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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 #972 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:

-- ***What Should Caravanserai Timeshare Owners Do?***

-- ***Should You Buy Timesharing on SXM?***

-- ***Holiday Sale Underway with "Black Friday" Prices - \$39 for 200 Discounts Across SXM -- Lowest Prices of the Year for New Memberships, Renewals, and Reinstatements; Join To Keep These Newsletters Coming***

-- ***Traveling for the Holidays? Go Nowhere Without SkyMed Medical Evacuation Protection***

-- ***In SXM, All Beaches Are Free and Public -- Aren't They?***

-- ***Team Goldendog Wants a SXM Animal Sanctuary; How You Can Help***

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-- ***Guilders, Euros, and Dollars - Figuring Them Out***

-- ***Why You Gotta Love SXM's "Wonder Woman"***

-- ***Gonzalo-Sunk Lord Sheffield Tall Ship Raised in Simpson Bay; Salvage To Begin***

-- ***Amazing Massages: Tricia Altenau, AIA Massages, SXM***

-- ***Restaurant of the Week, New & Unique - Cugini Italiano***

... ***and much more***

25 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.

RENTAL 3/7/2015 3/14/2015 Week 10 Ocean Club Villas One bedroom unit, second floor poolside, Unit 13R; renter pays timeshare tax and energy surcharge directly to resort. 825 Yvonne 413-684-1997 ydrwr1@msn.com

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 2/8/2015 2/15/2015 Week Six Royal Palm Beach Resort Renovated two bedroom/two bath on the first floor overlooking the pool and the beach. Great apartment for children and handicapped individuals. The room has a full kitchen, dining room, and living room. The room also has Wi Fi in it. \$7,000.00 Loretta 239-405-8661 lolstar@aol.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

Meet Our Sponsors (Updated 9/7/13)

Section Four: For Members Only (Revised 12/17/13)

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- B. All the Answers for JWS members: Just Click the Link
- C. Members: Why Check Airfares Daily?
- D. Members: Password Recovery Info
- E. How To Submit Rental or Sale Ads

Section Five: Background Information for Travelers (**For New Readers**) (Revised 12/17/13)

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. Weather Update

Other than occasional seasonal showers, which have been widely scattered and light, weather lately has been fine. Hurricane season is over and no tropical storm formation is foreseen, but some storminess in the Caribbean may still happen. For the latest information, see our everything St. Maarten Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/EverythingStMaarten>

2. Use Our Guidelines for the Lowest Airfares to SXM

The Low Airfare Grid on our members-only Secret Website gives you frequently updated guidelines as to the best fares from about 100 cities coast-to-coast in the USA and in Canada. Recent fares have been a bit lower than those posted from some cities, but the trend is for fares to rise despite low jet fuel costs. Airlines are keeping a tight rein on capacity and demand remains high, which is what is causing fares to increase.

The next story tells you about the best way to book the lowest airfares.

3. Make Winter Cruise Reservations Before Prices Increase

If you plan to take a cruise this winter, we reiterate that you should book it now. Fares are increasing and capacity in the Caribbean will be reduced by the reassignment of some ships to the far east. We don't know the extent of the ship repositioning yet, but we do know that ships will be repositioned and capacity will fall, which means prices are going up.

4. 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

5. Caravanserai Battle Will Be Long; Never Assume Anything

A number of Caravanserai owners seem to have assumed already that the war has been lost. That is not the case, and in fact only one case has been heard in court and more are inevitable.

For those of you who have just joined us, the previous owner of Caravanserai went belly up. The resort was bought at auction from the Bank of Nova Scotia for \$14 million by individuals who have since renamed it Alegria. The principal owner is Ray Sidhom, who you can Google.

Widely spread rumors say that some of the current buildings will be bulldozed and replaced with an upscale hotel property with all the amenities. We've attempted to contact Mr. Sidhom but he has not responded. We know the owners don't want a timeshare operation, so one of their first actions was to send e-mails to some timeshare owners in October telling them that their timeshare contracts were null and void, and if they wanted to stay in the resort in a hotel unit they could do so by paying the new owners an amount equivalent to their most recent annual maintenance fee.

