

## **David Walters Yachts Welcomes You to Saint Martin**

Welcome to David Walters Yachts guide to the beautiful island of Saint Martin, a tapestry of vibrant cultures and natural splendor. What you're about to read is the culmination of five years of immersive experiences. We have distilled our seasoned insights into this guide. However, this is not a rigid manual; instead, it's a testament to years of exploration, discoveries, and heartfelt connections. Each corner of Saint Martin has its unique allure and surprises that await the keen traveler. So, while we have strived to encapsulate the essence of this Caribbean gem, we encourage you to delve into the nooks and crannies, unravel the layers, and form your own understanding and appreciation of Saint Martin. Because at the end of the day, the magic of travel lies in the eye of the beholder.

## **Exploring Saint Martin: An Island Paradise at the Heart of the Caribbean**

### **Geographical Overview and Island Appeal**

Saint Martin, a charming island nestled in the northeastern corner of the Caribbean Sea, is where the island chain swings from its north-south orientation towards the Virgin Islands and beyond. Covering 87 square kilometers (34 square miles), the island is harmoniously divided between French and Dutch territories in an approximate 60:40 ratio, hosting an unguarded border that's been amicably open for over 375 years, barring a few brief exceptions.

A tourism haven, Saint Martin entices visitors with stunning beaches and countless attractions, forming the backbone of the local economy. Gastronomy enthusiasts will find themselves spoilt for choice, as the island boasts arguably the best culinary scene in the Caribbean.

### **A Yachting Haven**

For yacht owners, Saint Martin offers a wide range of anchoring, mooring, and marina options on both the French and Dutch sides. Strategically positioned, it serves as an ideal starting point for those wishing to venture to other islands in the west, east, or south. The island's quality shipyards, talented local workforce, well-stocked chandleries, and duty-free status—making it economical to import specialized parts—also make it a preferred spot for major boating projects.

### **The Saltwater Lagoon: A Yachtie's Delight**

A distinctive feature of Saint Martin is its expansive saltwater lagoon occupying much of the island's western region. A haven for yachters, it's surrounded by marine services, chandleries, delightful restaurants and bars, and grocery stores, predominantly in the southern part. We will delve into more detail about the lagoon in its dedicated section below.

## **General Advice and Good to Know Before You Arrive**

### **Currency**

On the Dutch side of Saint Martin, the official currency is the Antillean Guilder (ANG). However, it's important to note that the US Dollar is widely accepted and preferred for transactions. In fact, US Dollars are accepted almost everywhere and for all types of purchases. It is recommended to have US Dollars on hand for your expenses on the Dutch side.

On the French side, the official currency is the Euro. Similar to the Dutch side, the US Dollar is widely accepted on the French side of the island. However, it's a good idea to carry some Euros, especially if you plan to visit establishments that exclusively accept Euros. Additionally, certain services such as shipyards and dentists may bill in Euros, so having a credit card with a favorable currency exchange rate can be beneficial.

### **Electrical**

The electrical systems on Saint Martin differ between the Dutch and French sides. On the Dutch side, the voltage is 110 volts, and the plugs and outlets are of the American standard. If you're staying or docking on the Dutch side, make sure to have the appropriate adapters for your electronic devices.

On the French side, the electrical system operates on single-phase European 220 volts. European-style plugs and outlets are used, so it's important to have the necessary adapters or converters if you plan to use devices that are not compatible with this voltage and plug type. It's advisable to check the electrical compatibility of your equipment before your trip or consult with the marina or accommodation where you'll be staying.

### **Car Rentals**

Saint Martin is a popular tourist destination, and as a result, there is a wide selection of car rental agencies available. If you're staying in or near Marigot Bay, it's convenient to rent a car from the agencies located near the Ferry Terminal. In Simpson Bay or the Dutch Lagoon, you can find several rental car companies along the main strip. It's worth noting that asking around or seeking recommendations from locals might lead to finding deals on long-term rentals.

When renting a car, ensure that you have a valid driver's license and are familiar with the local traffic rules and regulations. It's also important to check if the rental agency provides insurance coverage and what the terms and conditions are. Exploring the island by car can be a convenient and enjoyable way to discover its many attractions and hidden gems.

## **Navigating Clearance Rules and Procedures in Saint Martin: Two Countries, Two Sets of Rules**

## **Insider Tips on Border Procedures**

Despite the seamless integration of French and Dutch territories on land, there are distinct rules and procedures when it comes to moving your vessel from one side to the other. While border enforcement on land is minimal, you are required to check out of one country and into the other if moving your vessel across borders—fuel trips and single-day service facility visits are notable exceptions.

### **Checking In on the French Side: A Laid-Back Affair**

The check-in procedures on the French side, similar to other French islands, are quite relaxed. You can typically complete the process in either of the French-side chandleries—Ile Marine or Island Water World—where a self-service computer terminal and printer are provided. To check in, you need the ship's papers, passports for all crew and guests, and either \$2 or €2 for processing. Unlike many places, your previous stop's clearance isn't strictly required. While guests can accompany, it isn't necessary or generally advised. An employee from the chandlery will review the paperwork. These procedures can also be undertaken at the Capitanery in Anse Marcel. Although check-in/out is available at the commercial port in Galisbay, it's a long dinghy ride and not typically recommended.

### **Checking In on the Dutch Side: A Formal Affair**

The Dutch side's check-in process is typically conducted at Simpson Bay, in the police station near the Dutch Side bridge. This office operates 7 am to 5 pm, seven days a week. Here, the procedure is more formal as you'll interact directly with Customs and Immigration officials, who may ask a few questions. Like the French side, bring the ship's papers and passports for all crew and guests. However, clearance from your last port is required. Additionally, there is a fee for anchoring on the Dutch side based on vessel size.

You can also check in/out at Philipsburg in Great Bay, though it's less common. The office, open from 7 am to 5 pm seven days a week, is located just outside the Harbor port gates on the right-hand side.

## **Discovering the Charm of Saint Martin: An Insider's Guide**

### **Philipsburg: The Heart of Dutch Saint Martin**

Nestled on the southern coast of the Dutch side of Saint Martin, Philipsburg is a vibrant town steeped in cultural richness and commercial allure. The town, named after John Philips, a Scottish captain in the Dutch navy, is not only a critical governmental hub, housing the Dutch Government and major banks, but also serves as a vivacious commercial center teeming with energy and activity.

The imposing Government House, a picturesque white and blue building that whispers tales from the 18th century, stands as an iconic symbol of Philipsburg's deep-rooted heritage. This architectural gem is a beautiful fusion of Dutch colonial and Caribbean design elements, underlining Philipsburg's multicultural identity.

Front Street, Philipsburg's pulsating artery, is a bustling labyrinth of shops, restaurants, and historical edifices that capture the spirit of this dynamic town. Lined with an array of duty-free shops, this vibrant street offers an enticing shopping experience where visitors can indulge in everything from luxury jewelry to top wristwatch brands. It's not uncommon to find glittering diamonds, gold pieces, and watches from globally recognized brands that add a dash of glamour to this colorful shopping scene.

A stone's throw away from Front Street, the Sint Maarten Museum stands as a testament to Philipsburg's rich past. This fascinating cultural repository unfolds the island's intriguing tale through its unique exhibits, spotlighting the region's culture, history, and archaeology. A visit here provides a deeper understanding of the island's past, shaping its present identity.

Philipsburg also hosts the bustling Cruise Ship Terminal, a hive of activity especially during the high season. On peak days, the terminal can welcome as many as 30,000 eager cruise passengers, each stepping ashore in anticipation of fun, shopping, and the unique Caribbean experience that Saint Martin offers.

Furthermore, Philipsburg, like the rest of the island, is a duty-free paradise, meaning shopping opportunities abound, especially around the cruise ship terminal. Visitors can revel in the dazzling array of goods, savor local cuisine, or simply soak in the lively atmosphere.

Located on the alluring Great Bay, Philipsburg boasts a fantastic mile-long beach. This tropical haven is fronted by a busy boardwalk, brimming with a variety of restaurants and bars catering to every taste and desire. Here, you can unwind, savoring the perfect cocktail while gazing at the tranquil turquoise waters. As dusk falls, the nightlife in Philipsburg comes alive with several casinos and nightclubs, offering a chance for fun and entertainment long into the night.

In essence, Philipsburg is a lively blend of commercial vibrancy, cultural richness, and recreational fun, making it a must-visit destination when exploring the captivating island of Saint Martin.

