

Merry Christmas / Happy Hanukkah -- #974 --- December 24, 2014 -- News From St. Maarten / St. Martin



This Week's Stories

Airfare, Airlines & Weather News

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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](http://www.everythingstmaarten.com)

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### Important Note:

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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](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 #974 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:

- ***Copa Airlines May Be a Surprising Source of Low Fares to SXM***
- ***What You Can Do About the Caravanserai / Alegria Debacle***
- ***What SXM Must Do To Protect Itself from Cuban Competition***
- ***Americans Can Now Stay Longer in SXM and Get a Job (Unequivocally Perhaps)***
- ***Simpson Bay Resort Renovations Getting Rave Reviews from Timeshare Owners***
- ***The Rumor Mill is Alive and Well Regarding Hard Rock***
- ***Holiday Sale Extended -- Must End Jan. 5 - Lowest Prices of the Year for New Memberships, Renewals, and Reinstatements; Join To Keep These Newsletters Coming (Story Below)***
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- ***SkyMed Now On Sale -- Go Nowhere Without SkyMed Medical Evacuation Protection***
- ***Ebony Steel Orchestra In Concert Dec. 27 at the Westin***
- ***Nine-Vacation Giveaway Ends Jan. 5; Drawing Set for Jan.12***
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- ***Restaurant of the Week: Izi***

**26** new stories this week

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## 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](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](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:

RENTAL 01/01/2015 12/31/2015 Floater Divi Little Bay Resort Spacious studio-sleeps 5. Located on private peninsula between 2 bays. Beach front unit. Beautiful decor. See cruise ships arriving & departing. Beautiful interior decor , w/tiled floors. 1 mile of white sanded beach w/water sports. HUGE whirlpool tub & shower. Mini Kitchen, safe, balcony. Stunning views from unit. Amenities include 2 restaurants, deli,cafe,internet cafe, gym, beach bar. Can walk to Phillipsburg for shopping. My asking rate is almost half of the resort rate if you book

directly with Divi for weeks 21-40. \$900. The extra fee resorts charges to go weeks 11-20 is \$402 and for weeks 1-10 \$804. \$900.00 Teddy 510-601-1154 [girlsrule5@earthlink.net](mailto:girlsrule5@earthlink.net)

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](mailto:jeff@jmbcommunications.com). This unit and week 4 in the same unit are also both for sale.

### ***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 but we will accept any reasonable offer. Please contact Jeff at email [jeff@jmbcommunications.com](mailto:jeff@jmbcommunications.com) - leave phone number and we'll call back.

SALE 2/15/2014 2/22/2014 7 Ocean Club Ocean Club 1 Bedroom Unit 19R, sleeps 4. King bed in master bedroom and queen sofa bed in living room, large designer bathroom with shower and double roman soaking tub; sliding glass doors to comfortably furnished balcony that spans length of unit and overlooks pool, fully-equipped kitchen. Pool, 24-hour security, car rental, bar/restaurant, satellite TV, A/C, maid service, Internet access. Peaceful, quiet location. \$2,800 Ray 302-376 3824 [rhughes565@msn.com](mailto:rhughes565@msn.com)

### ***Non-St. Maarten Timeshare Rentals:***

See them all at [http://everythingxsm.com/sxm/timeshare\\_rent\\_sale/index.shtml](http://everythingxsm.com/sxm/timeshare_rent_sale/index.shtml)

### ***This Week's Stories***

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"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](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](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](http://www.linkedin.com)

Get a growing list of 210+ Money-Saving SXM-focused travel discount benefits through JMB Website Supporters:

[http://www.everythingsxm.com/sxm/about\\_sxm/paypal.shtml](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://everythingxm.com/sxm/about\\_sxm/paypal.shtml](http://everythingxm.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](mailto:support@jmbcommunications.com)**

NON-members who wish to contact us should write to **[jmbweb@jmbcommunications.com](mailto: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](http://www.everythingsxm.com) .

\*\*\*\*\*  
**All JMB Newsletters Read \*From JMB\***  
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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. December Weather; Hot, Humid, Windy

December weather in St. Maarten is best known for being windy. Although it took a while for this December to do that, it has been windy lately — and hot and humid. There has been little rain this month, and the trend toward drier weather will accelerate as we move more deeply into winter.