Many owners never received that e-mail. Worse, to the best of our knowledge, no other follow-up mailing was ever done, which means that many timeshare owners have no idea their units may not be available. In fact, the e-mail sent by the resort said there was a deadline of November 1 to sign a paper relinquishing timeshare owner rights and requesting a hotel unit.

Later, it became clear that the property intended to give those who agreed to this their own unit — though it never said that in writing to anyone. And it was dead serious about discontinuing timesharing, which means timeshare owner investments would be worthless, untradable, and unsellable.

We quickly set up a Caravanserai timeshare page on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Caravanseraitimeshare>

More than 250 Caravanserai timeshare owners use that page to talk about the situation and what to do next. Indeed, some have grouped together and are pursuing things legally.

Overall, timeshare owners are not happy with the island government's response to the situation. However, it's important to remember that an election was held last September and thanks to Dutch politicians getting involved in St. Maarten's business, the new government still is not in office -- so it can't act. But in the minds of timeshare owners, the island had years to enact real timeshare owner consumer protection and it failed to do so -- so timeshare owner anger is focused on the government for not protecting them. Many have lost tens of thousands of dollars and have said they will not return to SXM.

The first court action attempted to institute an injunction to stop Alegria, the new name of the resort, from expropriating timeshare weeks, but the court held that the litigants did not prove their case and said Alegria did not have to honor prior timeshare owner contracts.

If you are Caravanserai timeshare owner, you can apparently still call the resort and reserve your week for this season in your unit. We also suggest you consider getting involved in any legal action against the resort, if after reviewing things you think you should do so. Information about all that is on the above Facebook page. (Facebook is free.)

As noted above, some people have said they will never go to St. Maarten again because of this. Our opinion is that that constitutes throwing the baby out with the bathwater; it punishes honest business who had nothing to do with buying Caravanserai or making these changes. And we can tell you business owners are very unhappy with this situation and there is a lot of beyond-the-scenes activity from them

regarding this: they are trying to help.

Bottom line, the delay in installing the new government clearly has not helped, since the current caretaker regime can't really do anything dynamic about the timeshare situation. Despite the fact that prior governments never enacted timeshare owner consumer protection legislation which may have prevented this situation, it is what it is; the government is changing and the situation will be in the courts for a long time to come.

Hang in. This situation is far from over.

6. What Should Caravanserai Timeshare Owners Do?

There are several things timeshare owners stuck in this situation should do.

First, become thoroughly familiar with what has happened and with your options, many of which are explained on the Caravanserai timeshare page on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Caravanseraitimeshare>

Second, make sure you have all your paperwork accessible.

Third, if you feel you want to be involved in the litigation, contact one of the attorneys mentioned on the above Facebook page. We suggest, however, that you first make contact with some of the other Caravanserai timeshare owners using that same page — share knowledge, share experience, and consider your options.

Fourth, if you have anything you want to say to the island, do so in writing on the letters to the editor pages of the two principal newspapers, the Daily Herald and today. Here is contact information for both:

Daily Herald: editorial@thedailyherald.com

Today: todaymanagersxm25@gmail.com

If you do write to the newspapers or anyone else, please keep your writing factual and to the point. Emotional approaches or name-calling don't work in St. Maarten. Facts will help your case. The objective is to solve this problem.

7. Delay in Installation of New Government Not Helping Timeshare Owners

As noted above, St. Maarten timeshare owners' fortunes have been buffeted by the in-process change in government underway on the Dutch side.

Although a government does exist, it is a caretaker holdover from the prior administration and is unable to do much on its own. Installation of the new government should take place sometime after December 16 but, because of the holidays, it's possible the situation will not be fully resolved until a bit later.

None of this helps timeshare owners, but we honestly do expect the new government to understand the severe hit that has been taken not only by Caravanserai's 2300 timeshare owners (representing about 3000 timeshare weeks). Owners are threatened with the loss of their investments which are in aggregate tens of millions of dollars. Of course this also threatens the entire SXM timeshare industry itself which is the major pillar of the St. Maarten stayover tourism economy. This situation must be solved to avert economic disaster for the St. Maarten economy.