### **Simpson Bay/Cole Bay: A Blend of Fun and Business**

Simpson Bay and Cole Bay are two dynamic communities that cradle the southern fringes of Saint Martin's captivating lagoon. These neighboring towns together form a multifaceted destination, melding commercial vigor, recreational delights, and a vibrant maritime landscape.

Cole Bay, primarily a commercial nerve center, is dotted with various businesses and enterprises. The town is a hub for marine services and chandleries, which cater to the robust

yachting and boating industry on the island. One of the most significant landmarks in Cole Bay is the Harold Jack Lookout Point. This panoramic vantage point offers breathtaking views of the surrounding landscapes, where the deep blue ocean meets the verdant hills in a spectacle of nature's grandeur.

Among the numerous commercial establishments in Cole Bay, two standout chandleries are Island Water World and Budget Marine, well-regarded by locals and visitors alike for their comprehensive selection and quality service. Not far away is Bobby's Megayard, the largest boatyard on the island, known for its excellent boat maintenance services. Among other establishments catering to the yachting community is The Business Point, providing an array of services for yachties.

For those seeking leisure amidst their busy schedules, Lagoones Bistrot in Cole Bay offers the perfect respite. This lively eatery is celebrated for its fun happy hour, nighttime music, and elevated pub food, all set within a convivial atmosphere.

On the other hand, Simpson Bay, the twin to Cole Bay, wears a different demeanor. It dons the guise of a pleasure enclave, brimming with an expansive array of restaurants and bars - so many, they're almost too numerous to count. The life of Simpson Bay undulates to the rhythm of its vibrant social scene, particularly along "the strip."

The strip houses a wonderfully well-stocked grocery store, Market Garden, right at its center. It's a favorite among locals and visitors, who can avail a discount by mentioning their boat affiliation. Dining options along the strip range from the award-winning schwarma of Little Jerusalem to the popular happy hour at The Soggy Dollar Bar, a favorite among yachties. Additionally, you'll find The Dinghy Dock Sailors Bar, the Sint Maarten Yacht Club restaurant, and the vivacious Naked Pirates Rum Bar, each contributing to the vibrant culinary scene of Simpson Bay.

Kim Sha Beach, another highlight of Simpson Bay, is famed for its energetic weekend parties and concerts. This is where locals and visitors alike come to let loose, soak in the sun, and create memories under the Caribbean sky.

Meanwhile, the lagoon between the two bays transforms into a theater of sails every March when it hosts the St. Maarten's Heineken Regatta. This prestigious event attracts sailing enthusiasts from around the world, cementing Simpson Bay and Cole Bay's status as a premier sailing and yachting destination.

In sum, Simpson Bay and Cole Bay represent a harmonious blend of commerce and pleasure, underscored by the area's maritime beauty. Their distinct yet complementary characteristics create a versatile experience for both residents and visitors. Whether you're a business traveler, a sailing enthusiast, or a leisure seeker, Simpson Bay and Cole Bay have something to offer you.

**Maho: A Tourist Magnet with a Twist**

Maho, situated in the Dutch part of Saint Martin, paints a vibrant picture with its eclectic mix of resorts, restaurants, clubs, and a sprawling casino. This locale is a lively playground for island visitors, offering a smorgasbord of experiences that cater to diverse tastes.

The most iconic attraction in Maho is the famed Maho Beach, synonymous with its unique proximity to Princess Juliana International Airport. The beach provides an unparalleled spectacle as large aircraft, or the "heavies" from airlines like KLM and Air France, descend shockingly close overhead to land on the nearby runway. This thrilling, almost surreal, phenomenon has thrust Maho Beach into the limelight, making it one of the world's most Instagrammed spots.

The azure canvas of the sky populated by descending aircrafts is best enjoyed from the beach bars at either end of Maho Beach. Visitors can savor a surprisingly potent rum punch, the signature Caribbean drink, adding an extra thrill to the avionic spectacle unfolding before their eyes.

Away from the beach, Maho thrives with a lively social scene centered around its dining and entertainment establishments. High on the list of the area's "greatest hits" is Jax Steakhouse. This elegant venue serves top-tier steaks, offering a refined dining experience for those seeking a high-end culinary indulgence.

The Hole In The Wall bar is another standout, pulsating with live music almost every night of the week. It's the perfect place to unwind, get your feet tapping, and enjoy the vibrant nightlife that Maho is renowned for. Music lovers should also pay a visit to the Red Piano, another popular venue known for its pulsating live music scene, adding another melodic note to the rhythmic symphony of Maho's nightlife.

For those seeking a taste of the exotic, Le Moulin Fou offers an authentic French dining experience, providing a dash of European elegance in the heart of the Caribbean. Another culinary delight is the 3 Amigos, serving up Tex-Mex flavors and a fun atmosphere. The restaurant is particularly celebrated for its margaritas, the perfect complement to a zesty meal.

Not to be overlooked is Casino Royale, the largest on the island. It offers a glittering gaming experience, luring both seasoned gamblers and casual visitors seeking a dash of excitement.

In summary, Maho is a bustling tourist haven, offering a compelling mix of unique experiences. From the avionic marvels of Maho Beach to its pulsating nightlife and diverse culinary scene, this area embodies the dynamic spirit of Saint Martin, promising a truly memorable visit for all.

### **Marigot: A French Riviera in the Caribbean**

Marigot, the French capital of Saint Martin, exudes an undeniable charm, combining the laid-back ambiance of the French Riviera with the natural beauty of the Caribbean. The town presents an enchanting tableau with its pastel-colored buildings, narrow streets lined with

French bistros and boutique shops, and the turquoise waters of Marigot Bay serving as a serene backdrop.

One of Marigot's most endearing features is its open-air market. The Marigot Market is a vibrant hub, buzzing with activity every day, but it truly comes alive on Wednesday and Saturday mornings. Locals and visitors flock to the market to explore the lively stalls brimming with an array of local produce, exotic spices, and intricate crafts handcrafted by the island's artisans. This bustling marketplace is not only a shopping destination but also a cultural immersion, offering a rich tapestry of Saint Martin's diverse and vibrant lifestyle.

The culinary landscape of Marigot is an epicurean's delight, fusing the sophistication of French cuisine with the bold flavors of the Caribbean. The waterfront Lolos, casual, open-air barbecue joints, serve a smorgasbord of local dishes that offer a flavorful exploration of the island's culinary heritage. Moreover, Marigot's bakery stalls are renowned for their freshly baked baguettes, croissants, and pastries, echoing the culinary traditions of France in this tropical paradise.

Marigot Bay, with its azure waters, offers an excellent anchorage point for sailors. The bay is well-equipped with ample dinghy facilities and services, making it a convenient pit-stop for seafaring visitors. On the lagoon side, you can find Island Water World's French store, Ile Marine, and four boatyards that provide comprehensive service and maintenance facilities for boats, reinforcing Marigot's reputation as a haven for yachties.

Dominating Marigot's skyline is Fort St. Louis, the largest historical monument in Saint Martin. Perched on a hill overlooking the town, the fort is a window into the island's colonial past. A trek up to the fort is rewarded with breathtaking panoramas of Marigot, the sprawling Caribbean Sea, and the neighboring islands, making it a must-visit for history buffs and sightseers alike.

In essence, Marigot represents a delightful blend of cultures. It combines the leisurely charm of the French Riviera, the vibrant market culture, and the stunning natural beauty of the Caribbean. This quintessential blend makes Marigot a distinctive and alluring destination in Saint Martin, capturing the essence of the island's Franco-Caribbean heritage.

### **Grand Case: The Culinary Capital of the Caribbean**

Tucked away in a serene bay on the northern coast of Saint Martin, Grand Case has gracefully evolved from a tranquil fishing village into a hub of gourmet indulgence, its transformation embodying the island's resiliency and flair for gastronomy.

The village's culinary scene is a symphony of flavors, reflecting the vibrant diversity of Saint Martin's Creole heritage. A notable feature of Grand Case is the presence of 'lolos', traditional, casual roadside eateries that serve local Creole cuisine. These establishments, often adorned with vibrant colors and wafting with the enticing aroma of barbecue, serve up everything from

freshly grilled fish to spicy chicken, side dishes of plantains, johnnycakes, and rice and peas, a testament to the rich culinary traditions of the Caribbean.

