

Sint Maarten / St. Martin



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St. Maarten was my winter getaway spot for several years.

These photos are drawn from various years, and are organized into sections as follows:

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Introduction

St. Maarten sits between the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, at the top of a string of islands known as the Lesser Antilles.

Saint Martin

French West Indies

Sint Maarten

Netherlands Antilles



Introduction

The island is divided between the French and the Dutch.
Area: 37 square miles or 87 km². Population: 75,000.



Introduction

There are no border guards between the French and Dutch parts, just “Welcome” signs.



Introduction

Everyone's first St. Maarten story is about the airport.
You were flying over the sea and suddenly landed at the beach.



Introduction

It's even more exciting if you happen to be buzzed by a jumbo jet while sailing past the airport.



Philipsburg

Philipsburg – on the island's south-east coast – is the capital of Dutch Sint Maarten, its largest city, and the island's major port.



Philipsburg

Philipsburg is built along a wide sandy beach ...



Philipsburg

... lined with dozens of beach restaurants.



Philipsburg

**Great Bay at Philipsburg attracts
a wide range of sailing craft.**



Philipsburg

The Court House was built first in 1792, and rebuilt in 1825 after hurricane damage.



Philipsburg

Front Street is a busy shopping zone for cruise ship passengers.



Philipsburg

**The shops on Front Street specialize
in duty-free expensive items.**



Philipsburg

Fort Amsterdam was built by the Dutch by 1631 to protect Great Bay and Philipsburg.



Philipsburg

**The Spanish took the island in 1638, but abandoned it.
The French and Dutch moved in.**



Philipsburg

**Modern day invaders are delivered
by fleets of cruise ships.**



Philipsburg

**New activities have been invented
for cruise ship day-trippers.**



Philipsburg

St. Maarten In A Nutshell:
Beach, cruise ships, Heineken (from Holland, of course).



Marigot

Marigot – on the north coast – is the capital of French Saint Martin. Saint Martin is part of the Guadeloupe overseas region of France.



Marigot

**Marigot's Marina Fort Louis is
the largest on the French side.**



Marigot

Marigot is Saint Martin's major port and commercial centre.



Marigot

Fort Louis was built in 1789 to protect from British privateers based on nearby Anguilla.



Marigot

**Not much remains of Fort Louis
other than a few canons ...**



Marigot

... but it offers a fine view of Marigot.



Marigot

Les Boucainiers restaurant at Sandy Ground is a pleasant spot for lunch.



**Simpson Bay
Lagoon**

**Simpson Bay Lagoon is a safe haven
for sailboats and megayachts.**



**Simpson Bay
Lagoon**

Development here launched
the island's tourism industry.



**Simpson Bay
Lagoon**

The red roofs in the centre are the Port de Plaisance marina, casino, and resort complex.



**Port de
Plaisance**

Port de Plaisance was home
base for 2005, 2006, and 2007.



**Port de
Plaisance**

The Princess Casino gets top billing.



**Port de
Plaisance**

**Hotel lobby building. The limos were
just for major casino customers.**



**Port de
Plaisance**

**Residential buildings, wrapped around the South Marina.
The whole complex was superbly designed.**



**Port de
Plaisance**

When it was built it must have been a 5-star resort, but without maintenance year after year it has been decaying rapidly. What a waste.



**Port de
Plaisance**

**All the traditional resort amenities
were included in the design.**



**Port de
Plaisance**

**Balcony view in 2006, looking south
towards the Simpson Bay Yacht Club Marina.**



**Port de
Plaisance**

Looking east from balcony,
across Port de Plaisance South Marina.



**Port de
Plaisance**

**The Port de Plaisance North Marina
accommodates the larger sailing yachts ...**



**Port de
Plaisance**

... and some of the larger megayachts.



**Port de
Plaisance**

The South Marina accommodates
a stately favourite, *Inspiration*.



**Port de
Plaisance**

Rainbow over the North Marina



Port de
Plaisance

Dusk at the North Marina



**Port de
Plaisance**

Inspiration after dark



Megayachts

The Simpson Bay Lagoon hosts dozens of multi-million dollar megayachts.



Megayachts

Ocean-going sailboats are dwarfed
by modern day megayachts.



Megayachts

Megayachts are at the top of the tourism priority tree.



Megayachts

The largest cost well over \$100 million,
and there are over 5,000 on the seas.



Megayachts

The largest megayachts now come with major toys,
like sailboats to be deployed for day trips ...



Megayachts

... and helicopters for quick runs to the grocery or wine store – or the casino.



Oyster Pond

**On the east side of the island – a totally different universe.
The community of Oyster Pond straddles the French / Dutch border.**



Oyster Pond

**There are no megayachts here, fewer people
(so far), and breathtaking scenery.**



Oyster Pond

A local riding stable offers trips up the coast.



Oyster Pond

The Oyster Pond bay accommodates a marina (centre) and a public dock.



**Captain
Oliver's**

Captain Oliver's is Oyster Pond's marina,
restaurant, and resort complex.



