



INSIDER'S GUIDE TO ST BARTHS

By **Thibault Masson**, founder
of SaintBarth.com and owner
of Villa Domingue and Villa
BelAmour

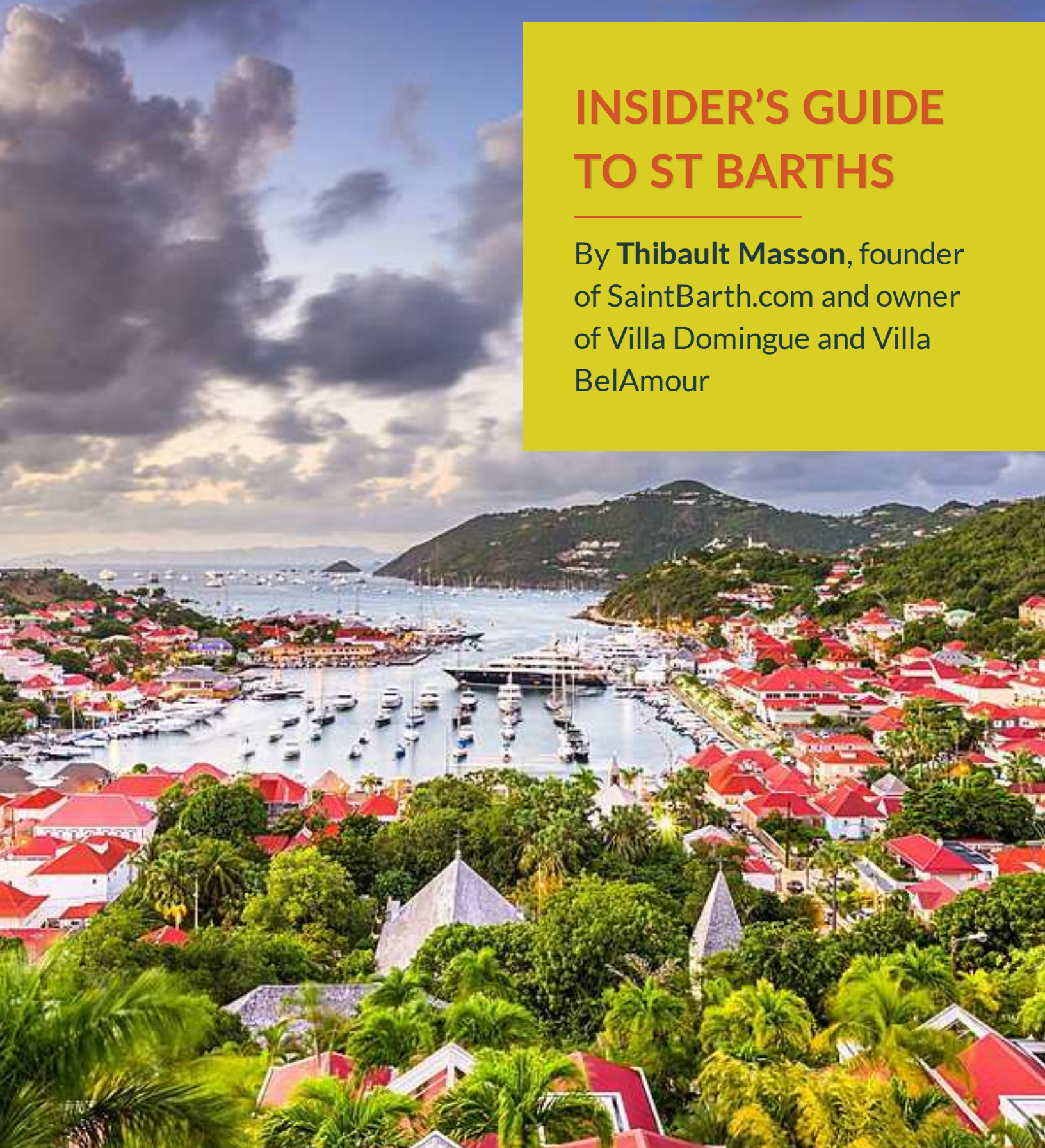


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St. Barths is a tiny island that feels like a tropical private club. Follow me inside.

Dear St Barths Insider,

Thank you for taking the time to read my personal guide. You will get a general overview of the island, balanced with my own tips, favorite addresses, and my very biased comments about the places I like the most.

My name is Thibault and my goal is to help you have a great time on the island by giving you the very same travel tips that I give to my

friends and to the guests staying at my villas on the island.

Just like you, I love St Barths. I came to the island for the first time when I was 20, in 1995. At first, I only came for a few weeks a year, staying at my beloved [villa Domingue](#) in Pointe Milou.

My connection with St Barths

My friend and business partner Bruno has renovated the house a lot over the years. To afford the villa, we turned it into a nice luxury vacation rental, with stunning views of the Caribbean sea.

In June 2013, I sold my company in mainland France and have been living in St Barths since October of the same year. In January 2015, I was very happy to finish building villa **BelAmour**, a romantic, luxurious, and intimate villa for 2, also located in Pointe Milou.

In 2017 hurricane Irma hit our island and our villas. We renovated them but the event got us to think about our beloved Domingue: What if we rebuilt the villa from scratch?

This is what we did in 2020 and the rejuvenated Villa Domingue opened its doors in 2021. As you can see, I have a long-term commitment to the island and to welcoming guests ;-)

If you have a question about St Barths, a suggestion for a great place that I should include in this guide, or want to know more about my villas, send me now an email at thibault@saintbarth.com.

Oh, and if you are on the island, come over for coffee or for a sunset drink ;-)

Meanwhile, get the latest travel news and photo updates on St. Barths by joining our **Facebook group of fellow St Barths lovers** and following SaintBarth.com on **Instagram** - my social media account.

Best regards,

Thibault Masson



GETTING HERE



GETTING HERE

Newcomers as well as seasoned visitors will always remember their first arrival in Saint Barthélemy, as every arrival on the island has an air of adventure about it.

From days of yore, when sailors arrived on merchant ships or large schooners, to today when ferries and private mega yachts dock in Gustavia, or by way of the spectacular landing over the Col de la Tourmente onto the once grass-covered runway, the memories of that first sighting of the island are unforgettable.

But times have definitely changed: Today many of the visitors to Saint Barthélemy arrive at the tiny but modern Gustav III / Rémy de Haenen Airport (SBH), complete with creature comforts: air-conditioned waiting room, boutiques, and snack bar.

Landing onto the tiny St Barths airport strip is such an experience that there are plenty of great videos on Youtube to (re)live it. I have selected my favorite ones and sorted them out for you on the [SaintBarth.com YouTube channel here](#).

For those who prefer starting their vacations in a fabulous way, here's a great idea on how to get to Saint Barthélemy: a private speedboat. There are local companies that will meet you when you arrive at Juliana Airport, and accompany you to their dock and whisk you aboard a magnificent motorboat to speed across the incredible turquoise waves that surround Saint Barthélemy.

Immigration

Most visitors to St Barths are either from the US, Canada, the European Union, or the Schengen Area. These people do not need any visa for a stay under 90 days, just a valid passport.

Citizens of some countries are required to have a visa to enter St Barths.