P. S. about Chikungunya: Not even in the news but as always, use bug repellent.

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#### 2. Copa Airlines May Be a Surprising Source of Low Fares to SXM Via Panama

COPA airlines, the Panamanian carrier, is now operating from an increasing number of US locations. Since it also flies to many nations in the Caribbean and South America from Panama, COPA is leveraging its route structure by offering residents of American cities a number of good connections to St. Maarten. We've received a few messages from JMB members about COPA. The most striking connection to St. Maarten comes from Chicago, where the cost of a round-trip flight has at times wound a bit over \$400, much less than any competition. Panama is only about an hour and a half or so from SXM.

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#### 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](http://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. Except For The Sign Change, No News at Caravanserai / Alegria (Except Possible Demolition)

Many Caravanserai timeshare owners had hoped that once the new government was installed on the Dutch side, it would dive into the island's timesharing mess and try to work some magic.

The new Prime Minister is Marcel Gumbs, a longtime Dutch side politician who strikes us as a very knowledgeable, sincere, by the book kind of guy. Although there has been no obvious action undertaken so far by the new regime, our hunch is that there is activity in the background. We have already asked some of the members of the new government for an interview so we can explore this further for you.

The only other thing we've heard from a number of sources is the rumor — the pervasive rumor — that the very deep renovations planned by the new ownership of Caravanserai will include demolition of some of the current buildings. That has come from multiple people close to the new management. Whether it's real remains to be seen, but we do know that owner Ray Sidhom has deep pockets.

Again, we'll keep you posted.

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### 5. Nothing from New Government Yet on Alegria / Caravanserai; What You Can Do

As noted in the previous story, no formal news about prospective government intervention in the Caravanserai debacle has emerged from the Government Information Service.

But that doesn't mean that timeshare owners can't step in and express their opinions — and those among you who wish to potentially influence the new Dutch-side government should make your opinions known.

The culture here differs markedly from the United States & Canada. Wave your finger at the government, blaming them for this situation, and act emotionally rather than factually tends not to work in SXM. In fact it can hurt your case. Factual information that focuses on the island itself and on what is good for it will prove much more valuable in making your case than anything else.

You can write a letter to the editor to both the *Daily Herald* newspaper, which is the dominant paper here, and to the *Today* newspaper, both of them on the Dutch side. Their e-mail addresses: [editorial@thedailyherald.com](mailto:editorial@thedailyherald.com) and [todaymanagersxm25@gmail.com](mailto:todaymanagersxm25@gmail.com).

If you are timeshare owner who was directly and personally affected by what happened at Caravanserai, using yourself as an example is probably a good idea. If you lost money at Caravanserai you should put that in family related terms to which the people in St. Maarten government can relate. We suggested in the past that those people who say they will not return to St. Maarten are hurting innocent people in the process — restaurateurs, shopkeepers, hoteliers, etc. Although the government here does not move quickly, it does need to know what people are going to do in response to what Caravanserai and Alegria did to them.

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### 6. Simpson Bay Resort Continues Renovations; Getting Rave Reviews from Timeshare Owners

Simpson Bay resort initiated an ambitious renovation program a few years ago, and will be expanding that program to the sprawling Marina

building this year.

So far, the resort is getting rave reviews for these extensive renovations. People who have held onto units seem to be delighted with what has happened through the renovations, though no one was particularly elated about the bill.

If you have an opportunity to buy a timeshare at Simpson Bay that has not yet been renovated, it might very well be a profitable investment to do so. The units are being gutted and completely replaced – the difference is huge.

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## 7. Sonesta Great Bay Hotel Reopens

The all-inclusive, adults only Sonesta Great Bay Beach Resort Casino and Spa has reopened its doors on 18th December, after repairs of hurricane damage to the property and additional improvements for the current tourist high season. What follows was sent to us by Sonesta.

The top-rated resort had sustained some damage from Hurricane Gonzalo in October. Repair crews quickly went to work to remedy the wind and rain damage to the beachfront resort.