8. Should You Buy Timesharing on SXM?

It may be counterintuitive to think that this is a good time to buy timesharing in St. Maarten, considering recent events at Caravanserai.

Whether to buy is a personal decision for each of us — and many people have been walking away from timesharing for a lot of very good reasons. For example, Diamond Resorts, which owns Royal Palm and Flamingo, has been reviled for astronomical annual maintenance fees. Simpson Bay Resort for years was criticized for lack of maintenance, but it is in the middle of a major renovation which is being given rave reviews by the vast majority of timeshare owners who stuck with it. There have been some changes at Sapphire Resort but it has yet to be sold to a new developer, and many people believe that's the only step that can make that resort turn the corner permanently — though it has made many positive changes recently.

A big factor in favor of buying now is the fact that prices really have never been lower. A largely aging timeshare owner base wants to divest itself of thousands of timeshare weeks and it often offers them for literally pennies on the dollar — a small fraction of what was paid for the units. Given the likely renovations at many resorts, and the certainty of the renovation program at Simpson Bay Resort, it appears that the investment may well be a good one.

Many timeshare weeks are available for purchase or rental on www.everythingStMaarten.com, our St. Maarten website. Check it out.

SECTION 3: Island

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

Story 9:

Holiday Sale with Black Friday Pricing Now Underway: 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 10:

Traveling for Christmas / New Years? Take SkyMed Medical Evacuation Protection With You, Everywhere You Go ***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 from 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...

11. In SXM, All Beaches Are Free and Public -- Aren't They?

On December 1, we were riding through the Bel Air area when we noticed that the iron gate at the entrance to the dirt road to Bel Air beach (the beach, not the hotel) had been closed and locked that No Trespassing and Keep Out signs were posted there. We immediately took a picture with our cell phone and posted it on our personal (Jeff Berger) Facebook page. Within hours, the news had bounced from one end of the island to the other and that picture had been shared on Facebook dozens of times.

This wasn't the only recent episode of beaches being blocked from public access. A few weeks ago, a couple attempted to go on Dawn Beach through the Westin and were confronted by hotel guards on the beach who allegedly told them to go elsewhere.

On the French side all beaches are readily accessible to anyone and parking is generally free and easy.

Although the Dutch side says all beaches are free and public, it's often an obstacle course attempting to get onto them easily. After this episode, some people in the Dutch Side government are talking about legislation to codify the availability of beaches to everyone.

In the Bel Air situation, the road is privately owned and development is planned for the property. There are a number of details that don't particularly matter to tourists, but the bottom line is that the padlock has been removed and the signs had been taken down, which means access to Bel Air beach (the beach, not the hotel) is back to being free and easy, like it was before.

We should also note that Little Bay beach at Divi resort is one of the beaches the government regards as being freely available to everyone, yet Divi does want cruise ship people to come and hog "its" beach; it's located on Little Bay.

This situation will be in the news for some time to come. N. B.: Bel Air Resort had no involvement whatsoever in this situation. The land in question is owned by a private developer unaffiliated with the Resort.

12. A Place You Should Not Visit in SXM

During the day, Coralita Road, which stretches from the Dutch/French border at oyster pond along the coast well into French St. Martin, is a gorgeous stretch of road with lots of photo opportunities. Indeed, the scenic overlook at Embouchure is a favorite destination for tourists since it offers beautiful daytime photographic opportunities.

At night, the same stretch of road is desolate, though the gendarmerie now says it is increasing patrols there. In a recent incident, people described by gendarmes as young hooligans threw some rocks at a car occupied by tourists returning to Orient beach from Oyster Pond via that desolate coastal route.

Gendarmes are in the area more now and the likelihood of this occurring again is very small, but nonetheless we avoid that desolate coastal

road at night and we think it would be wise for all tourists to avoid it at night as well. We've never had any daytime issues there.

13. Valuables in SXM: About Your Safety

We've been back on the island for a couple of weeks and we noticed some things that alarm us. They aren't any island problems – things here seem to be outstanding — but they are tourist habits which imply that the tourists who exhibit them think they are in utopia rather than paradise, and there is a huge difference.

