 3.

08 / STAYS WITH A SENSE OF PLACE

Stays with a sense of place

Six editorial choices for different budgets and holiday styles. Price levels are estimates for an entry room or accommodation category.

DUTCH SIDE · PHILIPSBURG

Holland House

A Philipsburg hotel on the Great Bay boardwalk, useful for town convenience and beach time. Compare your room's outlook and the expected street atmosphere. It is a town-beach choice rather than a secluded resort setting.

\$\$\$ · [27]

DUTCH SIDE · LITTLE BAY

Divi Little Bay

A resort on a peninsula near Philipsburg, with different accommodation and meal-plan options. Confirm what your actual rate includes and which beach or pool areas suit your group. Allow for transport when planning evenings beyond the resort.

\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ · [28]

DUTCH SIDE · SIMPSON BAY

Azure Hotel & Art Studio

A smaller Simpson Bay option to compare when beach location and a personal atmosphere matter. Check your exact room, cooking facilities and the approach to the sand. Nearby airport activity is part of the setting, so consider your tolerance for aircraft noise.

\$\$-\$\$\$ · [29]

FRENCH SIDE · GRAND CASE

Grand Case Beach Club

A French-side option for beach time close to Grand Case's dining scene. Compare the unit, kitchen facilities and walking route into the village. Ask about the current operation of all facilities before treating photographs as a booking specification.

\$\$\$\$ · [30]

FRENCH SIDE · ORIENT BAY

Esmeralda Resort

An Orient Bay property with accommodation arranged in a villa-style setting. Check the actual room, pool-sharing arrangements and walk to the beach. It can suit travellers who want the French-side beach area without a large tower-hotel environment.

\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ · [31]

FRENCH SIDE · BAIE LONGUE

La Samanna, Belmond

A luxury choice on Baie Longue for a quieter resort-led holiday. Compare room and villa categories, meal arrangements and transport. Choose it for the full setting and service rather than expecting the same neighbourhood convenience as Simpson Bay or Grand Case.

\$\$\$\$\$ · [32]

Compare identical dates, room categories, meal plans and cancellation terms. Photos may show premium rooms or facilities that cost extra. Confirm the route to the beach and the total payable before booking.

PRICE LEVELS: \$ budget to \$\$\$\$\$ luxury, within each category. See page 3.

09 / BRING HOME A LITTLE COLOUR

Bring home a little colour

Browse for local craft, useful holiday purchases and something with a story.

PHILIPSBURG

Front Street

Philipsburg's best-known shopping area has international brands, jewellery and smaller stores. Compare the final price and warranty before a valuable purchase. "Duty free" is not a guarantee of value, and your home customs allowance still applies.

\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$ · [33]

MARIGOT

Marigot market browsing

Ask which stalls are operating and choose a daylight visit. Look for work with an identifiable maker and compare imported souvenirs with local craft. Agree price and currency clearly, and pack delicate items before the flight rather than at the gate.

\$-\$\$\$ · [33]

MEET LOCAL CREATIVE WORK

Independent art and gifts

Browse small galleries or shops around Grand Case, Marigot or Philipsburg, checking opening before a dedicated visit. Ask who made the work and whether packing or shipping is available. Choose a piece for its story rather than a generic island label.

\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$ · [33]

Browsing is usually free. Price levels refer to purchases, which vary widely. Ask who made an item, keep receipts and check your home country's customs rules before buying food, alcohol or natural materials.

PHILIPSBURG

Guavaberry Emporium

A distinctive Front Street stop for island-associated liqueurs and gifts. Check the bottle size and transport rules before buying. If tasting alcohol, keep the driver sober and do not assume an opened bottle can travel in hand luggage.

\$\$-\$\$\$ · [34]

ISLAND-MADE PRODUCT INTEREST

St Maarten Nectar

A local body-care name to compare for a useful gift. Check the current shop location, ingredients and product size. Skin sensitivity and cabin-liquid limits are worth considering before choosing several bottles simply because they are easy to pack.

