

Sint Maarten Travel Tips

The island of Sint Maarten-Saint Martin is the smallest landmass in the world to be shared by two different nations. Only 37 square miles, the island is owned by France and the Netherlands. If you appreciate gourmet food, world-class duty free shopping, vibrant nightlife, pristine beaches, year-round warm climate and a cosmopolitan atmosphere with a Caribbean twist, Sint Maarten is for you.

We know you probably have a lot of questions. This easy-to-use guide will provide you with helpful tips as you prepare for your trip and everything else you will need to know about your adventure.

Guest Services

If you have any questions regarding your air or hotel arrangements, you can contact Big M Guest Services between the hours of 9:00 am and 5:00 pm (CST), Monday through Friday at:

Phone: (847) 381-1800

E-mail: guestservices@merchantsfoodstravels.com

Covid-19 Information

There are currently NO travel restrictions in St Maarten. However, should things change, we will update you with any significant information.

Below is a link regarding travel to St Maarten:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/sint-maarten-travel-advisory.html>

Airline Travel

Passport Information

U.S. citizens traveling to Sint Maarten require a valid passport with at least one blank page. The expiration date of your passport must be more than 6 months from your date of entry to Sint Maarten. For complete application information please see <http://travel.state.gov/passport>.

Make sure you pack your passport in your carry-on luggage or in an area where it is easily accessible. You will need it when boarding your flights and at Customs in Sint Maarten. Please keep your passport with you at all times.

Travel Tip: It is also a good idea to bring a photocopy of your passport to keep in your hotel room safe. If it gets lost, it is much easier to get an emergency replacement if you have a copy.

Airline Check-In

You will need to check in at the airport at least three hours prior to your departure time. Be sure to check your luggage all the way through to Princess Juliana International Airport (SXM).

Frequent Flyers

It is important that the name listed on your frequent flyer account matches the name on your

airline ticket. This will ensure mileage accrual and/or status upgrades (as applicable). Keep your boarding pass in case of mileage discrepancies.

Upgrade or Change Airline Ticket

Your trip includes two round-trip coach tickets for travel on group dates. If traveling outside of group dates, any additional cost will be your responsibility. Flight arrangements will be confirmed when we receive your registration information. Once your ticket is purchased, any fees or penalties associated with changes will be at your own expense. Tickets are generally non-refundable, non-transferable, highly restricted and may not allow for any type of upgrades. In the event you would like an upgradeable class of service, any additional cost will also be your responsibility.

Seat Assignments/Boarding Passes

Seat assignments have been requested. If seat assignments are not indicated on your flight itinerary, they were unable to be assigned due to airline availability.

Please Note: Although we do our best to confirm complimentary seats as requested in your registration, most airlines block a large percentage for their high level frequent flyers and to sell as “premium seating” so your preference (aisle, window, seats together etc.) may not be available at the time of ticketing. The program does not allow us to pay for premium seats but you are welcome to go online once the tickets are issued to purchase those seats.

Check in early at the airport to secure the best seats and keep in mind that airlines sometimes change the type of aircraft shortly before departure. This can result in new seat assignments. Big M Guest Services are not able to predict or prevent this.

With an e-ticket, you may be able to print your boarding passes online up to 24-hours prior to departure. Boarding passes may not print if you have been pre-selected for a security check. You should receive passes at check-in for each segment through to your final destination.

Baggage Information

Most airlines charge a fee for checked luggage. This information is continually changing, so we highly recommend that you check with your airline just prior to travel for the most accurate information regarding allowance for both checked and carry-on bags, as well as any charges. For your convenience, we are including the appropriate web sites and phone numbers below:

American Airlines	www.aa.com	800-433-7300
Delta Airlines	www.delta.com	800-325-2000
JetBlue Airlines	www.jetblue.com	800-538-2583
Southwest Airlines	www.southwest.com	800-435-9792
United	www.united.com	800-531-5600

Important Travel Tip: As a general rule, checked bags may not exceed a total dimension of 62 inches (length+width+height) and a weight of 50lbs without penalty. Your carry-on bags must not exceed 43 inches. However, these restrictions are also subject to change, so please check with your airline for current information.