While France is a member of the European Union and the Schengen Area, the overseas departments and territories of France, like St Barths, are not part of the Schengen area and apply their own visa policies.

- Citizens of the European Union and Schengen Area (Monaco, Andorra, Norway, Iceland, San Marino, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland): No Visa. Must have valid passports.
- Citizens of the United States, Canada, and the UK must have a valid passport as well as a return ticket or proof of continuation of travel. The passport must be valid for more than 3 months from the date of entry to Saint Barth. No other visa or paperwork is necessary for a stay of less than or equal to 90 days.
- No visa either for citizens from Albania, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (biometric passport), Brazil, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Hong Kong, Israel, Japan, Macau, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova (biometric passport), Montenegro (biometric passport), New Zealand, Nicaragua, North Macedonia, Panama, Paraguay, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, Serbia, Seychelles, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan (passport bearing identity card number), United States, Uruguay, Vatican City, Venezuela
- Citizens of other countries must have a valid passport and a tourist visa provided by the French Embassy or Consulate closest to their home. Entry to St Barths is checked very, very thoroughly.

IMMIGRATION

My tip:

Tourists from these countries must make sure that the French Consulate delivers them not only a Schengen Visa but also the extension for either "Départements d'Outre-Mer" (i.e. French Overseas Territories) or **D.F.A.** (Départements Français d'Amérique - French territories in the Americas) **specifically mentioning St Barths** (and St Martin for the transit). I had a Columbian friend forced to leave St Barths by the first plane because the French Consulate made a mistake and he did not have the St Barths mention in his visa. Do not make that mistake!

- If you are bringing along a **nanny** or personal staff, make sure that you check whether they need a Schengen visa with the D.F.A. and Saint Barthélemy extensions. Otherwise, they will not be able to enter the island.

Do you need help figuring out whether you need a visa? Then use this [official online tool](#) made by the French government. In the "Main Destination" field, make sure to choose "Saint Barthélemy".

By Plane

The runway at the airport in Saint Barthélemy measures just 2,100 feet long and does not allow for a large aircraft to land.

Just 15 miles away, the neighboring island of Sint Maarten has an international airport - Princess Juliana (SXM) - from which it is easy to reach Saint Barth. Most international visitors will be transiting through SXM. If you are coming from Europe, especially France, you may be transiting through either Sint Maarten (SCM) or through Guadeloupe (PTP, Pointe-à-Pitre). Both airports have direct flights to Saint-Barthélemy. If you are coming from the US or Canada, another popular choice is using Tradewinds Aviation. The airline operates regular and charter flights from San Juan (SJU, Puerto Rico), St Croix, St Thomas, and Anguilla.

Note that our neighbor island of Sint Maarten / Saint Martin has 2 airports flying out to St Barths:

- Juliana Airport (SXM) on the Dutch side of the island, where flights from the US land. This is the connecting airport for most people
- Grand Case Airport (SFG) on the French side of the island. You may need to use this airport if flights to SXM are full. Then, it will be a 30-minute taxi ride to SXM.

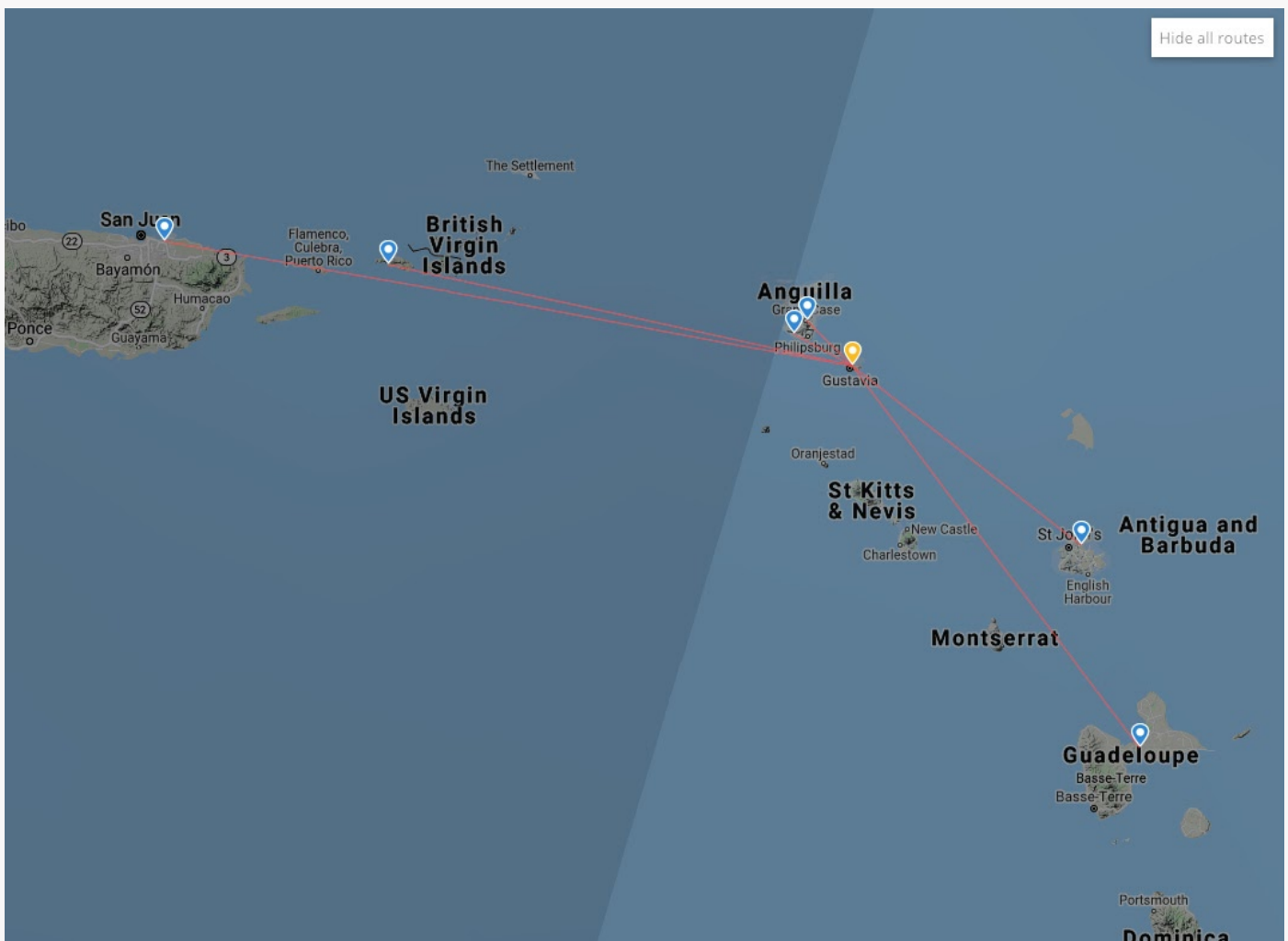
To save money or because your plane may arrive late in the afternoon, you may also want to catch the ferry from St Martin to St Barths.

By Plane

Top airline routes from Saint Barths (SBH):

This is the 2020 average number of flights per week. In the high season (e.g. December), rotations are much higher than in the low season (e.g. June). Most private charter flights are not included here.

