

# SXM PRACTICAL GUIDE



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### JANUARY & FEBRUARY

#### Carnival

- Festivities on St. Martin last for nearly 2 months starting the second Sunday in January with parade rehearsals and band tryouts.
- Carnival reaches its frenzied peak on the French side in February, with jump-ups, barbecues, and pageants.
- It all leads to J'ouvert, the weekend before Mardi Gras, and lasts until Ash Wednesday.
- The streets are crowded with young and old following trucks with enormous sound systems in Marigot until everyone congregates at "Carnival Village" come nightfall for concerts and events, including the crowning of the Carnival King and Queen.

### MARCH

#### Heineken Regatta

- This annual series of major boat races debuted in 1980.
- More than 200 vessels, from converted family fishing dinghies to race prototypes, compete in several categories.
- It's a prime excuse for partying, particularly on the Dutch side. For details, go to [www.heinekenregatta.com](http://www.heinekenregatta.com).

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### APRIL

#### Carnival

- Beginning the Wednesday after Easter Sunday and continuing for 15 riotous days of beauty pageants, costume and calypso competitions, Mas bands, parades, shows, and assorted revels.
- The Carnival Village features stands dishing out spicy local fare and an enormous stage where local and international musicians perform nightly.
- J'ouvert, the opening jump-up, showcases local and international bands and thousands of revelers line the streets and follow the bands until they arrive at Carnival Village.
- More parades are held the next morning, and the grandest of all takes place on the Queen's Birthday.
- Crowds pack the streets of Philipsburg vying for a spot to see the musicians, the outrageous costumes, and the colorful floats. The Last Lap, the grand finale of the Carnival, includes a symbolic burning of King Momo, a straw figure who embodies the spirit of Carnival.

#### St. Maarten Open Golf Tournament.

- Residents and visitors alike are invited to participate in this 3-day 54-hole event at Mullet Bay Golf Resort.
- For details, go to [www.stmaartengolf.com](http://www.stmaartengolf.com). Second weekend in April.

### MAY

#### Ecotourism Day

- Usually second or third weekend of May.

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- Nature discovery organizations, activity operators, artisans, and local entertainers take over the Bellevue Estate on the French side for this event.
- You can indulge in free sea kayaking, scuba diving, horseback tours, mountain bike riding, hiking, and treasure hunts.
- Cultural and culinary traditions are displayed: spice-growing, pottery-making, coffee-roasting.
- Typical island dishes and local bands are also on the menu. Go to [www.st-martin.org](http://www.st-martin.org) for updates.

### Fête du Nautisme

- Usually second or third weekend of May.
- This watersports festival organized by METIMER, the St. Martin Sea Trades Association, focuses on (re)discovering the rich marine environment.
- Free activities include yacht and motorboat excursions and regattas, jet-skiing, kayaking, and windsurfing, with lessons available.

## JUNE

### Billfish Tournament

- One of the Caribbean's most prestigious fishing competitions lasts nearly the entire week, attracting anglers from Europe and the Caribbean.
- About 30 fishing boats battle at the "Marlin Boulevard" area, rich fishing grounds about 48km (30 miles) east of St. Maarten. Go to [www.billfish-tournament.com](http://www.billfish-tournament.com) for details. First or second week of June.



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### The Fishing Event

- Fish the famous Marlin Boulevard area, rich fishing grounds about 48km (30 miles) east of St. Maarten. Go to [www.the-fishing-event.com](http://www.the-fishing-event.com) for details. Third or fourth week of June.

## JULY

### Bastille Day

The French holiday is celebrated island-wide with fanfare and fireworks, races and revelry. July 14.

### Schoelcher Day

Boat and bike races are held in honor of Victor Schoelcher, a Frenchman who fought against slavery. July 21.

## NOVEMBER

### St. Maarten's Day

Christopher Columbus named the island St. Maarten/St. Martin because he discovered it in 1493 on November 11, the feast day of St. Martin of Tours. Island residents on both sides still celebrate it as an official holiday, organizing various sporting events, parades, and jump-ups over 2 to 3 days. November 11.