Airport Security

Test the batteries in your electronic devices before your departure; you may be asked by security to turn on electronic equipment to prove that it is what it appears to be.

With heightened concerns regarding airport and in-flight security, it is more important than ever to take proper care in selecting what to pack in carry-on luggage. Anything that could possibly be used as a weapon is banned. This includes any kind of knife, most pointed objects, flammable and explosive items. The basic rule: If in doubt, stow it in checked luggage. If you attempt to take banned items on board, they may be confiscated and not returned.

For the latest on airport security please check the Transportation Security Administration web site: <http://www.tsa.gov/>

Travel Tip: All liquids, gels, and aerosols in carry-on bags must be packed in a container that is 3 oz or smaller and placed in a single, quart-sized, zip-lock, clear, plastic bag. Each traveler must remove their quart-sized plastic bag from their carry-on to be x-rayed separately.

Packing

Comfort on the Plane

It is best to dress comfortably in loose-fitting clothing. A light jacket or sweater can come in handy to combat the often-cold air conditioning settings on board the plane. Easily removable footwear is best, as you can take off your shoes in-flight and you may be required to take off your shoes as part of a security check. Don't wear clothes with lots of metal buttons, buckles, chains, etc. These accessories may set off metal detectors at the airport and could cause delays.

Smart Packing

Think carefully about what you will really need and leave enough space for personal and souvenir shopping. Remember that luggage will be subject to weight and piece restrictions, as well as hand searching by security personnel at the airport. Keep the number of pieces of luggage to a minimum and remember to label all luggage.

Important: Make sure to pack your prescription medicines, eyeglasses, a light change of clothes and anything else you can't be without in your carry-on luggage. Once in a while a piece of luggage will take its own vacation so, to be on the safe side, keep your most important items with you.

Day Attire

For touring and sightseeing, pack light cotton pants or shorts, khakis, casual skirts, jeans, t-shirts, polo shirts, sports blouses or shirts, casual dresses and, of course, a comfortable pair of walking shoes.

Evening Attire

Some restaurants may require a collared shirt and casual slacks, such as Dockers or Chinos for men. Ladies will be suitably dressed in casual dresses, skirts, dressy pants or shorts and coordinating tops. You may also want a light jacket or sweater for the evenings.

We Suggest Bringing:

Pack in your carry-on baggage:

- Sufficient prescription medications in the original labeled containers
- Eyeglasses, sunglasses, contacts, contact lens solution
- Important papers & travel documents
- Camera gear, memory cards, extra batteries, chargers, etc.
- Valuables

Pack in your checked luggage:

- Comfortable walking shoes
- Dressier shoes (some restaurants may consider sneakers unacceptable evening wear)
- Lightweight jacket, sweater or sweatshirt
- Sun hat or visor
- Toiletries (cold remedy, pain reliever, upset stomach, anti-bacterial, band-aids, sun block)

Valuables

For safety and easy access, carry all valuables in your carry-on bag. **DO NOT PACK THESE ITEMS IN YOUR LUGGAGE.**

Safeguard your valuables! Although they are a minority, pickpockets and purse-snatchers can ruin the unwary traveler's trip. Be especially careful in crowded areas such as stores and on public transportation. It's best to leave irreplaceable jewelry at home and use the complimentary in-room safe for your excess cash and valuables. Keep purses, wallets, money, phones and cameras close to your body at all times.

Airport Arrivals

Arrangements have been made for your transfer to the hotel. Once you have landed, cleared Customs and have retrieved your luggage from baggage claim, just look for the Big M Travel Staff, you will know them by their smiling faces and Big M signs.

Transfers are included on group travel days only.

Please note: If traveling outside of group travel dates, a taxi from Princess Juliana International Airport to the hotel is very inexpensive, as the hotel is an approximate 5-7 minute drive.

Hotel Information

Sonesta Ocean Point Resort

1A Rhine Road

Maho Bay, Sint Maarten

Phone: 721-545-3100

Website: <https://www.sonesta.com/sx/maho-bay/sonesta-ocean-point-resort-st-maarten>

Check-in time: 4:00 pm

Check-out time: 11:00 am

Your Personal Hotel Account

You will be required to present a major credit card upon check in for payment of incidentals. For your convenience, the hotel accepts all major credit cards. We do not recommend using a debit card.