**Captain
Oliver's**

**Captain Oliver's marina has a
pleasant, relaxed atmosphere.**



**Captain
Oliver's**

**The marina hosts a mixture of
sailboats and catamarans.**





**Captain
Oliver's**

**The left side of this duplex
was my place in 2008.**



**Captain
Oliver's**

My ocean view



**Captain
Oliver's**

The swimming pool boasts an ocean view ...



Captain
Oliver's

... and a seaside pool bar.



**Captain
Oliver's**

**Captain Oliver's restaurant draws
customers from all over the island.**



Captain
Oliver's

Crab Island Salad makes a great lunch.



Pelicans

**Captain Oliver's is home to
a busy fleet of pelicans.**



Pelicans

Once a target has been spotted,
a pelican changes from horizontal ...



Pelicans

... to vertical flight.



Pelicans

The pelican becomes a diving missile.



Pelicans

Splash. Loud splash.



Pelicans

Diver down.



Pelicans

Gulp.



**Orient
Bay**

**Orient Bay is a park, residential, and beach
community north of Oyster Pond.**



**Orient
Bay**

The residential community has charm ...



**Orient
Bay**

... but it's the beach that draws the crowds.



**Orient
Bay**

**The beach at Orient Bay is
the busiest on the island.**



**Orient
Beach**

Busy ...



**Orient
Beach**

... and colourful.



**Orient
Beach**

**But you can do your
own thing if you want.**



**Orient
Beach**

Beach bars rent chairs
and umbrellas.



**Orient
Beach**

Beach restaurants offer
food and atmosphere.



**Orient
Beach**

By 2008 many places
were offering bargains.



**Beach
Activities**

Hobie Cat sailing is the easiest activity
to master at Orient Beach.



Parasailing
Beach Activities

Parasailing looks dramatic,
but doesn't require much skill.



Parasailing
Beach Activities

A boat pulls the parachute sail with enough power and speed to lift the riders to great heights.



Parasailing
Beach Activities

Whoopee.



Windsurfing
Beach Activities

Windsurfers attach large plastic sails to modified surfboards to harness the wind's energy.



Windsurfing
Beach Activities

As with waterskiing, the hardest part is getting up to get started.



Windsurfing
Beach Activities

The ride can be thrilling
if the wind is strong.



Kitesurfing
Beach Activities

Kitesurfing uses large wind kites and modified wakeboards.



Kitesurfing
Beach Activities

The large kites are given shape by their inflatable ribs.





Kitesurfing
Beach Activities

... but the results are thrilling.



**Baie d'
Embouchure**

**Baie d'Embouchure is only one mile south
of Orient Beach, but completely different.**



**Baie d'
Embouchure**

**The serious water sports enthusiasts are here,
but without the commercial development.**



**Baie d'
Embouchure**

**Windsurfers find that the wind conditions
are more favourable here.**



**Baie d'
Embouchure**

The best kitesurfers are here too.



**Baie d'
Embouchure**

**A local stable offers rides along
the largely deserted beach ...**



**Baie d'
Embouchure**

... and the atmosphere is totally laid back.



**Lord
Sheffield**

Lord Sheffield (flying the pirate flag) takes visitors for day sails from Philipsburg along the south coast.



**Lord
Sheffield**

**Captain Rob, the owner (centre), was formerly
with New Brunswick Telephone.**



**Lord
Sheffield**

**First Mate Veronica climbs up
to begin unfurling the sails.**



**Lord
Sheffield**

Lord Sheffield is a 72 foot brigantine, with
2 masts and 8 sails, including 3 square sails.



**Lord
Sheffield**

The ship was built in Montreal, and
remains under Canadian registry.



**Lord
Sheffield**

We drop anchor opposite the La Samanna resort for some snorkeling.



**12 Metre
Challenge**

While on *Sheffield* we encounter “12 Metre Challenge”,
a simulated America’s Cup race for tourists.



**12 Metre
Challenge**

**The races pit yachts from the 1987
Cup competition against each other.**



**12 Metre
Challenge**

**Tourists pay to crew the ships, and
are assigned to vessels and duties.**



12 Metre
Challenge

Lord Sheffield roots for Canada II.



Golden Eagle

Eagle Tours offers day trips around the island
on its 76-foot *Golden Eagle* catamarans.



Golden Eagle

These have 80-foot masts, and sail under canvas when the winds are strong enough.



Golden Eagle

The crew is international, from the island, South Africa, the U.S., and Hungary.



Golden Eagle

The first stop is for a swim at Tintamarre,
a nature preserve island off the north-east corner.



Golden Eagle

While others swim I grab a photo of a majestic sailing ship anchored nearby.



Golden Eagle

Next stop is at Creole Rock (left),
just off Grand Case on the north shore ...



Golden Eagle

... one of the most popular
snorkeling spots on the island.



Golden Eagle

We put in for lunch at a beach
restaurant at Grand Case.



Golden Eagle

Fine restaurants line Grand Case's main street,
each with a stunning view of the bay.



Golden Eagle

As we sail on after lunch one of the mates impresses us with his fishing skills.



Golden Eagle

**Final stop is for snorkeling
just off La Samanna.**



**Lambada
Anguilla**

**Pelican Activities offers day sails to
the neighbouring island of Anguilla.**



Lambada
Anguilla

The *Lambada* catamaran's destination was
Sandy Island, off the north coast of Anguilla.