Beyond its array of casual dining options, Grand Case also boasts a plethora of high-end restaurants that cater to those seeking a more refined dining experience. These establishments showcase the island's sophistication, serving a variety of culinary delights that range from exquisite French cuisine to innovative fusion dishes. Here, amidst elegant settings, you can savor delicacies prepared by seasoned chefs who artfully blend local ingredients with international techniques, creating dishes that are as visually stunning as they are flavorful.

Grand Case isn't just about food, though. It's also a destination that pulsates with the vibrant rhythms of Caribbean culture. Every Tuesday evening from January to April, the streets of Grand Case transform into a lively festival, known as "Mardi de Grand Case". This vibrant street fair brings together local artists, craftsmen, and musicians in a celebration of Saint Martin's cultural heritage. Amid the lively tunes of Caribbean music, you can browse stalls offering locally made crafts, watch artisans at work, and immerse yourself in the festive, carnival-like atmosphere.

Despite being severely impacted by Hurricane Irma in 2017, the spirit of Grand Case remains undaunted. The village continues to rebuild and flourish, its tenacity reflecting the indomitable spirit of the island's residents. Today, its growing popularity as a gourmet paradise is a testament to its successful recovery.

In essence, Grand Case is a testament to the adaptability and resilience of Saint Martin. It blends its traditional charm with gastronomic innovation and cultural celebrations to offer a uniquely enchanting experience, making it an integral part of the island's diverse and vibrant character.

### **The Lagoon: The Bustling Hub of the Island**

Occupying a significant portion of the western part of Saint Martin, the Simpson Bay Lagoon stands as the largest inland lagoon in the West Indies. Its placid, protected waters teeming with marine life, and the scenic vistas that it offers, make it not only a captivating geographical feature but also an integral part of the island's lively nautical culture and ecological richness.

The lagoon's extensive waterways serve as an essential transport route, connecting various points of the island. It houses a range of marine facilities and marinas, from Marina Royale in the east, through the commercial hubs of Simpson Bay and Cole Bay in the south, to the luxurious Porto Cupecoy in the west. These marinas offer services that cater to every conceivable nautical need, from repairs and maintenance to fuel and provisioning. Thus, the lagoon serves as a central node for the island's boating community and visitors alike, its calm waters providing a safe harbor and playground for various water sports activities.

The lagoon isn't just a boater's paradise, though. It is also an ecological wonder. Nestled within its expanse is the Sint Maarten Nature Reserve, a sprawling 30-hectare national park that invites



nature enthusiasts to explore the island's biodiversity. This reserve, an oasis of tranquility amidst the bustling activities around the lagoon, is an excellent spot for hiking and bird watching. Its numerous trails wind through varied landscapes, offering glimpses of the island's vibrant flora and fauna. As you traverse these trails, you can observe diverse bird species in their natural habitat, discover native plants, and immerse yourself in the island's natural beauty.

While swimming is not generally recommended in the busier parts of the lagoon due to boating activities, there are more secluded areas where one can dip into its serene waters, offering yet another dimension to the experiences it offers.

In essence, the Simpson Bay Lagoon is a versatile gem in Saint Martin's crown. It harmoniously intertwines the island's vibrant nautical life with its rich ecological beauty, offering residents and visitors an all-encompassing experience of the island's unique character. It is a testament to Saint Martin's commitment to preserving its natural assets while also leveraging them for recreational and economic benefits.

## **Navigating the Bridges of Saint Martin: A Practical Guide**

### **Mastering the Passage: Key Bridges on the Island**

On the island of Saint Martin, three significant bridges facilitate the movement of vessels, each with its own set of regulations, operating times, and characteristics. Understanding the functioning of these bridges is key to a smooth sailing experience in the island's waterways.

#### **Bridge Communication: VHF Channel 12**

### **The Dutch Bridge: The Island's Busy Waterway Hub**

The Dutch Bridge, located in the southern end of the Simpson Bay Lagoon and adjacent to the Sint Maarten Yacht Club, is the most frequently operated bridge on the island. It services all types of vessels, from commercial traffic to superyachts and recreational boats. Operated by the Simpson Bay Lagoon Authority (SLAC), it functions seven days a week and is the only bridge that imposes a usage fee. At the time of writing, the charge for a 47-foot catamaran for an inbound and outbound trip amounts to \$20.

Unique to the Dutch Bridge are its designated opening times which are structured to regulate traffic flow. Vessels must adhere to these timings and are forbidden to travel against the specified flow direction.

#### **Dutch Bridge Opening Times**

- 8:30 AM: Outbound
- 9:30 AM: Inbound

- 10:30 AM: Outbound
- 11:30 AM: Inbound
- 3:00 PM: Inbound
- 4:00 PM: Outbound
- 5:00 PM: Inbound

### **The Causeway (Swing) Bridge: Flexible and Convenient**

Situated further south, the Causeway or Swing Bridge allows passage between the southernmost part of the lagoon and the rest of the water body. It operates seven days a week and is distinctive in allowing vessels to pass abreast, much like North American roads, with portside to portside traffic.

The operation of the Causeway Bridge is on demand. To ensure your vessel's passage, it's recommended to call the operator on VHF Channel 12 half an hour before the scheduled opening. This practice is particularly useful for the 10 am and 3:30 pm openings when the operator is most likely already attending to VHF radio communications.

#### Causeway Bridge Opening Times

- 8:00 AM
- 10:00 AM
- 3:30 PM

### **The French Bridge: Access to the North**

The French Bridge at the northernmost point of the lagoon crosses the French Channel, connecting the western end of Marigot with the community of Sandy Ground. At 10 meters in width, it can accommodate most recreational vessels, while larger catamarans may need to navigate to the Dutch Bridge.

#### French Bridge Opening Times

- 8:30 AM
- 5:00 PM

By understanding the functioning of these bridges, visitors to Saint Martin can optimize their travel plans and enjoy a smooth sailing experience in the island's waterways.

### **A Cruiser's Guide to Services and Local Resources**

Given its reputation as a prime yachting destination, Saint Martin is well-equipped with a multitude of chandleries and marine services to cater to the needs of cruising enthusiasts.

Whether you're seeking boat-related supplies or expert maintenance services, this island has got you covered.

### **Chandleries: Your One-Stop Marine Supply Shops**

Boasting five diverse chandleries, Saint Martin is a haven for sourcing all your marine supply needs. The southern part of the Simpson Bay Lagoon, specifically in Cole Bay, houses the two largest chandleries—Island Water World and Budget Marine. These comprehensive stores offer an extensive range of boat-related products, satisfying almost any marine requirement you might have in the Caribbean.

Known for their excellent service and vast selection, these two chandleries are arguably some of the best in the world. With a loyalty program available at both, providing discounts on purchases, they become indispensable resources for extended stays on the island. Don't forget to bring your boat documents to set up an account and start saving.

Island Water World also maintains a conveniently located satellite store at Bobby's Marina in Philipsburg. Additionally, on the French Side of the island, two smaller but well-stocked chandleries exist. Island Water World's French side store is nestled a few hundred meters northeast of the French Channel, and Ile Marine is conveniently located near the seaward end of the French Channel, sharing a pier with the DP fuel station. Both these chandleries offer computers for checking into the French Side of Saint Martin, adding to the convenience for yachters.

### **Marine Services: Catering to Your Boat Maintenance Needs**

Saint Martin's strong maritime industry caters to vessels of all sizes, ranging from personal boats to supersized yachts. As such, the island hosts a plethora of service providers skilled in various aspects of boat maintenance, including AC, diesel, composites, and canvas work.

Cole Bay serves as the epicenter of this thriving industry. Quality of service varies, so it's beneficial to seek feedback before committing to a provider. While most are excellent, a few might not live up to your expectations. Be aware that during the high season, these businesses can be incredibly busy, so advanced booking is recommended. Here are a few noteworthy businesses to consider:

**FKG Rigging:** Known for its superior rigging services, FKG also offers excellent stainless work, fabrication, and hydraulics work.

**Libertas Fabrication:** Specializes in stainless steel work and constructs beautiful solar racks.

**ProServ:** Renowned for its expertise in hydraulics, programmable logic controls, and some light machining. Exceptional customer service is a hallmark.

**Electec:** A retail store featuring an extensive range of electrical supplies for both boat and land use. Also offers parts for various watermakers and generators.

**Tradewinds Marine Electrics:** Experts in solar and lithium technologies and modern conveniences to enhance your yachting experience.

**Sew Nauti:** Specializing in top-quality upholstery for vessels, from helm seats for sport fishers to salon or cockpit cushions for sailing yachts.

