

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

# **MARTINIQUE FAST FACTS – 2008 / 2009**

## **Essential information on The Caribbean Island with French Flair**

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**Overview/History** – First sighted by Columbus on his initial expedition in 1493, Martinique played host to its first European “tourists” in 1502 when Columbus landed there during his fourth voyage. Dubbed Martinique by Columbus, the island was inhabited by Carib Indians who had driven away the Arawaks who, like themselves, had come to the island from South America. Martinique was claimed by France in 1635 and officially annexed in 1674. France and Britain fought over the island until 1815, when it was restored to France. Slavery was abolished in 1848. In 1946, Martinique became a Department of France and in 1974 a Region of France, its current status.

Modern day Martinique is truly “a little bit of France in the Caribbean.” It exudes an alluring and distinctly French sensibility in the excellence of its cuisine, the chic sophistication of its fine resorts and hotels, and the sensuality of its language. Yet Martinique has a cachet all its own; an endearing West Indian warmth and friendliness in its personality, a special spice in its music and dance, its local dishes, cultural heritage, and way of life. It is an island with style and so much more. A special place, to be sure, with so much to offer – Martinique c’est magnifique!

### **The Basics**

**Location** – Nestled in the heart of the Lesser Antilles between Dominica to the north and St. Lucia, Martinique lies 1,965 miles from New York, 1,470 miles from Miami, 425 miles from San Juan, and 4,261 miles from Paris.

**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 summer and winter temperatures.

**Size** – 425 square miles (50 miles long and 22 miles across at its widest point), or just a few blocks smaller than New York City.

**Topography** – Mountainous and lush in the north with plains in the center and rocky hills (mornes) framing pristine beach coves (anses) in the south.

**Population** – 400,000+

**Currency** – Euro

**Capital City** – Fort-de-France

**Languages** – French, Creole and English.

**Electricity** – Voltage is 220 AC. Visitors traveling with hair dryers, shavers and other appliances made in the U.S. will require international power adapters.

**Religion** – Roman Catholicism, Seventh-Day Adventist, Jehovah’s Witness, Methodist, Evangelical, Baptist, Jewish, Hindu and Islamic.



**Money Exchanges & Banks** – U.S. dollars can be converted to euros at locations throughout the island. Hours of operation vary, though Fort-de-France banks are generally open 7:30 a.m. to noon and 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. weekdays. Bank-operated 24-hour ATM's can also be found throughout the island.

**Accommodations** – Martinique is home to 6,000+ hotel rooms with budget, moderate and luxury properties scattered throughout the island. For the rustic and truly budget-conscious, beachfront and rainforest camping can be arranged. Those seeking a more luxurious experience can opt for villa and private island rentals.

### **Getting There & Getting Around**

**Entry Requirements** – U.S. visitors must have a valid passport for stays up to 3 months.

**Arrival/Departure Taxes** – None for air or cruise arrivals.

**By Air** – American Airlines/American Eagle connects via San Juan 4x's a week. Air France operates regular service from Miami. Air Jamaica and Caribbean Airlines daily service from NY connects with LIAT in Antigua or Barbados. Air Caraïbes flies to/from Antigua, Barbados, Dominica Guadeloupe, St. Lucia, St. Martin, St Vincent and Trinidad.

**By Sea** – Air/sea connections can be made via Guadeloupe, St. Lucia, Dominica and Les Saintes aboard sleek catamarans operated by Express des Iles. Ferry service operates daily with a typical trip from Guadeloupe taking approximately 3 to 3-1/2 hours.

**By Cruise** – Lines featuring Martinique in 2008-2009 include Azamara, Costa, HAL, MSC, P&O, RCCL, Seabourn, Silversea, Star Clippers and Windstar.

**Getting Around by Rental Car** – Driving is on the right with cars provided by Avis, Budget, Hertz and more. A valid driver's license is required; min. age is 21.

**Yachting** – Bareboat or crewed charters can be arranged at most hotels. Yachtsmen can choose among several marinas, most notably Port de Plaisance in Le Marin, the island's largest and best equipped marina.

**Getting Around by Taxi** – Taxi stands are located at the airport, in Fort-de-France, and at major hotels. All cabs are metered. Martinique has 200+ taxis; 80% of them are Mercedes-Benz.

### **Activities & Attractions Aplenty**

**Culinary Travel** – World-renowned for its cuisine, Martinique's 365+ restaurants feature the best of French and Creole. Seafood abounds, prepared Creole-style with spices, or in a classic French manner with herbs.

**Cultural Heritage** – Birthplace of the famed poet, Aimé Césaire, Zouk and Napoleon's bride, Empress Josephine, Martinique boasts a rich cultural heritage kept alive in the island's 25 museums.

**Rhum** – The Rum Capital of the World, Martinique is home to 15 brands, each produced utilizing a unique rhum agricole method yielding blends comparable to fine cognacs. Martinique rhums are the only rums to carry the exalted Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC) designation formerly reserved for the finest wines. Free tasting is available at all of the island's distilleries.



**Ecotourism** – Martinique boasts a whole world of natural wonders, making it one of the Caribbean's top eco destinations. Two-thirds of Martinique is designated as protected parkland, affording visitors a wide range of nature-themed vacation adventures – hiking the island's 27 well-marked trails, kayaking, horseback riding, enjoying a 4x4 tour and more.

**Shopping** – Martinique offers the best of Parisian fashion, jewelry, perfumes, etc., and local treasures. La Galleria Mall is a top shopping spot, while Rue Victor Hugo is to Martinique as Fifth Avenue is to New York.

**Casino Gaming** – Martinique's two casinos, Casino de la Batelière Plaza located just north of Fort-de-France and Casino des Trois Ilets, offer slots, blackjack, roulette and more. Patrons must be 18; dress is casual.

**Scuba Diving** – The best-kept secret in Caribbean diving, Martinique offers abundant marine life, historic shipwrecks and healthy reefs. The highlight is Diamond Rock, an offshore island with a deep undersea cavern.

**Golf & Tennis** – Designed by Robert Trent Jones Sr., the 18-hole Golf de l'Impératrice Joséphine in Trois Ilets, is the island's sole golf course. Tennis is available at the course and at resorts throughout the island.

**Family Attractions** – From sightseeing trains to the Butterfly Gardens and Mangofil, Martinique has much to offer families. The main attraction is Aqualand, a U.S.-style water park featuring water slides, wave pool, and young kids play area complete with its own pirate ship.

**Destination Weddings** – Required documents include original birth certificates; certificate of good conduct; residency card (bride or groom must reside on-island min. 1 month); medical certificate issued within 3 months of marriage; French translation of all documents.

For more information on Martinique, contact the Martinique Promotion Bureau /CMT USA, 825 Third Avenue, 29th Floor, New York, NY 10022 – Tel: 212 838 6887 - Fax: 212 838 7855 – Email: [info@martinique.org](mailto:info@martinique.org) – Web site: [www.martinique.org](http://www.martinique.org).