1. #1 Sint Maarten Juliana (SXM): 228 flights/week
2. #2 San Juan, Puerto Rico (SJU): 72 flights/week
3. #3 Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe (PTP): 49 flights/week
4. #4 Saint Martin Grand Case (SFG): 29 flights/week
5. #5 Antigua (ANU): 19 flights/week
6. #6 St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands (STT): 1 flights/week



By Plane

Local Airlines to and from St Barths

Here are the airline companies that regularly land on Saint Barths:

- Air Antilles Express <https://www.airantilles.com/> (regular flights)
- St Barth Commuter www.stbarthcommuter.com (regular flights)
- Tradewind Aviation www.tradewindaviation.com (regular and charter flights)
- Windward Express Airways <http://www.windwardexpress.com/> (charter flights)
- Winair www.fly-winair.com (regular flights)

International airlines that connect you to St Barths

Several airlines are at your disposal to come to St Barths. Passing through the neighboring islands, it is very easy to reach Saint Barths airport with local airlines.

ST BARTHS FROM NORTH AMERICA, WITH FLIGHTS CONNECTING IN:

- **St Maarten, Princess Juliana Airport (SXM):**

American Airlines, Jet Blue, US Airways, Delta Airlines, Continental Airlines, Spirit Airlines, United Airlines, Sun Country Airlines, Air Canada, Air Transat

- **St Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, Cyril E King Airport (STT):**

Delta, American Airlines, Jet Blue, Airways, Spirit, United Airlines, US Airways, Sun Country, Continental

- **Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe, Caribbean Pole Airport of Raizet (PTP):**

American Airlines, Delta Airlines, Air Canada, Air Transat

- **Florida, direct charter flights:**

Tradewind Aviation

By Plane

ST BARTHS FROM NORTH AMERICA, WITH FLIGHTS CONNECTING IN:

- **San Juan, Puerto Rico, Luis Munos Marins Airport (SJU):**

Delta, American Airlines, Jet Blue, Spirit, United Airlines, US Airways, Air Canada, Westjet, Air Transat

ST BARTS FROM EUROPE, WITH FLIGHTS CONNECTING IN:

- **St Maarten, Princess Juliana Airport (SXM):**

Air France, Corsairfly, Caribbean Airlines, Jet Blue, KLM

- **St Martin, Grand Case Airport (SFG or CCE):**

Air Caraïbes

- **Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe, Caribbean Pole Airport of Raizet (PTP):**

Air France, Air Caraïbes, Corsairfly, KLM

- **Antigua, V.C. Airport Bird International (ANU):**

British Airways, Virgin Atlantic, Caribbean Airlines (flights from London)

- **San Juan, Puerto Rico, Luis Munos Marins Airport (SJU):**

Lufthansa, KLM, US Airways, Alitalia, British Airways, United Airlines, Air France, American Airlines, Air Berlin, Iberia, Delta, Condor, Finnair

ST BARTHS FROM SOUTH AMERICA, WITH FLIGHTS CONNECTING IN:

- **St Maarten, Princess Juliana Airport (SXM):**

Copa Airlines

- **San Juan, Puerto Rico, Luis Munos Marins Airport (SJU):**

United Airlines, American Airlines, Delta, Spirit, Copa

By Plane

Tip: How to search for flights to St Barths using Kayak or Google Flights

When you are searching for the best prices for your flights, you can outsmart Google Flights and Kayak.com by looking up these various combinations. Note that you always allow ample time to catch your connecting flight or ferry to St Barths.

- **Basic Search:** Simply search on Google Flights or Kayak.com for a trip from your local airport to St Barths (Airport code: SBH)
- **Book the last mile direct:** Search on Google Flights or Kayak.com for a trip from your local airport to **Sint Maarten** (Airport code: SXM) then look up the price for a connecting **flight directly on the websites of the airlines** commuting between the islands (e.g. Winair and Saint Barth Commuter)
- **Take the ferry from Sint Marteen:** Search for a trip from your local airport to **Sint Maarten** (Airport code: SXM) then look up the price of the **ferry** from St Martin to St Barths (e.g. The Voyager)
- **SJU instead of SXM:** **If you are flying from North America**, you can also search for a trip from your local airport to San Juan (Airport code: SJU) then look up the price on the websites of the airlines commuting between the islands (e.g. Tradewind Aviation). A longer route could be through Guadeloupe if you have exhausted all options through Sint Maarten and San Juan.
- **PTP instead of SXM:** **If you are flying from Europe**, you can also search for a trip from your local airport to Pointe-à-Pitre (Airport code: PTP) then look up the price on the websites of the airlines commuting between the islands (e.g. Air Antilles). A longer route could be through San Juan if you have exhausted all options through Sint Maarten and Pointe-à-Pitre.

The ANU option: **If you are flying from the UK**, you can also search for a trip from your local airport to Antigua (Airport code: ANU) then look up the price on the websites of the airlines commuting between the islands (e.g. Air Antilles Express)

By Boat

How about arriving in Saint Barthélemy by ferry? From Saint Martin (the French side), Sint Maarten (the Dutch side), or Anguilla, there are ferries as well as charter companies that run regular connections to Saint Barthélemy. For the most discerning travelers, there are private charters that will meet you at Juliana Airport, take you to their dock, and ensure a comfortable trip across the turquoise waters of the archipelago.

There are two ferry companies:

- Voyager <http://www.voy12.com>
- Great Bay Express <http://www.greatbayferry.com/>

My tip: I prefer the Voyager III boat, as it is more comfortable. When traveling from St Martin to St Barths, the sea currents are tougher than on the way back. I've never been sick, but I always take a pill against seasickness 20 minutes before leaving St Martin. I also sit either inside, in the middle of the boat, (more stable), or at the back outside for some fresh air. I never book "business class": I got upgraded once as the ferry was empty, it is more comfortable, but also a small room for my taste.

Also, book online and in advance, as it will be cheaper. Finally, always stop by at the ferry booth the day before leaving, just to make sure that your ferry will be leaving at the expected time and sail to the expected part of St Martin. You'd be surprised, but things sometimes change without much notice. Also, always make sure that you are buying a ferry ticket to the right side in St Martin where you actually want to go ;-)

THE ISLAND

Saint Barthélemy is tiny, but thanks to its hills and to the very different landscapes from one place to another, the island feels much bigger. It does not feel overcrowded, while it has a dense concentration of 5-star hotels, luxury villas, and gourmet restaurants. This is the magic of St. Barths and I find it sometimes hard to explain to future guests who inquire about the distance from my villas to the island's hot spots: No point on the island is beyond a 15 to a 20-minute car ride. So, nothing is far away. But there is no way you can walk your way around the island: too hilly, too hot.

Where is St. Barths?

Saint Barthélemy is a French Caribbean island, located between the Franco-Dutch island of St Martin / St Maarten and the archipelago of Guadeloupe, at 17°55N and 62°5W. It measures just 25 square kilometers (9.6 square miles).

At a distance of 8,500 km from Paris and 2,500 km from New York, this small island floats in the Caribbean Sea at 17°55 North and 62°5 West. While the island of Saint Barthélemy seems minuscule with its 25 square kilometers of rugged terrain, the most recent census revealed that 9,500 residents live here, or 335 residents per km². But again, people are really spread out. For instance, Gustavia, the main town, has just 3 or 4 main streets.

