

PANORAMA



Sint Maarten

Shaped by its history as much as its hills and beaches, Sint Maarten promises a vacation or business trip of the highest quality

SHUTTERSTOCK / SEAN PAVON



Simpson Bay is one of the largest lagoons in the West Indies and is a major attraction for private yachts



Aviation enthusiasts flock to Maho Beach to catch a glimpse of planes just feet overhead as they land



The 37 beaches of Sint Maarten mean the country has one for every square mile of territory



The best time to dive is between November and May with many reefs and wrecks to explore



The government of Sint Maarten oversees the Dutch southern half of the island. Prime Minister Luc F.E. Mercelina was elected in 2024. The government meets on Pond Island in the capital, Philipsburg.

Sint Maarten charts its own course

With its dazzling turquoise waters, green hills and a culture shaped by centuries of French and Dutch heritage, Sint Maarten is both an island paradise and a nation in transformation. Sint Maarten's prime minister, Luc F.E. Mercelina, has no shortage of plans, ambitions and visions for his country's future. The knowledge gained from past challenges inform much of his decision making and his call to professionals and investors to join in building a stronger, more resilient Sint Maarten is rooted in the country's reputation for tolerance, economic freedom and a way of living which combines both island life and the feel of a large city.

"Sint Maarten is a very attractive place at this particular moment," he begins. "We have 120 different nationalities living peacefully with each other. We have an incredible landscape that on a

“When I look back over the last seven years since Hurricane Irma, I’m proud. With the odds against us, we have achieved a great deal.”

Luc F.E. Mercelina
Prime Minister of Sint Maarten

small square combines green hills, white beaches and sun. That's the best combination ever and the way God created Sint Maarten, it's so attractive and beautiful." The prime minister shares his vision for the country's future, the lessons learned from past challenges and his call to professionals and investors to join in building a stronger, more resilient Sint Maarten.

The island is one of the world's few territories in which a single island is shared with another country — France. Mercelina offers a historical overview of the island's unique political geography: "Sint Maarten is divided into two countries: the Dutch side in the south and the French side in the north," he explains. "We used to be part of the Netherlands Antilles, which included six islands.



Sint Maarten has made an extraordinary recovery since the 2017 hurricane, but there is lots more to do and lots of potential



Luc F.E. Mercelina
Prime Minister of Sint Maarten

Over time, we moved towards more autonomy and on October 10th, 2010 — known as 10-10-10 — we became a constituent country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands."

That transformation required building critical infrastructure and institutions. "To function as a country, you need seven pillars: reliable utilities, telecommunication, a harbor, an airport, healthcare, security and education and social services. We weren't strong on these when we became a country, but I've made it my mission to strengthen these foundations."

A major turning point for Sint Maarten came in 2017 with Hurricane Irma's devastation. The prime minister candidly discusses the country's recovery process. "When I took office, we had an unstable supply of electricity. The entire country was experiencing rolling blackouts. I had to act quickly to stabilize the grid and we've made great progress," he says. "We're also investing in renewable energy. Solar panels will cover about 25-30 percent of our energy needs in the future."

Reform and rebuild

Reconstruction hasn't stopped with utilities. Major community investments are underway. "We're building a new national library, a cultural complex to honor our heritage and a new general hospital. The airport, which reopened in November 2024, is now one of the most advanced in the Kingdom of the Netherlands." He adds: "These are dreams I have because I'm very sensitive to nation-building. I want a university, a development bank and an education system that meets the demands of our labor market."

While progress has been made, challenges persist, particularly in human resources. "After Hurricane Irma, we received a €550 million [\$623.4 million] grant from the Netherlands, managed through the World Bank. But after seven years, €200 million [\$226.7 million] remains unspent," he admits. "We lack professionals to

implement the projects. This is a serious problem we continue to face." The prime minister called on the international community to assist. "We need professionals in every sector. If you're in healthcare, construction, or education, come and help us build this country."

The government is actively encouraging investment, especially in real estate and tourism. "Sint Maarten has a very attractive tax system and stunning real estate options. Because of our hilly landscape, properties offer magnificent views," he said. "We welcome those focused on tourism or enhancing the visitor experience." High-net-worth individuals are especially welcome. "Professionals can come and invest in their profession here. If you want to contribute to tourism or improve the quality of life on the island, you are welcome," he emphasizes.

The topic of currency reform is also on the government's agenda. In March, Sint Maarten and Curaçao adopted the Caribbean guilder, a new shared currency that has considerably more advanced security features than the previous Netherlands Antillean guilder. Mercelina has a different vision, however: "To be honest, my dream is to dollarize our economy. If smaller is-

“If you’re in healthcare, construction, or education, come and help us build this country.”

Luc F.E. Mercelina
Prime Minister of Sint Maarten

lands like Saba, Sint Eustatius and Bonaire can survive on the U.S. dollar, why can't we? We have a stronger economy," he said, noting the stability and ease dollarization could bring.

Between 60 and 70 percent of Sint Maarten's tourism traffic is from the U.S. and Canada, the

dollar is widely recognized and accepted anyway. In 2023, U.S. exports to Sint Maarten were valued at \$847 million, while U.S. imports from Sint Maarten totaled \$90 million. The United States Consulate General in Curaçao manages the day-to-day relations with the Dutch Caribbean including Sint Maarten.

Environmental sustainability is another key area of focus. "In everything we do, we emphasize resiliency. Hurricane Irma taught us the destructive power of climate change," he said. "We are not industrial polluters, yet we pay the price. I want the world to recognize that small island developing states like ours deserve more support." The country has made significant strides in rebuilding its energy infrastructure with resiliency in mind. "We've installed new generators, an initial 10-megawatt unit, followed by a further 20 megawatts and we've ordered another three 9-megawatt units to make 27 in total. This will stabilize our grid."

Tourism remains the lifeblood of Sint Maarten's economy. Mercelina sees both opportunity and room for improvement. "We need to professionalize our hospitality sector to boost those numbers," he said. "We've had high-end tourists in the past, but we became complacent. If we improve service and quality, the tourists will return." He emphasized the island's inclusive culture as a draw. "Nobody cares who you are or where you come from. Everyone's welcome. In our own Council of Ministers, there are three men and four women. That shows our balance."

As Sint Maarten looks to the future, Mercelina is clear on his priority: building a resilient, inclusive and dynamic nation. "We are not a rich country and we have financial limitations. But when I look back over the last seven years since Hurricane Irma, I'm proud. With the odds stacked against us, we have achieved a great deal."

He concludes with a call to the global community: "We want to do better and we can. But we need partners. Investors, professionals, dreamers, we invite you to come and help shape the future of Sint Maarten."

Sint Maarten's vast tourism offerings will appeal to all

Grisha Heyliger-Marten, as Minister of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Transport and Telecommunications, is responsible for much of the island's economic performance. She explains Sint Maarten's appeal to the Panorama.



Grisha Heyliger-Marten
Minister for Tourism

What are the highlights of Sint Maarten and what makes Sint Maarten different?

The Dutch side of Sint Maarten has over 100 nationalities, even though our share of the island is only 16 square miles out of the 37 square miles in total. We pride ourselves on being the 'Friendly Island' because we embrace everyone. Sint Maarten is a melting pot, with people from all over the world calling it home. We describe ourselves as a little European, very Caribbean.

We are home to a rich blend of Caribbean cultures. You'll find a mix of Trinidadian, Jamaican and other Caribbean cuisines here. You can experience the diverse culinary offerings that reflect our island's cultural richness. What makes Sint Maarten unique, particularly on the Dutch side, is our vibrant nightlife. I often jokingly refer to us as the City of the Caribbean. We have everything from casinos to nude beaches. There are also three nudist hotels on the Dutch side. We're a daring, party-loving island with a free-spirited vibe. You might think of a smaller Las Vegas.