Not only were repairs to the resort made, a beautiful Wedding Cabana with spectacular views of Great Bay Harbour and the sandy beach was added. The cabana is ready for the perfect Caribbean Destination Wedding for residents and visiting couples.

Sonesta Great Bay Beach Resort Casino and Spa is a 10-minute walk to the heart of Sint Maarten's capital Philipsburg, and overlooks Great Bay Harbour. Guests have the best of both worlds with a prime beachfront location and easy access to a quaint town with shopping, restaurants, entertainment, and nightlife.

The resort is a tropical retreat with elegant Caribbean styling, vibrant prints, a tropical colour palette, custom designed modern teakwood furniture, Italian marble bathrooms, convenient amenities, and gorgeous views.

Tennis, volleyball, and a variety of games along with swimming and lounging at one of the three dazzling swimming pools, including a stunning infinity pool are available at the resort.

The four restaurants in the resort offer culinary delights from around the world.

Guests can try their luck at the casino or make a tropical escape at the resort spa.

More: <http://www.sonesta.com/greatbay>

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## 8. SXM's Rumor Mill Conjures Up a Different Scenario Re: Hard Rock International Hotel / Casino

The rumor mill here in St. Maarten works overtime like nothing elsewhere. Because there are so many rumors, and because they are pervasive, we normally never cover them.

On the other hand, many of you who come here this winter will no doubt hear the latest rumor about Caravanserai, which is that it will be taken over by Hard Rock International developer the Seminole tribe.

Anything can happen in St. Maarten, but we really don't think this is likely, for several reasons.

First, we have no reason to doubt previously acknowledged stories regarding the takeover of Simpson Bay Resort by the Seminole tribe, including construction of a large centerpiece mixed-use high-rise including a Hard Rock Casino and a year-round resort/convention center.

Second, when the Seminole tribe takes over a property, it knows exactly what it's dealing with and has precise future plans which are usually quite expansive. The Caravanserai property, recently renamed Alegria, offers little opportunity for high-rise expansion because of the adjacent airport. Likewise, underground parking is impossible because the property is next to the ocean and gets pummeled in hurricanes. Even if some buildings are demolished, which wags are saying is likely, there still isn't much room there for a typical big Hard Rock Casino and a sizable Hard Rock International hotel. It doesn't make sense to us.

Third, none of this means it won't happen – it just means we don't think it will happen. Is it possible that Alegria owner Ray Sidhom is planning an upscale conversion of the property for investment and ultimate resale purposes? That option would not surprise us, and it would explain why the property is being groomed as a hotel instead of an upscale timeshare development.

Regardless of what happens, we'll bring you all the news here, as always.

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

Story 9:

# Holiday Sale Extended But It Must End Jan. 5: Only \$39 For The Biggest, Best SXM Discount Package -- 210+ Discounts Across SXM -- Gift Memberships Available

Get The Best SXM Discount Package: Get about 210 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](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](#).

To get a Gift Membership -- simply buy via PayPal and use the "Comments" area to tell us who you're buying for (name, address, email). Bonus: buy a Gift Membership and we'll extend your own membership for a full year on us.

Story 10:

# SkyMed Now On Sale: Travel Nowhere Without SkyMed Medical Evacuation Protection

SkyMed takes you home in a hurry on an ICU-equivalent medical evacuation jet when you or your spouse / partner become critically ill or injured while traveling. 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 join -- and they are far less per day on an annual basis.

**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 January 31 (just expanded / 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](mailto: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.

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 have 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 JMB member, join; it's now on sale at Holiday / 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\\_xsm/paypal.shtml](http://everythingxsm.com/sxm/about_xsm/paypal.shtml) . The cost of the best SkyMed plans is deeply discounted for JMB members. SkyMed will ask for your JMB membership number.

For one-year or other duration SkyMed memberships, buy online at [www.skymed.com/jmbspecial](http://www.skymed.com/jmbspecial) (JMB members only) or [www.skymed.com/jmbsxm](http://www.skymed.com/jmbsxm) (everyone else). Do it today... 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](mailto: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 January 31, 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 SkyMed now...anything can happen anywhere you go.