Considered one of the oldest volcanic islands in the Lesser Antilles chain, its dry, rocky soil does not lend itself to agriculture. But its jagged coastline encircled with sparkling white sand makes the island one of the hottest vacation spots, aside from the large tourist destinations.

Neighborhoods of St. Barths

The mountainous landscape of the island determined the creation of distinct neighborhoods, some of which encompass a beach, others offer a perfect little harbor for fishermen, or embrace the interior charm of the island. It wasn't that long ago that the absence of roads and transportation made communication between villages difficult other than by boat, thus allowing each neighborhood to develop its own particular character. Whether one is looking for peacefulness or a lot of activity, someplace picturesque or unspoiled, there is always a neighborhood in Saint Barthélemy that suits the mood of the moment.

Gustavia

Originally called Carénage, the name of the town was changed to Gustavia in honor of the Swedish king, Gustav III. Monuments and forts remain as witnesses to the island's interesting past.

Public

Once primarily a salt pond, this is now the principal industrial zone on the island. Close to the port of Gustavia, the beach in Public is home to the island's sailing school. A perfect place to see magnificent sunsets!

Corossol

A small, traditional fishing village, Corossol is the last place where dried palm fronds are woven into straw objects.

Flamands

Bordered by a large, magnificent beach, this discrete neighborhood has typical Saint Barth charm. The nearby natural cove, La Petite Anse, provides a peaceful place to swim. Its plant beds are considered one of the nurseries within the marine park, and fishing here is prohibited.

Neighborhoods of St. Barths

Lorient

Lorient is one of the oldest neighborhoods on the island, and according to certain sources, the cradle of its Catholicism. The church, destroyed several times by hurricanes, looks out over the picturesque cemetery near the beach, and also hosts concerts during the St Barth Music Festival in January. The beach is popular with families, as well as numerous surfers who consider this one of the best spots to hang ten on the island.

Colombier

An exceptional panorama unfolds in front of the lookout point encompassing the northeast coast of the island, the outlying islands, and the sea. Further to the west, on a clear day, you can see St Martin. Access to the beach in Colombier is only by boat or via a footpath. A very pleasant hike!

Grand Fond

This neighborhood is the most dramatic on the island. One side features a craggy, undeveloped coastline with stiff breezes and waves that crash against the rocks in a mist of ocean spray. The other side comprises a peaceful hillside area with houses nestled in tropical gardens.

Anse des Cayes

A popular spot for surfers who love the strong waves, this neighborhood has a varied landscape, from gnarled rock and irregular coastlines that evoke the island's tumultuous geological past. Enjoy the natural scent of the sea spray and tropical flowers while walking through the neighborhood.

Vitet

The highest point in Saint Barthélemy at 940 feet, the mountainside in Vitet shelters charming, traditional cottages that dot its slopes.

Neighborhoods of St. Barths

Saint-Jean

Saint Barthélemy's touristic hot spot, St Jean has two superb beaches lined with restaurants, hotels, and beaches. Nature lovers can spot numerous species of marine birds as well as various flora and fauna around the salt pond. From the top of the "Col de la Tourmente," there is a great view of the airport and its spectacular landings.

Mont-Jean and Pointe Milou

These are two very residential areas, located on top of the Mont-Jean and Pointe Milou hills and known for the spectacular views that they offer, especially sunrise for MontJean and sunset for Pointe Milou. **My villas BelAmour and Domingue are located at the tip of Pointe Milou.**

Marigot

This calm, relaxing bay is the perfect invitation to daydreaming. The beach is sheltered from the wind, and the area comprises underwater plants as well as abundant flora and fauna. Located within the protected zones of the marine park, the bay is off-limits for fishing.

Cul de Sac

A lovely turquoise lagoon, perfect for nautical sports, this area has a lot of local charm. The salt pond is a reproduction zone for birds and crabs.

Saline

Until 1972, the salt flats here were exploited as a source of income. Marine birds and freshwater birds continue to populate the deserted landscape where small, natural salt sculptures can be seen. At the end of the road, a paved parking lot leads to a path over the dune to one of the most beautiful beaches on the island.

Neighborhoods of St. Barths

Gouverneur

After passing Lurin, a long descent leads off the beaten path to the beautiful beach in Gouverneur, which is rarely crowded. Legend has it that the pirate Monbars hid his treasure here.

Toiny

The best surfing spot on the island, but strong currents discourage swimming. The nearby hotel has transformed part of the beach into a hot spot (albeit quieter than in St-Jean).

Beaches of St. Barths

Perfect arcs of white sand bordering warm turquoise waters, with a wealth of underwater fauna sheltered by plant beds and coral, the beaches of Saint Barth are all different, each with its own seductive charms and decided personality.

Shell Beach

At first view, this beach is a stretch of shells that all look the same: But there is the occasional surprise of finding a rare shell, sending you off on a treasure hunt for more! This unusual, one-of-a-kind beach is perfect for those tired of the clichéd "white sand beach." It is also the closest to the center of Gustavia (5 minutes) and one can have lunch or dinner almost at the water's edge.

My tip: Great stop for younger children. Transparent waters, almost no waves, shells on the beach.

Gouverneur Beach

Off-the-beaten path and undeveloped, the beach in Gouverneur looks like a picture postcard with its white sand, vegetation, and turquoise water. It is said that the pirate Monbars hid his treasure nearby.

Beaches of St. Barths

My tip: Enjoy the steep drive to Gouverneur, embrace the view on the crystal water. Parking might be a problem in high season, so you may have to park by the side of the road. Billionaire Roman Abramovich owns the bay and the parking area, but you can park there. Nude bathing is tolerated in the off-season, at the far, far back of the beach. But Saline is better for this kind of clothing-optional sunbathing;-)

Colombier Beach

Accessible only by boat or a footpath from la Petite Anse or Colombier, the beach of Colombier boasts one of the most beautiful panoramic views on the island. The clear, turquoise water is ideal for snorkeling.

My tip: Wow, it is more than worth the 20-minute hike! Wear sneakers. Bring some water. Enjoy the view of the tropical mansion built for the Rockefellers in the 1960s. I go there early in the morning, it is very nice to be almost alone there. Sunset is magic, but you'd better be on a boat to enjoy it, as it is very difficult to walk back to the road at night if you do not walk back fast enough.

Saline Beach

This is the most beloved beach on the island. It is completely undeveloped. A long stretch of sand, named after the large salt pond nearby. It is pure magic. When you are in the water, you can turn around and see no building around you. Wild. No wonder that it has become the place for many fashion photo shootings.

My tip: It is also popular with nudist visitors, on the far sides of the beach. It is also the most gay-friendly beach on the island. People are discreet, live, and let live attitude here: Laissez-faire.

Flamands Beach

The beach in Flamands is the largest on the island with fine white sand and rolling waves. The beach gets busier in the summer when students home from school get together to play soccer or volleyball in the sand.

Beaches of St. Barths

My tip: Beautiful stretch of sand, but some waves may be treacherous, be careful. One side of the beach is just villas, the other boasts one posh hotel with parading chaises longues: LVMH's Cheval Blanc.

