

A woman with voluminous, curly brown hair is shown in profile, smiling warmly. She is wearing a strapless top with a black, white, and blue geometric pattern. The background is a lush tropical landscape with a clear blue sky, a turquoise ocean, and a dense forest of palm trees and other greenery. In the foreground, there are several bright pink flowers.

MEET MARTINIQUE

and its people



LA MARTINIQUE



There's only one Martinique

One island blessed with a wide assortment of fragrant and exotic flora it's known as The Isle of Flowers.

One home of majestic Mount Pelée, our towering volcano, and the historic city of Saint-Pierre, The Pompeii of the Caribbean.

One shoreline with beaches of every natural hue, from the silver-grey volcanic sands in the north to the brilliant white shores of Les Salines in the south.

One producer of the world's finest *rhum agricole*, so confirmed by the coveted AOC designation on every label of our rums.

One Culinary Capital of the Caribbean offering traditional French fare and our own unique Creole cuisine, a superb blend of flavors from Africa, the Caribbean, and India.

One place where the generosity and the warmth of its people make you feel at home away from home.

One place where *zouk* is the music, *bèlè* a rhythm, Colombo a delicious spicy dish.

One place where you can experience Carnival on land and at sea, our colorful *Tour des Yoles* boat race taking all the fun and pageantry of Mardi Gras to the waters encircling Martinique.

Breathtaking natural beauty; hotels, villas, and Creole residences to suit every style of travel; pulsating authenticity, traditions and culture; magnificent protected hiking trails, intriguing mangrove tours, and canyoning adventures; world-famous surfing, stand-up paddle boarding, bill fishing, and every other conceivable water sport or just relaxing on the beach...

Martinique is truly one place that has it all!

We look forward to welcoming you soon to experience everything that Martinique has to offer!

À bientôt, Nou ké konten wè zot ! Bwa pou nou alé !

Karine Mousseau
Tourism Commissioner
Martinique Tourism Authority

Testimonies of the Past

Martinique is a small island with a vast array of majestic landscapes



Fort St-Louis



The Slave Savannah



Creole traditional outfit

The north is a rugged mountainous region featuring the active volcano Mount Pelée and the Pitons du Carbet range, swathed in rainforest. The north also boasts beaches with silver or bluish-gray volcanic sand. The center of the island is home to Martinique's largest mangroves. The roots of the trees aren't underground, but out in the open air, thus the nickname "forests taking a foot bath." The south features rocky hills, valleys, and fjord-like coves, plus white-sand beaches and rocky promontories. Before any French or African pioneers arrived, there were Amerindian ethnic groups from South America, followed by the Arawaks, who were later supplanted by the Caribs.

In 1635, the French took possession of the island and imported slaves from Africa to work on their sugarcane, pineapple, and banana plantations. Thus began the *triangular trade*, in which manufactured goods, raw materials, and slaves were shipped between Europe, Africa, and the New World, until slavery was abolished in 1848.

In 1902, Mount Pelée erupted, destroying the former capital, Saint-Pierre. More recently, in 1946, Martinique was officially declared a region of France, the equivalent to Hawaii becoming a US state.

Cultural Heritage

Martinique's culture and history have a deep influence on the arts

In literature, major writers like Aimé Césaire, Edouard Glissant, and Patrick Chamoiseau focused on Caribbean history and identity, while Joseph Zobel's novel, *Sugar Cane Alley*, shows the harsh life of plantation workers a century ago.

In the fine arts, a group of painters founded the Caribbean Negro School during the 1970s to explore Martinique's African heritage. A decade later, the artist group Fromajé sought to develop "a Caribbean aesthetic" that would convey "the strength of our roots, the memory of our people."

Martinique's history also resonates in the island's mix of European, African, and Caribbean music. The quadrille originated in eighteenth-century France, whereas *chouval bwa*, *bèlè*, and *zouk* music all have Afro-Caribbean roots. *Biguine* is a form of ballroom music whose *bèlè* roots are evident in the drums and *tibwas*, but whose use of clarinets, trombones, and banjos recalls New Orleans jazz.

