



This Week's Stories

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St. Maarten and St. Martin "SXM" Weekly News

Weekly Tourist-Oriented News & Comments from SXM

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Part of www.everythingstmaarten.com

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You are receiving St. Maarten and St. Martin Weekly News because you subscribed to it and/or are a JMB Website Supporters member. Unsubscribe info is at the end of this newsletter. Stay with us for all the latest tourist-oriented news from St. Maarten / St. Martin / SXM all year long. We now have over 210,000 readers around the world...

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This format is easily readable on most mobile devices; scroll down for this week's news. You can also download a PDF of recent editions here:

http://everythingxsm.com/sxm/free_newsletters/sxmweeklynews.shtml

On that page, the link beginning with the highest number is the most recent edition

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TOP STORIES

(Scroll Down for Full Table of Contents); this edition features many new stories about your favorite island:

This is issue #971 of Jeff Berger's / JMB Communications' *St. Maarten and St. Martin (SXM) Weekly News*, published every Monday all year long (Tuesdays during some holiday weeks). You're receiving this because you subscribed or are a JMB Website Supporters member.

(Scroll Down for Full Table of Contents); this edition features many new stories about your favorite island:

-- Alegria Need Not Honor Caravanserai Timeshare Owners' Contracts, Court Says; Now What?

-- Angry "Former" Caravanserai Timeshare Owners Vent Their Fury On The Island

-- Hurricane Season Ends, But Something May Be Brewing Anyway

-- Tastevin Restaurant Sold: The Details

-- Black Friday Sale Continues - Only \$39 for 200 Discounts Across SXM -- Lowest Prices of the Year for New Memberships, Renewals, and Reinstatements; Join To Keep These Newsletters Coming (Story Below)

-- Taxi Warning: When Taxis Aren't Really Taxis

-- Where To Park at Cupecoy Beach (Revised)

-- Where To Go for Vegetarian Food (and More): Top Carrot

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-- Maho Beach As Packed As It Ever Gets

-- Restaurant of the Week: Toppers

... and much more

30 new stories this week

Scroll down for our complete Table of Contents

Timeshare Rentals and Sales of the Week

Each week JMB randomly picks timeshare condominiums for rent and for sale in SXM from the huge selection at http://everythingxsm.com/sxm/timeshare_rent_sale/index.shtml and features them here.

To rent out or sell timeshares you own in SXM or anywhere else, worldwide, at no charge, join JMB Website Supporters. Visit http://everythingxsm.com/sxm/about_sxm/paypal.shtml for info. Membership now delivers a growing list of 200+ St. Maarten and St. Martin-focused travel benefits, and your subscription also helps keep these weekly SXM newsletters coming.

SXM Timeshare Rentals of The Week:

One Week RENTAL -- January 31 to February 7, 2015 (week 5)-- Exceptional cliff-top unit 4B at Summit Resort Hotel offers unobstructed panoramic views of the northern lagoon, lowlands, Marigot, even Creole Rock and Anguilla from a central convenient location in Cupecoy. Gated resort has a restaurant and friendly bar on the pool deck with phenomenal lagoon views and beautifully landscaped grounds. Many beaches and restaurants are nearby... Beaches: Cupecoy, Mullet Bay, Baie Longue, Rouge, Maho, Simpson Bay. Restaurants: Temptation, FIG, La Gondola, and many others. Breezy recently renovated unit is fully air-conditioned, has a king size bed, stove, refrigerator, microwave, cable TV, free wired and wireless internet, privacy and serenity. Want a quiet midnight swim? Pool is open all night. More photos available! Reduced to only \$1099. Jeff, 508-747-8281 or jeff@jmbcommunications.com. This unit and week 4 in the same unit are also both for sale; see Sale section for those listings.

RENTAL 2/6/2015 2/13/2015 Week 6, Royal Palm Beach Club. Spacious, comfortable and well-appointed with 2 Bedrooms (King Bed

each), 2 Baths. Sleeps 6 with Queen sleeper in Living Room. Beautiful Ocean front views from Master Bedroom, Living Room and full Kitchen. Resort has own beach, restaurant, mini-market, shops, complementary gym, and pool with swim-up bar. Free shuttle and facilities use of sister resort (Flamingo) nearby. More restaurants, entertainment and shops within 1-3 block walk. \$1695 per week. ALSO AVAILABLE: 1-BEDROOM, same dates, \$1395 per week. Ron 310.722.2632. ronfrankel@earthlink.net .

SXM Timeshare Sales of The Week:

Sharply Reduced! About To Be Renovated Unit Available At A Fraction of its Future Price; Steps from the Caribbean With All The Amenities You'd Expect

===== MUST SELL=====

SALE: 1/31/15 to 2/7/15 (week 5) Simpson Bay Resort Marina 207, a sleep-four studio overlooking both the Marina pool and Pelican beach (a short walk to Marina Residences, next door). Many beaches, great restaurants, piano bar (The Red Piano), more nightlife, casinos, a Deli, and other shops and nearby. A clothing optional beach is about two miles away. Unit features stove, microwave, cable TV, WiFi is on site, sleeps four, very convenient. Reduced to only \$1099. Please contact Jeff at (508) 747-8281 or email jeff@jmbcommunications.com