Our nightlife is wild and the food is incredible. Often when I travel to places like New York or elsewhere, I'll eat something similar and think, this doesn't compare to what we have back home. The gastronomic scene, particularly on the Dutch side, is remarkable. We're spoiled with great food, great entertainment and an overall fantastic lifestyle that you don't find anywhere else.

What are some of the tourist arrival figures you can share with us?

Before 2017, we received about 600,000 stayovers. We're now returning to those numbers and expect 400,000-500,000 visitors this year. Before Covid-19, we received two million cruise tourists annually. We're looking at 1.7-1.8 million this year.

We are getting back to those big numbers very soon, but that means more cars, buses, taxis and more congestion, so we need to find a balance. We're growing, but we need to make sure that everything is done right.

We hosted the Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association conference which was well attended with over 100 executives. I met with all of them one-on-one to find out what we can do to facilitate them and to explain the ideas that we have for transforming Sint Maarten. Cruise tourism is changing. Passengers are not looking to go shopping anymore, or to just come and go on the beach. They want something engaging, they want entertainment, so we're making sure that our capital reflects that.

We're busy making a whole transition, restructuring and making it more welcoming. The port is also looking to expand with a whole new facility including a water park and hotel, which will be interesting. We want to become not just the friendly island, but also the entertainment island. This is how we're changing. We will be making some major changes in the coming years.

What are your expectations for the new airport terminal which is now open?

We are busy doing a carrying capacity study for Sint Maarten because in the next three or four years, we will have five or maybe seven new hotels available, so the question is, can we manage that with all the traffic? We're also paying attention to the other airports around us.

“The food here is incredible. When I travel elsewhere, I’ll eat something similar and think, ‘this doesn’t compare to what we have back home.’”

Grisha Heyliger-Marten, Minister of Tourism

Sixty or seventy percent of our traffic is from the U.S. and Canada, then Europe, so expanding in non-American markets is something we want to do. There are still some projects to complete, such as a fixed-base operator for private jets.

As a country depending heavily on tourism, how do you balance income versus green and blue economies?

We need to build capacity in our green economy. We'll focus on food security and build our own

It has the sun, sea and sand like many islands, but also a thriving gastronomic scene and wonderful, welcoming people



Sint Maarten's annual Carnival is a three week party and took place this year April 21st to May 5th.

agriculture department. We're working on establishing an agriculture authority, our own agriculture department and working with regional countries, like St. Kitts and Nevis, which is only 20 minutes away by plane and see what we can do to trade.

In terms of the blue economy, we are widening the Simpson Bay Bridge so that it can bring in bigger yachts. It's going to expand without taking too much effort. We are looking at investing in blue bonds and green bonds and are looking to make an investment promotion agency. We are, of course, trying to make it easy to do business in Sint Maarten to attract foreign direct investments, so that's another initiative we're working on.

We're busy digitizing all our processes right now so we are kind of there already, but we're still cleaning up the process and making it less bureaucratic, before going fully digital. In the next four years, we'll be fully digital.

Can you highlight the quality of Sint Maarten's telecommunications network?

For the last couple of years after Hurricane Irma, our government has owned the telecommunication company, TELEM. We have our fiber optic cable from Puerto Rico to Sint Maarten, finally restored after seven years. We are looking to get into 5G too. Also, we are having discussions with Star-

link. Starlink is present in Sint Maarten so if you're a Starlink subscriber, you'll have no issues here.

We welcome investors from Miami. We are going to need assistance with agriculture, digital nomads and anything else that is digital. We need investment in major construction projects like condos. There is also banking and fintech. We're looking to establish our own national bank. Plus we're always open to new restaurants, we have over 300 restaurants here.

What kind of level of service can visitors expect from Sint Maarten?

We are working on creating a comprehensive training program for everyone in the hospitality industry and it will be mandatory. However, to make it effective, we need a unified cultural script. For example, if I ask anyone in the country what our local dish is, I'll get several different answers. This is the challenge of being a melting pot. We need to formalize our history and culture, ensuring that everyone speaks with the same voice. This is what's currently missing in Sint Maarten and we're actively working on it. If you haven't experienced Sint Maarten yet, you're missing out. There's something about it that makes people want to come back to feel the island's energy. You will always feel at home here.

Sint Maarten's tourism industry by the numbers - a tale of success



Sint Maarten enjoys several flights per day from Miami, as well as Atlanta and New York.



The country expects to welcome 1.8 million cruise ship passengers in 2025.



It prides itself on being the friendly island with a melting pot of over 100 nationalities.



25 airlines call at Princess Juliana Airport flying 1.8 million passengers per year.



Over 75 percent of employment in Sint Maarten serves the tourism industry.

Sint Maarten’s socio-economic of the future

Marinka J. Gumbs and Patrice T. Gumbs, the ministers of finance and public housing, spatial planning, environment and infrastructure, explain their visions for Sint Maarten's future.

As the Caribbean's most cosmopolitan island, Sint Maarten is known for its turquoise waters, rich cultural mosaic and dynamic tourism economy. But beneath its postcard-perfect surface lies a nation at a crossroads, grappling with fiscal reform and a pressing public housing shortage.

The government is embarking on a bold journey to restore financial stability, modernize infrastructure and make housing more accessible, all while promoting inclusive and sustainable development.

Marinka J. Gumbs, the first female minister of finance since Sint Maarten achieved autonomy in 2010, stands at the helm of this transition. Her tenure marks a significant shift in tone. While there are no sweeping new financial policies slated for 2025, the minister is championing pragmatic reforms aimed at efficiency and transparency. "I want to streamline procedures," she said. "I'm not trying to cut corners. I'm just trying to make it more efficient for everyone." Her efforts paid off recently with the unanimous passage of a 2024 budget amendment — a first in Sint Maarten's history. In a fragmented coalition landscape, such unanimity is rare, showing that across party lines, there's recognition of the urgency and the direction needed. "These matters have to be passed so that our loans can be approved," she stressed, pointing to the delicate balance between financial independence and loan-based development.

Currently, the backbone of Sint Maarten's public revenue is taxation, primarily wage and turnover taxes. "That means the country is carried by its workforce," the finance minister explained. "While I am grateful for every individual who is working and contributing to the budget, there has to come a time when they need some relief."

The sentiment resonates across the island, where the cost of living outpaces earnings. The minister has publicly called for reductions in both wage and profit taxes. "We are the highest within the region, at 34.5 percent," she noted, advocating for a more equitable tax structure. "Let's try and look at ways of reducing wage tax, of reducing profit tax... then increase our budget in a different capacity." She also highlighted the financial strain on senior citizens. "They are not taxed on their social pension, but if there's additional income, that is now compiled in one and the whole thing is being taxed. I don't think that's totally fair." Her proposals suggest a shift from reactive budgeting to long-term fiscal planning, rooted in social equity.

Listening to the people: Finance Fridays

One of the most distinctive initiatives introduced under her leadership is Finance Fridays, a monthly open-door policy for constituents to share concerns. "These are people who elected our parliament whom appointed me to represent the people of this country," she explained, adding that it's only right that she make herself available to the people. The sessions have revealed a surprising



Marinka J. Gumbs
Minister of Finance



Patrice T. Gumbs
Minister of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment and Infrastructure

range of issues, some unrelated to finance but indicative of broader social frustrations. One tangible result was the creation of a voluntary savings plan for civil servants. "I'm giving civil servants the opportunity for a net take-home deduction, of between 50 and 200 guilders [\$27-\$111] per month," she revealed. The idea, originating from two citizens, allows employees to accumulate savings, paid out in December. It's a small but powerful example of participatory governance in action.