We've recently seen many people bring iPads and other valuables to the beach, stuff them in their towels and head off for a walk or and a dip in the Caribbean. In other cases, we've continued to see many people put handbags, computers, video cameras, digital cameras, iPads, and many other valuables in their car trunk and then walk away as if it is a safe. It isn't, and if we see people do these things so do many others, as we've said here repeatedly for years. Please don't do that anywhere.

Please also see the crime page on our website: http://everythingxsm.com/sxm/sxm_news/crime-in-st-maarten-st-martin.shtml

14. Eclipse, World's 2nd Largest Super Megayacht, is Back; Venus, Steve Jobs' Yacht, Also Here

Eclipse, once the largest super megayacht in the world, has returned to in St. Maarten from its previous port of call, Bermuda. It's owned by one of the world's richest man, Roman Abramovich, a Russian billionaire who also owns the Chelsea football club in the UK.

Venus has also arrived, the super megayacht owned by the family of the late Steve Jobs. Mr. Jobs, the Apple tycoon, had ordered the yacht built but was never able to sail it since he passed away before it was completed.

Other huge mega yachts and super megayachts are said to be headed to the island now.

15. Wine Tasting / Patti Meotti Art Show Coming to Vesna Taverna

On December 14 at 7 PM, Vesna Taverna will host a wine tasting and an art show by renowned Italian artist Patty Meotti. The cost is \$30 per person but attendance is by advance reservation only and is strictly limited to 40 people. For more information, please call Vesna at: 524-5283 or info@vesnataverna.com. Vesna is in Simpson Bay.

16. Should You Drink Bottle or Tap Water in SXM?

GEBE is the Dutch side electric and water company.

For many years we had said it was safe to drink Dutch side water and to get bottled water on the French side — or wine. Technically, as we understand it, the water on both sides of the island now is fine. But since we like good, palatable water, we usually buy bottled water and use it on the island. You don't have to buy expensive stuff -- even inexpensive water here is good. This is just our suggestion – others may disagree. But we're happy with the taste of our choice.

17. Iguanas, Monkeys, Mongoose, and Tarantulas

Wildlife on SXM includes iguanas, monkeys, mongoose, and tarantulas.

Tarantulas?

We had never heard about them being here until after the flooding rains a few weeks ago. In fact, several folks we know who were born here had no idea they were here, either.

The good news is that they eat mosquitoes and cockroaches. Other good news: they tend to hang out on the tops of mountains, and are not big at socializing with tourists. We've never seen one here and doubt we ever will..

Iguanas are as plentiful here as squirrels in New England and like the latter, are often road kill. Although iguanas can run very fast, they

have a bizarre habit of crossing roads really slowly, which down here is a bad idea.

Monkeys are plentiful on St. Maarten but they tend to travel in extended family groups. One estimate we read about a year ago was that there are more than 1200 on the island, a figure which no doubt has increased in the last year. When our daughter visited with us before Christmas of last year in St. Maarten, we took her to Loterie farm where we knew monkeys had been seen. At the entrance, we told her the odds of seeing them were almost nil — then, at the left, we spotted dozens of them feasting on wild fruit.

Mongoose don't hang around people. They look like low-slung, dirty beige, oversized house cats. They're usually gone by the time your camera is out, and in fact it took us many years before we first saw any of them. We've seen them most frequently in the Oyster Pond and Dawn beach areas and in Cupecoy.

18. Seaweed Update

As of Friday, mostly gone everywhere. Still a few scattered patches around, but for the most part this issue seems to be over.

19. Our First Visit to Cugini, Simpson Bay

We've elevated this to our Restaurant of the week. See the last story, below.

20. Guilders, Euros, and Dollars - Figuring Them Out

Although dollars are readily accepted across St. Maarten and St. Martin, the national currency of the Dutch side is still the Antillean guilder and the currency of the French side is the euro.

The disparity between the dollar and the euro has been narrowing over the last few months, and today, the euro was worth just under \$1.25. That figure varies depending on world markets. The Antillean guilder is pegged to the US dollar and one dollar is worth 1.78 guilders, although some places put it at 1.80 guilders.