**DutchYachts:** An excellent composite shop known for structural repairs, rudders, grounding damage, and keels.

**Neptune Marine:** Offers high-quality yacht carpentry repairs, refurbishment, or remodeling, for both interior and exterior.

**Sail Lofts and Canvas:** Two lofts, Tropical Sail loft and Sint Maarten Sails, are available in Cole Bay, offering excellent sail repair or new sail build services. Both also offer canvas making services for biminis, dodgers, covers, and more.

Whether you're on a short visit or an extended stay, Saint Martin's plethora of services and local resources ensures a smooth and satisfying yachting experience.

### **A Comprehensive Guide to Boatyards and Marinas in Saint Martin**

Saint Martin, a popular yachting destination, offers a wide range of boatyards and marinas to cater to the diverse needs of boaters, ranging from those needing serious vessel maintenance to others seeking plush amenities and a delightful stay. Whether you're looking for a modest yard to service your medium-sized boat or a luxurious marina to dock your superyacht, Saint Martin has an option for every yachty.

#### **Boatyards: From Modest to Massive**

Saint Martin is home to seven noteworthy boatyards that can service a wide variety of vessel sizes. Apart from the four smaller yards located around Marigot, the island features three larger establishments, all conveniently named Bobby's.

**Bobby's Airport Yard:** A moderately sized establishment equipped with a modest travel lift capable of hauling medium-sized boats for service and storage. It is the perfect choice for those looking for personalized and efficient service.

**Bobby's Mega Yard:** This yard has the largest travel lift in the region, capable of servicing boats up to 11 meters wide and of significant length. Its strategic location near Island Water World

and Budget Marine ensures easy access to parts and supplies, enhancing the convenience for vessel owners.

Bobby's Original Yard: in Philipsburg, operational since 1968, is a testament to Saint Martin's long-standing maritime tradition. This yard can haul and store an extensive variety of vessels, both large and small, making it a versatile choice for many yachting enthusiasts.

### **Marinas: From Frugal to Luxurious**

While many yachties opt for anchoring in the numerous splendid anchorages around the island or mooring in the lagoon, Marigot Bay, or Simpson Bay, Saint Martin also offers a diverse range of marinas for those seeking a home base for rest or maintenance work.

Within the well-sheltered lagoon, Blue Pearl, Lagoon Marina, and Island Water World provide no-frills services for those seeking economical options. These marinas offer safe and affordable docking facilities for yachties. A smaller marina, nestled behind the Hertz Car Rental location on Airport Road, is also a viable option for those seeking basic docking facilities.

For those looking for a blend of comfort and accessibility, Simpson Bay Yacht Club Marina is an ideal choice. Situated in close proximity to various restaurants and entertainment options, it is currently expanding its offerings by constructing a pool and recreation center.

Port de Plaisance upscales the luxury quotient by featuring a country club, health club, restaurants, and even a casino on its premises. Designed with a focus on luxury, Isla Del Sol primarily caters to superyachts and their crews by providing posh services and amenities. Similarly, Palapa Marina services large yachts along with some smaller vessels, providing easy access to Simpson Bay's vibrant nightlife and a short walk to the scenic Simpson Bay Beach.

For those exclusively servicing large yachts, Skyport, the northernmost marina in Simpson Bay Lagoon, is adding more infrastructure to its site to enhance its offerings for this specific clientele.

On the French side, Fort Louis Marina in Marigot Bay and the Marina at Anse Marcel provide excellent alternatives. Fort Louis Marina can accommodate a wide variety of sailing and power vessels up to 100 feet. They have had problems with their water and power infrastructure in the past, but significant efforts have been made to address these issues. However, arranging for payment via credit card in advance is required to access diesel at Fort Louis.

The Marina at Anse Marcel is more focused on recreational vessels and charter yachts, accommodating vessels up to approximately 55 feet. Equipped with a well-functioning fuel dock, it allows visitors to check in and out of French St. Martin at the Capitainery, adding to its convenience factor.

Regardless of your vessel's size or your personal preference for amenities, Saint Martin's array of boatyards and marinas ensures a seamless and enjoyable yachting experience. With options ranging from modest yards to plush marinas, there's something for every yachtie on this vibrant Caribbean island.

### **Comprehensive Yacht Services and Resources for Cruisers in Saint Martin**

Saint Martin offers a vast range of essential yacht services and resources for cruisers. Whether you need business support, yacht maintenance, fuel, water, or propane services, the island's businesses stand ready to meet your needs.

#### **Essential Business Services**

At the heart of Saint Martin's yachting business services is Business Point, a one-stop solution for all the essential needs of cruisers in the area. Spearheaded by the diligent Hyacinth Joseph, Business Point offers an impressive suite of amenities. From mobile connectivity options, including SIM cards and 4G modem rentals, to providing an official US or European mailing address for shipments, Business Point stands ready to assist with all your business-related needs. It also offers printing, photocopying, and faxing services, and even provides hourly computer workspace. Hyacinth's engagement with the community extends beyond her business, with her organizing monthly boat jumbles in high season on the dock at Lagoonies restaurant in Cole Bay.

#### **Yacht Maintenance and Auxiliary Services**

Known as a Saint Martin institution, Shrimpy's Yacht Services and Shrimpy's Laundry Services are central to the yachting community. Beyond providing top-tier wash and fold laundry service, Shrimpy's hosts an array of used marine parts for sale. It even offers modest lodging in a hostel-style setting for visiting crew members, and provides storage lockers for those in transition between vessels. Owner Michael Glatz is an invaluable resource, possessing extensive knowledge of the island. His dedication to the yachting community is evident in his longstanding service as the host of the morning cruiser's net for approximately two decades.

#### **Fuel Services**

Fuel access for your vessel in Saint Martin is abundant and conveniently located. On the Dutch side of the Lagoon, Island Water World runs a fuel dock six days a week, offering gasoline, diesel, and potable water. On the French side, Cadisco and DP operate fuel docks seven days a week, supplying gas, diesel, and water.

Marina Fort St. Louis offers a diesel-only fuel dock within its premises. Larger vessels requiring substantial refueling can arrange for a fuel truck delivery to the pier. However, advanced billing setup is required at this location.

For those moored east of Grand Case, the marina at Anse Marcel offers a seven-day operational fuel dock supplying gasoline, diesel, and water. An additional bonus is the ability to check in and out of the French side at this facility.

In Great Bay, Philipsburg, Bobby's Marina operates a comprehensive fuel dock with gas, diesel, water, and even ice, available seven days a week.

### **Water Supply**

Potable water is accessible at all the above-mentioned fuel docks. A unique option in Saint Martin is a water delivery boat that operates in the Lagoon and Marigot Bay during the weekends. For more information, check the Sint Maarten Cruiser and Boaters Facebook page or ask during the morning net for the water boat's contact number.

### **Propane/Cooking Gas**

For your propane or cooking gas needs, Gas King is conveniently located at the southern end of the Simpson Bay strip. To cater to yachties' unique needs, Island Water World offers a drop-off service on Mondays at the Dutch Side store and on Fridays at the French Side store. Similarly, Ile Marine offers the same service on Wednesdays. These chandleries on the French side are equipped to fill all your less common European tanks. For this service, drop off your tank before 9 am and collect it after 4 pm.

### **Gourmet Groceries and Provisions in Saint Martin**

Known as a gastronomical paradise, Saint Martin boasts an incredibly diverse and high-quality food scene, making it a fantastic place for provisioning. This is primarily due to two factors. First, the presence of numerous upscale restaurants on both the French and Dutch sides of the island which cater to discerning food enthusiasts and demand premium ingredients. Secondly, the multitude of superyachts and megayachts that make Saint Martin their winter haven, bring with them chefs and guests who require an array of top-notch, exotic ingredients. The abundance of exceptional food on this island not only benefits these high-end patrons but also provides a boon to all residents and visitors.

*Advice: Buy your Booze in Saint Martin! Saint Martin is its surprisingly affordable alcoholic beverages. The island's absence of retail taxes and duties results in some of the lowest retail prices for alcohol anywhere in the world. Imagine finding a top-tier scotch for merely \$20 per liter or premium gin for under \$15. Rum enthusiasts can also indulge in a variety of Caribbean rums at incredibly low prices. Hence, it is wise to avoid purchasing duty-free alcohol before landing in Saint Martin.*

### **Grocery Stores and Markets**

On the French side, there are two Super U markets, one in Marigot and another in Grand Case. These stores stock a broad range of European groceries, including fantastic selections of cheese, wine, and produce. Also, in Grand Case is the remarkable Leader Price store which offers a similarly impressive range of products as the Super U in Marigot.