SALE 2/21/2015 3/14/2015 Week 8, 9 & 10 Flamingo Beach Resort Studio apt., Oceanside, Sat. to Sat. Unit #7416, can sleep 4 with privacy pull out door & TV & pull out full couch. Full kitchen with expected full size refrig. microwave oven & stove, dishwasher; etc beach front-2 beaches & pool. Parking included. Recently refurbished \$5,000. per week Laina (401) 934-2999 until May15th & then (401) 934-0550 armacdonald6@gmail.com

Non-St. Maarten Timeshare Rentals:

See them all at http://everythingxsm.com/sxm/timeshare_rent_sale/index.shtml

This Week's Stories

Stories are numbered; scroll down for stories of interest. This week's Table of Contents follows these links:

"Like" Our Facebook "Everything St. Maarten / St. Martin" Page:



<https://www.facebook.com/EverythingStMaarten>

"Like" Our Facebook SXM Timesharing Group People for Timeshare Owner Consumer Protection in St. Maarten

http://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group_205834172765083

Search the **SXM Weekly News** Archives:

Current Archives (Since 4/2014) in PDF Format (New):

http://everythingxsm.com/sxm/free_newsletters/sxmweeklynews.shtml

Archives prior to April 12 2014 (old format):

<http://everythingxsm.com/cgi-bin/dada/mail.cgi?flavor=archive:list=sxmweeklynews>

Check Out Our Linked-In "St. Maarten and St. Martin Travelers" Group (Free; Timeshare Focus):

www.linkedin.com

Get a growing list of 200+ Money-Saving SXM-focused travel discount benefits through JMB Website Supporters:

http://www.everythingsxm.com/sxm/about_sxm/paypal.shtml

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Rent Out or Sell Your SXM Timeshare

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How To Get a **GROWING LIST of 200+** Money-Saving St. Maarten- and St. Martin-Focused Travel Benefits

Visit <http://www.everythingsxm.com/secret> , the *secret* site for JMB Website Supporters members only, for low fares to SXM from cities across the USA, Canada, and Western Europe, plus a total of a growing list of 200+ additional major travel benefits, including reduced-cost access to

Not a member yet? See http://everythingxsm.com/sxm/about_sxm/paypal.shtml. Cost: \$59 for one year, or \$99 total for five full years. Other durations available. Join us today...

Now a growing list of 200+ benefits... and more coming soon.

Contact Us:

[Revised 12/17/13]

All member discounts and benefits are explained in detail on the members-only *secret* website, <http://www.everythingsxm.com/secret> . If you're a JMB Website Supporters member and have a question not answered there, please contact us at support@jmbcommunications.com.

NON-members who wish to contact us should write to jmbweb@jmbcommunications.com with the subject *Free Newsletter Recipient,* but due to the huge volume of mail received, we may not be able to respond individually.

Our main St. Maarten / St. Martin website: www.everythingsxm.com .

All JMB Newsletters Read *From JMB*

This newsletter and mail from JMB Website Supporters to *members (including *Low Airfare Bulletins*) read *From JMB* in the subject area so you won't misinterpret them as spam.

THIS WEEK'S STORIES:

Stories are numbered; scroll down for stories of interest.

SECTION 1: Getting There: Airlines, Airports, Cruises, & Weather

1. At SXM Airport, Lots of Changes Coming in the Next Two Years

We've frequently written about changes coming to SXM Airport. For several years, the airport has been acquiring property along Airport Road which it intends to use to build a parallel taxiway. That taxiway will enable the airport to handle increased traffic -- it's expected to be the second busiest airport in the region, behind only San Juan.

The first change noticeable to visitors will be the establishment of a new fixed-based operations terminal, or FBO. This terminal will serve numerous private aircraft that visit St. Maarten. Construction is expected to begin next year.

A central car rental facility, similar to those sprouting up in many US cities now, should become a reality by 2016 or thereabouts.

Many businesses along airport road have already closed down, since their properties have been sold to the airport for expansion. You can expect most of the remaining businesses between the St. Maarten lagoon Causeway and the Red Cross area to shut down or move within the next 18 months.

As proposed changes enter construction, we'll keep you posted and if possible we'll post photos.

2. Hurricane Season Ends, But Something May Be Brewing Anyway

Hurricane season runs from June 1 of each year through November 30, which means the Atlantic season is now officially over (as of our Monday cover date).

It isn't that hurricanes can't possibly happen for six months, since mother nature has a mind of her own. In fact, Rob Lightbown of crownweather.com said last Thursday that some tropical development was possible Northeast of Puerto Rico over the next few days, and that it could move southwestward toward the northern lesser Antilles. Mid-day last Thursday, he wrote:

"Satellite imagery this morning also shows an upper level low pressure system located a few hundred miles to the northeast of Puerto Rico. The forecast with this upper level low has some "interesting" possibilities. It appears that this weather system will be initially pulled northward by the frontal system pushing offshore into the western Atlantic tracking this to the east of Bermuda over the next two to three days. By next week, however, some of the forecast guidance, including the European and Canadian models, then forecast that a piece of energy may split off and forms a surface low pressure system that dives southwestward from near 27 North Latitude, 50 West Longitude on Monday to 22 North Latitude and 60 West Longitude by Wednesday of next week. Now, the operational GFS model guidance does not show this scenario, but instead forecasts a scenario of a low pressure system forming in the southwestern Caribbean around the middle part of next week and tracking northeast and east-northeastward towards Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and the northern Lesser Antilles by the weekend of December 6th and 7th.