Visitors can also explore Martinique's rich history and cultural heritage through an extensive network of museums scattered throughout the island and a more recent multi-artist installation of totem poles in the city of Saint-Pierre.



Aimé Césaire Theater



Biguine dance



Traditional pottery arts





Red Devils



Celebrations

Carnival is the major event of the year in Martinique

The celebrations begin on the weekend before Ash Wednesday. There are parties on Samedi Gras, followed by parades on Dimanche Gras, when costumed marchers play musical instruments or carry elaborately dressed puppets. Many marchers dress up as traditional Carnival characters, like the *Nègres-gros-sirop*, caricatures of rebel African slaves, or *Marianne la po fig*, a female figure dressed entirely in dried banana leaves. Presiding over the festivities is the Carnival King, Vaval, who is actually a satirical mannequin.

Next comes Lundi Gras, which is the day for burlesque in the form of mock weddings. The men dress in their wives' bridal gowns, and the women dress up as reluctant bridegrooms.

The theme for Mardi Gras is "red devils" and adults and children wear red jumpsuits adorned with glittering mirrors and small tinkling bells.

Ash Wednesday is the day of the she-devils when the only colors worn are black and white. The she-devils typically wear black skirts, headscarves fashioned from white table napkins, and black-and-white socks, shoes, and gloves. At dusk, a fire is lit to burn King Vaval's effigy, marking the end of Carnival.



Diving



Yole boat race

Watersport Heaven

If your idea of a great vacation involves picture-perfect beaches, then Martinique is for you

-Swimming: Along Martinique's southern coast, you'll find idyllic white-sand beaches lapped by clear turquoise waters. The north also has lovely beaches known for their silver or blue-gray volcanic sand.

-Surfing, windsurfing, and kitesurfing: Surfers love the northern part of the island. The southern beaches are best for windsurfing, while the southeast is the place for kitesurfing, where trade winds blow in at ideal speeds.

-Sailing: You can rent a Hobie Cat, Sunfish, or Sailfish by the hour or charter a well-appointed yacht and sail in luxury for a day, a week—or even a month.

-Fishing: The fish in Martinique can grow to incredible sizes. The most popular deep-sea catches are kingfish, bonito, barracuda, tuna, white marlin, blue marlin, spearfish, dolphinfish, sailfish, and swordfish.

-Snorkeling and scuba diving: Discover an underwater world of magnificent coral reefs and brightly colored fish. You can also explore century-old shipwrecks off the coast of Saint-Pierre.

-Yole racing: Teams of men and women reach high speeds on delicately balanced crafts called *yoles*, an amazing feat of coordination, endurance, and skill.

A Cruise Call with Creole Flair

Cruise passengers calling on Martinique discover a dynamic destination with distinctive West Indian charms and a lively French-Creole spirit.

The world's largest cruise ships make port at Pointe Simon and Tourelles, both terminals located in Fort-de-France, Martinique's vibrant capital city. Shore excursions emanating from here provide memorable introductions to Martinique's history, cultural heritage, hiking and ecotourism, rum, and exotic beaches—from the volcanic sands in the north to the brilliant white shores of Les Salines down south.

Independent cruisers can hire local guides or rental cars at or near the ports, or hop the ferry to Pointe du Bout in the town of Trois-Ilets, just 20 minutes away.

No matter where or how you roam in Martinique, unique shopping opportunities await.

Local arts, crafts, jewelry, skin care products, perfumes, designer accessories, and souvenirs are available throughout the island, including the historic Covered Market in the center of Fort-de-France, and the Cruise Villages of Pointe Simon and Tourelles Terminals. Parisian perfumes, fashion, wines, champagnes, cheeses, and more are also available in modern shopping malls, like Cour Perrinon downtown and La Galleria, just 10-15 minutes by car.