*Advice: Learn to cook duck breast. This incredibly tasty protein is heavily subsidized on the French side, making it a great value option. Unlike chicken, duck breast has a steak-like texture and provides a distinct, rich flavor that is a must-try during your stay.*

On the Dutch side, which primarily caters to American tourists, you'll find all your familiar favorites. Stores such as Carrefour in Cole Bay and another over the mountain en route to Philipsburg are akin to the best American grocery stores, offering a vast range of products.

*Advice: There are baguettes, and then, there are baguettes! Most grocery stores in Saint Martin will sell you a fresh baguette, but not all baguettes are created equal. In Marigot on the French side, you'll find bakeries that offer superior quality baguettes at excellent prices. L'Express near the ferry dock provides a chewier, denser, artisanal variety, while Sarafina bakery in Marina Royale sells a crisper, flakier type of baguette. Chez Fernand offers a middle-ground between these two. Coupling a fresh baguette with some delectable, unpasteurized French cheese and a bit of charcuterie creates an effortless yet exquisite lunch.*

## **Bulk Buying**

For those looking for bulk purchases, the Dutch side offers three main businesses: Divico, Prime, and Cost-U-Less. Located in Cole Bay, Divico is a newer establishment that offers larger packages of items similar to an American Costco and has impressive prices on alcohol. Prime, located a few streets east, carries quantities of dried goods, canned foods, spices, drinks, etc. Cost-U-Less, near the large Carrefour en route to Philipsburg, is the largest of the three, stocking large packages of a wide variety of items, as well as electronics, clothes, and hardware. Convenient transportation to Carrefour and Cost-U-Less is provided by Island Water World with a weekly grocery bus during the high season.

## **Asian Markets**

Scattered across Saint Martin and much of the Caribbean are Asian markets, locally referred to as "The Chinese Grocery." They are not only conveniently located but also often offer great deals on alcohol, bottled water, soft drinks, and other essentials.

*Advice: Best deal on 2-stroke oil! At the Asian Markets, you can find 2-stroke oil for as low as \$7 per liter here, nearly half the price of those in chandleries.*



## **Marine Swap Meets or Boat Jumbles in Saint Martin**

In the heart of the vibrant yachting community of Saint Martin, boat jumbles – or marine swap meets – have become staple events for sailors, marine enthusiasts, and community members alike. These monthly events, organized by Hyacinth of Business Point at Lagoonies Restaurant, and by Paula, the manager of Time Out Boat Yard (affectionately known as TOBY), offer a unique mix of commerce, camaraderie, and celebration.

### **Lagoonies Restaurant Boat Jumble**

Under Hyacinth's careful coordination, Lagoonies Restaurant transforms into a bustling marketplace once a month, where yachting enthusiasts can peruse a wide range of maritime merchandise. Here, visitors can sell or purchase an array of boating necessities and treasures, from essential gear like ropes, sails, and anchors to unique nautical trinkets and accessories. However, the allure of this event stretches far beyond simple commerce.

Indeed, the boat jumble at Lagoonies is a veritable social event, drawing a diverse crowd that includes everyone from experienced sailors to casual boaters and curious onlookers. It offers a unique opportunity to share stories, exchange insights, and forge connections within Saint Martin's thriving nautical community.

### **Time Out Boat Yard (TOBY) Boat Jumble**

Further south, at TOBY, Paula spearheads another monthly boat jumble that has quickly gained fame within the island's yachting community. This event, similar to its counterpart at Lagoonies, provides an avenue for people to buy and sell various marine-related items. However, the TOBY Boat Jumble also includes its own unique draw – the signature Irish coffee served by Desmond.

Brewed with a perfect blend of coffee, Irish whiskey, sugar, and topped with a layer of cream, Desmond's Irish coffee is a delightful treat to enjoy as you browse through the assortment of nautical items. And rest assured, it's perfectly acceptable to indulge in this warm, caffeinated concoction as early as 08.30 – after all, it is coffee!

### **Unifying a Community**

These boat jumbles in Saint Martin are more than just swap meets; they are significant social gatherings that help to bind the community. They offer a space where people with shared interests can gather, engage, and exchange. Moreover, these events further foster an environment that encourages sustainable practices by enabling the reuse and repurposing of marine equipment.

Therefore, whether you're in the market for a specific boat part, looking to offload some surplus gear, or simply craving Desmond's renowned Irish coffee, don't miss out on these boat jumble

events in Saint Martin. You may arrive with the intention of browsing through nautical odds and ends, but you'll leave with an enriched appreciation for the island's vibrant yachting community.

### **A Tour of Saint Martin's Beaches**

Saint Martin, a jewel of the Caribbean, offers 37 distinct white sand beaches, each exuding its own unique character. From vibrant social hubs to serene stretches of sand, there's a slice of paradise for every type of beach-goer.

#### **Orient Beach: The Island's Social Epicenter**

Dominating the shoreline is Orient Beach, a 2-kilometer-long stretch of white sand, bustling with energy and activity. This beach, one of the world's great coastal landmarks, hums with a lively atmosphere, drawing a vibrant mix of locals and tourists.

Here, visitors can rent a chair, grab a bucket of chilled beer, and delve into world-class people-watching. An array of beach bars, ranging from intimate establishments to bustling venues, dot the coastline. These offer a plethora of delightful frozen cocktails and sumptuous lunches that will tantalize your taste buds. As Orient Beach faces east, the day wraps up around 4.30 pm, just as the sun sets behind you, painting the sky with hues of orange and pink.

#### **Maho Beach: Thrill Seeker's Delight**

For adrenaline junkies, Maho Beach is a must-visit. As seen on numerous viral Youtube videos, this beach offers an unrivaled spectacle – incoming passenger jets flying perilously low to land on the nearby airport's relatively short runway. This extraordinary sight is nothing short of breathtaking and, for many, a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

#### **Mullet Beach: Sunset Paradise**

If you're seeking a beach day that lasts a bit longer, Mullet Beach, facing west, ensures the sunshine lingers well into the evening. Besides the extended sunlight, Mullet Beach also boasts a variety of fantastic beach bars, offering the perfect spots to sit back, relax, and enjoy the mesmerizing sunset.

#### **Le Galion Beach: A Family Haven**

For families, especially those with young children, Le Galion Beach is the ideal destination. Nestled in a well-protected cove, this beach rarely experiences significant swells, making it a safe playground for the little ones. It's a perfect spot for building sandcastles and enjoying the gentle lapping of the Caribbean Sea.

#### **Happy Bay Beach and Anse Marcel: Yachters' Favorites**

For yacht enthusiasts, Happy Bay Beach and Anse Marcel offer a unique charm. Happy Bay Beach, inaccessible by road, offers an intimate beach experience, often giving visitors the feeling of owning a private beach. Its tranquil waters make it a perfect spot to anchor and enjoy a quiet beach day.

Anse Marcel, on the other hand, rests in a long, secluded bay and is home to an expansive white beach. Here, a beach club offers one of the best lunch experiences on the island. The sight of yachts anchored off the shore against the backdrop of the setting sun makes for a truly picturesque evening.

Whether you seek solitude or social vibrancy, St. Martin's 37 beaches promise an unforgettable coastal experience. Remember to pack your sunscreen, beach towel, and a good book, and let the allure of Saint Martin's beaches sweep you off your feet.

### **Savoring Saint Martin: An Island of Culinary Wonders**

The island of Saint Martin is a culinary paradise, a mosaic of flavors that extends from the simplest local street food to the most elaborate gourmet dining experiences. Whether you're a foodie seeking the finest international cuisine or a traveler yearning for authentic local delicacies, Saint Martin has a dish and a venue to tantalize your taste buds.

#### **Tipping Etiquette: A Bicultural Approach**

Before embarking on your culinary tour, it's crucial to understand the dual nature of Saint Martin, which is divided into two countries: French Saint Martin and Dutch Sint Maarten. Each side has its own tipping culture.

On the Dutch side, the tipping protocol closely resembles that of the United States, where a tip is typically expected. Some establishments automatically include a service charge on the bill, which can be supplemented with a small tip if the service is exceptional.

In contrast, the French side adheres to a more European custom, where servers are paid a living wage, and tipping is not as prevalent. However, given the influence of international tourists, it's customary to leave a modest tip of about 8-10% as a token of appreciation.

#### **Dining Near The Lagoon and Marigot Bay**

The areas around the Lagoon and Marigot Bay are easily accessible by dinghy and are home to several noteworthy eateries.