A nation of renters to become owners

While fiscal reform is vital, it is the affordable housing shortage that may define Sint Maarten's future. Rapid tourism-driven development since the 1970s led to economic growth but also neglected the foundational needs of infrastructure and housing. "We failed to invest adequately in the infrastructure needed to support that growth," admitted the Minister of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment and Infrastructure (VROMI), Patrice T. Gumbs, "While tourism brought economic success, it came at a cost to the environment, the very asset attracting visitors."

“While I am grateful for everyone who is working and contributing to the budget, there has to come a time when they need some relief.”

Marinka J. Gumbs, Minister of Finance

Public housing is currently managed by the Housing Foundation, but the minister sees this model as unsustainable. "I believe it's not sustainable for the government to both build and manage social housing," he said. Instead, his ministry is rolling out initiatives to enable access rather than control. Central to this vision is a Mortgage Guarantee Fund aimed at helping low-income and first-time buyers. "Many residents own land but lack the capital to develop it. This creates an opportunity for public-private partnerships," he explained.

This shift in policy direction also opens the door for U.S. investors. "While most foreign investment,

Such strong tourism and real estate growth could mean ordinary people are forgotten. Two ministers are ensuring they are not



Philipsburg has the Caribbean Sea on one side and the Great Salt Pond on the other.

especially from Americans, goes into luxury condos or villas, Sint Maarten urgently needs housing for lower and middle-income residents," the Minister said. With the new fund guaranteeing mortgages, the government aims to make these investments more attractive by reducing financial risk and ensuring returns. American firms with experience in modular housing, mixed-use zoning and sustainable design would be particularly welcome.

The housing strategy is not happening in a vacuum. Climate resilience and environmental protection are integral to the ministry's development plans. "We are exploring nature-based solutions for flood mitigation and coastal erosion," said the VROMI minister. New policies are being designed to limit coastal development and preserve ecosystems like mangroves.

The ministry also plans to establish the country's first terrestrial nature parks and an Environmental Impact Fund. Developers of large projects will be required to contribute to this fund, which will finance coastal protection, offset tourism impacts and support affordable housing.

Recognizing the limitations of public financing, the government is turning to innovative models like public-private partnerships, performance-based contracts and even carbon credits. "We exist in a gray zone," T. Gumbs highlights, referring to the country's limited access to international funding due to its constitutional status as a constituent country of The Netherlands, which prohibits access to finance from intergovernmental organizations such as the Caribbean Community, a group of 15 Caribbean countries. "Long-term sustainability requires greater private sector involvement, bringing both financing and innovation."

The island's openness to international collaboration also extends to infrastructure. "We prioritize giving local contractors the first

opportunity to build and invest but, like many small nations, we face capacity limitations. For large-scale infrastructure projects like roads, housing and waste management we welcome international contractors, especially when they partner with local firms." The government is preparing several World Bank-funded tenders for the landfill and waste sector, creating significant entry points for foreign engineering and technology firms.

Sint Maarten's economic strategy is coalescing around three key pillars: fiscal reform, sustainable infrastructure and inclusive housing. The government sees itself not merely as a builder, but as a facilitator — connecting residents with investors and ensuring that growth does not compromise equity or the environment.

A new investment vision

The shift in strategy, from government-as-builder to government-as-facilitator, is intentional. Sint Maarten doesn't want to just build homes, it wants communities — livable, connected and sustainable. As both Ministers made clear, Sint Maarten's development strategy is no longer just about bricks and mortar: "Developers are increasingly becoming part of the community they invest in," said the VROMI Minister. "Now, for the first time, there is a focus on investing not just in construction, but in communities."

The message is consistent and compelling: Sint Maarten is open for business, but only the kind that uplifts its people, protects its natural assets and supports its financial sovereignty. Sint Maarten offers a rare blend of international appeal and small-island warmth for those who want to make a difference.

Or, as the finance minister puts it: "Come to Sint Maarten, our unique island where you can enjoy cuisine from anywhere. We have so many nationalities here. I hope to see people here, not just as tourists, but as partners in progress."

All customers are welcome, local and foreign, at WIB

Windward Islands Bank (WIB), the largest and oldest in Sint Maarten, is led by Daisy Carolus who is overseeing a greater digital presence and a continued push to ensure island residents and expats are well served.

Can you introduce the bank and explain its structure?

Windward Islands Bank opened its doors in 1960; this year, we are celebrating 65 years of service. WIB is part of the Maduro & Curiel's Bank (MCB) Group, which is our majority shareholder. Another key shareholder is Scotiabank from Canada, holding 49 percent of the shares. Originally, WIB operated as an independent entity, but in 2022, the MCB Group streamlined its legal structure by merging us within MCB. Since we share the same regulators under the Central Bank, this made operations more efficient, however, I continue to run the bank independently with my team here in Sint Maarten.

We have three branches and 20 ATMs across the island, along with point-of-sale machines in many businesses, ensuring convenient access to banking services. Our online banking platform further enhances accessibility for our customers.

Despite strong competition, we remain the largest and most trusted bank on the island — a position we have maintained for over six decades. While banking products worldwide have become commoditized, what sets us apart is our strong balance sheet and prudent management of assets and customer deposits. Our financial strength and responsible investments instill trust in our customers, both locally and internationally.

What is your assessment of Sint Maarten's digitization of its financial services?

Sint Maarten remains a largely cash-friendly society, which has naturally limited the rapid adoption of digital banking. However, significant progress has been made and today, all banks on the island offer digital services. One major milestone is that no banks in Sint Maarten use cheques anymore — a clear sign of digital evolution.

WIB is taking proactive steps to encourage digital adoption. We recognize that some customers may feel hesitant about online banking, so we provide training, awareness and accessibility. We offer specialized courses for clients over 65, providing them with hands-on training to build confidence in online banking. Additionally, we run infomercials and demo videos on how to use our point-of-sale machines, ATMs, PIN management and transfers.

Our goal is to make digital banking seamless and secure for all customers. While Sint Maarten is still transitioning toward a more digitized economy, we are committed to ensuring that no one is left behind in this transformation.

How has your new Mastercard debit card, Bankomatiko+, been received?

The response has been overwhelmingly positive. The biggest change with Bankomatiko+ is that us-



Daisy Carolus
Country Manager
Windward Islands Bank

ers can now make online purchases, book hotel reservations and use their debit cards worldwide — something that was not possible before.

Phasing out the Maestro card was significant. The cards stopped working on February 17, 2025, ensuring that by then, all customers had transitioned to Mastercard debit. The ability to use debit cards internationally has been a game changer for our clients and the feedback has been fantastic.

A new currency (XCG) was launched in April 2025 jointly between Curaçao and Sint Maarten. How will both countries benefit economically?

While Curaçao and Sint Maarten share the same financial regulator, their economies operate quite independently. Within the Dutch Caribbean, Sint Maarten, Saba and Sint Eustatius are more interconnected, while Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao form a separate economic cluster. The introduction of the Caribbean guilder won't drastically change daily life in Sint Maarten. The primary benefit is that the new currency will have enhanced security features, making it much harder to counterfeit. However, the guilder exchange rate remains unchanged and pegged to the U.S. dollar, so there is no financial disruption.

“Sint Maarten is very open to foreign investors. Americans can get residence permits easily. What we as a bank can do for the economy is to support these investors.”

Daisy Carolus
Country Manager, Windward Islands Bank

In Curaçao, the impact will be more noticeable because the Netherlands Antillean guilder is used more widely in everyday transactions. In contrast, Sint Maarten already operates in U.S. dollars about 80 percent of the time. Our economy is heavily influenced by tourism, particularly from the U.S., which explains the widespread use of dollars. The transition to the Caribbean guilder will be smooth, but it won't significantly alter how people in Sint Maarten conduct their business.