"You are probably asking which model scenario do I believe more? Right now, I'm leaning much more towards the scenario of low pressure tracking southwestward from the central Atlantic early next week to the western Atlantic just north of the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico around Wednesday and Thursday of next week. From there, the overall upper level pattern may drive this low pressure system to near the Bahamas by the end of next week. It is something to certainly keep an eye on for next week and since this low pressure system will be hanging around for several days, there is certainly the possibility that it could try to become a sub-tropical storm.

"So, for those of you in Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and the northern Lesser Antilles, keep an eye on anything that forms to your northeast over the next several days as it may bring you some very stormy weather by Wednesday and Thursday of next week."

If anything happens with this, we'll report the details on our Facebook page — you'll find a link to that page above.

3. How To Get The Lowest-Cost Airfares, Hotels, Cruises, and Tour Packages Worldwide (Repeat)

This is the single biggest piece of membership news we've had in the past 12 years and it bears repeating: JMB Website Supporters now gives you access to a private, "members only" travel wholesale club that offers incredible prices not only on airfares but on packages not just to the Caribbean, but worldwide.

Retail travel sites — the ones whose names you know very well — are heavily regulated. But private travel clubs like this, which normally charge members prices for membership/admission, are regulated differently and consequently, can offer much better pricing.

The organization providing these travel benefits has been traveling under the radar for 25 years and is only now making its travel reservations prowess publicly known. It's SkyMed Travel Club and it is entirely separate from the SkyMed "takes you home" medical evacuation service we've been recommending to you since shortly after the millennium.

The SkyMed Travel Club offers exceptional pricing on everything and almost invariably beats everyone else's pricing. We have been testing it for the past few weeks and have found the pricing to be extraordinary — even on the wildly popular river cruises that are a tourism phenomenon throughout Europe and are quickly gaining popularity here in the US.

And normally, this organization charges you \$99 to join plus \$99 annual renewals. But for our JMB Website Supporters members, and during a brief introductory period for everyone else, the cost to join is zero as will be the cost for renewals. Exclusively through us, you get access to a world-class global ticketing mechanism without paying one cent to get in the door.

This is a new benefit for JMB members. During this introduction, everyone can join by going to www.SkyMedtravelclub.com, clicking the sign up link on the top right corner of the homepage, and providing the requested information. It's very important to complete the first sign up item (SkyMed Membership Number or Representative ID) by entering the code 391330 — entering that code is what ensures that you pay nothing to be a member of the SkyMed Travel Club. If you fail to enter that code, you will not gain free entry to the club's phenomenal pricing.

Do join — you will not be disappointed once you've booked through them.

SECTION 2: Accommodations: Hotels, Inns, Timeshares

4. Alegria Need Not Honor Caravanserai Timeshare Owners' Contracts, Court Says; Now What?

Although things are far from over in the battle between former Caravanserai timeshare owners and Alegria Resort, a court here in St. Maarten has now ruled that Alegria resort owners need not honor timeshare contracts between Caravanserai Resort and nearly 2500 timeshare owners.

We published the ruling in social media and the response was quick and highly negative toward St. Maarten; see next article. You can see the ruling, translated into English, on our Caravanserai Timeshare page on Facebook, where you can also find info on joining the current litigation. Look here: <https://www.facebook.com/Caravanseraitimeshare>

It's very important to remember that this is far from over, and that there are many unanswered questions.

Since timeshare owners could represent a substantial source of ongoing revenue for Alegria, will it respect that and offer former Caravanserai timeshare owners some kind of olive branch? And will any timeshare owners even want it?

Will Alegria send some kind of intelligible communication to former Caravanserai timeshare owners extending its offer of "hotel units" on an ongoing basis for the future? Alegria's communications in the past have widely been regarded by Caravanserai timeshare owners as poorly written/mottled.

Will the new government of St. Maarten, which is still not in office, attempt some kind of mediation between former Caravanserai timeshare owners and Alegria, hopefully with the help of the St. Maarten Timeshare Association (SMTA)?

If you are a Caravanserai timeshare owner, we suggest you contact the resort to see if you can stay there during your week, in your unit. Otherwise, hang loose and, if you wish, or join the ongoing litigation. You'll see details about it here:

<https://www.facebook.com/Caravanseraitimeshare> .

We have been told, but have not verified, that Lexwell attorneys in St. Maarten have never lost a timeshare case and that more is about to happen in court. It was suggested to us that some timeshare owners may wish to contact Lexwell. You will find them here:

<https://www.facebook.com/Lxwll>

We can tell you unequivocally that members of the St. Maarten government, people involved with the St. Maarten Timeshare Association, news people, and most business owners on the island are not at all happy either with what Alegria is doing to Caravanserai timeshare owners or with the court's current response to the situation. The fact that it's taking many weeks for a new government to be sworn in and start operating is making matters orders of magnitude worse for everyone -- and more damaging to the island economy. To us, that's largely the fault of the Hague, not SXM.

Of course, the above situation does nothing to solve the current dilemma for timeshare owners, who have been royally screwed by this situation. Our opinion is that the current situation remains highly fluid. We know the St. Maarten Timeshare Association and other business organizations on the island aren't going to simply roll over and play dead as a result of this, since the entire economic well-being of the island still hinges to a great extent on the health of the timesharing sector of the St. Maarten economy.