\$\$ · [33]

USEFUL HOLIDAY PURCHASES

Simpson Bay practical shopping

Use established shops near your base for groceries, beach essentials or a replacement charger. Compare labels and plug compatibility, and leave large-value purchases for a considered decision. An ordinary shopping stop can make the rest of the holiday easier.

\$-\$\$\$ · [33]

PRICE LEVELS: \$ budget to \$\$\$\$\$ luxury, within each category. See page 3.

10 / EVERYDAY ISLAND ESSENTIALS

Everyday island essentials

The small details that make a holiday run more smoothly.

CARDS AND CASH

Pay in a currency you understand

Carry some small notes and ask whether the quote means USD, XCG or EUR. A business accepting another currency can apply its own rate. Compare the final total and check whether a service charge is already included before adding a tip.

[04]

STAY CONNECTED

Mobile data and calling

Dutch-side numbers use +1 721; French-side numbers use +590. Your phone can connect to a different network as you cross the island. Check both sides with your roaming provider or eSIM plan, and download the entire island in MAPS.ME before setting off.

[06]

MEET THE DESTINATION

Language and local rhythm

English is widely used on the Dutch side alongside Dutch; French is the main official language on the French side. Both sides are multilingual. A greeting in the language of the place helps, and keeping beachwear for the beach is a useful everyday courtesy.

[06]

BEFORE YOUR FIRST OUTING

Download your maps

We suggest MAPS.ME for offline maps. On Wi-Fi, download your destination, save the hotel and airport, then test a route with mobile data off. Check entrances with your host; an app's shortcut is not proof of a safe or open road.

[35]

KNOW YOUR ACCOMMODATION

Water and electricity

Ask your accommodation about current drinking-water advice and any property storage-tank issue. Plug types and voltage can differ between the Dutch and French sides; confirm the exact socket before packing appliances. A plug adaptor does not convert voltage.

[06]

MAKE THE FIRST DAY EASY

Shopping for everyday things

Buy water and groceries near your base before a long excursion. Confirm shop and pharmacy opening hours around weekends and public holidays. Pack snacks for children and people with dietary needs. Small notes are useful when an independent vendor cannot accept your card.

11 / GETTING AROUND, YOUR WAY

Getting around, your way

A rental car can make beach exploring easier, while taxis suit meals and airport days. Allow for bridge openings and peak-time traffic.

FOR DOOR-TO-DOOR TRIPS

Licensed taxis

Use a recognised taxi or hotel-booked driver, agree the fare and currency, and confirm waiting and return terms. Dutch-side licensed taxis carry a TAXI plate. Keep the driver or dispatcher's contact rather than assuming a quiet beach will have waiting cars.

[12]

FOR STRAIGHTFORWARD ROUTES

Local minibuses

They can suit selected main-road journeys when you understand the route. Confirm the destination and return options before boarding. They are not a dependable substitute for a booked late-night pickup from an isolated beach or hilltop property.

[06]

FOR INDEPENDENT ISLAND DAYS

A rental car

Useful for visiting both sides at your own pace. Confirm insurance and assistance cover across the whole island, permitted drivers and the excess. Match the car to the roads you intend to use and keep beach belongings out of sight.

[13]

A SEPARATE TRAVEL DAY

Ferries and island hopping

Anguilla, St Barth and Saba involve separate travel arrangements and entry rules. Check the actual departure port, passport and visa needs, baggage and weather cancellation terms. Do not place a same-day international connection immediately after an uncertain sea crossing.

[01] [03]

BOOK THE RETURN JOURNEY

Agree the pickup point, fare, currency, waiting time and number of passengers before setting off. Save the driver or dispatcher's contact, keep enough phone battery for the return and carry the accommodation address offline.

12 / DRIVE WITH LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Drive with local knowledge

Drive on the right on both sides. Short map distances can still mean a slow journey through busy roads and bridge traffic.

