

Why St. Maarten?

We have visited most every island in the Caribbean, including Antigua, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Cozumel, Curacao, Dominica, Grand Cayman, Haiti, Isla Margarita, Jamaica, Martinique, St. Barthélemy, St. John, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Maarten, St. Thomas, Tortola, Trinidad, and Virgin Gorda. Several of those islands we have visited on several occasions. When we go on vacation we want to go AWAY...to a place that is peaceful, has great food, excellent shopping, great people, and superb beaches. We want it to be different than at home and we want to experience the different cultures.

But there is something about the West Indies and the austere beauty of French St. Martin which combines everything WE want in a vacation--friendly people, French and Dutch cultures, beautiful weather, spectacular beaches, great restaurants and incredible French food. St. Maarten and this magic piece of the world is our one great love, the place on earth that revitalizes and makes us well again.

The restaurants are the MOST FANTASTIC in the World (voted by *Caribbean & Travel* magazine and *Gourmet* magazine). And even in two weeks we still can't go to all of our favorites. On many islands we couldn't believe how expensive they were and the food was not great at any restaurant we were at. Every island has its own flavor and each has its own special qualities.

Orient Beach has been voted the most beautiful beach (Top 10) of *Caribbean Travel* more than a few times now. We cannot find any other island anywhere near comparable to SXM. The islands, all have negatives, but with SXM the entire experience far out weighs anything else.

It seems to have what was missing! That comfort level - like being "home". Between the friendly locals, and most of the visitors we met, there was that comfort level. People whom we had not previously known greeted us like we were old friends. The beach bars and waterfront/beach restaurants and the lounge chair food and drink service - you don't see any of that on other islands!

IMHO, St. Maarten is by far and away the best based upon a number of factors including:

- *Beaches (number and quality)*
- *Culture*
- *Food*
- *Activities at night*
- *Shopping*
- *Proximity to other islands*
- *Range of accommodations and resorts*
- *Accessibility by air*
- *Historical interests*
- *Friendliness of people*
- *Degree of Americanization*

Islands like St. Thomas, St. John and Aruba are highly Americanized. Those are good for a visitor who wants to take "home" with them. For us, that's the last thing we want. We want to enjoy the Caribbean, NOT an extension of the USA.