We do not know if the current litigants are going to appeal this verdict; a lot remains to happen here. We will keep you posted on day by day developments on our Everything St. Maarten and Caravanserai timeshare pages on Facebook. Links to those pages are in this edition of *Weekly News*.

5. Angry "Former" Caravanserai Timeshare Owners Vent Their Fury On The Island

Within minutes after the court ruling against Caravanserai timeshare owners was posted on our Caravanserai timeshare owners page on Facebook, owners posted reactions which had one singular target: the island itself. Timeshare owners appeared to blame the island, charging that the St. Maarten government didn't protect them and allowed them to be the victims, where many of them in fact have lost tens of thousands of dollars.

Here are some excerpts:

Mary: Let's see.....Manek profited. Caravanserai profited, endless vacation profited. Scotia bank profited. Alegria profited. The island of sxm profited by repeat visitors and spending. The only losers were the tourists. Just a horrible blight on the island. How can anyone ever feel the same about it?

Maggie: I use to love to visit the island..... we will be returning in Feb 15 but not to that resort... thankfully found another one in Simpson Bay..... but this will be my last year spending my money on that island..... the only people I am going to miss is Marty SXM and Lori they have always been real people with good hearts..... as for the rest of the businesses..... that I use to support..... nothing but anger. We are screwed..... someone got our money and we have nothing--- as to saying it is not over..... well then the question becomes how much more money do we give to businesses in Saint Martin for nothing in return...?

Dennis: There are plenty of other beautiful islands in the Caribbean. I'm done with SXM.

Pam: Horrifying for timeshare owners everywhere.

Jennifer: \$25k down the drain.

See more: <https://www.facebook.com/Caravanseraitimeshare>

SECTION 3: Island

[Just \\$59/month Gets You Global SkyMed Medevac Protection: Go Nowhere Without It](#)

Story 6:

Black Friday Sale Continues: **Only \$39 For The Biggest, Best SXM Discount Package --** **200+ Discounts Across SXM**

Get The Best SXM Discount Package: Get about 200 discounts across the island including sizable jewelry gift cards, half-off members-only lagoon sunset cruises, discounts at dozens of restaurants, plus many activities, art, shopping, and other discounts on both sides of the island.

And it's just \$39 for one year (new memberships) but much less per year when you buy multiyear memberships. Low prices for renewals and reinstatements, too.

New memberships: Learn more here: http://everythingxsm.com/sxm/about_sxm/paypal.shtml . Your JMB membership keeps these newsletters coming every week and gives you tons of discounts across SXM.

Reinstate a former membership: <http://everythingxsm.com/sxm/reinstate/index.shtml>

Renew your current JMB membership at the Membership Renewal Center on the members-only [Secret Website](#).

Story 7:

Travel Nowhere Without Medical Evacuation Protection From SkyMed International -- ***Now On Sale!***

Having your own medical evacuation membership enables you to get home in a hurry when you or your spouse / partner become critically ill or injured away from home. Without membership, you must pay for the evacuation in cash, in advance -- if you can set it up -- and the cost can easily be \$50,000 or more, sometimes far more.

Only SkyMed guarantees to take you home should you become critically ill or injured throughout the SkyMed universe, which consists of the USA, Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, the Bahamas, all the nations of the Caribbean including Cuba, plus Belize and Costa Rica. Should you need protection anywhere in the world, you can get that, too. But the point is simply this: don't travel anywhere without making sure you have medical evacuation protection from SkyMed.

And now the best SkyMed plan is deeply discounted for our members.

There are a number of SkyMed plans available. Short-term plans are the least expensive in initial outlay, but you must be medically requalified every time you want a new short-term plan. By contrast, both SkyMed annual and Ultimate plans require only one medical qualification when you first apply.

When you renew SkyMed, your membership continues uninterrupted and is renewable indefinitely without further medical requalification regardless of your age or health. There are also never any increases in membership fees (premiums) related solely to your age or health: everyone pays the same low rates.

Six Big Reasons To Buy SkyMed Now: The first five -- we are giving away vacations to destinations worldwide to the next five people who buy new five-year SkyMed Ultimate memberships from us between now and December 15 (just expanded and extended.) You get a one week vacation (airfare not included) at your choice of many resorts worldwide and pay only the cost of maintenance *for one day*. That's a deal and a half. (Email us at jmbweb@jmbcommunications.com immediately after buying the new five-year Ultimate for us to tell us.) There's another reason to buy a new 5-year Ultimate: a 5-year free extension of your JMB membership. More on that is below.

The Sixth Reason: Buy any new SkyMed membership other than short term now and even pre-existing conditions are covered once the 90-day waiting period (for pre-existing conditions coverage) has passed. If you're going to SXM in February or after, that's gangbusters news for you right now.

Let's repeat one critical item: The cost of SkyMed never increases solely because of your advancing age, nor is SkyMed ever canceled solely for declining health -- in sharp contrast to other plans. SkyMed *Takes You Home*® -- what else matters?

Here's that steep discount. For five years of "Ultimate" SkyMed global protection, you'd prepay the five-year rate of \$699/year. But JMB Website Supporters members get \$1000 off -- they pay just \$499/year when prepaid in full, or \$2495. (If you'd rather pay monthly, it's \$59, \$49, or \$39/month depending on what you need /want). Get yourself protected against the high cost of medical evacuation and you will simultaneously find yourself with great peace of mind.