Keep right across the island

The driving side does not change at the land boundary. Slow down at junctions, give space on narrow roads and read the local signs. Plan a daylight first journey while adjusting to the traffic.

[13]

Check cross-side cover

Ask the hire firm whether your insurance and roadside assistance cover both jurisdictions. Keep the contract, licence and required identification available. Confirm the procedure for an incident on the French side before leaving the lot.

Build a traffic margin

Allow for congestion around Simpson Bay, Marigot and Philipsburg, as well as bridge openings. Do not plan a ferry, airport check-in and distant restaurant reservation with only the app's estimated drive between them.

Hills and wet surfaces

Drive carefully on steep, winding approaches and after rain. Avoid floodwater and unpaved shortcuts. Ask your host about the exact access to a villa rather than assuming an ordinary road car is appropriate.

[12]

Parking and valuables

Use recognised parking and put valuables away before arriving. Do not leave passports or electronics in a beach car park. Keep roads and airport access clear when stopping to watch aircraft.

[12] [20]

Sober driver, secure seats

Use seatbelts and reserve appropriate child seats. Arrange a driver for a Grand Case dinner or a rum tasting. Stop somewhere suitable before reading directions or changing a route on the phone.

AFTER A COLLISION

Stop and check for injuries. Tell the dispatcher which side of the island you are on: Dutch-side police 911 and ambulance 912; French-side general emergency 112. Contact the rental firm, follow police instructions about the vehicles and reporting, and keep the incident reference.

[08] [09]

13 / PLAN FOR THE SEASON

Plan for the season

The marine forecast matters for beach choices, boat excursions and connections to neighbouring islands.

PERIOD	WHAT TO EXPECT	HOW TO PLAN
December-April	A popular, generally drier travel period.	Book key rooms and dinners; check swell for water plans.
May-November	More heat and rainfall variability.	Keep outdoor days adaptable and ask about seasonal closures.
June-November	Atlantic hurricane season.	Monitor warnings and leave flexibility around ferry travel.

Check the forecast that matters

Check local forecasts, wind and marine warnings rather than only the rain percentage. A crossing can be cancelled while the beach near your hotel looks pleasant. During a storm alert, follow instructions from the authorities and your accommodation; avoid exposed coasts and flooded roads. [14]

Have a useful alternative

Choose a nearby museum, a booked restaurant or a short shop visit if local travel is safe. Reschedule the hill walk or boat trip instead of compressing both into the next available morning.

Seasonal patterns are not a forecast. Ask operators about cancellation and rescheduling terms, and follow local warnings and closure instructions.

14 / FAMILIES, HEALTH AND ACCESS

Families, health and access

A comfortable trip starts with your group's needs, rather than a full timetable.

Choose the sea for today

Choose the actual beach section, shade and access for the day. A sheltered-looking bay can still have swell or boat movement. Treat Maho as a controlled viewing stop with close supervision, keeping well clear of jet-blast zones and traffic.

[15]

Health needs before travel

Arrange cover for both sides of the island, treatment and evacuation. Save Dutch and French emergency numbers before an outing. Discuss your own travel-health needs with a clinician and use mosquito protection; ask your insurer which clinic is suitable for non-emergency care.

[07]

A realistic family outing

Choose one short boat outing or an age-appropriate estate or park visit. Confirm steps, child lifejackets, activity restrictions and toilet access. A full-island drive plus a demanding water trip is usually more than a family needs in one day.

Ask precise access questions

Ask about the route from your room to the beach, lifts, steps, bathroom layout and adapted transport. Check whether a boat is boarded by a stable gangway, ladder or beach launch. A ground-floor room or a "family friendly" label does not confirm accessibility.

A doctor or pharmacy

For urgent danger use the emergency numbers on page 20. For a non-emergency, ask your insurer or accommodation to identify a currently operating clinic and pharmacy. Call before travelling. Bring the generic medicine name and prescription; a foreign prescription may need local review.