What are the key factors shaping the economy in the medium term and how is your bank navigating them?

One major factor is the high cost of real estate. Sint Maarten is small and hilly which limits available land and drives up property prices. Additionally, many high-net-worth individuals from abroad are purchasing property here, further increasing real estate values. While this brings investment, it can also make homeownership challenging for locals.

To support the market, we provide mortgage loans for both residents and non-residents, ensuring that individuals and investors alike can access

Windward Islands Bank has consolidated its strong presence in Sint Maarten by appealing to a cross-section of society



The WIB HQ building in Philipsburg.

financing. Additionally, Sint Maarten is highly open to foreign investment. The government is working to stimulate economic growth, though it is still early to measure the full impact of new policies. Americans, in particular, can obtain residency permits relatively easily, which makes the island an attractive option for expatriates and investors. At WIB, we see ourselves as a key player in supporting this economic activity. Whether through business loans, real estate financing, or digital banking services, we aim to facilitate growth and investment on the island.

With the global emphasis on environment, social and governance (ESG), how do you put these goals into practice in your bank?

Sustainability is a priority for us and we have taken concrete steps to integrate ESG principles into our operations. On the environmental front, we offer preferential loan rates for customers purchasing solar panels and electric vehicles, encouraging greener choices. We have partnered with Green Dream to install recycling bins in all our buildings

and educate employees on environmental responsibility. During Carnival, one of the island's biggest events, we launched an ESG awareness campaign through radio and social media. We focused on waste recycling, protecting one's hearing from loud music and promoting sun safety — small but impactful steps to encourage responsible behavior.

Operationally, we are upgrading to energy-efficient equipment, LED lighting and implementing sustainable practices to reduce our environmental footprint. Socially, we align with several UN Sustainable Development Goals, including poverty reduction, quality education and good health and well-being. We also run cybersecurity awareness programs to educate clients on phishing threats and online security. For us, ESG is not just a corporate responsibility — it's about making a lasting positive impact on the communities we serve.

Sint Maarten is, after all, the jewel of the Caribbean. I invite everyone to come and experience our island for themselves and make use of our 22 ATMs, our branches and enjoy our happy island.

Sint Maarten is the Caribbean's gem—vibrant, welcoming, and full of opportunity. Whether visiting or investing, you'll find strong potential here. With WIB ready to support you every step of the way.

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Once you visit, you'll never leave

Many of Sint Maarten's visitors return year after year, thriving in the cultural paradise

Far from only benefitting those who visit, the Tourism Bureau ensures that the lifeblood of Sint Maarten's economy is benefitting all residents, who each have a stake in the island's booming tourism sector.

The sun-drenched shores of Sint Maarten have long been a favorite for travelers seeking a unique blend of European charm and Caribbean warmth. Beyond its vibrant nightlife and picturesque beaches, Sint Maarten is making waves as a premier travel destination, driven by a commitment to sustainable tourism, cultural authenticity and economic inclusion. As it continues to welcome record numbers of visitors, the Tourism Bureau is actively shaping a future where travelers and locals alike thrive in a flourishing tourism ecosystem.

At the helm of Sint Maarten's tourism success is a strategic balance between policy implementation and advisory expertise. The island's tourism leadership is not only focused on executing policies that drive economic growth, sustainability and inclusion but also on anticipating global trends and adapting accordingly. This dynamic approach ensures that Sint Maarten remains an innovative and competitive destination.

As the director of tourism for the Sint Maarten Tourism Bureau, May-Ling Chun, explains: "This balance allows us to remain agile and innovative while staying aligned with national objectives. For the people of Sint Maarten, this means creating real opportunities — jobs. We want to be inclusive and involve micro, small and medium enterprises."

With unprecedented arrivals at Princess Juliana International Airport and increased traffic through Port St. Maarten, the island's allure is stronger than ever. Driving this success are strategic partnerships including collaboration with regional and international travel partners which are bringing in more visitors from key markets; service excellence, meaning world-class hospitality, seamless travel experiences and an emphasis on personalized service. Travelers are immersing themselves in experiential tourism — in eco-adventures, local culinary experiences and cultural



May-Ling Chun
Director of Tourism
St. Maarten Tourism Bureau

festivals beyond the beaches, deepening their connection to the island.

"Our most recent figures show that about 60 percent of our overnight visitors are repeat travelers," Chun notes, before adding "a powerful testament to the 'Sint Maarten effect' — once you've been, you can't wait to come back."

One of Sint Maarten's biggest strengths is its diverse accommodation landscape. Whether visitors seek the luxury of international resorts, the charm of boutique hotels, or the personalized touch of homestays and villas, there is something for every-

one. "Our visitors are diverse — some seek all-inclusive ease, while others crave local authenticity. What they all expect is warm service, safety, and memorable experiences," says Chun. This variety not only enhances visitor experiences but also creates economic opportunities for residents. By supporting boutique properties and short-term rental markets, Sint Maarten ensures that more citizens can take part in and benefit from the tourism economy. Local participation is key to making the product work, as Chun makes clear, saying: "Local involvement is vital. We're working with communities, schools and businesses to instill a sense of ownership and stewardship over the tourism product."

A digital destination for every visitor

The country has embraced digital innovation with the introduction of entry.sx, an electronic travel authorization system that has streamlined the arrival process. Although not yet compulsory, its completion by visitors is encouraged by Sint Maarten in order to expedite their arrival into the country by use of e-gates at immigration. It can be completed seven days prior to arrival. Not only are shorter wait times beneficial for travelers, the form also ensures enhanced security measures and better visitor data collection for Sint Maarten. "The introduction of our electronic travel forms has been a game-changer," explains Chun. "It has streamlined the arrival process, significantly reduced wait times and enhanced security. For



Sint Maarten's rainforest zipline, the Flying Dutchman, is the world's steepest and is 2800 ft long.

travelers, it translates to less paperwork, faster processing and a more seamless start to their Sint Maarten experience."

Tourism is Sint Maarten's heartbeat and preserving the island's natural and cultural resources is paramount. Sustainable initiatives are at the forefront of the island's development plans. Hotels and businesses are adopting green practices to reduce their environmental footprint, protecting coral reefs and marine biodiversity ensures that

“Our most recent figures show that about 60 percent of our overnight visitors are repeat travelers.”

May-Ling Chun, Director of Tourism
Sint Maarten Tourism Bureau

Sint Maarten's turquoise waters remain pristine for generations to come and residents, schools and businesses are actively involved in maintaining and enhancing the island's tourism appeal. "Sustainability is at the heart of our tourism mission. When the environment thrives and the culture is preserved, tourism becomes sustainable — and citizens benefit long-term," Chun highlights.

With the U.S. as its top market, Sint Maarten has strengthened its presence, particularly in Miami, a major gateway for Caribbean travel. The

island is working closely with airlines, media and travel trade partners to highlight its unique offerings, specifically highlighting its easy access from major U.S. cities, its cultural richness blending Dutch, French and Caribbean influences and its vibrant calendar of events, including music festivals, regattas and gourmet experiences. "The U.S. remains our top source market, with Miami acting as a gateway. We're deepening our relationships with airlines, media and travel trade partners in North America, especially in Florida."

The newly upgraded Sint Maarten Tourism Bureau facility represents a significant milestone in the island's tourism evolution. With modern technology, enhanced meeting spaces and a welcoming atmosphere, the bureau is better equipped to collaborate with stakeholders and deliver top-tier services. This investment underscores Sint Maarten's commitment to innovation and excellence in the tourism sector. The new opening coincided with the launch of a new logo which represents all that Sint Maarten has to offer.