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## 11. SkyMed Offers End-of-Year Bargain Renewals to Current Members; Act Quickly

Thousands of readers of *St. Maarten Weekly News*, as well as many of our JMB website supporters members, have opted to join SkyMed, which gives them enormous peace of mind when they travel. SkyMed takes you home when you become critically ill or injured while traveling — in our view, nothing else matters.

SkyMed members who joined through us have received a letter in the last week or so offering them membership extensions at a very special year end low price. If you have not responded to SkyMed's mailing, you should do so now: this bargain membership extension will likely not be repeated and it offers you exceptional pricing on SkyMed's superb annual or multiyear memberships.

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## 12. Thaw in US Cuba Relations Could Have Profound Impact Throughout the Caribbean

in the 1950s, when Americans were seeking a warm weather refuge during the winter, that refuge was Cuba. The island nation is some 750 miles long and up to 75 miles wide, and it reportedly has beaches that stretch unbroken for miles and miles.

Although Cuba lacks the infrastructure many of us are accustomed to in the Caribbean, it has more infrastructure that most Americans would expect since it has been open to Canadian and Western European tourists for a number of years.

If the expected thaw in Cuban-American relations occurs, it will have a profound effect throughout the Caribbean. If, as expected, the Cuban nation is developed as a tropical tourist mecca, airlines will flock there, cruise ships will dock there, and tourists will want to look at this latest developing vacation spot near home.

Nations with liabilities -- such as mediocre infrastructure, crime, etc. — will have to fix those liabilities in a hurry to compete. Nations which are willing to compete can certainly be successful, from a marketing and financial perspective. But nations which do not choose to compete will simply become has-been competitors for the tourist dollar.

The United States Congress may oppose Pres. Obama's plan to normalize relations with Cuba, but that opposition will likely be smothered by major public sentiment in favor of opening Cuba up to American tourism and investment. This is going to happen, and the nations in the path of the steamroller had better get ready.

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## 13. To Maintain Its Economy, SXM Must Leverage Its Uniqueness -- and Attack Its Problems Head-On in a New "Manhattan Project"

Suddenly, thanks to US Pres. Obama's announced intent to normalize relations with Cuba, country St. Maarten and St. Martin French West Indies find themselves — to quote George Clooney -- in a tight spot.

The island has two choices. It can either wring its hands and worry about what's going to happen, or it can prepare itself to compete.

It may seem counterintuitive to think that a small country like SXM can possibly compete with the biggest landmass in the Caribbean while looking for tourist dollars. Indeed, St. Maarten does have its share of problems -- on both sides of the island. Gendarmes on the French side, for example, don't seem particularly adept at preventing crime. Though improving, the island's road infrastructure is neither modern nor efficient, except for roads at the airport on the Dutch side and the lagoon Causeway.

Worse, the Dutch Side has done nothing so far to protect the interests of tens of thousands of timeshare owners who are the pillar of the island's current stayover tourism business. As a result of the Caravanserai debacle, many timeshare owners from that resort have already said publicly that they will not be returning to the island after the 2014 – 2015 season, if indeed they come this winter. Last year's Chikungunya near-epidemic and this year's stubborn seaweed are nothing compared to the impact the island would feel were its timeshare owners to give up on St. Maarten and try something new — like Cuba -- which could very well see a Renaissance in timeshares if the government there allows it.

Of all the nations of the Caribbean, St. Maarten clearly has the most to offer. It has a modern new airport; it has a modern new cruise port; it has beautiful beaches, though access to a number of them on the Dutch side is both spastic and difficult; it has extraordinary restaurants in many price ranges; it has genuine, warm hearted people; it has great jewelry bargains; and much more.

To market itself in a battle against Cuba, St. Maarten must make itself visible in American media — and it has not been visible really at all for many years. It is out advertised, out publicized, and outwitted by many other nations with far more ambitious marketing programs. There is no doubt that it can be marketed effectively even against Cuba if its uniqueness is leveraged in a comprehensive, wide-ranging, imaginative marketing program. The recent program which used double "aa's" in a play on words was too small, too obscure, and to infrequently communicated -- and consequently, it did nothing lasting for the island.

To compete, the island must invest, and we have never seen it invest anything significant in any marketing program in the last 30 years. We know it hasn't had the money, but somehow - now - it must get that money if it is to compete effectively.