[07]

Heat, food and hydration

Build shade and rest into the day, especially for children and older travellers. Discuss allergies directly with restaurants and carry needed medication. Ask about child-seat sizes before booking a transfer. Bring water on boat and road trips rather than relying on every stop having supplies.

For lost documents or cards, contact the relevant authority or bank through an official channel. Report theft, keep the report reference and contact your own country's consular service if a travel document needs replacing.

15 / THREE DAYS, THREE ISLAND MOODS

Three days, three island moods

Three full days on the ground. Add a light arrival and departure day; switch outdoor plans when conditions change.

Day 1 / The Dutch-side coast

Choose a nearby beach, such as Mullet Bay or Little Bay, according to your base and conditions. Add a short Philipsburg visit if it fits the route. If aircraft viewing matters, make Maho a brief stop from a safe position rather than the entire beach plan.

Day 2 / French-side food and a bay

Choose Orient Bay or Grand Case for the day, checking conditions first. Leave room for a lolo lunch or a booked dinner. Arrange the return transport and allow for traffic instead of trying to add every northern cove.

Day 3 / Green hills or a small island

Choose Loterie Farm, an Emilio Wilson estate visit or a Pinel outing. Check the specific access, physical demands and weather. End with a relaxed meal near your base, leaving an international ferry adventure for a longer visit.

KEEP THE ROUTE REALISTIC

The two sides share an island, but not all practical rules. Carry the required documents, watch network changes and check the currency whenever you pay.

16 / A WELL-PACED WEEK

A well-paced week

Seven full days, with room for one flexible day. The order is adaptable; allow extra time for airport and inter-island transfers.

01

Find your local beach

Settle into the coast near your accommodation and organise transport and groceries.

02

Philipsburg at a relaxed pace

Combine a heritage walk, a little shopping and Great Bay if conditions suit.

03

A French-side bay day

Choose Orient Bay or Grand Case, with a local meal and a planned return.

04

The green interior

Choose Loterie Farm or the Emilio Wilson estate according to your interests and mobility.

05

A nearshore island trip

Choose Pinel or a responsible Tintamarre outing, with the marine forecast deciding the final plan.

06

A food-led day

Keep the daytime gentle and reserve a favourite restaurant for the evening.

07

Your flexible island day

Repeat a beach, catch a missed outing or pack slowly. Keep ferry and flight connections outside this buffer.

For Anguilla, St Barth or Saba, add a dedicated day and verify separate entry rules and weather options. Do not make an offshore day trip your only route back before an international flight.

17 / WARNINGS WORTH KNOWING

Warnings worth knowing

Practical advice for a better-informed trip. Check current local guidance and conditions, especially before unfamiliar evening journeys.

MAHO AND THE RUNWAY

Jet blast is dangerous

Never hang on to the airport fence or stand in the blast behind a departing aircraft at Maho. Heed the airport's warnings, keep the road clear and supervise children. A popular online stunt is not a safe visitor activity.

[20]

CARRY THE RIGHT INFORMATION

Two sides, different details

Currencies, phone networks, electricity and emergency numbers can differ. Verify the side of your destination before asking for assistance. Save both sets of contacts and check that your insurance, vehicle hire and data plan cover your actual itinerary.

[06] [09]

BEYOND THE ISLAND

Ferry connections need a buffer

International day trips depend on weather, the correct port and separate entry permission. Confirm return timing and a fallback before travelling. Keep an extra margin before an onward flight; the last ferry should not be your only workable plan.

[01] [03]

Check official local updates after heavy rain or storm warnings. Choose routes by current conditions and local advice, not by an island-wide safety label.

PLAN THE EVENING RETURN

Quiet areas after dark

Avoid isolated beaches and poorly lit walking routes. Ask about the exact street and use a known driver when unsure. Keep valuables secure in cars and accommodation; a familiar resort district still requires ordinary attention.