As tourism continues to flourish, now is the perfect time to experience everything this stunning island has to offer. Whether you're planning a weekend retreat or an extended adventure, Sint Maarten is ready to welcome you with open arms. As Chun puts it: "Sint Maarten is not just a destination, it's a feeling. A vibrant, welcoming and unforgettable place where cultures fuse and every sunset feels like a private invitation to return." Her concluding remarks sum up the country perfectly: "It's happening in Sint Maarten!"



Divi Little Bay is located on the beach on a private peninsula with three stunning swimming pools.

One for all, all for one

Divi Little Bay is the place for families and couples alike

Divi Little Bay prides itself on welcoming everyone and, in so doing, stands out from other hotels.

Nestled on a picturesque peninsula between Little Bay and Great Bay, Divi Little Bay Beach Resort offers a rare blend of natural beauty, Caribbean hospitality and diverse accommodations that cater to every kind of traveler. Whether you're planning a sun-soaked family vacation, a romantic couples' getaway, or a solo retreat to reconnect with yourself and nature, Divi Little Bay welcomes you with open arms and an experience tailored to your needs.

"At Divi Little Bay Beach Resort, we take great pride in being a family-friendly destination," says Anne-Marie Brooks, the hotel's general manager explains, before adding: "With a dedicated children's activity center, various family-oriented amenities and adult-friendly options, we offer an environment where families can bond and enjoy the freedom to do their own thing around the resort."

This family-first philosophy sets Divi apart from many other properties on Sint Maarten, which often cater to adults-only or high-end luxury markets. The resort strikes a careful balance, creating a space that is as entertaining and welcoming for children as it is relaxing and indulgent for adults. With three spacious swimming pools, a supervised kids' activity center and reduced child and teen pricing on all-inclusive stays, Divi is clearly designed with multigenerational travelers in mind.

In 2021, Divi expanded its offerings with the launch of the Oceans at Divi Little Bay, a premium concept that caters to travelers seeking a more upscale experience while still enjoying the resort's signature charm and accessibility. "The Oceans area provides an elevated, luxurious experience with premium amenities and VIP facilities," Brooks informs. "Currently, our guest portfolio is roughly 20 percent families with children, 35 percent couples enjoying a romantic retreat and 45 percent guests staying in the Oceans area for an upscale, all-inclusive get-



Anne-Marie Brooks
General Manager
Divi Little Bay

away." The suites offer sweeping ocean views, private check-in, upscale room features and access to exclusive amenities — a sanctuary for those wanting the finer things while still being part of a lively and diverse resort community.

For island destinations, environmental stewardship is not just a choice, it's a necessity. At Divi Little Bay, sustainability is integrated into operations in thoughtful, tangible ways. "The construction of the Oceans area with insulated concrete forms reflects our commitment to energy efficiency and sustainability," says Brooks. "Across the

resort, we've implemented water-saving systems, energy-efficient lighting and a recycling program." By sourcing locally and reducing emissions wherever possible, the resort strives to protect Sint Maarten's pristine environment for future generations of travelers.

Immersive experiences for the inquisitive

Today's tourists are increasingly looking for authentic experiences that connect them with local history and culture. Divi Little Bay Beach Resort delivers exactly that with both on-site and nearby experiences that invite guests to discover the real Sint Maarten. "From guided tours of historic Fort Amsterdam, which is located right on our property, to excursions that explore the island's Dutch and French heritage, we help guests connect with the true essence of Sint Maarten," highlights Brooks.

Beyond Fort Amsterdam — one of the oldest colonial forts in the Caribbean — guests can venture to the colorful Marigot Market, explore the quaint streets of Philipsburg, or book culinary tours and art walks that showcase the island's multicultural richness. Divi's concierge team curates these experiences to ensure travelers leave not only with stunning photos but with meaningful memories and deeper understanding.

As remote work becomes more common, Divi Little Bay is seeing growing interest from digital no-



All kinds of travelers are welcome from families to upmarket travelers staying in the Ocean suites.

mads and long-term vacationers. Though the resort does not yet offer a dedicated remote work package, it's actively exploring the opportunity and already provides many of the essential ingredients. "Sint Maarten is an ideal location for remote work, offering stunning views, a reliable infrastructure and a vibrant culture that blends productivity with relaxation," Brooks notes. With free high-speed Wi-Fi, scenic workspaces and access to pools and beaches steps away from your room, guests can balance their workload with leisure seamlessly.

Divi has also evolved its marketing to keep pace with a hyper-connected generation of travelers who rely heavily on online reviews and influencer content. "We've embraced the digital age by leveraging social media platforms and collaborating with influencers and travel bloggers to showcase the beauty of our resort. By highlighting guest experiences through authentic, user-generated content, we engage with the modern traveler in meaningful ways," summarizes Brooks, touching upon a theme that all hotels must now embrace.

Whether it's a drone shot of turquoise waters or a family's beachfront dinner on Instagram, these digital impressions help convey the warmth and vibrancy of the Divi experience far beyond the island's shores in ways that connect with modern travelers who value authenticity much more than previous generations.

Divi Little Bay is meeting the changing desires of global travelers, from a deeper appreciation for experiential and sustainable travel to a renewed focus

on well-being, nature and cultural immersion. "The future of travel is about connection, whether to people, nature, or culture and we're excited to play a role in creating those connections," says Brooks. Reinforcing the point, she adds: "Travelers today value experiences and authenticity more than ever."

“The future of travel is about connection and we're excited to play a role in creating those connections.”

Anne-Marie Brooks
General Manager, Divi Little Bay

In Sint Maarten every beach, hilltop and local smile tells a story and Divi Little Bay Beach Resort brings the comfort of a resort and the soul of a community. Whether it's quality family time, enjoying a luxurious Oceans escape, or setting up your remote office overlooking the Caribbean Sea, Divi Little Bay is ready to welcome you.

"Sint Maarten offers a truly unique Caribbean experience, with its blend of Dutch and French cultures, stunning beaches and warm hospitality," Brooks concludes. "We invite you to discover the magic of our island. With our focus on creating unforgettable experiences, we're confident you'll leave with cherished memories and a deep appreciation for the beauty and spirit of Sint Maarten."

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St. Maarten®

A world class Caribbean hub

Travelers landing at Sint Maarten’s main airport will enjoy a seamless experience

Princess Juliana International Airport (PJIA) is the main airport for Sint Maarten and serves as a gateway for other Caribbean islands. It is a vital piece of infrastructure for the Leeward Islands.

For many travelers, the journey to paradise begins the moment their plane touches down at PJIA. Known for its iconic low-altitude beach landings and unparalleled views of the turquoise Caribbean Sea, the airport is more than just a travel hub, it’s a symbol of Sint Maarten’s resilience, growth and future ambitions. At the heart of this is Princess Juliana International Airport Holding Company (PJIAH) and its subsidiary, Princess Julian International Airport Operating Company (PJIAE).

“PJIAE is responsible for the strategic oversight and development of Sint Maarten’s primary gateway to the world, together with the management board led by CEO Michael Cleaver,” states the managing director of the holding company, Perry Wilson. Over the years, PJIAE has worked to modernize and expand the airport’s infrastructure, adapting to growing passenger demands while safeguarding operational efficiency and passenger comfort.

What began as a small airstrip during World War II has grown into one of the busiest and most advanced airports in the Caribbean. Located just outside Philipsburg, PJIA now serves as a critical node for both regional connectivity and international travel, offering direct routes to the U.S. Canada, Europe and neighboring Caribbean islands. It is a vital artery for Sint Maarten’s tourism-based economy and plays a significant role in facilitating trade and cargo logistics. “The airport serves as the lifeline of Sint Maarten’s economy, facilitating a modern gateway for tourists to the island and supporting local businesses that depend on tourism,” Wilson says. To meet these growing demands, PJIAE has continued to expand the airport’s network of destinations and forged partnerships with major airlines. “Recent collaborations with international carriers aim to increase flight frequencies and introduce new routes to fur-



Perry Wilson
Managing Director
Princess Juliana
International Airport
Holding

ther strengthen Sint Maarten’s position as a tourism and trade hub.”