What About my Room

Guest room amenities include luxury 400-thread count cotton bedding with ultra comfortable mattress and variety of pillows, flat-screen TV, in-room safe, iron/ironing board, refreshment center, Lavazza espresso and hot beverage machine, AC, Internet access, USB charging station, oversized bathroom, hair dryer, bathrobes and slippers and a private balcony or terrace with table and chairs.

Internet Access

Wireless Internet access is included in guest rooms and throughout the resort.

Gratuities & Service Charges

Big M has picked up all the usual gratuities and service charges for the events on the itinerary; however, if someone does something special (like track down a phone charger, aspirin or a Snickers), you may want to add a small tip. Tipping is much the same as in the States.

Miscellaneous

Time Zone

Sint Maarten is on Atlantic Standard Time (AST). So if it is 12:00pm (noon) on Sint Maarten, it is:

Eastern Time (New York): 11:00 am

Central Time: (Chicago): 10:00 am

Mountain Time (Denver): 9:00 am

Pacific Time (Los Angeles): 8:00 am

Climate

The weather in Sint Maarten is fairly consistent year-round. Daytime highs range from about 72 to 86 degrees. The average temperature is around 84 degrees for the year. There's just one season there, three hundred and sixty-five days of summer. You can review live weather reports at cnn.com/weather.

Do I Need an Electrical Converter?

No. Hotels in Dutch Sint Maarten are wired as in the U.S. (110 volts, 60 cycles). All electronics and appliances from the U.S. will work, such as blow dryers, electric razors and phone chargers. If you will be visiting the French side, a converter will be needed.

Insurance

Special insurance has not been arranged. However, many homeowner policies provide coverage for luggage loss or damage and most health plans cover overseas accidents and sickness. Please check with your own insurance agent for advice on additional coverage.

Medical Needs

It's a good idea to consult your physician regarding your personal needs whenever you plan to travel.

Drinking Water

Tap water is purified; local and imported bottled water is also widely available. All hotels, condos, restaurants and most private homes are connected to the city water supply.

Money & Currency

As U.S. dollars are widely accepted on both the Dutch and the French sides, visitors do not need to exchange their U.S. money for a visit to the island. Official currency on the Dutch side is the Netherlands Antilles florin or guilder (NAF). Official currency on the French side is the Euro, as in France. Nearly all prices are listed in U.S. dollars as well as the local currency, so there's no need for calculating exchange rates. U.S. dollars and major credit cards are widely accepted throughout the island. You will often get a better rate of exchange at the local banks or ATMs than you will at the hotel. Banks on Dutch Sint Maarten are open Monday through Friday from 8:30am to 3:30pm. Some banks are also open on Saturday mornings. Personal checks are generally not accepted.

Telephone Info

If using your room phone to call the U.S., we recommend telephoning collect or with a telephone credit card or calling card. The hotel will add a small surcharge, but it will be less expensive than charging the call to your room. A cell phone may be a less expensive option. Please check with your provider for service information in Sint Maarten. Of course, your best bet is to leave your phone at home, disconnect from the world and enjoy your holiday.

Name Badges

As a courtesy to fellow travelers and to identify yourself as a guest of Big M, please wear your name badge to all group activities.

Shopping

As the only completely duty-free island in the Caribbean, Sint Maarten has become an international shopping mecca. Stores are open Monday through Saturday from 9:00am until 6:00pm. Some shops in resort areas stay open until 10:00pm or later.

Additional Information

Travel Directors

Travel Directors will be stationed at the Big M Hospitality Desk for your convenience. All times, function rooms, bulletins and schedule changes will be posted there. Stop by for help in arranging personal plans, answers to travel questions and to reconfirm your daily activity schedule.

Additional Information

If you have questions, you can contact Big M Guest Services between:

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- Phone: (847) 381-1800
- E-mail: guestservices@merchantsfoodstravels.com

Itinerary Notes

Schedules and activities are subject to change. We appreciate your understanding if changes to the itinerary becomes necessary.

We're looking forward to seeing you soon in Sint Maarten!