[12]

CHOOSE AN APPROPRIATE OUTING

Respect sea and hillside conditions

Do not follow an app into a remote trail or enter rough water because others are doing so. Ask about the route, equipment and return plan. Protected areas and wildlife need space, including when a tour promises close encounters.

[18] [15]

PAY WITH CLARITY

Check the full bill

Confirm currency, service charges, chair packages and transport costs. Use verified booking contacts and avoid pressure to buy valuables quickly. Keep receipts and check home customs rules even when a shop advertises duty-free prices.

[04] [33]

18 / HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT.

Help when you need it.

Save these numbers offline, together with your accommodation, transport and insurance contacts.

SERVICE	NUMBER	USE
Dutch side: police	911	Immediate police assistance.
Dutch side: ambulance	912	Urgent medical assistance.
Dutch side: fire	919	Fire emergency.
Dutch Caribbean coastguard	913	Maritime emergency.
French side	112	General emergency. Medical 15; police 17; fire 18.
Island hospital, Cay Hill	+1 721 543 1111	SMMC / SMGH contact. Dutch ambulance: 912.

When you call

Give the country or island, your exact location, a landmark, what happened and a callback number. Follow the dispatcher. If a short code fails on a roaming phone, ask someone nearby or your accommodation to call. Do not treat a hospital switchboard as an ambulance number. [08]

YOUR OWN ESSENTIAL CONTACTS

Accommodation / address: _____

Transport provider: _____

Insurance assistance: _____

French-side numbers: official guidance. Hospital: SMMC / SMGH. State your side of the island and exact location when calling.

REFERENCE DESK

Sources & editorial notes

Tap a title to open its source. The numbered references beside recommendations connect to this list.

- 01 UK FCDO — Sint Maarten entry requirements
- 02 Sint Maarten — official entry form
- 03 UK FCDO — French Saint-Martin entry requirements
- 04 SHTA — travel information and currencies
- 05 CBCS — Caribbean guilder legal tender
- 06 SHTA — practical travel information
- 07 UK FCDO — Sint Maarten health
- 08 Government of Sint Maarten — emergency contacts
- 09 UK FCDO — French Saint-Martin emergency contacts
- 10 UK FCDO — fire and coastguard contacts
- 11 SMMC / St Maarten General Hospital — official contact
- 12 UK FCDO — Sint Maarten safety and security
- 13 SHTA — road and practical information
- 14 UK FCDO — storms and local safety
- 15 SHTA — beach directory
- 16 SHTA — choosing between the island's main beaches
- 17 SHTA — island sights and experiences
- 18 SHTA — Loterie Farm
- 19 SHTA — Emilio Wilson estate and museum
- 20 Princess Juliana Airport — jet-blast safety warning

REFERENCE DESK

Sources & editorial notes

Tap a title to open its source. The numbered references beside recommendations connect to this list.

- 21** SHTA — local lolo restaurants
- 22** SHTA — Le Pressoir
- 23** SHTA — Emilio's restaurant
- 24** SHTA — Ocean Lounge
- 25** SHTA — Skip Jack's
- 26** SHTA — French-side dining
- 27** Holland House — Philipsburg beach hotel
- 28** Divi — Little Bay Beach Resort
- 29** Azure — Simpson Bay hotel
- 30** Grand Case Beach Club — hotel information
- 31** Esmeralda — Orient Bay resort
- 32** Belmond — La Samanna
- 33** SHTA — shopping directory
- 34** SHTA — Guavaberry shop
- 35** MAPS.ME — official downloads and offline maps
- 36** Colin Hobson / Unsplash — original cover photograph
- 37** Unsplash — photograph licence

About this edition

Research checked on 6 October 2026. Recommendations reflect published location, facilities and trip fit; we have not personally inspected the properties. Prices, access, entry rules and opening arrangements can change. Check the linked official information before travel.

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