For Americans, the situation is somewhat annoying particularly when you're buying gas which is priced per liter, not gallon. As the price of gas at home continues to drop toward two dollars a gallon, the price here per gallon is more than twice that. The price on the Dutch side always seems to be higher than that on the French side, where some stations charge in euros but accept dollars at par. In our experience, the best station is the Cadisco station near the soccer stadium just north of the French side drawbridge. Look around; you may find something better.

21. Why You Gotta Love SXM's "Wonder Woman"

Laurell is her name, but we prefer to call her what she really is: wonder woman.

On different days, you'll see this lady doing a variety of different duties. Early morning on some days, she's hard at work as the master pastry chef at Pier Grocer, the new and extremely popular small grocery store next to the Greathouse Marina at Oyster Pond on the Dutch side. She makes delicious stuff so if you want any, get there early.

On other days, you'll find her as the chief daytime waitperson at Mr. Busby's Beach Bar, across the street from the grocery store.

And on still other days, Wonder Woman is chief mixologist at Daniel's by the Sea restaurant, the nighttime incarnation of Busby's, though she tends to smile a lot no matter where she is.

Next time you see her, buy all means address her by who she really is, St. Maarten's Wonder Woman.

22. Please Help Fund "Camp Goldendog"

Camp Goldendog is a proposed sanctuary for animals on St. Maarten. It has been needed for years and your help is needed now to make it happen: <http://www.teamgoldendog.org/CampGoldendog.html>

23. Lord Sheffield Tall Ship Raised in Simpson Bay; Salvage To Begin

The Lord Sheffield, the tall ship tourist attraction in St. Maarten that sank during a hurricane Gonzalo, is in the process now of being salvaged from the bottom of Simpson Bay lagoon. We hadn't been aware that a salvage attempt would be made and we're delighted to hear that it is now underway.

The Sheffield is expected to be fully out of the water sometime today, Monday. We've asked for more information on salvage plans and will let you know.

24. Amazing Massages: Tricia Altenau, AIA Massages, SXM

After trying massages across the country and around the world, our honest opinion is that Tricia Altenau of SXM is the absolute best. A native of Cincinnati, she has been here for many years. Do make sure you see her on your next trip -- her work lasts and is the real thing: www.aiamassage.com.

25. Restaurant of the Week - Something New & Totally Unique, Cugini

For years, Cugini was located in Marigot at Marina Royale. We heard rave reviews for it including several from TV Chef Jim Gray, who urged us to go. But we rarely go to Marigot at night...

Now Cugini has relocated to a big new location in Simpson Bay between Fedex and the Carousel. Here are the facts:

- a) Ample off-street parking.
- b) Nice breeze off the lagoon and fans inside make it very comfortable regardless of the weather outside.
- c) Run by Sam and Tony who really, really know their stuff. (Sam and Francesca Runza are long time SXM friends.)
- d) Open nightly at 5 pm including Sundays (Sundays effective next week).
- e) Live nightly music, mostly Italian.
- f) Vintage Italian movies (w/o sound) shown nightly on a big screen visible throughout most of the 110-person dining room. They can accommodate groups.
- g) Thin-crust authentic Italian pizza made in the front. Looks fantastic. Reasonably priced. Lots of toppings (very generous).
- h) Extensive menu and wine cellar offer lots of choices.
- i) Great, great food. We had eggplant parm and chicken parm with several appetizers and wine. Everything is deliciously fresh and flavorful. Hot entrees are actually served steaming hot, kind of a novelty in SXM. Open kitchen. You will love the food.
- j) Prices are kind of astonishingly low for SXM. We were surprised. You will be delighted with the food and the pricing. Great stuff, and they will be offering discounts to our members within the next week or so. (Voucher and your JMB Membership Card are required.) Join JMB Website Supporters today for about 210 discounts across the island: you will not be disappointed. See ad, top of this section.
- k) Tell them you're visiting at the recommendation of Jeff Berger / SXM Weekly News.
- l) Call for a reservation: 721-523-7076.
- m) You will come as a guest and leave as a friend...
- n) Calm, relaxing ambiance.

Recently featured Restaurants of the Week:

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

Cugini (featured 12/8/14)

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 .

[Villa Journeys](#) offers JMB readers villa accommodations (and much more) not only throughout the Caribbean, but across the USA and in Europe.

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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