Call SkyMed any weekday Mountain time at 1-800-475-9633 and ask for Nan or Jim. Tell them you're a JMB Website Supporters member to get the best rates. If you're not a member, join; it's now on sale at Black Friday prices (usually it's just \$99 for four years or \$59 for one year). Sign up for JMB here: http://everythingxsm.com/sxm/about_sxm/paypal.shtml . The cost of the best SkyMed plans is deeply discounted for JMB members. SkyMed verifies your JMB membership.

For one-year or other duration memberships, buy online at www.skymed.com/jmbspecial (JMB members only) or www.skymed.com/jmbxsm (everyone else). Do it today, before you forget... It's great peace-of-mind when you travel.

Five-year Free JMB Membership Extension With New Five-Year Ultimate Purchase: Once you've joined SkyMed through

us, email support@jmbcommunications.com and tell them you've bought a new SkyMed Ultimate five-year membership. Upon verification, we'll extend your current JMB Website Supporters membership for five full years. Offer open to U. S. and Canadian citizens only. You must join JMB first to be eligible for both the SkyMed JMB-members-only discount and this JMB membership extension. And you must join SkyMed only as described above and not by any other means to qualify for the JMB membership extension. Offer extended; ends December 15, 2014. The five-year JMB membership extension will be terminated if you cancel your SkyMed Ultimate membership before its five-year term expires. Vacation offer expires when we run out of vacations; limited quantity available. Join now...

8. Tastevin Restaurant Sold: The Details

We wrote last week that both Ti Provençal and Rainbow have been sold and will be converted into boutique hotels, while Sol e Luna will continue as an upscale restaurant but it will have a swimming pool outside.

Last week, Tastevin was sold -- to the owners of Ocean 82, which years ago was Fish Pot. (Fish Pot's guy in charge was Yannick, now the chef/co-owner of Vesna Taverna in Simpson Bay).

We hear the owner of Tastevin will be moving to Spain next Spring where he will semi-retire, opening a small restaurant there.

9. Penultimate Hurricane Update: OBBR a/c's Quickly Repaired

Except for temporarily out-of-service elevators in one building, Oyster Bay Beach Resort is fine -- the air conditioners that had been affected by Gonzalo and the rains that followed are fine and back to normal.

Our final hurricane update will come when we hear that Sonesta Great Bay has reopened. No open issues elsewhere.

10. Road Conditions

Generally decent, with some widely scattered rough pot holes thanks to the heavy rain that fell a few weeks ago. Those should be fixed in December.

11. Taxi Warning: When Taxis Aren't Really Taxis

If you use taxis in St. Maarten, it's extremely important to make sure they are licensed, legitimate, and insured, for your own safety.

Legitimate taxis on the Dutch side bear the word taxi on their registration plates. Legitimate taxis on the French side have the letters TXI on their registration plates.

There are other taxis around which are illegal. They may have plastic yellow and black lighted "taxi" signs on their roofs, but they are illegal and you should never step into one for any reason. There has been criminal activity by gypsy cabs. Avoid them, even if a hotel doorman tells you they are okay.

12. Etna: Something You Must Do On Your Next Trip

Now that many of you are about to come to the island we're repeating: get Etna ice cream while you are here. Etna has a higher amount of butter fat than most other ice creams, and all-natural flavorings imported from around the world. The result is outstanding and super creamy. It takes forever to melt, which is why it is particularly well adapted to the tropics. You'll find in virtually all island supermarkets.

13. Update on Blue Mall Stores

Blue Mall now has nearly 30 stores. You will find the mall in Cupecoy, opposite Cupecoy beach. Underground parking is available. You can find a complete directory of stores here: www.bluemallsxm.com

14. Update on the American Clinic: Roddy Heyliger's View

Over the last few years, we've told you about the American Clinic, a medical tourism project destined for SXM on land between Atrium Resort and Royal Palm, on Kim Sha Beach. Hopefully construction will begin once the project has financing nailed down. It's about a \$150-million project that would bring to SXM sophisticated treatment and surgical capabilities which the island now lacks.

Our friend Roddy Heyliger submits this perspective:

Dear Editor,

Sint Maarten: could become a leading medical tourism destination starting in 2015

According to Florida-based consulting firm Deloitte Development, medical tourism is considered the Caribbean's fastest-growing segment, which includes patients from the U.S. mainland. Medical tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors in the world.

The leading industry organization Patients Beyond Borders (PBB), estimates of global medical tourism is growing at 25 per cent to 35 per cent per year, while Deloitte estimates a 13 per cent growth by the United States of America by mainland patients, and in 2012 this group was expected to number over 1.6 million.

The global economic environment since the 2008 international financial market crash, has not yielded or yielded very little in economic growth during the past six years, and the impact internationally has also been felt on Sint Maarten as well where growth has been low or flat. This of course does not bode well for those who enter the job market on an annual basis.

Country Sint Maarten needs to see an economic impetus and medical tourism is an area worth pursuing. The private sector foreign investment/investor interests has been shown, but we need to move forward in providing the necessary inputs that would allow this sector and the country to become a leading medical tourism destination in the north eastern Caribbean.

2015 is just around the corner, and the nation is looking for an economic push that would create employment opportunities and generate additional business for the national economy.