Saint Jean Beach

Saint Jean is second only to Gustavia as the most active area on the island. Its beach is split into two sections, divided by the world-famous Eden Rock Hotel. The first part is near the airport and one can see the planes taking off and landing: Be careful and stay out of their way! There is also

easy access to nautical activities here, like surfing and stand-up paddling. The second part of the beach, on the far side of the hotel, is calmer and better suited to swimming or snorkeling.

My tip: Party! The Nikki Beach and La Plage are where it's at Champagne, rosé, music, DJs, people who want to be seen. This beach is a strange mix between family outings and hard-partying. Now, my favorite place is the new opened Gyp Sea, a restaurant cum bar for people who are not into dancing on tables ;-)

Anse des Cayes Beach

The beach in Anse des Cayes is like its name suggests, as "cayes" refers to coral rocks. It is also one of the more popular beaches for surfers with its big waves rolling in.

My tip: Nice sand, but too many rocks for me to enjoy long swimming sessions.

Lorient

The locals call it the "little pools." It is true that the beach in Lorient is different from the other beaches on the island, with one side that is calm enough to swim safely (the little pools) and is frequented by families since the area is protected by a coral reef that offers extra security for children. The other end of the beach is popular with surfers as there are large waves that come in over the rocks and coral.

My tip: Very quiet spot, yet very nice. The closest beach to my villas on this side

Beaches of St. Barths

Marigot Beach

This is a very small beach. Time seems to have stopped along the beach in Marigot. In spite of numerous hurricanes, there is still a healthy coconut grove near the beach.

My tip: This is the other closest beach to my villas, going the other way around the island. Looks great from the hill of Mont-Jean, but the stretch of sand is not large at all.

Grand Cul de Sac Beach A lagoon with shallow, clear water and home to many small fish, the beach in Grand Cul de Sac is a perfect spot for nautical activities.

My tip: Perfect with little children, not deep at all. Great for windsurfers and kitesurfers. Most of the beach is occupied by hotels and restaurants. Even if the beach is a public domain area, you do feel like you are on somebody's turf.

Petit Cul de Sac Beach

The beach in Petit Cul de Sac is the spot where friends and families often gather for picnics. **My tip:** Local feel.

Toiny Beach

Those who love surfing and challenging waves utilize the beach in Toiny. Although swimming is discouraged here due to strong currents, surfing is the principal activity on this beach. Le Toiny hotel has opened a chic beach shack there.

My tip: Do not swim there. I only dipped my toes here or go there with my stand-up paddleboard. This is the most dangerous, yet idyllic looking, beach on the island.

Grand Fond Beach

The beach in Grand Fond remains the most mysterious, and swimming is not encouraged due to the rocky coast and stones in the water. But the shoreline is the perfect place to take a long walk on the rocks with the wind in your hair.

Beaches of St. Barths

My tip: You cannot swim there, but the hike to the natural pools is wonderful.

Public Beach

Close to the Port of Gustavia, the neighborhood of Public has its own beach, which houses the island's sailing school. The water is calm and pleasant for swimming.

My tip: Yes, you have to drive past the industrial area, I know. Not the prettiest beach background. A nice local beach, still.

Corossol Beach

Its slightly brownish sand gives this beach a certain charm. The bay of Corossol is home to many traditional fishing boats or dories.

My tip: Corossol feels very local and is out of the way of most tourists.

Small island, but diverse population

Even if St Barths now has its own President, it remains part of the French republic and most French laws apply here. Due to its history, St Barths remains feels more like a French village than a Caribbean island. The official language is French, Euro is the legal currency, bakeries serving fresh croissants are hot spots and women can tan topless on the beach. C'est la vie!

The 9,500 inhabitants are made up of 4 groups:

- The "Saint Barth": People whose ancestors emigrated here 3 to 4 hundred years ago. Family names like Magras, Gréaux, Lédée, Blanchard will alert you that you are talking to a "real" local.
- The "Métros": They come from Mainland France (a.k.a. "La Métropole). Some have been living here almost all their adult life. Others are seasonal workers who are here for a few months or a few years. I belong to the Métros group, as I was not born here.

Small island, but diverse population

- The Portuguese: More than 2,500 Portuguese live in St Barths. They arrived in the last 20 years, as construction workers for example, during the real estate boom. They are hard workers and can stand working in the sun. This is why the Catholic church now has a service in Portuguese as well.
- The Américains: Americans who live here half or full-time. Just hang out at the Santa Fé restaurant in Lurin or at Andy's Hideaway in St Jean to meet them. They are lovely people always ready to give you some tips about the island

US-Friendly island

The island is very French, but as you can see also very cosmopolitan: Venezuelan and British hôteliers, Russian villa owners, Italian and Brazilian jet-setters... quite a diverse crowd! No wonder that English is everybody's second language. As a tourist, you will not encounter any language barrier. A strong French accent, like mine, yes, but we all can speak English. For instance, store owners recruit only bilingual shop assistants, as 70% of the clientèle speaks English.

Americans feel very comfortable in St Barths: They can ask to be charged in US dollars if they want, all villas and hotels have US satellite TV and Netflix (For instance, my guests at Villa Domingue have an Academy Awards party every year, with one eye on the TV and the other on their cocktail glass), some American food products are available in convenience stores and at fancy deli stores like American Gourmet in Gustavia, all the villas and hotels have converters for shavers and iPads, etc.

Laws: Mostly French, very open-minded

When it comes to Law, most French laws apply here:

- As this is a French island, it is OK for women to tan **topless**, for anyone who wishes so to be **naked** on Saline beach (it is tolerated, just sit on the sides of the beach), same-sex marriage is legal and the privacy of famous people is seen as something important (You are not supposed to bat an eyelid when you notice Rihanna or DiCaprio walking down the street.).
- Security: The Gendarmes enforce the law. They will not bother you if you wear your seatbelt while driving your car and your helmet while riding your motorbike. However, beware of their breathalyzers when leaving Ti St Barth, Nikki Beach, or La Plage!
- Property: Real estate is governed by French laws. Realtors need to have the proper French real estate license.
- Working in St Barths: If you are a European Union citizen, you are free to live and work in St Barths. If you are American, you need to get papers done but the St Barths authorities are pretty fast with this cumbersome paperwork.
- Health: You must have travel insurance. If something bad happens, you will be transferred to St Martin and the hospital will take care of you. If you are French, it is almost free of charge. But if you are not, it will be costly. Make sure that your travel insurance papers are in order.

VILLAS VS. HOTELS

Villas rule in St Barths

St Barths is a villa island: Each year, 70% of visitors stay in a villa, not at a hotel. The island has 450 luxurious villa rentals from which you can choose, while it has only 20 hotels.

To book your villa, you can either:

- go through a villa rental agency. The three biggest are WIMCO, Eden Rock Villas and St Barth Properties.
- look at listing sites such as Airbnb and Vrbo,
- Or contact owners directly.

What you should do not is go through 3rd-party agents that do not have a direct foot in the island or with the owners. First, they will be adding their own fee to your booking. Second, as they probably do not

Which way should you go? Let me help you decide by giving you the pros and the cons of each booking channel, using my own villas as examples.