It has no choice. Either it invests and succeeds or it doesn't invest, in which case it could virtually disappear if Cuba happens.

To develop an atomic bomb to end World War II, the United States launched the Manhattan project. Since Manhattan really is the epicenter of the target market that is most important to St. Maarten, perhaps St. Maarten should launch its own Manhattan project while the entire island, at the same time, unites in a way that enables it to combat and overcome its problems in a cohesive fashion.

Before, it was simply a matter of competition. But now, it could well be a matter of survival.

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## 14. SkyMed Already Has Added Cuba To Nations It Serves

One good piece of news is that SkyMed, mentioned above, has been providing medical evacuation services to its members from Canada who were traveling to Cuba. It has also been providing similar services for the last year or two to Americans traveling to Cuba with State Department approval. Soon, State Department approval won't be necessary. See [www.skymed.com/jmbspecial](http://www.skymed.com/jmbspecial) for more on SkyMed. Nonmembers of JMB, see [www.skymed.com/jmb](http://www.skymed.com/jmb).

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## 15. Americans Can Now Stay Longer in SXM and Get a Job (Unequivocally Perhaps, Because of Court Case)

A court case in St. Maarten appears to have paved the way for Americans who are self-employed to be able to move to St. Maarten and start a business there without filing for a work permit, which is an arduous, expensive process. But wait a minute – this was one court case applying to one individual, and it may not hold for others.

An article in the *Daily Herald* quoted the victorious lawyer as saying: "For the first time, the Joint Court gave its opinion about the requirements for admission of US nationals in St. Maarten," said Grant's attorney Vivian Choennie. "The Court confirmed that American citizens are entitled to the same rights as European Dutchmen. This, in fact means that just like European Dutch nationals, American citizens also do not require work permits when seeking employment here. They are, therefore, entitled to stay in St. Maarten, for as long as they have sufficient means to sustain themselves and have no criminal record," the lawyer said.

If you are self-employed and thinking about moving to St. Maarten this winter and working there, print this article and see a lawyer on the island before you do anything. Vacation-wise, it now looks like you can stay here longer -- as long as the money holds out.

Unequivocally perhaps.

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## 16. New Dutch-Side Cabinet Sworn In; Faces Many Challenges

As you may already know, Marcel Gumbs is the Dutch side's new Prime Minister. The new government was sworn in several days ago and is now getting in gear.

Among the many issues it will face — besides, potentially, Cuba as noted above — are development, infrastructure, crime, budgetary issues, marketing, and perhaps most important to American and Canadian tourists — the Caravanserai debacle, under which timeshare owners, some 2300 of them, were suddenly told their timeshare investments were null and void after their property was sold at auction and taken over by the highest bidder. Worse, a court has reaffirmed that the new owner had the right to do that. This means that not only are the millions of dollars invested by timeshare owners of Caravanserai now totally worthless, but the debacle also brings into question whether investments in all other St. Maarten timeshares are potentially worth nothing should a similar change of ownership occur there. The government must address that gaping legislative hole quickly and forcefully to slow the flow of timeshare owners away from SXM.

St. Maarten is in serious need of immediate timeshare owner consumer protection legislation if its one-pillar economy -- based on stayover tourists who are also timeshare owners -- is going to continue to be the real engine of the whole island economy.

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## 17. Ebony Steel Orchestra In Concert Dec. 27 at the Westin

A number of months ago, we ran a series of articles showing you videos of steel bands of the week.

Most Caribbean tourists enjoy steel band music. But, have you ever heard a steel orchestra? Steel orchestras are significantly larger than steel bands and their music is simply quite awesome.

If you're among the thousands of people who are here after Christmas, buy tickets to the December 27 concert at the Westin hotel featuring the Ebony steel orchestra along with a number of other performers. We're quite sure you will not be disappointed.

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## 18. Dutch Side Finally Acquires Emilio Wilson Estate

Located in the heart of the Dutch side, the Emilio Wilson estate is one of few large tracts of natural, undeveloped land on the island outside of Colombier on the French side, Pic Paradis, and Loterie Farm. It's a beautiful area which the Dutch side has been seeking to obtain for quite some time. Most of it will be preserved in its natural state, prior administrations have said, although at one point there was some talk of a nature park being built on part of the property.