Airlines like JetBlue, American Airlines, KLM, Air France and Sint Maarten’s own Winair regularly operate flights in and out of PJIA, connecting the island with major cities such as New York, Miami, Paris, Amsterdam and beyond. With increased flight capacity and direct services, the airport is opening new doors for global travelers eager to explore Sint Maarten’s unique cultural offerings.

PJIA has invested heavily in technology-driven improvements to enhance the airport experience. The newly rebuilt terminal, which suffered extensive

damage from Hurricane Irma in 2017, now features state-of-the-art facilities and an updated layout designed to streamline passenger flows. “Our brand-new terminal building incorporates cutting-edge technology to enhance both passenger experience and operational efficiency,” stresses Wilson “Features include advanced biometric systems for faster check-ins and security screening, automated baggage handling systems and real-time flight information displays.”

Moreover, the airport’s infrastructure has been redesigned with sustainability in mind. From energy-efficient lighting to modern waste management systems, PJIA is focused on reducing its environmental impact. Plans are underway to electrify ground service equipment and promote eco-conscious practices among tenants and stakeholders. “As part of our long-term strategy, the airport is exploring innovative solutions to achieve net-zero emissions in line with global aviation standards,” Wilson adds. These upgrades ensure that PJIA is not only one of the most advanced airports in the region but also one of the most environmentally conscious — a critical factor for island nations on the frontlines of climate change.

The scars of Hurricane Irma, one of the most powerful storms ever recorded in the Atlantic, are still felt across the Caribbean. PJIA was among the hardest-hit infrastructures, suffering severe damage



Princess Juliana International Airport is one of the most modern and high-tech in the Caribbean.

that halted operations for months. But from this devastation rose an opportunity to rebuild stronger. “Hurricane Irma stressed the importance of robust infrastructure and crisis management. Key lessons include the need for proactive disaster planning, resilient construction standards and effective stakeholder collaboration,” Wilson reflects. Reconstruction was not just about laying concrete and wiring circuits. It became a community-driven initiative, one that invited the people of Sint Maarten to

“PJIA ensures a seamless travel experience, making it easier than ever to explore this Caribbean gem.”

Perry Wilson, Managing Director, Princess Juliana International Airport Holding

contribute to a shared vision of recovery. “Local community engagement is essential to the airport’s reconstruction success,” he emphasizes. “Initiatives such as public consultations and employment opportunities during reconstruction have been key. This inclusive approach has resulted in an airport that not only serves as a gateway for the island but also reflects the spirit of the community.” This commitment to inclusivity has earned PJIA a sense of ownership among locals, making it not just an airport, but a symbol of unity, pride, and perseverance.

Major port for northern Caribbean

Not just the entry point for millions of tourists, Port St. Maarten is a hub for the region

Port St. Maarten is a vital asset to the economy of Sint Maarten, serving as the primary entry point for the majority of its visitors. First impressions count and the port makes sure visitors are not disappointed.

Port St. Maarten is one of the premier ports in the Caribbean, known for its strategic importance, diverse business operations and role as a key hub for cruise tourism, cargo handling and yachting. As a government-owned entity, the Port St. Maarten Group of Companies operates with the efficiency and business mindset of a private company while maintaining strong ties with the government. “We conduct our business as a private entity,” explains Alexander Gumbs, the port’s CEO, adding that they coordinate closely with the Minister of Tourism to ensure alignment with national economic and tourism goals.

Port St. Maarten’s operations are centered around three main business pillars: cruise operations, cargo handling and yachting, with real estate serving as a foundational support for these activities. “We have strategic agreements with

several cruise brands and the arrival of hundreds of cruise ships annually,” Gumbs explains. The port ranks as one of the top cruise destinations worldwide — globally positioned at number five or six and ranked third or fourth in the Caribbean, behind only Port Miami and other leading cruise destinations. Figures from 2024 are expected to

“Over the last five years, we’ve seen a further shift of persons wanting more tour experiences and venturing further into the country.”

Alexander Gumbs, CEO, Port St. Maarten

indicate 1.4 million cruise passengers with this number expected to increase to approximately 1.55 to 1.6 million in 2025, underscoring the port’s resilience and strategic growth plans.

Beyond cruises, the port plays a critical role in regional cargo distribution. As a major hub for nearby islands such as St. Kitts and Nevis, Anti-

gua and Anguilla, Port St. Maarten ensures steady a flow of goods through its extensive cargo facilities. “Over the years we’ve also invested significantly in our cargo product,” Gumbs notes, highlighting its importance to regional trade and logistics.

Investment in infrastructure remains key, with over \$65 million allocated for improvements over the next seven years, including beautification projects, expanded port facilities and enhanced safety measures to improve the overall experience for visitors and stakeholders. “We fully welcome and endorse investment opportunities,” Gumbs adds, and adds that passengers on average have been to Sint Maarten at least three times. “That also puts a beautiful challenge to the destination to continue to reinvent itself, reinvent itself and to further showcase the opportunities of other inland experiences.”

Prime destination for cruises and yachts

Port St. Maarten continues to attract new cruise lines like Virgin Voyages, which recently included the island in its itinerary along with stalwarts Carnival Corporation and Royal Caribbean. The island’s unique blend of Dutch and French heritage, tax-free shopping and diverse attractions including 37 pristine beaches make it a top choice for travelers worldwide.

The port also plays a significant role in the yachting industry, leveraging the natural advantages of Simpson Bay Lagoon, one of the



Alexander Gumbs
CEO
Port St. Maarten

largest island lagoons in the West Indies. Yachts and private jets frequently bring high-net-worth individuals to the island, contributing to its reputation as a luxury destination. As Gumbs explains, “Tying into the attractiveness of Sint Maarten from a yachting perspective, we have a comprehensive maritime industry here, very important from the services standpoint.” He continues, saying “If there’s work to be done, we have a lot of skilled maritime professionals in the Simpson Bay area. From a fabrication

or mechanical and electrical standpoint, those services are readily available here at good prices.”

Port St. Maarten recently hosted the Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association Conference and Trade Show which drew 800 attendees, including nearly 100 cruise executives. This high-profile gathering provided a platform for key discussions on the future of cruise tourism and economic development in the region. The conference generated substantial economic impact, with attendees contributing to hotel stays, dining, transportation and cultural activities. “Many of the executives and delegates came with additional family members so that 800 could have easily been 1,100 or 1,200 people,” Gumbs notes, emphasizing the ripple effect of hosting major industry events.

Port St. Maarten stands as a beacon of innovation and economic growth in the Caribbean and will shape the industry for years to come.

WELCOME TO PORT ST. MAARTEN

The beehive of cruise activity taking place at Port St. Maarten this cruise season reveals that cruise ship passengers are sailing to destination St. Maarten and are leaving with memorable experiences for the 2024-2025 cruise ship season. The year 2024 ended with the destination receiving 56,185 more cruise passengers than in 2023.

The Dr. A.C. Wathey Cruise & Cargo Facilities received 513 cruise vessel calls and 1,374,362 cruise passengers in 2024, while in 2023 this was 491 cruise ship calls and 1,318,177 cruise passengers.



Port St. Maarten has also seen an increase in cruise vessel inaugural calls for the 2024-2025 cruise season. There are a total of 12 inaugural calls expected for the season.

Eight vessels are homeporting out of Port St. Maarten for the 2024-2025 cruise season. Homeporting is a niche market for the destination and is part of the Port St. Maarten Group business model.