The Dinghy Dock Bar: A favorite among yachties, this self-proclaimed dive bar offers a satisfying selection of pub food, an assortment of creative cocktails, and an impressive variety of craft beers.

Lagoonies: Located at the opposite corner of Simpson Bay, Lagoonies serves elevated pub food. Known for its lively music scene in the evenings, this hotspot promises a feast for both the palate and the ears.

Naked Pirates Rum Bar: Across the lagoon from Lagoonies, Naked Pirates offers an indulgent treat: one of the island's best burgers paired with exciting drinks in a relaxed, jovial atmosphere. The generous dinghy dock is open for cruisers at any time.

Don Pizza: This recent addition, run by the chef at Sale E Pepe, offers an impressive array of delicious pizzas. The delightful flavors have quickly won over patrons, with many returning for seconds within the first week.

Pizza Italy: Located near the Naked Pirates, Pizza Italy is a haven for pizza lovers. Their large patio provides the perfect setting for an al fresco pizza feast.

Reveil Matin: Adjacent to Pizza Italy, this breakfast and lunch venue offers an extensive menu spanning eight pages of delectable breakfast options. It's a popular spot for a leisurely Sunday morning breakfast.

Buccaneer Beach Bar: This venue offers the perfect blend of fun, food, and scenery. Enjoy a laid-back afternoon or evening lounging in a beach chair, admiring the picturesque view of Simpson Bay. Their themed nights featuring all-you-can-eat ribs and chicken, live music, face painting, and movies draw a lively mix of yachties and families.

Avantika: Situated on the second floor of the Plaza Del Sol, this establishment serves refined Thai cuisine. The exquisite food, coupled with a charming ambiance, makes Avantika an excellent choice for group outings.

The Tap and Still: Across the street from Plaza Del Sol, The Tap and Still, part of a successful USVI mini-chain, dishes up delectable burgers and fries in a cool atmosphere. With three different dining areas and regular live music, it's an ideal place to enjoy a casual meal.

### **Cruising Further From the Simpson Bay Lagoon**

Traveling further afield will open up even more culinary treasures:

Porto Cupecoy: Located at the far west end of the lagoon, this area is home to several bars and restaurants. Mama's pizzeria is a must-visit, with its pizzas winning the approval of even the most discerning Italian cruisers. On Sundays, the Rendezvous Lounge hosts an afternoon jazz session that perfectly complements their cuisine.

Port Royale Marina: This marina in Marigot houses several stellar restaurants. Be Kool, with its contemporary French cuisine and vibrant atmosphere; Tropicana, a classic French restaurant with a fun vibe; The Creperie Du Lagon, renowned for its savory and sweet crepes; and Croissant Royale, known for its delightful breakfast and lunch menus. Another favorite is Le Sous Marin, a local haunt run by the colorful Jean Baptiste and his wife Paula, known for their great, inexpensive food and entertaining company.

### **Delights in Marigot Bay**

The dinghy dock in Marigot Bay offers quick access to a wide array of delectable dining options:

Lolos: These local restaurants, housed in reclaimed shipping containers, offer a variety of cuisines in a lively setting. For an affordable and authentic local meal, Lolos is the way to go.

Chez Fernand: Across from Lolos, Chez Fernand offers a plethora of sweet and savory pastries, sandwiches, and freshly baked baguettes, guaranteed to set your heart racing with their delicious offerings.

L'Express: This bakery and café, famous for its rustic baguettes and delectable pastries, also offers a guilty pleasure: fugaz, a long, baguette-dough flatbread with a variety of toppings baked right in.

O Plongeoir: This informal French restaurant boasts fantastic food and top-notch service. It's always worth a visit.

Yacht Club Restaurant: This full-service restaurant is famed for its delectable thin-crust, authentic Italian pizzas. It's also an excellent spot for an afternoon cocktail, offering a lovely view of the boats and the sea.

Whether you are within the vicinity of Simpson Bay Lagoon or venturing out to explore the far corners of Saint Martin, this island's culinary delights offer a taste of paradise with every bite.

### **Near the Yacht Club and the Simpson Bay Strip**

The Sint Maarten Yacht Club: A vibrant hub for sailors located beside the Dutch Bridge. This authentic yacht club organizes youth sailing programs and hosts renowned events like the Heineken Regatta and the Caribbean Multihull Challenge. The associated restaurant at the Yacht Club is a focal point for both cruisers and locals, offering all-day dining and a beloved happy hour. You can also enjoy live music a couple of nights a week, creating a lively atmosphere that perfectly complements the sailing spirit.

The Fish Market: Located just across the Dutch Bridge from the Yacht Club, and opposite MacDonalds. Within this bustling complex, you'll discover several small restaurants specializing

in various interpretations of local Caribbean cuisine. Considered somewhat of an insider's secret, these establishments offer intriguing and mouthwatering lunch or dinner options, often accompanied by engaging conversations and stories, all at great prices.

Pizza & Co: Located further north on the Simpson Bay strip. An excellent pizzeria conveniently situated across from the popular yachtie hangout, Soggy Dollar Bar. These two establishments seem to go hand in hand, and it's not uncommon to see people bringing over a freshly baked pizza from Pizza & Co to enjoy during Soggy Dollar Bar's happy hour.

Little Jerusalem: A beloved eatery renowned for its generous portions of delicious shawarma served in various flavorful presentations. Offering tremendous value for its large, affordable, and immensely satisfying meals, Little Jerusalem is a go-to destination. Plus, engaging in conversation with Abraham, the chef and owner, adds an extra touch of warmth to the dining experience.

The Palms: This cozy restaurant serves Caribbean-inspired home-cooked meals that will transport your taste buds to paradise. While they are famous for their Drunken Ribs, make sure to also indulge in their fantastic cocktails. A must-try is the Passionfruit Caipirinha, a delightful blend that will leave you grateful for the recommendation.

### **Unveiling Culinary Gems: Restaurants Worth the Journey**

When it comes to restaurants in Saint Martin that are worth traveling for, one cannot overlook the enchanting town of Grand Case. Nestled along the seaside, this former fishing village has blossomed into the gastronomic heart of the Caribbean, offering an unparalleled dining experience. Here, you'll find a delightful contrast between the local BBQ joints known as Lolos and a collection of high-end establishments that showcase gourmet meals with French flair and locally sourced ingredients.

#### **Lolos: A Flavorful Tradition**

The Lolos, long-standing local BBQ joints, have been serving up mouthwatering dishes for years. For a modest price of around 12 to 14 bucks, you can indulge in generous plates of tender chicken, succulent ribs, and delectable sides, all enjoyed in the open air with the tantalizing aroma of charcoal BBQ wafting through the air. On bustling nights, you might find yourself sharing a table with strangers, an experience that often leads to delightful conversations and new friendships. Among the Lolos, one standout is The Talk of the Town, where you can expect a truly memorable culinary adventure.

#### **Gourmet Delights: French Techniques with Local Flair**

On the other end of the culinary spectrum, Grand Case is home to a remarkable selection of high-end restaurants that blend French culinary techniques with local flavors, using the island's

abundant ingredients. Le Pressoir, located at the east end of the main street, serves up dishes that will transport your taste buds to new heights, perhaps even offering the best meal of your life. In the heart of town, La Villa offers prix fixe menus that deliver an incredible dining experience at an affordable price point. Bistrot Caraibes combines a trendy ambiance with stunning culinary creations, while Auberge Gourmand provides a classic French dining experience that never fails to impress. These are just a few examples of the diverse array of establishments available, and it's hard to go wrong with any choice in this culinary haven.

### **Entertainment and Beachfront Delights**

At the western end of Grand Case, you'll discover Rainbow Café and Captain Frenchy's, both bustling beach clubs during the day and vibrant entertainment hubs at night. These venues not only offer exquisite food but also provide a lively atmosphere where you can enjoy live music and soak up the energetic vibe. As an added bonus, Grand Case boasts a fantastic anchorage with a vast, shallow bay and pristine sandy spots offering excellent holding for boats. While it typically offers calm waters, be aware that it can become slightly roly if the winds or swells shift from the north. Additionally, the bay is a haven for snorkeling and scuba diving enthusiasts, with Creole Rock at the east end and Turtle Reef at the west end offering captivating underwater exploration.