The Puerto Rico Government via its Economic Development & Commerce (DDEC) department is making medical tourism a top priority turning the island into one of the world's top markets. Sint Maarten also has an entity known as the Economic Development Corporation (EDC).

Puerto Rico's plan of action for medical tourism entails the creation of 3,000 new jobs over the next three years (2015-2017), US\$200 million in additional economic activity, and the treatment of 30,000 patients from outside of the island.

To carry out Puerto Rico's medical tourism economic promotion strategy, the island has established the Medical Tourism Corporation which comprises of representatives from the Puerto Rico Trade & Export Co., Puerto Rico Tourism Co., Health Department, Cardiovascular Center and members of the medical community.

The Puerto Rico Medical Tourism Corp. is seeking private sector proposals that would manage the flow of patients and providers and market the island as a leading medical tourism destination in the Caribbean. The Puerto Rico Government will provide seed money for the first couple of years in order to get this economic sector moving forward.

Puerto Rico statistics show that 15,000 medical tourists visit the island annually, spending an average of US\$10,000. Family members or a friend who also travel along with the patient adds an additional economic injection of close to US\$1000 which is spent on lodging, meals and transportation.

The Medical Tourism Association (MTA) is a global non-profit organization for the medical tourism and international patient industry. The MTA works with healthcare providers, governments, insurance companies, employers and other stakeholders of healthcare with respect to medical tourism, international patient, and healthcare initiatives.

Puerto Rico recently signed an agreement with MTA to provide training, consulting and certification services as the part of the island's new strategy to develop medical tourism. The program kicks off in December 2014 and will run until June 2015.

The International Medical Tourism Center (IMTC) from Costa Rica that offers medical and dental travel services, in 2013 stated that the medical tourism business in that country has grown to a nearly US\$300 million industry out of an over US\$100 billion global business.

According to PBB, the 10 countries in the lead in attracting tourists for medical treatment, and offering costs that are 25 to 90 per cent lower than on the U.S. mainland are Brazil, Costa Rica, India, South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and Turkey.

Sint Maarten has the potential to become a leading medical tourism destination with the first major steps being taken in 2015 to build such a destination. We already have the flight connections; and we can offer patients to combine their health-related stay on the island with our well established leisure and entertainment sectors.

One of the most important benefits for the people of the country will be having access to medical specialists here on the island; so besides the creation of job opportunities, economic activity across the board for the tourism sector; the people will have world-class medical care which we now have to travel abroad to receive. Let's make 2015 the year of new opportunities and progress.

Roddy Heyliger

15. Update on The Beaches

Except for Sargasso Seaweed, that stubbornly persists on some east-facing beaches, all SXM beaches are in good shape awaiting only you....

16. Where To Park at Cupecoy Beach (Revised)

Parallel parking is available along the wall on the west (ocean) side of the street, between the boulders. You can park there, then walk to the beach.

17. Where to Rent Cars

Tropical Car Rental, www.tropical-tropicana.com; Unique Car Rental, www.uniquecarrentalsxm.com; Rodael Car Rental (for cruise ship passengers); and the new ones are Mickey Daniel's Car Rental, www.mickeyscarrental.com; Leisure Car Rental; and Thrifty Car Rental. We have long recommended Tropical and Unique and Rodael; see the JMB members-only Secret Website for discounts from them. Mickey's, Leisure, and Thrifty will be offering JMB members exclusive discounts starting in the next week or two.

Car Rentals are among more than two hundred St. Maarten / St. Martin discounts offered through memberships in JMB Website Supporters. Learn more here:

New memberships: Learn more here: http://everythingxsm.com/sxm/about_xsm/paypal.shtml . *Your JMB membership keeps these newsletters coming every week and gives you tons of discounts across SXM.*

Reinstate a former membership: <http://everythingxsm.com/sxm/reinstate/index.shtml>

Renew your current JMB membership at the Membership Renewal Center on the members-only [Secret Website](#).

18. Friars Bay Beach Businesses Back in Business

Orient Beach beach bars and those at Friar's Bay were hit hard by hurricane Gonzalo last month. Most Orient Beach establishments are now in fine shape. A few days ago we checked out Friar's Bay and there too -- all is AOK.

19. Where To Go for Vegetarian Food (and More): Top Carrot

Top Carrot in Simpson Bay is (we think) the island's oldest vegetarian restaurant. It has a sizeable menu and even your carnivorous friends will like it. Delicious stuff, highly recommended.

20. "Nature's Discount" Is The Place to Buy Natural Foods

Located in Simpson Bay just south of Toppers, Nature's Discount offers a huge selection of natural foods, supplements, etc. It's the place on the island to get this kind of product...

21. Front Street "Repaving" To Solve Sinking Cobblestones

The 10 inch rain storm that hit SXM early this month caused some of the cobblestones on Front Street to appear to sink, which is why "repaving" has been underway in some areas there ever since. It usually only involves a day or so per section. The eastern end of Front Street -- where this is happening -- is blocked off for car access anyway most days because of the influx of many cruise ship passengers.

22. Maho Beach As Packed As It Ever Gets

Maho Beach has been packed all week, as densely packed as it ever gets. Maho is the place where many cruise passengers go to stand under arriving aircraft -- in some cases only 30 feet above your head on Maho. An example of low incoming planes:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zD-3pU6nWQG...> and a departing Air France A340: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7hC7Oarik3A>

This is why doing this is a really bad idea: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eV21f1MZ5IU> Luckily the young lady shown in this video was not killed....