A special place to be sure—Martinique, c'est magnifique!



Pointe Simon



Market souvenirs



Hommes d'argile/Street performers

All ships call in the heart
of downtown Fort-de-France,
Martinique's capital city,
at one of the most beautiful
bays in the world.



Romantic Getaway

Wherever you go on the island,
you'll be immersed in the color and
splendor that were once captured
on canvas by Paul Gauguin



Carbet beach

Le François



Trinité



Les Trois Ilets

When planning a honeymoon or a romantic vacation, it can be hard to settle on a destination.

In Martinique, you'll find a unique combination of French *savoir-faire* and Creole *joie de vivre* amidst beautiful natural surroundings. An island this beautiful has to be the ideal setting for romance!

The secret is finding the right romantic spot. The most enticing choices are Martinique's *hôtels de charme*, lovely boutique hotels found all over the island—in all sorts of settings. Picture yourself in a Creole-style villa overlooking a picturesque bay, an eighteenth-century plantation manor house, or a charming beach bungalow.

If it's the height of luxury you're looking for, opt for one of our chic resorts for five-star comfort and service. Breakfast in bed, a private pool, and a private terrace with an ocean view—it doesn't get better than this for a picture-perfect romantic getaway.

Martinique, Bon Appétit!

France gave Martinique its wonderful tradition of delicious breads, cheeses, and charcuterie as well as soufflé, bouillabaisse, and filet mignon.

Creole cuisine is a blend of local ingredients—shellfish, pork, beef, coconuts, bananas, and spices—and ingredients from around the Caribbean and even Africa, Europe, and India. The result is mouthwatering dishes like green papaya gratin, crayfish soup, and codfish fritters called *accras*.

Martinique also produces great rum. The island's ten distilleries are the only ones in the world to be awarded the designation *Appellation d'Origine Controlée*, a label typically associated with excellent French wines. Now it's also associated with excellent Martinican rums. And why not? Like wine, rum is aged in oak barrels and is comparable to fine cognac.

Just as wine lovers visit France to savor the best of French wine while traveling along *La Route des Vins*, rum connoisseurs head to Martinique to experience some of the world's finest rums by traveling *La Route des Grands Rhums*.



Rhum Agricole from Martinique



Guy Ferdinand aka Chef Hot Pants



Accras (codfish fritters)

What is Martinican cuisine?
In fact, there are two
types: French and Creole.





The Perfect Destination for Nature Lovers

Caribbean World magazine named
Martinique the "Best Eco Island"
in the Caribbean

Essential Facts

- Size:** 436 square miles (50 miles long and 22 miles across at its widest point), or 1,128 square kilometers.
- Population:** 413,310 inhabitants
- Capital city:** Fort-de-France
- Currency:** Euro
- Languages:** French and Creole; English and Spanish are spoken in resort areas.
- Electricity:** Voltage is 220 AC. Visitors traveling with hairdryers, electric shavers, and other appliances made in the US will require power adapters.
- Climate:** Temperatures average 79°F with two regular alternating wind currents (*les Alizés*) keeping the island cool. There is only about a 5° difference between average summer and winter temperatures.
- Location:** Nestled in the heart of the Lesser Antilles between Dominica and St. Lucia, Martinique lies 1,965 miles from New York City, 1,470 miles from Miami, 425 miles from San Juan, and 4,261 miles from Paris.
- Taxes/Tipping:** Restaurants prices include a 15% service charge.
- Getting around:** Both local and international car rental services (Avis, Budget, Europcar, Hertz) operate in Martinique, as do taxis and car services. In Fort-de-France, taxi stands in areas of touristic interest make it easy for people to find an empty cab.