### **Unveiling Hidden Culinary Gems**

While Grand Case takes center stage as a culinary hotspot, don't limit your culinary explorations solely to this charming town. Saint Martin is brimming with more hidden gems scattered throughout the island. Instead of attempting an exhaustive list or overlooking some obvious choices, I encourage you to seek recommendations from locals and fellow travelers. Consider renting a car to embark on culinary adventures beyond the beaten cruiser's path, discovering lesser-known establishments that offer exceptional dining experiences. Let your taste buds guide you to the island's treasures as you savor the diverse and tantalizing flavors of Saint Martin's remarkable eateries.

### **Yachtie Hangouts: Where Sailing Stories Unfold**

Saint Martin's vibrant bar scene caters to both tourists and locals, with an abundance of establishments to explore. While the options are vast, here are a few popular hangouts among yachties that offer a mix of convenience, camaraderie, and fantastic libations. While many of these bars are located in Simpson Bay, don't hesitate to venture beyond and discover the swish cocktail spots and lively beach bars scattered across the island. After all, being in this lively destination calls for embracing the fun it has to offer.

### **Soggy Dollar Bar: The Yachtie Gathering Spot**

Located in Simpson Bay, Soggy Dollar Bar stands as the quintessential yachtie bar in Saint Martin. Its daily happy hour from 5 pm to 7 pm, with beers priced at a dollar, acts as a magnet for both seasoned sailors and glamorous seafarers. Friday nights are particularly bustling, drawing yachties who come to meet old friends and form groups for outings to the many nearby Simpson Bay eateries. If you're lucky, you might even spot some familiar faces from the reality show "Below Deck."

### **Dinghy Dock Bar: A Yachtie Focal Point**

The Dinghy Dock Bar, a beloved hangout for yachties, tourists, and locals alike, lives up to its name with its convenient dinghy dock for easy access. Here, you'll find a cozy atmosphere and a wide range of pub food options to satisfy your cravings. Whether it's lunchtime or a relaxing evening, the Dinghy Dock Bar is a go-to spot for yachties seeking delightful meals and refreshing cocktails.

### **Buccaneer Beach Bar: Beachfront Bliss**

For an idyllic afternoon lounging on a beach chair with a bucket of ice-cold beers, look no further than the Buccaneer Beach Bar. With its prime location and lively ambiance, this bar offers food specials on select nights and occasional live music throughout the week. Let the beach vibes wash over you as you unwind and enjoy the laid-back atmosphere.

### **Sint Maarten Yacht Club: Classic Yachtie Hangout**

The Sint Maarten Yacht Club is another classic hangout favored by yachties, offering all-day dining and an immensely popular happy hour. This venue serves as a meeting point for cruisers and locals alike, creating a vibrant atmosphere filled with camaraderie. With live music scheduled two or three nights a week and Formula 1 screenings on Sundays during the season, the Sint Maarten Yacht Club guarantees a memorable experience for all.

### **NoWhere Special: Unforgettable Vibes**

Situated right next to the Sint Maarten Yacht Club, NoWhere Special may not have gained as much recognition among cruisers, but it consistently offers a lively ambiance and engaging events. From regular music performances to enticing drink specials and ladies' nights, this bar promises a good time. Don't miss out on the chance to uncover the unexpected at NoWhere Special.

### **Tap & Still: Burger Paradise with Entertainment**

Tap & Still isn't just known for its delectable burgers; it's also becoming a hotspot for entertainment. With a schedule of lively events several nights a week, this venue sets the stage for an enjoyable evening. Immerse yourself in the vibrant atmosphere and savor the mouthwatering food, all while enjoying the energy that Tap & Still exudes.



### **Huppel, The Pub: Cozy Hideaway at Simpson Bay Yacht Club**

Tucked within the Simpson Bay Yacht Club commercial space, the recently reopened Huppel, The Pub, offers a cozy setting for gathering with friends. The friendly staff welcomes visitors to enjoy their selection of bar food while occasionally hosting sports events and live music. Take a moment to unwind at this inviting establishment and savor the laid-back ambiance.

### **Toppers: Karaoke Fun**

If you're in the mood for some lively karaoke sessions, Toppers is the place to be. With its new location at the former Carousel restaurant, this spacious and vibrant venue guarantees a memorable night filled with laughter and entertainment. Gather your friends, choose your favorite songs, and join the fun at Toppers.

### **Naked Pirates Rum Bar: Casual Charm**

Known for its relaxed and unpretentious atmosphere, Naked Pirates Rum Bar is a must-visit spot for those seeking a carefree experience. It's not uncommon to find a doctor serving as your bartender here, adding to the bar's eclectic charm. Despite its relatively short time in operation, this establishment has already garnered a dedicated following, drawn in by its welcoming ambiance and inviting libations.

### **Lagoonies: Where Music Meets Sunset**

Lagoonies, nestled on the Simpson Bay strip, offers a delightful late-afternoon happy hour that seamlessly transitions into lively evenings with live music two or three nights a week. As the sun sets, indulge in bargain-priced Heineken or the in-house rum punch, perfectly complemented by the delectable snacks available. The bar's expansive and somewhat precarious dinghy dock warmly welcomes visiting yachties, making it a popular spot for cruisers to mingle and connect.

### **The Yachtie's Morning Net: Six Days a Week at 7:30 AM on VHF Channel 10**

Hosted by Mike "Shrimpy" Glatz, is a highly regarded and well-organized broadcast that provides valuable information to visiting yachties. With 20 years of experience, Shrimpy delivers concise and reliable updates on weather, marina availability, local events, and more. The net fosters a sense of community among yachties and serves as a daily gathering point to connect, share stories, and seek advice. Yachties appreciate Shrimpy's dedication and passion, making the Cruiser's Morning Net an indispensable resource for starting the day right in St. Martin.

### **Facebook Groups**

As useful as the morning net is for cruisers, these Facebook groups have become an invaluable source of information for local and visiting yachties. In Saint Martin, the groups to checkout include:

- Sint Maarten Cruisers & Boaters (SXM)
- SXM cruisers and Boaters (mostly unmoderated)
- SXM Boat Parts and Nautical Flea Market
- SXM Cruisers Buy, Sell Swap and Give Away.

### **Finding Your Piece of Paradise: The Best Anchorages in Saint Martin**

St. Martin offers a diverse range of anchorages that cater to the needs of cruisers and yachties. Let's explore these anchorages in more detail:

Lagoon: The Lagoon is a significant anchorage on St. Martin, encompassing both the Dutch and French sides of the island. On the Dutch side, anchoring is primarily concentrated within the defined square area, bordered by the causeway Bridge, Airport Road, Isla Del Sol marina, and Port De Plaisance marina. While the holding is generally good, it can become crowded during high season, limiting the amount of chain that can be deployed. The Dutch side anchorage can be lively, with entertainment from nearby clubs. A weekly fee is required to anchor on the Dutch side. On the French side, the Lagoon is much larger and offers multiple anchoring opportunities. Yachties typically anchor west of the channel that separates the Dutch and French sides. To ensure good holding, it is advisable to locate sandy patches and carefully drop the anchor on the windward side. The bottom of the lagoon can be thick and tangled, which may require a few attempts to secure the anchor properly.

Marigot Bay: Marigot Bay is the largest and most populated anchorage on the island. This expansive bay provides excellent protection against prevailing easterly winds. Boasting acres of sandy bottom, the depths range from approximately 7 to 20 feet. Yachties will encounter a wide variety of boats in Marigot Bay, from modest monohulls to luxurious superyachts. The bay features a large town dinghy dock and convenient access to various services within a short walking distance. The water is clear and inviting, ideal for swimming, but caution should be exercised around dinghies. Marine life such as turtles, rays, and sand sharks can be spotted in the area. It's worth noting that if the wind or swell originates from the north, the bay can become choppy. In rare instances when the swell comes from the northwest, relocating to the Lagoon may be preferable.

In the summer of 2022, the town of Marigot installed 87 mooring balls in the bay. However, these moorings have not been widely embraced by the boating community. While they offer a new and safe option, the short pendants can be uncomfortable on days with swells. Moreover, many mooring blocks are in water depths less than 6 feet, potentially posing a risk for boats with deeper keels. As of now, there is no established method for paying fees for the moorings.

Consequently, they have been practically free to use, although it remains unclear when the town will implement a fee collection system.

Friars Bay: Situated east of Marigot Bay, Friars Bay provides an intimate anchorage where a few boats can enjoy reliable holding and excellent protection from prevailing easterly winds. This smaller anchorage offers a more secluded and exotic atmosphere, adding to its appeal.