Villas rule in St Barths

Villa Agencies

- I list my villa BelAmour with several agencies, such as [Wimco](#) and [Eden Rock Villas](#).
- When you book my villa through these agencies, their teams handle everything: They welcome you at the airport, show you the villa, help you if you have a problem.
- Villa agents usually know the villas and have visited them. At least, the serious ones. If you are not satisfied with the villa, the agency can relocate you somewhere else (in extreme cases)
- You have to pay a booking fee, usually 10% on top of the rental price.

Listing Sites like Airbnb and Vrbo

- You get to contact the villa owner directly (However, some agencies list villas on these sites too, so you may end up talking with an agency). Make sure that you understand who you are talking to, to be sure if they are legit and they will not be adding more booking fees.
- You can check the reviews for the villas on sites like Airbnb, Vrbo, and TripAdvisor. Past reviews are interesting to look at. They give you a good idea of whether the property will be a good fit for you and your party. For instance, I list my villa BelAmour [here](#)
- Some listing sites take a booking fee from the guests, some from the owners, and others from both. On average, a listing site takes a 15% service fee. For instance, Airbnb takes 15% of my booking revenues, so does Booking.com. Vrbo takes 8% from me and adds a 5 to 8% guest fee that you must pay. you will pay a booking fee of about 9% on top of the rental price. Owners usually increase their price to make up for the listing commission fee.

Villas rule in St Barths

Booking directly from the owner

- Most St Barths villas belong to owners who do not live on the island and prefer to let a villa agency manage their property. It means that there are not that many villas that you can actually book straight from the owner, without using a listing site like Airbnb.
- In my case, guests can find my villas and book direct with me because I am active on social media and through my SaintBarth.com website.
- Guests booking directly from the owner can expect to pay no booking fee.
- Make sure to ask for the owner's cancellation policy. When booking directly from an owner, you want to know what will happen if the villa is not available anymore (say, there is an urgent maintenance issue). Will you be getting your money back? Will the owner help you find another property?
- Check out the property on various websites to read past reviews.
- You also want to ask whether someone will be showing you the villa (meet and greet service), how often the maid will be coming, and whether a concierge is at hand. Most owners offer these services and include them in their prices.

Villa examples

Domingue (My villa for up to 6 guests)

Our completely rebuilt Villa Domingue opened its doors in March 2021. It is located in Pointe Milou and offers stunning sea views. Domingue is all about helping you create a very special time with your friends and your family. Finally, you have the time to be all together and to share happy memories. Our team is here to help you spend carefree days so that you can be happy with the people you love.

You can book Villa Domingue in a 2-bedroom or a 3-bedroom configuration. If you are planning Caribbean vacations for your close ones, you want to make sure that all bedrooms offer the same kind of perks. This is what we heard from our guests, so, in 2020, we remodeled all the bedrooms, moved walls, decorated things anew, in order to make sure that everyone is happy with their bedrooms.

To see more photos and to get booking information, go to

<http://www.saintbarth.com/domingue/>





Villa BelAmour (My villa for 2 lovers)



Villa BelAmour (My villa for 2 lovers)

BelAmour is a stunning 1-bedroom villa created for a couple who wants to celebrate their passion in style. Wonderful sea view, a mural by French artiste Catelbajac, concierge service.

Feel like a privileged insider in St. Barths by planning your dream couple vacation directly with the villa owner.

BelAmour is a luxurious, yet intimate, boutique villa for two in St. Barths. Celebrate a milestone in your couple's life at this designer villa. Rekindle your passion in the absolute privacy of a villa built for lovers. Enjoy a private home with services discreetly provided by your maid and your concierge.

To see more photos and to get booking information, go to <http://www.saintbarth.com/belamour/>.

The hotels

St. Barts has about 25 hotels. The biggest one is Rosewood Le Guanahani with 66 bedrooms. As a consequence of the relatively small number of hotel rooms, the demand far outstrips the offer, and you have to book well in advance if you are going to stay in the high season.

Yet, our tiny island managed to offer 9 five-star hotels and even 1 palace!

Here are St Barths hotels, ranked by star categories and accommodation type. The island relies on the French star rating system, which puts the Palace category at the top (more than 5 stars!) and then goes down from 5 to 1 star. Some St Barths hotels do not have stars as they do not fit the ranking system. For instance, they offer comfy bungalows instead of hotel bedrooms.

- Palace
- CHEVAL BLANC ST-BARTH ISLE DE FRANCE
- 5-star hotels
- BARRIERE LE CARL GUSTAF
- CHRISTOPHER SAINT BARTH
- EDEN ROCK ST BARTHS
- LE BARTHELEMY
- LE SERENO
- LE TOINY
- MANAPANY
- ROSEWOOD LE GUANAHANI ST. BARTH
- VILLA MARIE SAINT-BARTH
- 4-star hotels
- LE VILLAGE
- EMERAUDE PLAGES (2022)

The hotels

3-star hotels

- P'TIT MORNE
- BAIE DES ANGES

Boutique hotels

- PEARL BEACH HOTEL
- TROPICAL (2021)

Low-key hotels, cottages and resorts

- LES ILETS DE LA PLAGES
- LES ONDINES SUR LA PLAGES
- LE NID D'AIGLE
- LES MOUETTES
- VILLA LODGE 4 EPICES
- LES COTTAGES LES SUCRIERS
- AUBERGE DE TERRE NEUVE
- AUBERGE DE LA PETITE ANSE
- AU COEUR CARAIBE ST BARTH

My tip: The most prestigious ones are Rosewood Le Guanahani, Cheval Blanc Isle de France, Sereno, Le Toiny, Villa Marie, Le Barthélemy, and, of course, the Eden Rock. The Christopher has an interesting positioning: High luxe lower prices.

Here are my favorite hotels:

La Baie des Anges

This hotel offers 10 air-conditioned studio-rooms recently decorated in tones that are in harmony with the sea. Each room has a satellite TV, a safe, direct telephone line, living room area, bathroom with shower, and a kitchenette on the balcony. Its restaurant, La Langouste, has a wonderful reputation.

The hotels

Eden Rock - St Barths

A legendary place created by Remy De Haenen, a great adventurer and former mayor of Saint Barth, the Eden Rock is situated on a rocky promontory surrounded by a coral reef and white sand beaches in the heart of St Jean Bay. Member of Relais & Châteaux, the hotel has 34 chambers exceptionally designed rooms, a bar, and two excellent restaurants.

Rosewood Le Guanahani

Situated on the Atlantic coast between Marechal Bay and the lagoon of Grand Cul de Sac, the newly reopened Rosewood Le Guanahani has 66 luxurious, contemporary rooms and direct access to the stretch of white sand that encircles the lagoon. There are two restaurants near the beach and a gourmet restaurant.

Hôtel Christopher St Barth

Located on Pointe Milou, this hotel has great views of the sea and open skies, with beautifully renovated rooms that are good value for the price. Most of the 38 rooms and suites have a view of the pool and the ocean, and the infinity pool has a magnificent view of the small islet, Tortue, at sunset. The hotel has two bars and two excellent restaurants offering inventive Caribbean-style cuisine.