The Perfect Destination for Nature Lovers

Caribbean World magazine named Martinique the "Best Eco Island in the Caribbean"

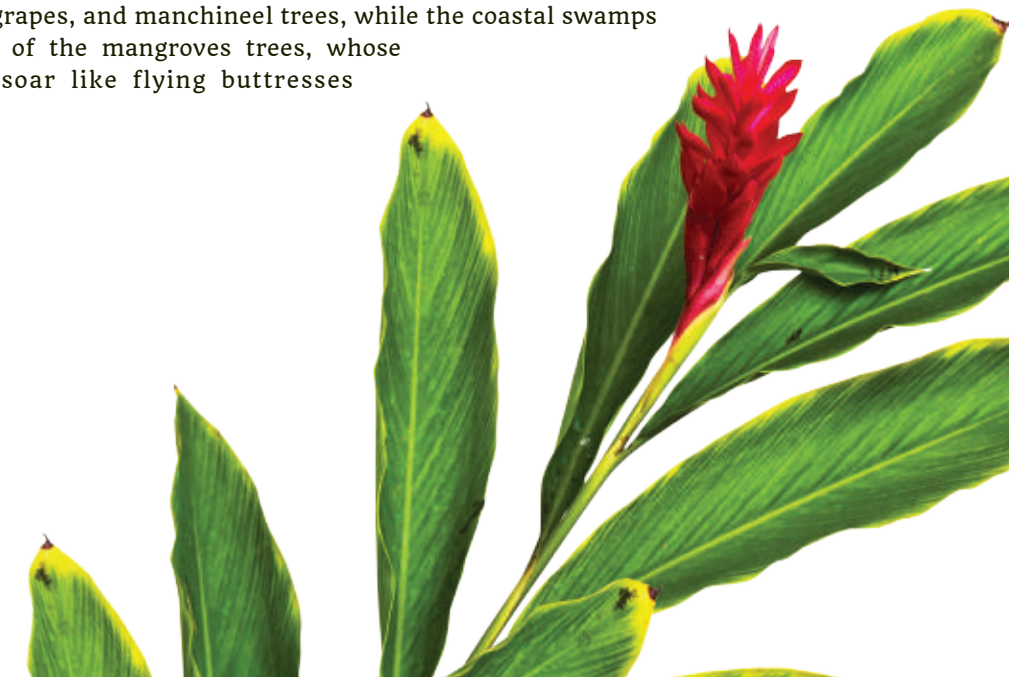
Two-thirds of Martinique is protected parkland, and the entire island offers visitors great opportunities to hike, ride, or paddle through an amazing variety of natural landscapes.

Martinique's well-maintained network of hiking trails extends eighty miles, taking you through beaches, bays, and mountain rainforests. You can also horseback ride, mountain bike, or go on a kayaking or canoeing excursion to a mangrove swamp or an off-shore islet. Another popular activity is canyoning, which involves climbing to the top of a waterfall, looking down into the mists of the tumbling waters—and jumping.

The Caribs called Martinique the Isle of Flowers—and no wonder! The island's warm, humid climate is ideal for blazing-red bougainvilleas, white frangipani, and about a hundred species of orchids.

Martinique, c'est magnifique!

Rainforest trees also abound. Mahogany, magnolias, and bamboo all stand proud at about sixty-five feet. Yet they're dwarfed by yellow mangroves, chestnuts, and white gum trees, which can grow twice as high! On the beaches, you'll find palm trees, sea grapes, and manchineel trees, while the coastal swamps are the domain of the mangroves trees, whose exposed roots soar like flying buttresses above the water.



Martinique

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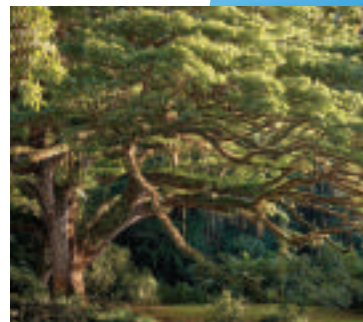
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Zamana Tree, Habitation Céron



Anse Cafard Slave Memorial



Diamond Rock



CARIBBEAN


LA MARTINIQUE