The Business Research & Economic Advisors (BREA) carried out an Economic Impact of Cruise Tourism for the Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA) which looked at the impacts of passenger, crew and cruise line spending to destination economies.

The direct expenditure for St. Maarten was US\$237.8 million, total employment was 5,213, and total employee wages were US\$104.4 million. 82 per cent of cruise passenger onshore expenditures in St. Maarten are focused on shore excursions, retail purchases of clothing, jewelry, and local crafts and souvenirs.

Port St. Maarten’s purpose is to be the leading port in the industry, through operational excellence, while providing a safe and secure environment. Our people are motivated and add value to stakeholders while collectively contributing to communities.



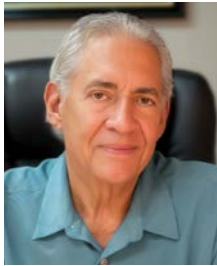
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To Sint Maarten and beyond

Starting from scratch, INTERMAR has grown into one of the country's most important shipping and logistics firms. Founded by George Pelgrim, who remains at the helm, INTERMAR is celebrating 40 years in business in 2025.

For four decades, INTERMAR has evolved alongside the rapid development of Sint Maarten's maritime industry. What began with Pelgrim and four employees has grown into a key logistics provider supporting a port that now handles over 100,000 TEUs (twenty foot containers) annually, or 1,200-1500 weekly. It has expanded its services from ship agency and cargo handling to include third party logistics, warehousing and inland transportation logistics. Its full breakdown of services includes sea and air freight logistics; import/export consolidation; devanning (unloading cargo from a container), warehousing and distribution; door-to-door trucking for both full



George Pelgrim
President and Founder
INTERMAR

INTERMAR can do pretty much anything a maritime business could ever want

container load and less than container load shipments; customs clearance and documentation; project cargo logistics and professional moving and relocation. Many of these services are carried out under the brand INTERMAR Freight Express.

At INTERMAR's inception, too, Sint Maarten's port infrastructure was a shadow of today, with fewer cruise ships, minimum port infrastructure, fewer passengers at the airport and overall import demand was much lower than it is today.

"INTERMAR has grown alongside the island," Pelgrim explains. "As the government, economy and demand grew, so did we — investing in equipment, personnel and expanding our shipping lines." That growth now manifests as a team of 150 and a full suite of maritime services. It has become a cornerstone of St. Maarten's logistics infrastructure. On June 23rd, it will celebrate its 40th anniversary.

Sustainability and innovation are also guiding INTERMAR's future. "I recently visited one of the world's largest port equipment manufacturers. They're producing electric vehicles and we're exploring those options," he shares. "Once the island's electrical infrastructure is ready, we'll be prepared to transition." The company plans to invest in electric trucks and emission-controlled equipment to reduce its carbon footprint. However, challenges such as limitations in the local power grid infrastructure remain. Sint Maarten's grid has historically been unreliable with frequent load shedding and blackouts ensuring many businesses rely on generators. This is being addressed effectively, however. Several new generators with a combined output of 30 megawatts are operational and the island is in the process of ordering three nine megawatts generators, for an additional 27 megawatts. Combined, this should be enough to stabilize the grid for the future.

Adapting to market needs

The island's growing superyacht industry further highlights its maritime potential. "Two new marinas have opened in the last five to six years and we're seeing increased imports for yacht-related equipment. It benefits the entire economy," Pelgrim recalls. As examples of these benefits, he cites, "Yachts bring high-value guests who enjoy our hospitality, safety and accessibility."

Where there are yachts, there are high-net-worth individuals who need transportation to and from the vessels. This is where Intermar Travel Agency comes in, offering a wide range of airline and cruise travel-related services catered to the

community of Sint Maarten and surrounding islands. Sint Maarten is a hub and stopover base for islands including Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda and St. Kitts and Nevis, owing to its strong travel connections with the U.S.

INTERMAR has been a member of the International Air Travel Association and American Society of Travel Advisors since 1987 and has received numerous accolades from major airlines and cruise lines for its outstanding service.

As cruise tourism expands, INTERMAR is playing a new role in provisioning vessels throughout the region. "Cruise ships now use our port for fresh produce and supplies sent from Miami or Europe. Sint Maarten is becoming a provisioning hub for the Caribbean."

“INTERMAR has grown alongside the island. As the government, economy and demand grew, so did we.”

George Pelgrim, CEO, INTERMAR

Looking to the future, Pelgrim is confident about the island's appeal to investors. "The U.S. supplies 60 percent of our imports and 57 percent of our tourism. Sint Maarten is a vibrant, growing island, open to investment and participation."

With its strategic location, efficient logistics and forward-looking vision, Sint Maarten is charting a bold course as a leading maritime and investment destination in the Caribbean. INTERMAR is at the forefront of that.

INTERMAR: An Island Business Proud of its Roots

40 years ago on June 23rd 1985, Caribbean International Maritime NV dba INTERMAR was founded by George Pelgrim on the beautiful island of St. Maarten, with the sole aim of providing high-quality shipping, travel, stevedoring, trucking and other related cargo and maritime services to our esteemed principals and customers.



Contact Us:

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2 Ground Dove Road,
Pointe Blanche, St. Maarten



INTERMAR's large container handling capacity ensures it is a vital cog in Sint Maarten's maritime infrastructure. The company is involved in all aspects of shipping and logistics, including warehousing.



INTERMAR is a Sint Maarten home-grown success

George Pelgrim, INTERMAR's founder and CEO explains his journey starting from just himself and several faithful employees to becoming one of the most important maritime companies on the whole island.

INTERMAR plays a vital role in Sint Maarten's maritime infrastructure. The company handles approximately 1,200 to 1,500 Twenty-foot Equivalent Units (containers) weekly, contributing significantly to the island's status as a key transshipment hub in the Northeastern Caribbean. Its strategic location makes it a preferred first stop for vessels arriving from Europe.

What are the key milestones that have shaped both the company's success and Sint Maarten's maritime sector?

INTERMAR has grown alongside the island over the past 40 years. When we started, there were

“The yachting industry is growing steadily. In the last five to six years, two new marinas have been developed.”

George Pelgrim, CEO, INTERMAR

fewer cruise ships, fewer passengers at the airport and overall imports were much lower. The port infrastructure was minimal. As the government, economy and demand grew, so did we, investing in equipment, personnel and expanding our shipping lines. Our growth has mirrored the island's development. As a cargo logistics facilitator, we ensure we are always ready to meet the growing demand.

St. Maarten is strategically positioned for transshipment as the first port of entry for European trade. Unlike other islands, we have minimal bureaucracy and operate a 24/7, year-round port. Our main challenge is the small port infrastructure. If the government and stakeholders invest in expanding it, we can capitalize on transshipment opportunities. We are already transshipping to neighboring islands like Antigua, St. Kitts, St. Barts and other islands in the Northeastern Caribbean, but our growth is limited by space.

As the island and infrastructure grows, our company is ready to support that expansion. I have visited all the ports in the Caribbean and observed that their structures are larger. However, we are vibrant, flexible and ready to do more. While I enjoy cruising, I focus on port operations, comparing equipment and infrastructure. Their advantage is more real estate around the port. Despite our limited space, our company has the equipment and manpower to handle our capacity. We are already excelling in our current operations, both at the port and as a company.

What opportunities are driving INTERMAR's sustainability efforts and what new services are you exploring as part of this drive?

I recently visited Taylor Industries in Mississippi, one of the world's largest manufacturers of port equipment, from small forklifts to large container handlers. They are capable of producing EV equipment, recently delivering some to the Port of Los Angeles. While we depend on the island's infrastructure, bringing in electric equipment isn't feasible yet due to issues with the local grid. Once the electrical system is stable, we can move in that direction. Our vendors have the equipment to meet those needs and we are prepared for when the time comes. We grow with the industry and I'm already exploring what's out there to be ready.

