



VIE L'VEN

ST. MAARTEN

THE ISLAND OF ST. MAARTEN



A L T R E E

Altree Developments is proud to introduce you to Vie L'Ven. Vie L'Ven will be the premier five-star resort destination in the Caribbean. Perched on one of the most beautiful beaches in the world, and featuring bespoke service, the incomparable artistry of star chef Alain Ducasse in its fabulous restaurants, Biologique Recherche therapies in its magnificent spa, and world class architecture and design, Vie L'Ven will have it all.

However, what makes Vie L'Ven truly unique is its location on the glorious Island of Sint Maarten.

For those of us, like my own family, who have come to love Sint Maarten and made it our home away from home for decades, the island, unique among all the Caribbean islands, has a certain magic and mystique all its own.

There are many five star resorts in the world. Vie L'Ven is unique in that its very essence has been inspired by the things that make Sint Maarten so special.

Sint Maarten is on the Dutch side of an island that is shared by Holland and France and has all the continental charm that earns its moniker as Europe on an island. But Sint Maarten is much more than that. It is a center of Caribbean culture that attracts people from all over the world who have made Sint Maarten the very embodiment of multicultural harmony.

Sint Maarten is blessed with an overwhelming abundance of natural beauty, ranging from its numerous celebrated beaches, rugged hills, tropical forests and of course, its charming towns.

Ultimately, what makes Sint Maarten so special is its people and its culture. Sint Maarten well deserves its nickname, the “Friendly Island”.

We, at Altree, are proud to bring you Vie L'Ven. We have commissioned this book showcasing, in words and pictures, what makes Sint Maarten so unique and loved by those who call it their home.

We invite you to make it yours too.

Zev Mandelbaum

PRESIDENT, ALTREE DEVELOPMENTS

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*TABLE OF
CONTENTS*

THE RESORT	5
THE ISLAND	21
THE ANGUILLA BANK	33
INDIGO BAY	45
THE HUB	63
THE CULTURE	73
THE FOOD	85
HEALTH & WELLNESS	99
THE ARTS	109
SHOPPING	119
NATURE	127
LEISURE	139
THE LOCAL FESTIVALS	155
CONTRIBUTORS	162



THE RESORT



FRENCH
vie
NOUN
life

DUTCH
leven
VERB
to live

STUNNING ARCHITECTURE | SUBLIME DESIGN
EPICUREAN KITCHEN | CURATED SERVICE
AN OASIS FOR THE HEART AND MIND

INFLUENCED BY THE DUTCH
INSPIRED BY THE FRENCH
WITH THE SOUL OF THE CARIBBEAN

ON AN INDIGO BEACH
EUROPE ON AN ISLAND
IN THE MAGICAL PLACE OF ST. MAARTEN

SUPERBE ARCHITECTURE | UN DESIGN SUBLIME
CUISINE ÉPICURIENNE | SERVICE ORGANISÉ
UNE OASIS POUR LE CŒUR ET L'ESPRIT

INFLUENCÉE PAR LES HOLLANDAIS
INSPIRÉ PAR LES FRANÇAIS
AVEC L'ÂME DES CARAÏBES

SUR UNE PLAGE INDIGO
L'EUROPE SUR UNE ÎLE
DANS LE LIEU MAGIQUE DE SAINT MARTIN

PRACHTIGE ARCHITECTUUR | SUBLIEM DESIGN
LEVENSGENIETER KEUKEN | SAMENGESTELDE SERVICE
EEN OASE VOOR HART EN GEEST

BEÏNVLOED DOOR DE NEDERLANDERS
GEÏNSPIREERD DOOR DE FRANSSEN
MET DE ZIEL VAN HET CARIBISCH GEBIED

OP EEN INDIGO STRAND
EUROPA OP EEN EILAND
OP DE MAGISCHE PLEK VAN SINT MAARTEN















THE ISLAND



THE FRIENDLY ISLAND

BY ALITA SINGH



Like many islands in the Caribbean, the two-nation island of Sint Maarten-Saint Martin was christened with its modern-day moniker by Christopher Columbus in 1493, when the famous explorer first spotted the land on St. Martin's Day. Before that, the island was known in the native tongue of the Arawaks and Caribs, the island's first inhabitants, who referred to their home as *Oualichi*, "land of strong women," and *Soualiga*, "land of salt."

Both names were apropos, particularly Land of Salt, since the island's many salt ponds produced the sea salt used for food preservation, until refrigeration became more accessible around the world. This industry thrived until the 1940s, when demand lagged and opportunities further afield began to draw islanders away from home. After a period of dormancy, the island's economy reawakened with tourism, and with it, a new moniker – The Friendly Island.

“Philipsburg is the capital of Sint Maarten and sits sprawled across a sandbank.”

That friendliness appeared long before the 20th century. The Treaty of Concordia (also known as the Partition Treaty of 1648), was signed on a spring day in the 17th century, between the Kingdom of France and the Dutch Republic, dividing the island, but not its people. In fact, the treaty was set up to promote a cooperative co-existence, guaranteeing the free movement of people and goods.

Today, the two sides are still part of their respective European countries, with Saint Martin an overseas collectivity of the French Republic (able to vote in the French presidential and senate elections), and Sint Maarten an autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands (able to create its own local laws, with kingdom laws applicable for foreign relations and defense).