Les Îlets de la Plage

More than just a hotel, with 11 villas nestled in a tropical garden or on the beach under the palm trees. Simplicity, calm, and relaxation: a haven of peace on the Bay of St Jean and one of the most beautiful beaches on the island.

The hotels

Les Mouettes

This simple, yet charming hotel right on the beach in Lorient has seven bungalows under the palms. Each one is air-conditioned and has a terrace facing the sea and a kitchenette. Stores and bakery located nearby.

Manapany Cottages & Spa

In the quiet, traditional neighborhood of Anse des Cayes, on the northern side of Saint Barthélemy, Manapany Hotel & Spa comprises 40 rooms and suites that blend luxury and elegance in a contemporary style.

Cheval Blanc - Saint-Barth Isle de France

Located on the magnificent beach in Flamands, just five minutes by car from the airport, Cheval Blanc St-Barth Isle de France combines a private setting and Caribbean style with a luxurious tropical garden. The 39 rooms, suites, and villas are designed with luxury and elegance.

Salines Garden Cottages Just a few steps from one of the most beautiful and undeveloped beaches on the island, this hotel comprises five cottages nestled in a tropical garden. A treat to discover...

Le Sereno

Overlooking the lagoon in Grand Cul de Sac, Le Sereno is a hotel with 37 suites, whose décor is both luxurious and refined. Inspired by the unique style and energy of the Caribbean, acclaimed Parisian designer Christian Liaigre created the most elegant private sanctuaries; a sparkling jewel among the most prestigious hotels on the island.

The hotels

Le Toiny

Situated at the far southeast point of the island, this hotel has an exceptional panoramic view of the sea. Its roomy and luxurious villa-suites are spread throughout a tropical garden and each has its own private plunge pool and a large terrace. Its restaurant, Le Gaïac features traditional French cuisine of the highest standard with subtle exotic flavors.

Pearl Beach

Right on the beach in Saint-Jean, this small, friendly hotel has 12 charming rooms. It also has a very trendy restaurant, where you can eat with your feet in the sand, and a beach bar.

MY RECOMMENDED THINGS TO DO IN ST. BARTHS

Few islands the size of Saint Barthélemy can boast a cultural and social calendar as rich and varied: festivals, nautical gatherings, and traditional fêtes accent the entire year.

From season to season, every year has its series of quality artistic and cultural events, such as the incredible St Barth Music Festival, St. Barth Film Festival, and the traditional Carnival with its parades and dancing in the streets.

As for sports, sailing takes top honors with three big events each year attracting some of the most beautiful sailboats in the world: The New Year's Eve Regatta; The St Barth Bucket; and Les Voiles de Saint Barth. Every two years, the island also hosts the arrival of the now-classic Transat AG2R transatlantic race.

An original initiative is a Swedish-themed marathon, or Gustavialoppet, which pays homage to the Swedish presence on the island.

And finally, many hotels and restaurants add to the activities on the island by organizing various musical or festive events that help create a fun atmosphere.

Calendar of events

St Barth Music Festival

January - Jazz and classical music concerts in the churches of Gustavia and Lorient with artists of international renown.

Literary Festival and Book Exchange

March / April

St Barth Festival of Caribbean Cinema

April - Six days of film screenings based on the themes of the Caribbean region and Caribbean culture.

St Barth Theatre Festival

May - This weeklong festival features theatrical performances by the local troupe, SB Artists, as well as performers from other islands and from France.

SBJAM Music Festival

August- A series of Caribbean music concerts presented by the association, SBJAM

St Barth Bucket Regatta

March- Three days of great racing around Saint Barthélemy, featuring some of the largest and most prestigious sailboats in the world

Les Voiles de St Barth Regatta

April- A three-day sailing event open to boats of all sizes

Tour of St Barth

May- A great event for windsurfing and catamarans, based on the beach in St Jean

St Barth Cata Cup

November - One of the Caribbean's leading events for sport catamaran racing

Calendar of events

New Year's Eve Regatta

December 31 - A just-for-fun regatta around the island, open to sailing yachts visiting for the New Year's festivities and local sailboats

Carnival (Mardi Gras)

March - Carnival in St Barth begins the first Sunday in January after Epiphany, with a parade in the streets of Gustavia every Sunday afternoon until Mardi Gras

French National Holiday-Bastille Day

July 14 - Fireworks and dancing on the Quai Général de Gaulle, Gustavia

Fête of St Barthélemy

August 24 - Commemoration of the island's patron saint. Official ceremonies, regattas, various games, dancing, fireworks, and live music on the Quai Général de Gaulle, Gustavia

Northern Neighborhood

July - Tournaments, various games, activities, theatre and dance performances, raffle, live music on the beach in Flamands

Windward Island Fête

August - Fishing tournament, regattas, various games, music, volleyball on the beach in Lorient; dance performance, raffle, and live bands at AJOE in Lorient

Fête of Public

August - Religious holiday. Games, tournaments, activities on the beach.

Fête of Gustavia

August

Fête in Anse des Cayes

July - Games, tournaments and various activities organized in the neighborhood of Anse des Cayes

Calendar of events

Fête of St Louis

August 25 - Activities and tournaments, regattas, games, raffle, dances and live music on the beach and in the streets of Corossol

Piteå Day

November - Commemoration of the twin cities of St Barth and Piteå (in Sweden), activities on the beach in Public

This is a headline card

Gustavialoppet

November - Annual Swedish Marathon in St Barthélemy (between 10 and 20km)



My favorite restaurants

In no particular order, here are my favorite restaurants in St Barths:

Bonito

Amazing view on the port and on Gustavia, great food, stylish but smiling service. Expensive. I go there to celebrate special occasions.

Le Tamarin

Our beloved Kate / Cat was the soul of the good old Tamarin for years. After she decided to step back, this hippie-chic retreat fell into disarray. Now, the new Le Tamarin has been the hot new place to be: Wonderful gardens, great food, cool music, and a very professional couple at the helm. Book a table, it is often very full!

Le Ti St Barth

Restaurant cum cabaret show, Le Ti is an institution. Surprisingly good food for a nightspot. Dancing on tables. Good fun. It is a night place, do not show up at 7:30 PM for dinner, but rather at 9 PM. It is 10 minutes away on foot from my villas Domingue and BelAmour, so you can enjoy the party, drink, and walk home.

Black Ginger

My favorite Asian food place in St Barths. Very fresh. I use them for taking out and also to offer nice things to nibble on when I host a party at my villas.

L'Esprit

Near Saline, a restaurant whose chef is the former chef of the Eden Rock restaurant. Peaceful ambiance, great food.

Grain de Sel

My favorite place for real Créole food. Very rich, but very yummy. Real Caribbean food by Saline beach.

My favorite restaurants

In no particular order, here are my favorite restaurants in St Barths:

Le Carré

Between Hermès and Cartier, this outdoor restaurant is actually a great place to have a drink early evening and to have great food at dinner.

L'Isoletta

This is the little sister shop to the (expensive) great Italian restaurant called L'Isola. Best pizza slices in town, high-end Italian deli. Great for lunch.

Brunch at Le Gaïac

Hôtel Le Toiny hosts my favorite brunch on the island, very Sunday. Book in advance. Very good.