23. Want to Try Johnny (Journey) Cakes in SXM? Two Places To Find Them

Johnny Cakes, historically called journey cakes, look like hamburger rolls and are fried, usually served with eggs or other sandwich ingredients. You'll find them at Mr. Busby's Beach Bar where you can get them with all sorts of ingredients. See www.dawnbeachsxm.com.

[A baked version, not fried, is served with those amazing "Johney Burgers" at the departure lounge at Princess Juliana Airport.](#) We were lucky enough to taste test the burgers earlier this year before the restaurant opened. Lots of different sandwiches -- including fish and chicken too -- all luscious. Be sure to arrive at the airport early enough before leaving to get one (or more). Great stuff. Only problem is that you have to leave the island to get one....

24. Where to Buy Gasoline

Prices are dropping but gas here is still considerably pricier than in the US. Best station: Cadisco near the soccer stadium opposite the Simply market... just over the French Side drawbridge between Sandy Ground and Marigot. Dollar is accepted here at par with the Euro.

25. What "Mosquito Milk" Is, Where to Get It, & Why

"Mosquito Milk" looks milky but isn't. It's a natural concoction with lemongrass and other natural ingredients which for some reason mosquitoes dislike. Put it on, they ignore you. It has actually been fairly dry the last few weeks in SXM (since the early November deluge) so numbers of mosquitoes seem to be declining. But... be cautious anyway. Available in markets and pharmacies.

26. Unique Seaside Dining Experience

There's only one SXM beach bar / restaurant open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner . . . that is on the beach . . . faces Eastward so it is constantly in gentle tradewinds . . . enables you to see the moon rise over the tropical Atlantic . . . has beach-side gazebos under palm trees where you can dine intimately and comfortably on delicious food.

It's Mr. Busby's Beach Bar for breakfast and lunch (we do breakfast there often) . . . and Daniel's by the Sea every evening for delightful Italian dining and seafood and even authentic thin-crust pizza. If you haven't tried it, do it soon. It's in Dawn Beach. See www.dawnbeachsxm.com. All three restaurants (including Island Pizza) offer discounts to our JMB Website Supporters members -- and Black Friday discounts still apply to JMB memberships. Join today.

New memberships: Learn more here: http://everythingsexm.com/sxm/about_sxm/paypal.shtml . Your JMB membership keeps these newsletters coming every week and gives you tons of discounts across SXM.

Reinstate a former membership: <http://everythingsexm.com/sxm/reinstate/index.shtml>

Renew your current JMB membership at the Membership Renewal Center on the members-only [Secret Website](#).

27. Best Apple Pie & Ice Cream

We've been told that the apple pie is "made by a little old lady who lives in the mountains" in SXM. We've never met her so we're not 100% convinced of the story, but the pie is outstanding, and served with is some rich, creamy, delicious ultra-premium Etna ice cream (see separate story). It's one of many desserts served at Daniel's by the Sea (see prior story). Our favorite dessert there. Try it....

28. Unpainted (Surprise) Speed Bumps

Speed bumps are located outside Philipsburg, in Mullet Bay, in Sandy Ground, and a few other areas of SXM. The difference right now is that the paint has worn off them so you may get a surprise "bump" while driving. They'll likely get fresh paint next month... but for now ... watch for them.

29. Megayachts Returning

Some maritime hurricane insurance policies don't pay if yachts are in hurricane-prone areas during hurricane season. But now they're returning to Isle de Sol Yacht Club, to the cruise ship terminal, and to Simpson Bay. Photo opportunities will be increasing as December unfolds....

30. "Restaurant Of The Week": Toppers

If you're on SXM during Thanksgiving, you do not need to lament the lack of turkey. Pineapple Pete, Jimbo's, Vesna Taverna, Canoa, and a number of other restaurants offer Thanksgiving feasts every year.

At around 1130 a.m. on Thanksgiving we were at Toppers in Simpson Bay talking with Topper and Melanie Daboul. Like us, Topper hails from the Boston area and had just returned from a visit home. We asked how it was. "Cold," he said.

Offering turkey, mashed potatoes, squash, broccoli, carrots, delicious apple raisin stuffing (it was amazing), and cranberry sauce, the restaurant was ready to go. Topper said the restaurant had over 500 reservations and with walk ins would easily serve over 600 dinners. "How many turkeys did you roast?" we asked. Topper was happy but a bit tired from all the prep work and replied, "You know, I've lost count. I don't know." We had hot fresh pecan pie and at Topper's nudging, some of his pride, freshly made pumpkin pie. Outstanding.

Toppers is famous for homestyle cooking, big portions, and reasonable prices. It has become one of our long-time favorites. Even a TV crew from New York was impressed; they were interviewing Topper for a Caribbean Thanksgiving TV segment.

Toppers was a 2014 winner of our Everything St. Maarten Award of Excellence (their second year in a row). Excellent dining there and at Toppers by the Sea, seaside at Flamingo Resort. Try both soon....