What makes Sint Maarten a unique maritime hub in the Caribbean and how can the island further strengthen its position in global shipping and yachting?

The yachting industry is growing steadily, thanks to the island's offerings. In the last five to six years, two new marinas — Skyport Marina near the airport and Dock Maarten in Pointe Blanche — have been developed, with private investments in facilities and docking. The results are evident, with busy marinas benefiting everyone, including us. As the industry grows, we see increased imports of yacht-related equipment, which goes through our organization, benefiting the port, economy, local vendors and the yacht sector.

The French side is also planning a yacht facility and we support that growth by providing cargo

Having started as a ship agent and cargo handler, INTERMAR now offers a full suite of maritime services

and logistics for imports and transportation. Yachts bring high-value guests who enjoy Sint Maarten's hospitality and with our improved international connections, the island is becoming an accessible destination. We also have relatively low crime, making it a safe place to visit and I hope it remains that way. We depend on the island's infrastructure to support us. Our company is ready to adapt if new requirements or restrictions arise.

How do you envision U.S.-Sint Maarten trade evolving and what opportunities exist for U.S. investors in Sint Maarten's maritime sector?

The cruise industry is growing, with new vessels being built daily and looking for destinations. Sint Maarten is one of the top locations in the Caribbean and as long as the island maintains proper infrastructure and keeps its offerings updated, it will continue to attract visitors and cruise lines. With the U.S. administration making moves that will impact global trade and tourism, I foresee an increase in visitors this season, especially from Canada, as they shift destinations. The island is prepared and doing its best to capitalize on this

opportunity.

U.S. investors are drawn to real estate here due to advantages like no capital gains tax and other tax benefits. Investments in properties like condos or hotels bring additional revenue to the island, benefiting everyone. Sint Maarten doesn't have a citizenship-by-investment program, as it's governed by the Dutch government, but we do hold Dutch passports. We are autonomous, but still a Dutch territory.

How busy are you in the cargo sector?

Our company, in collaboration with cargo lines like Tropical Shipping and CMA-CGM, has seen growth in provisioning cruise vessels at our port. Cruise ships traveling in the Caribbean use our port for provisioning, sending supplies from Miami or Europe. We handle all logistics, ensuring ships receive fresh produce, meat and other goods. Sint Maarten is gradually becoming a key destination for supporting cruise lines in the Caribbean, which is a promising new trend. Sint Maarten is a vibrant and growing island, welcoming visitors to explore what we offer. It's an open place for investment and participation.

Maritime contributions to Sint Maarten's economy



Port St. Maarten is a major economic player, made up of 13 companies across three business areas



Port St. Maarten is a transshipment hub, shipping containers to Anguilla, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saba and others



Simpson Bay lagoon attracts yachts from around the world bringing in high-net-worth tourists



Overall, the yachting and maritime industries contribute 16.3 percent of Sint Maarten's GDP

The unsung heroes of Sint Maarten's infrastructure

Two of Sint Maarten's utility providers, TELEM and NV GEBE which offer telecommunications and water and electricity services respectively, explain how the island is future-proofing itself for quality, price and sustainability.

For over 25 years, TELEM has been at the forefront of telecommunications in Sint Maarten, offering a full range of services, including mobile, fixed-line, television and high-speed international connectivity. As the island's only locally owned telecom provider, TELEM is dedicated to keeping residents, businesses and visitors connected with cutting-edge technology and reliable service. "Right now, we are introducing a new mobile system and a new internet core," says TELEM's former CEO, Kendall Dupersoy, adding that "by the end of this year, the entire internet backbone connecting households will be completely new, and we are actively working toward the launch of our 5G network in the near future."

It is a member of CANATO, a nonprofit association of telephone operating companies in the Caribbean, which brings together telecommunication players from the region and government



Kendall Dupersoy
Former CEO, TELEM



Troy Washington
Former CEO, NV GEBE

more bandwidth and better internet service at a lower cost to our customers," explains Dupersoy. "Our goal is to ensure that people get better internet without an increase in price," he emphasizes.

TELEM is also investing in resilience to ensure uninterrupted connectivity during natural disasters. "After Hurricane Irma, we rebuilt with stronger, hurricane-resistant infrastructure," he says. "Our central offices are now bunkers and our cables are underground, ensuring that within 12 to 24 hours of a major storm, we can restore connectivity to the island."

For investors, TELEM provides a seamless digital foundation to support business growth. "We have a very modern telecommunications network with connectivity across the island," he notes. "Sint Maarten is not just a paradise for tourists but also a prime location for business, thanks to easy global travel and a business-friendly environment." With innovations in automation, AI and smart home technologies on the horizon, TELEM is committed to enhancing digital experiences and expanding its services. For residents, tourists, or businesses, TELEM ensures Sint Maarten remains connected, competitive and future-ready.

NV GEBE keeps the lights on

As Sint Maarten's sole electricity and water supplier, NV GEBE plays a crucial role in the island's growth and infrastructure. "NV GEBE ranks as the 11th lowest in electricity rates among Caribbean utility providers," boasts Troy Washington, the util-

Utilities may not be at the forefront of everyone's minds, but those working in these sectors keep us safe and connected



TELEM is investing in AI; NV GEBE is moving to underground cables for protection against the weather.

ity provider's former CEO, ensuring competitive pricing for both residents and businesses. With a focus on balancing operational costs and service reliability, NV GEBE continuously explores ways to enhance efficiency and sustainability.

NV GEBE takes an active role in engaging with the local community to ensure that our services align with their needs."

Troy Washington, Former CEO, NV GEBE

Community engagement is a major priority for the company. Initiatives such as the installation of safety streetlights across the island have contributed to crime prevention and public security. The company is also transitioning from overhead to underground cabling, strengthening the resilience of the electrical network against hurricanes. Additionally, investments in advanced glass-infused water storage tanks improve water quality and durability, ensuring long-term reliability.

Sustainability is at the heart of NV GEBE's vision, but perfecting it is tricky. "Wind power is a great renewable option in many regions but Sint Maarten's location in the hurricane belt presents significant challenges. Wind turbines require costly reinforcements to withstand extreme weather conditions, making them a less cost-effective choice," explains Washington. Solar power looks to be the way forward, however, as Washington notes, "we remain fully committed to transitioning towards greener electricity production and are actively exploring opportunities to integrate solar power into our energy mix." This would include utility-scale solar farms and energy storage systems. NV GEBE welcomes discussions with U.S. investors interested in supporting renewable energy initiatives.

NV GEBE is also preparing for full domestic water production post-2027. "Our extensive operational expertise in water production, combined with strategic infrastructure upgrades, will position Sint Maarten to take full ownership of its water supply," he highlights, before concluding, "We remain dedicated to powering the island's progress for generations to come."

Investors have an opportunity here because we have a very modern telecommunication service. There is connectivity everywhere."

Kendall Dupersoy, Former CEO, TELEM

ministers, vendors and others. One of its key discussion points at the moment is that travelers use their phones for almost everything — from Google to Facebook to Netflix — yet those global giants do not pay for the considerable bandwidth they use. CANATO wants to generate revenue from this so that operators can keep expanding.

One of the most significant recent developments has been the repair of the Sint Maarten-Puerto Rico Network One submarine cable that runs between the two territories and was damaged in 2016. "This allows us to bring

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Expertise
Global
Connectivity

Your local partner for global connection, proudly based in St. Maarten.

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TV

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Value Added Services

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Connecting You

CELEBRATING 65 YEARS

NV GEBE is 65 years strong in the utility business on St. Maarten