As always, we'll keep you posted.

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## 19. Ras Bushman Opens Second Restaurant, in Antigua

Joseph "Ras" Bushman is a Rastafarian farmer and owner of the rasta Ital Shack restaurant near Philipsburg. He's expanding -- and soon a new Ital Shack will open in Antigua.

Get some local flavor and some great eating at either Ital Shack. The SXM version has been featured on US cable TV. Much more: <https://www.facebook.com/TheItalShack>

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## 20. Oyster Bay Beach Resort Receives Environmental Accolades

Oyster Bay Beach Resort GM Ricardo Perez has received another award -- the Blue Flag environmental award for marinas and beaches. The [Blue Flag](#) is an internationally recognized eco-label awarded to sites which meet rigorous environmental and safety criteria. Awarded sites in SXM include Oyster Bay Beach Resort, yacht club Isle de Sol, and Divi Little Bay Resort. Ceremonies included guest speakers from the Ministry of Tourism and Economic Affairs and the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association.

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## 21. Nine-Vacation Giveaway Ends Jan. 5; Drawing Set for Jan.12

Last Monday morning, before going on the air on island 92, we noticed that the hit count on our everythingStMaarten.com site was 3,999,850, close to that four million we expected to reach this year. "Dr. Soc" of island 92 mentioned it on the air and a JMB member from the US, listening online from his office, was #4,000,000. As a result, he will win entry to our "final fifty" - fifty entrant names picked at random from more than 50,000 entries received in our "Thanks Four Million" nine vacation giveaway held to celebrate us reaching 4 million visits to our website.

It will be from the "final fifty," who will *not* be notified in advance, that we will draw our nine vacation winners. You can still enter and be part, possibly, of the final 50. Just go to our homepage to see the prize list and to enter. Entries end January 5. The drawing will be live on the air on [island.92.com](http://island.92.com) at 10 AM island time on Monday, January 12. The first name we draw wins the grand prize, a one-week vacation on St. Maarten, round-trip airfare from any JetBlue city to St. Maarten for two, and many other prizes that you will find listed on our homepage. You must answer the phone to win – we won't leave messages or call back. After the Grand Prize winner has been drawn, we'll call the other eight vacation winners live on the air....

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## 22. Every Sunday Night There's a Sushi Feast at Vesna Taverna (Which Is Not a Japanese Restaurant)

Vesna Taverna, clearly one of the most eclectic restaurants on St. Maarten, serves American, French, and Greek food at dinner Wednesday through Sunday every week, plus breakfast and lunch every day.

On Sunday nights now, they offer their usual menu, but also a sushi feast by a talented sushi chef trained by Nobu, who is well-known on the island. A separate sushi menu is shown to each table when you are ordering; it consists of a variety of Nigiri sushi as well as a number of fresh, delicious sushi rolls.

Information about the Vesna Taverna sushi feast is not yet on the Vesna website, but you should go there, call them, and make reservations. Their regular menu is also available on Sunday night, along with a variety of specials. See [www.vesnataverna.com](http://www.vesnataverna.com).

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## 23. Seaweed Update

Sargasso seaweed — a small amount of it — usually appears in the Caribbean during the summer and, in the past, has always disappeared by mid-October.

This year, hurricane Gonzalo struck in October, churning the ocean. Some of the seaweed is still annoying the island. Hopefully it will be gone by the time you get here.

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## 24. "Snook" at Daniel's By The Sea is Amazing, But Not Always Available

Daniel Jurczenko, chief honcho of the great Daniel's by the Sea Restaurant, operates Mr. Busby's Beach Bar at the same location during the day. Each morning, his dad, Antoine, who many years ago operated an exquisite restaurant by that name, fishes. Occasionally, he catches snook, a fantastic eating fish. When Antoine catches snook, it winds up on the Daniel's menu as a special. If you see it on the menu and you like fish, grab it --it's amazing.

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## 25. Make Your New Year's Eve Reservations Now

If you're going to be on the island for New Year's eve, make your reservations early. New Year's eve is very busy on the island and you do not want to be disappointed.