La Crêperie

My guilty pleasure, crêpes just like in France. Low prices on salads, friendly family-owned place. I go there for a very simple but good lunch in Gustavia when I have to wait for the shops to open again in the afternoon.

Take Out & Eating at the Villa

If you are going to eat at your villa, have a picnic at Colombier beach, or a delicious snack while sailing around the island, you will need to buy food from the local stores. Here are my cliff notes:

Supermarket: Super U

If you are staying in a villa, there is an 80% chance that if you go shopping for groceries, you will visit the Super U supermarket. It is located right across from the airport. You will find fruits, vegetables, meats, wine, canned food, sauces, and more. The store brand "U" is actually quite good.

Take-out

- Maya's To Go: Famous restaurant Maya has been running this take-out outpost for years now. Expensive, but very good. Great salads, great cakes. The place to treat yourself to something good.
- Black Ginger: Great Thai Food, the take-out is next door to the restaurant. You can actually call beforehand and request a dish of the menu to be ready for taking out, so that offer more than you can see in their tiny shop.
- Fresh West Indies: This is not a place, but a local maker of delicious dishes that you can buy in the AMC food stores like in AMC Gustavia and AMC St-Jean (near the gas pump).

Food places to check out:

- Le Rendez-Vous: The local AMC food store chain has opened a gourmet / organic outlet. It is well hidden in the Mangliers area, in St-Jean, between the gas station and the stadium.
- Le Ti'Marché: Fresh vegetables and fruits from Guadeloupe. Go there if only for the nice smell and the nice colors. Located in Lorient.
- The fish market: Right at the entrance of Gustavia, the best place to buy fresh fish. Be there before 9 AM, before the fishermen pack and go home.

Take Out & Eating at the Villa

Booming: Private Chefs

As the number of villas is increasing and as restaurants are expensive, St Barths has become a great place for private chefs to work. Here are a few (I have not tried them all, this is just a list):

- [Fabulous Feats](#)
- [Chef Saint Barths](#)
- [Cibum](#)
- [Flo Mercier](#)

My favorite night spots

I spend most of my time in the quiet area of Pointe Milou, where my villas BelAmour and Domingue are located. I host friends at the villa for private parties. However, we all like to get out sometimes. What I like is that I can party at lunchtime, in the afternoon, and /or at night here. This is not the New York club scene, obviously, but you can have great fun here.

Partying in daylight:

Head to the beach of St Jean for partying from lunch to early night. Pick your place: Either the Nikki Beach or the beach bar at the Pearl Beach hotel. These two hot spots are separated by her majesty the Eden Rock Hotel, but you can walk on the beach from one place to another.

The Pearl Beach hotel always has some kind of party going on: on Friday nights it's the famous "I Love Fridays" party, with its upscale dining and a live fire show, on Saturdays, it's Bikini Brunch, an afternoon party reminiscent of Nikki Beach soirees (only a bit more casual), and finally, Sunday evenings mean a seaside barbecue with live music by island superstars like Robb Tito (Request his famous "St. Barth Song").

My favorite night spots

Partying in daylight:

Even in the off-season, the local offshoot of the Nikki Beach jet setter beach clubbing empire has great themed parties on Sundays. This is how Nikki very simply describes itself: "Nikki Beach St. Barth is simplistic in beauty with all-white plush sun beds, chic drapery and the brand's trademark teepees throughout the beach club and has become known as the playground of choice for the world's most well-known celebrities.":

Enjoying Sunset:

I am totally biased but the sunsets are my villas [Belamour](#) and [Domingue](#) are the best ones on the island ;-)

This side of Pointe Milou looks directly into the sunset. It is very quiet and overlooks the sea. Very private, very lovely.

You may never guess it, the Sante Fé restaurant in Lurin has a dramatic sunset view. It is a favorite rendezvous for the American community who lives on the island. Super, super, super low-key. But that view!

Partying at Night:

For years, the place to be for an evening of good food, nice drinks, and dancing on tables has been [Le Ti St Barth](#). Carole, the owner, is herself a great character, welcoming visitors and celebrities with the same kindness. Book a table, do not show up at 7:30 PM for dinner, but rather at 9 PM. There are often themed-night, like white parties, so do ask about the dress code to play along. It is 10 minutes away on foot from my villas [Domingue](#) and [BelAmour](#), so you can enjoy the party, drink, and walk home.

[Bagatelle](#): It has now established itself as an alternative to [Ti St Barth](#). I think that it is not great to eat with such loud music and it's lacking the cabaret atmosphere of [Le Ti](#), but this outpost of the [Bagatelle](#) franchise is a hot spot at night.

My favorite secret spots

Here are a few places that I like very much on the island. Some you may know, some not. Sometimes, I get up in the morning, drink a coffee and drive straight there to enjoy the luxury of having these places just for me.

Hike to Colombier beach

This one is probably on all the travel guides that you can find: A 20-minute walk on a natural trail, along the coast, leading to the beautiful beach of Gouverneur. No cars can go there, so people have either to walk or to come by boat. This beautiful bay is crowned by the only visible house, a villa built by the Rockefeller family in the late 1960s. The house is an architectural wonder but has been shamefully neglected for years by its current owner (David Rockefeller sold it in 1982).

To go there: Go to Flamands beach, park at the Petite Anse. Wear sneakers, bring a bottle of water and sun lotion. Hike for 20 minutes. Enjoy the beach. The villa is private property, so you are not supposed to go there.

Swim to the right (when looking at the sea) to see a lot of colorful fish, starfish, and the occasional turtle.

Les Piscines de Grand Fonds (Natural Pools)

A 20-minute hike on the wild, almost barren coast of Grand Fonds, leading a spectacular site with natural pools of seawater encased at the feet of a cliff. Beautiful.

Park at Grand Fonds near the pebble beach. Wear sneakers, bring a bottle of water. Walk all the way to the end of the beach, leaving the road and the hamlet of Grand Fonds behind you. Go up the rocks, stay on the trail close to the seashore. Walk for 20 minutes, enjoy the view. You may see goats here and there walking down from the hill.

Go slowly and carefully down to the pools. You can dip in them, it's ok. However, beware of sea urchins (I always look carefully on top of what I put my feet and my hands on)

My favorite secret spots

Beach of Anse Maréchal

This is secret and not so secret. You've seen it, maybe not tried it. It is my favorite beach this close to Pointe Milou. Funny enough, this secret spot of mine is located ... in the middle of Guanahani, the biggest bottle on the island!

Drive to the Guanahani, enter the property. After the small roundabout, go straight and park on your left. These are free, public parking spaces! Who knew? Then, walk down the trail, leaving the Guanahani spa to your left. You go down a few steep steps, along the fence protecting a wonderful wooden villa built by a member of the Rothschild family. On the beach, drop your stuff right there, as the long place to enter the water here is on the left-hand side (when looking at the sea). The other side is blocked by a coral reef and is part of the Guanahani beach.

Not many guests of the Guanahani venture here. When the water is calm, you can see a lot of fish if you swim all the way across the bay, to the foot of the little hill that separates Anse Maréchal from the lagoon.

If you have a question about St Barths, a suggestion for a great place that I should include, or want to know more about my villas, send me now an email at

thibault@saintbarth.com

Read my latest travel tips on my blog: SaintBarth.com

Let's go!