Lambada
Anguilla

What more could you ask for?



ATV
Experience

One of the activities invented for busloads
of cruise ship passengers is ATV tours ...



ATV
Experience

... along the highways and back roads
of the east side of St. Maarten.



**Seaworld
Explorer**

**These vessels, operating from Grand Case, have
underwater viewing decks 5 feet below the surface.**







**Butterfly
Farm**

Near Baie d'Embouchure



**Butterfly
Farm**

The butterfly “farm” is a huge netted cage.



**Butterfly
Farm**

**St. Maarten's climate is ideal
for breeding butterflies.**



**Butterfly
Farm**

A wide variety of vegetation is required ...



**Butterfly
Farm**

... because each species has its own
food requirements and preferences.



**Butterfly
Farm**

**This Owl Butterfly is camouflaged
in dull colours while at rest ...**



**Butterfly
Farm**

but displays brilliant blue wings
on top when in flight.



**St. Maarten
Park**

St. Maarten Park is a modest little mini-zoo on the outskirts of Philipsburg.



**St. Maarten
Park**

St. Maarten Park specializes in tropical birds.



**St. Maarten
Park**

Macaws are the largest members
of the parrot family ...



**St. Maarten
Park**

... but there are other parrots here too.



Mont Vernon

Plantation Mont displays aspects
of St. Maarten's early days.



Mont Vernon

The Manor House was at the heart of a sugar plantation.



Mont Vernon

Eighteenth century equipment



Mont Vernon

Examples of tropical vegetation



Mont Vernon

**Cotton plantations developed in
areas too dry for sugar cane.**



Mont Vernon

**Indigo dye was extracted from
plants grown on plantations.**



Mont Vernon

At sugar mills the slaves passed the cane through rollers to extract the juice.



Mont Vernon

Molasses recovered from the sugar mills was fermented to produce rum.



Industry

Today there is no agriculture in St. Maarten.



Industry

The land is hilly and supports only scrub brush and cactuses. There is no manufacturing industry either.



Industry

Casinos are St. Maarten's main industry.



Industry

Bright casinos



Industry

Pretty casinos



Industry

Round-the-clock casinos.



Development

Tourist industry development was well advanced on my first visit in 2005, as here at Maho Beach.



Development

New high-rise condo projects
underway then ...



Development

...were completed by 2008, as were their Phase 2 extensions, and the Phase 3 projects were underway.



Development

The new St. Maarten Airport terminal can handle over twice as many tourists per year.

THE WESTIN RESORT, SPA AND CONDOS

at dawn beach • st. maarten



Development

The Westin at Dawn Beach is an illustrative case study.



Development

In February 2006 construction of the new Westin resort was underway.



Development

It's now completed ...



Development

... and it's so big you can barely see the beach any more.



Development

The Westin has 308 guest rooms and banquet facilities for up to 1,000 people.

Pre-construction prices starting from US\$657,000.-



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Development

In 2008 a new condo project was starting up across the road from the Westin.



Development

And in Philipsburg cruise ship capacity was being increased with the addition of a second pier.



Third World ?

Despite all the development for tourists, most of St. Maarten lives in relative poverty. The wild mountain goats seem cute, but they hint at a serious story.



Third World ?

The wild donkeys are at home in town because in some ways this is still part of the third world.



Third World ?

Modest native businesses like
this pet shop are common.



Third World ?

Johnny B operates this open-air
“restaurant” in his front yard.



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Third World ?

The Baptist Church doesn't
have money for fancy signs.



Third World ?

This “Tire Service” centre also offers
Castrol oil changes and car washes.



Third World ?

This road house isn't a construction site any more. Things just got left this way.



Third World ?

Abandoned construction projects are common.



Third World ?

Development and the third world are beginning to clash, and the explosion in the number of automobiles is causing the most obvious early problems.



Third World ?

Driving here has become uncomfortable. Everyone follows too close, but there's also just too much traffic for the roads, and no infrastructure development.



Third World ?

This lift bridge is on the two-lane highway that runs around the island and leads to the airport.



Third World ?

This bridge opens six times a day, every day ...



Third World ?

... to let sailboats and yachts in and out of the Simpson Bay Lagoon.



Third World ?

The result is inevitable, but there are no plans for changes. Traffic jam at Simpson Bay.



Third World ?

Traffic jam on the only road through
Marigot, capital of French Saint Martin.



Third World ?

Traffic jam on the only road from Marigot to Grand Case. I'm glad I was able to enjoy St. Maarten before runaway development completely destroys its original charm.



Sunsets

An evening sail aboard *Lord Sheffield*.
Sailing along the south shore gives the best views of sunsets.



Sunsets

Sunset over Simpson Bay.



Sunsets



Sunsets



Sunsets



Sunsets



Sunsets

Sunset over the Port de Plaisance marina.



Sunsets

Despite its problems, for me this remains the best of the Caribbean.



Sunsets

Bye.

< End >

Sint Maarten / St. Martin

St. Maarten's Island Neighbours are in a separate file.