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## 26. Restaurant of the Week: iZi Ristorante Italiano

David Foini, founder of iZi, is a perfectionist who pulls out every conceivable stop to be sure everything in his popular Simpson Bay restaurant is exactly as he wants it. He and his General Manager Marco Ferrante are both accomplished chefs, so if one of the chefs in the kitchen suddenly isn't available then talented backup can take over without missing a beat. There are two other outstanding chefs and a number of assistants in the kitchen as well, plus a staff that hustles.

iZi this year is a cut above what it was last year -- and we raved about it then. The food is consistent and terrific and always flavorful, creative, and innovative, especially now when David is constantly bringing new ideas and new flavors to your palate. Whether it's a special occasion (tell your server) or not, go; it's terrific and you will not be disappointed.

iZi, like many other SXM restaurants and over 210 other SXM businesses, gives something special to our JMB members. If you belong to JMB Website Supporters, check the Secret Site for details and bring your JMB Membership Card and vouchers to the island on your next trip. If you're still not a member, join already - it's on sale for just \$39 for one year or \$18/year when you get our best multiyear deal. See the beginning of this section for details. Your membership also helps keep these newsletters coming.

IZI Ristorante Italiano, [www.iziristoranteitaliano.com](http://www.iziristoranteitaliano.com) (featured 12/24/14)

Canoa, [www.canoasxm.com](http://www.canoasxm.com) (featured 12/15/14)

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](http://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](http://www.spiga-sxm.com) (featured 11/24/14)

Fusion, [www.fusionrestaurant-sxm.com](http://www.fusionrestaurant-sxm.com) (featured 4/7/14)

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

Stone Restaurant, [www.thestonerestaurant.com](http://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](http://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](http://www.jimboscafe.com)

Vesna Taverna, [www.vesnataverna.com](http://www.vesnataverna.com) (featured 11/10/14)

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

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

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.

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### 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://everythingxsm.com/sxm/about\\_sxm/paypal.shtml](http://everythingxsm.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://everythingxsm.com/sxm/timeshare\\_rent\\_sale/index.shtml](http://everythingxsm.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.

## Meet Our Sponsors (updated 9/27/13)

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SkyMed Takes You Home® if you become critically ill or injured while traveling more than 100 miles from home in the USA, Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, the Bahamas, the Caribbean, plus Belize and Costa Rica. Learn more at [www.skymed.com/jmbxsm](http://www.skymed.com/jmbxsm) . Highest recommendation by JMB.

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### Travel Arrangements & Accommodations:

For The Best Prices On Individual and Group Tours to St. Maarten & St. Martin, as well as stays at B&Bs, condos, hotels, and villas, visit our sponsor: [Sandy Molloy at SXM Travel Specialists](http://www.stmartin-stmaartentravelspecialists.com) --- <http://www.stmartin-stmaartentravelspecialists.com> 704-567-6661

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

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

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

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Caribbean Days provides luxury villa accommodations throughout the Caribbean. See [www.caribbeandays.com](http://www.caribbeandays.com) .

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[Villa Journeys](http://www.villajourneys.com) offers JMB readers villa accommodations (and much more) not only throughout the Caribbean, but across the USA and in Europe. See [www.villajourneys.com](http://www.villajourneys.com)

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[Oyster Bay View Villa](http://www.oysterbayview.com), 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](http://www.oysterbayview.com)

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[Club Fantastico](http://www.clubfantastico.net), [www.clubfantastico.net](http://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.

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

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## 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](http://www.dkgemsint.com) .

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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](http://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](http://www.legrandmarche.net) .

## SECTION 4: For Members Only (Constantly Updated)

Please see [www.everythingsxm.com/secret](http://www.everythingsxm.com/secret) .

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

Returns soon.

## CONTACT US

JMB Website Supporters members wishing to contact us should visit the secret site, [www.everythingsxm.com/secret](http://www.everythingsxm.com/secret) , for detailed JMB Website Supporters information. JMB members can email us at support[at]jmbcommunications.com. If you have misplaced your password, you can get a new one by clicking the orange "forgot password" link below the masthead at [www.everythingsxm.com](http://www.everythingsxm.com) assuming your membership is in good standing.

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