Happy Bay: Continuing along the coast, Happy Bay presents a small but charming bay with a fantastic beach that is often uncrowded. It serves as an ideal daytime anchorage and may be suitable for overnight stays under particularly favorable conditions.

Grand Case: As one moves east from Marigot Bay, the next notable anchorage is Grand Case. Boaters should be cautious of a shoal a few hundred yards from the point marking the south end of the bay. Grand Case is another expansive and flat anchorage with numerous sandy patches, allowing for anchoring of multiple vessels. The bay offers excellent protection against prevailing easterly winds. However, wind funneling through a notch in the local hills can create breezy conditions. Yachties will appreciate the amenities in the town, including a well-equipped dinghy dock, superb dining options, and a beautiful beach suitable for walking and swimming. Snorkeling and scuba diving can be enjoyed at Creole Rock or Turtle Reef within the bay. Grand Case is an ideal anchorage for spending a few days or even a week, immersing oneself in its charm and culinary delights.

Anse Marcel: A beautiful and narrow bay located further clockwise along the coast. Boaters should be mindful of rocks along the southerly and westerly part of the entrance. The bay features a stunning white beach, where one can indulge in a delightful beach club lunch amidst a sophisticated setting. Anse Marcel also houses the inner harbor, home to Dream Yacht Charter and the Capitanery, where check-in and check-out procedures can be completed. It is important to note that the bay's unique configuration often results in conflicting winds, currents, and swells. As a result, anchored boats may face different directions, making it slightly challenging to find an optimal spot. Nevertheless, the natural beauty and allure of Anse Marcel make it a worthwhile destination.

Ilet de Pinel: Offers a small yet picturesque anchorage suitable for a limited number of boats, provided the conditions are favorable. The island's natural beauty is captivating, and boaters can enjoy a pleasant dinghy ride to the beach and restaurants on Pinel Island. The protected area surrounding the island offers excellent snorkeling opportunities, while a leisurely hike on the small island adds to the overall experience.

Tintamarre: Located two miles northeast of Ilet de Pinel, Tintamarre is a larger island with a delightful anchorage and several free mooring balls available for use. Exploring the island on foot reveals remnants of a pre-war airfield and various ruins, making for an intriguing excursion.

Orient Bay: Situated along the exposed east side of the island, Orient Bay is a large bay that lacks substantial protection. However, it can serve as a sporadic daytime anchorage near the

vibrant atmosphere of Orient Beach. In optimal conditions, anchoring behind Green Cay may be suitable for overnight stays.

Oyster Pond: Historically a bustling spot, Oyster Pond has experienced a decline in activity since Hurricane Irma in 2017. The removal of wrecks in 2022 has made anchoring possible, but due to the limited attractions and activities, there may be more enticing anchorages available on the island. With recent developments, including a treaty clarifying the Dutch/French border, Oyster Pond may regain its liveliness in the years to come.

Bays on the French Side: Moving counterclockwise from Marigot Bay, several bays on the French side provide additional anchoring options. Baie Rouge features a beautiful and expansive swimming beach suitable for day anchorage in favorable conditions and possibly overnight stays in excellent conditions. Boaters should bring their own beach chairs and coolers in the dinghy as there are no services available. Baie au Prunes offers a similar experience to Baie Rouge, albeit on a smaller scale. Anchoring here provides a view of the island's most exclusive and expensive properties, but it is subject to conditions.

Baie Longue: As the last bay on the French side of the border, Baie Longue is a breathtaking bay that is home to the prestigious La Samana hotel property. The beach and surrounding waters offer spectacular views and are worth a visit if conditions permit.

Mullet Bay: Proceeding in a counterclockwise direction from Baie Longue, Mullet Bay captivates visitors with its awe-inspiring colors. It is one of the most popular beaches on St. Martin, renowned for its stunning beauty. While Mullet Bay often serves as a suitable day anchorage, overnight anchoring is advisable only in the best weather conditions.

Simpson Bay: Continuing eastward, boaters will encounter the beautiful Simpson Bay, which shares similarities with Marigot Bay and Grand Case Bay. Simpson Bay provides a vast expanse of water, accommodating numerous vessels, particularly during high season. The sandy bottom ensures excellent holding. However, the bay is occasionally affected by a strong swell originating from the southern coast of the island. During such conditions, finding a spot closer to the shore or seeking alternative anchorages is recommended. The south end of the bay near Kimsha Beach offers more protection but may be crowded and slightly less picturesque. The areas off Simpson Bay Beach boast vibrant colors but are more susceptible to swells.

Little Bay: Situated further south and east, Little Bay is a picturesque day anchorage. However, due to its popularity among tourist boats, it may be challenging for cruisers to secure a spot.

Great Bay: Finally, as we progress eastward, we arrive at Great Bay, which fronts the largest town on the island, Philipsburg. Although bustling with activity from tourist boats, commercial vessels, and two massive cruise ship piers, Great Bay offers an energetic and vibrant atmosphere. Spending a few days in this bay provides an opportunity to immerse oneself in the lively ambiance and observe people enjoying their vacations.

## **Discovering Nearby Islands: Adding Adventure to Your St. Martin Voyage**

Embarking on an adventure to these nearby islands from St. Martin will enrich your cruising experience, offering diverse cultures, breathtaking landscapes, and unique attractions. Each island holds its own allure and promises memorable moments for intrepid sailors seeking exploration beyond the shores of St. Martin.

Anguilla: Just a short 6-mile journey across the Anguilla Channel from the French Side of St. Martin lies the tranquil island of Anguilla. This picturesque destination offers a quieter atmosphere with stunning beaches and secluded bays, providing a serene escape for cruisers seeking a more laid-back experience. The former English island boasts a unique blend of cultures, distinct from its neighboring Dutch and French counterparts. Explore the pristine white sand beaches, indulge in local cuisine at beachside shacks, and immerse yourself in the relaxed ambiance of Anguilla.

St. Barths: For a touch of glamour and French sophistication, cruise to the enchanting island of St. Barths. This sought-after destination is renowned for its upscale atmosphere, earning its reputation as a playground for the affluent. Immerse yourself in the island's natural beauty, characterized by breathtaking beaches and captivating scenery. Rent a scooter and embark on a day of exploration, discovering hidden coves, quaint villages, and panoramic viewpoints. St. Barths is famous for its New Year's Eve celebration, attracting superyachts from around the world to revel in the extravagant festivities. Indulge in the renowned \$40 cheeseburger lunch and soak up the luxurious ambiance of this captivating island.

Saba: A nature lover's and scuba enthusiast's paradise, Saba offers a truly unique and adventurous experience. Part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Saba is a small volcanic island that rises dramatically from the sea, resembling something out of Jurassic Park. Although it presents challenges for visiting sailors due to limited public moorings and deep anchorages, the rewards are well worth the effort. Embark on thrilling mountain hikes through lush rainforests, marvel at the panoramic views from the summit of Mount Scenery, and explore the island's vibrant marine ecosystem. Divers are in for a treat as Saba's upwelling currents attract a diverse array of pelagic creatures, creating unforgettable underwater encounters.

St. Eustatius (Statia): A hidden gem within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, St. Eustatius, also known as Statia, offers a peaceful and off-the-beaten-path experience. The anchorage in Gallows Bay, located on the southeastern coast, provides a secure spot to moor your boat, despite occasional rolling conditions. With a permanent population of only 3,200 residents, Statia offers a tranquil retreat for a few days of relaxation. Explore the town of Oranjestad, which features charming colonial architecture and a rich history, or embark on a hike to the dormant volcano that shaped the island's landscape. Don't miss the opportunity to witness the bustling fuel depot on the northwest coast, where tankers load and unload gasoline and diesel for distribution across the region.

## **The Resilience of Saint Martin: Rebuilding After Hurricane Irma**

After the devastating impact of Hurricane Irma in 2017, Saint Martin faced significant challenges in rebuilding the island. With widespread destruction and billions of dollars in damages, it took years to recover from the storm's aftermath. However, the resilience of the local community and the determination to rebuild have brought about positive changes. The removal of over 300 wrecks in 2022 marked a turning point in the recovery process. Although signs of the hurricane's impact remain, Saint Martin is undergoing a revitalization, with new construction and restoration efforts in progress. Yachties and cruisers visiting the island should be mindful of the ongoing recovery and exercise caution. Despite the lasting effects of Hurricane Irma, the spirit of the people shines through as they work towards a brighter future. Supporting local businesses and being part of Saint Martin's renewal is a meaningful way for visitors to contribute to the island's recovery journey.