Recently featured Restaurants of the Week:

SkipJack's SXM, <http://www.skipjacks-sxm.com/> (featured 4/21/14)

Trattoria Pizza Pasta, Maho Plaza near Casino Royale (featured 3/10/14)

Daniel's By The Sea, www.dawnbeachsxm.com (featured 11/17/14)

Domino's Pizza <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Dominos-Pizza-St-Maarten/95635717338> (featured 8/11/14)

Spiga, www.spiga-sxm.com (featured 11/24/14)

Fusion, www.fusionrestaurant-sxm.com (featured 4/7/14)

The Hideaway, <http://www.lavistaresort.com/restaurant.html> (featured 4/28/14)

IZI Ristorante Italiano, www.iziristoranteitaliano.com (featured 6/23/14)

Stone Restaurant, www.thestonerestaurant.com (featured 9/2/14)

Le Pressoir, <http://www.lepressoir-sxm.com> (featured 2/24/14)

Temptation, <http://www.rareandtemptation.com/EN/temptation/>

Lal's Curry In A Hurry Indian Restaurant, Airport Road, Simpson Bay (featured 1/6/14)

Mr. Busby's Beach Bar <http://www.dawnbeachsxm.com> (featured 6/28/14)

Island Pizza, <http://www.dawnbeachsxm.com> (featured 6/28/14)

Pineapple Pete, www.pineapplepete.com (featured 2/3/14)

Papagayo, <http://www.cluborient.com/papagayo.php> (featured 5/5/14)

SPN Cafe, <http://www.pineapplepete.com/sport.html> (featured 8/18/14)

Dany & John's Cupecoy Beach Bar (on Cupecoy beach; follow the car path from the far side of Ocean Club to get there).

FIG, Cupecoy opposite Rainbow Beach Club

St. Maarten Yacht Club, at the Dutch Side Drawbridge

Jimbo's, www.jimboscafe.com

Canoa, www.canoasxm.com (featured 3/31/14)

Vesna Taverna, www.vesnataverna.com (featured 11/10/14)

Topper's <http://www.sxmtoppers.com/> (featured 12/1/14)

Taloula Mango <http://www.taloulamango.com/>

Soprano's Restaurant, Maho Plaza, <http://www.sopranospianobar.com/stmaarten/restaurant/> (featured 3/3/14)

Bylbos, Simpson Bay

Sushiito Japanese Restaurant, Port de Plaisance (featured 3/17/14)

We'll write about another SXM restaurant here next week as we continue our weekly SXM restaurant coverage.

Rent Out or Sell Your Timeshare (both SXM and Worldwide) -- Page Updated Every Other Weekday

JMB members can run up to 10 free ads on our website per 12-month period to rent out or sell St. Maarten / St. Martin timeshare weeks they own -- or any timeshares, anywhere worldwide. If you're not a member, learn more about membership here: http://everythingsexm.com/sxm/about_sxm/paypal.shtml .

Want to rent or buy a week?

2014 St. Maarten / St. Martin Timeshare Weeks For Rent or Sale are posted at http://everythingsexm.com/sxm/timeshare_rent_sale/index.shtml Listings are now updated every other weekday. Ads are free (no commission) but are accepted from JMB Website Supporters members only.

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Rent St. Maarten Villas is the website of Villalady Bobby Valins, showcasing her villas in Burgeaux Bay and in Grand Case. See her site at www.rentstmaartenvillas.com.

Villas in Paradise is your one-stop source for great St. Maarten Villa Accommodations. See many choices at www.villasinparadise.com or call Marilyn Pulito directly at 508-533-1388.

[Emerald Cove Villas](#) provides a one-of-a-kind vacation experience in Oyster Pond. See their website at www.emeraldcovevillas.com . Learn why *Emerald Cove* is the name.

Caribbean Days provides luxury villa accommodations throughout the Caribbean. See www.caribbeandays.com .

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See www.villajourneys.com

[Oyster Bay View Villa](#), overlooking Oyster Pond and Captain Oliver's Marina, delivers great accommodations near Dawn Beach, a quick ride to Orient Beach and the dozens of fine restaurants at Grand Case. See their site at www.oysterbayview.com

[Club Fantastico](#), www.clubfantastico.net, overlooking Orient Beach, gives you fine villa-like accommodations in a totally clothing optional ambiance, inside and out. It's the perfect place for a *no tan lines* vacation.

[Summit Resort Hotel](#), atop a cliff in Cupecoy, is a favorite. See why; check out www.thesummitresort.com

Shopping: (Updated 9/7/2013)

DK Gems on Front Street (*opposite and not far west of the historic Court House*) offers extraordinary eye-popping gems in a rainbow of exquisite settings. Not to be missed on your next trip. See www.dkgemsint.com .

Zhaveri Jewelers on Front Street opposite Little Switzerland (near the historic Courthouse) offers an incredible inventory of the finest gems in the Caribbean. Offering the island's largest selection of elegant jewelry for men, women, and kids. Visit www.zhaveri.com .

Fine Food, Pastries, Wines/Liquors, Yacht Provisioning:

Le Grand Marche has several Dutch Side locations to conveniently serve you -- at the roundabout near the Bush road, next to Port de Plaisance off the Union Road near the French border, or their *Gourmet Marche* store in Simpson Bay. For all the details see www.legrandmarche.net .

SECTION 4: For Members Only (Constantly Updated)

Please see www.everythingsxm.com/secret .

SECTION 5: Background Information for Travelers (For New Readers) Updated 12/17/13

Returns soon.

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