For Sint Maarten, there is also the intriguing aspect of the alliance between the Dutch Kingdom and the United States, enshrined in the Dutch-American Friendship Treaty. Signed into law in 1956, the treaty was designed to encourage commercial, cultural, and economic cooperation between the US and the Netherlands, and allows US entrepreneurs to acquire Dutch residency, and its associated rights and privileges, with some restrictions.

Economically, the island thrives on tourism, from stayover and cruise visitors, to yachting and travel for inter-island trade. The official currency on the Dutch side is the Netherlands Antillean Guilder (to be replaced by the Dutch Caribbean Guilder in late 2024), the official tender on the French side is the Euro, and the US dollar is generally accepted island-wide.

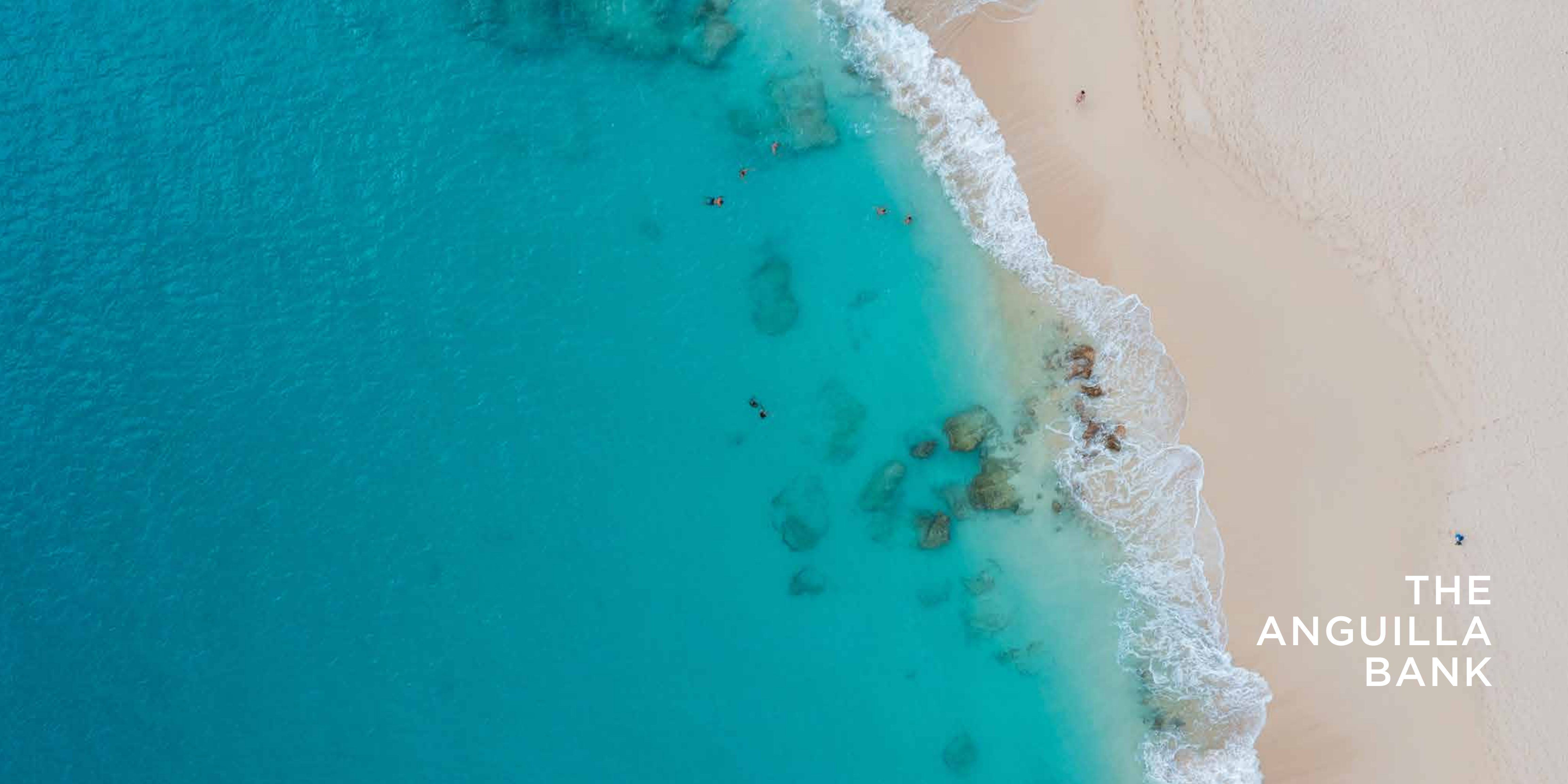
Philipsburg is the capital of Sint Maarten and sits sprawled across a sandbank, embraced by Great Bay, home to both Great Salt Pond and the cruise port, the economic generators of the past and present, respectively. Saint Martin's capital, Marigot, faces Anguilla and is a hub for inter-island travel, with daily ferries and boats transporting travelers and bountiful island produce. The two smaller towns of the island – Simpson Bay and Grand Case – are bygone fishing villages that have grown into destinations in their own right.



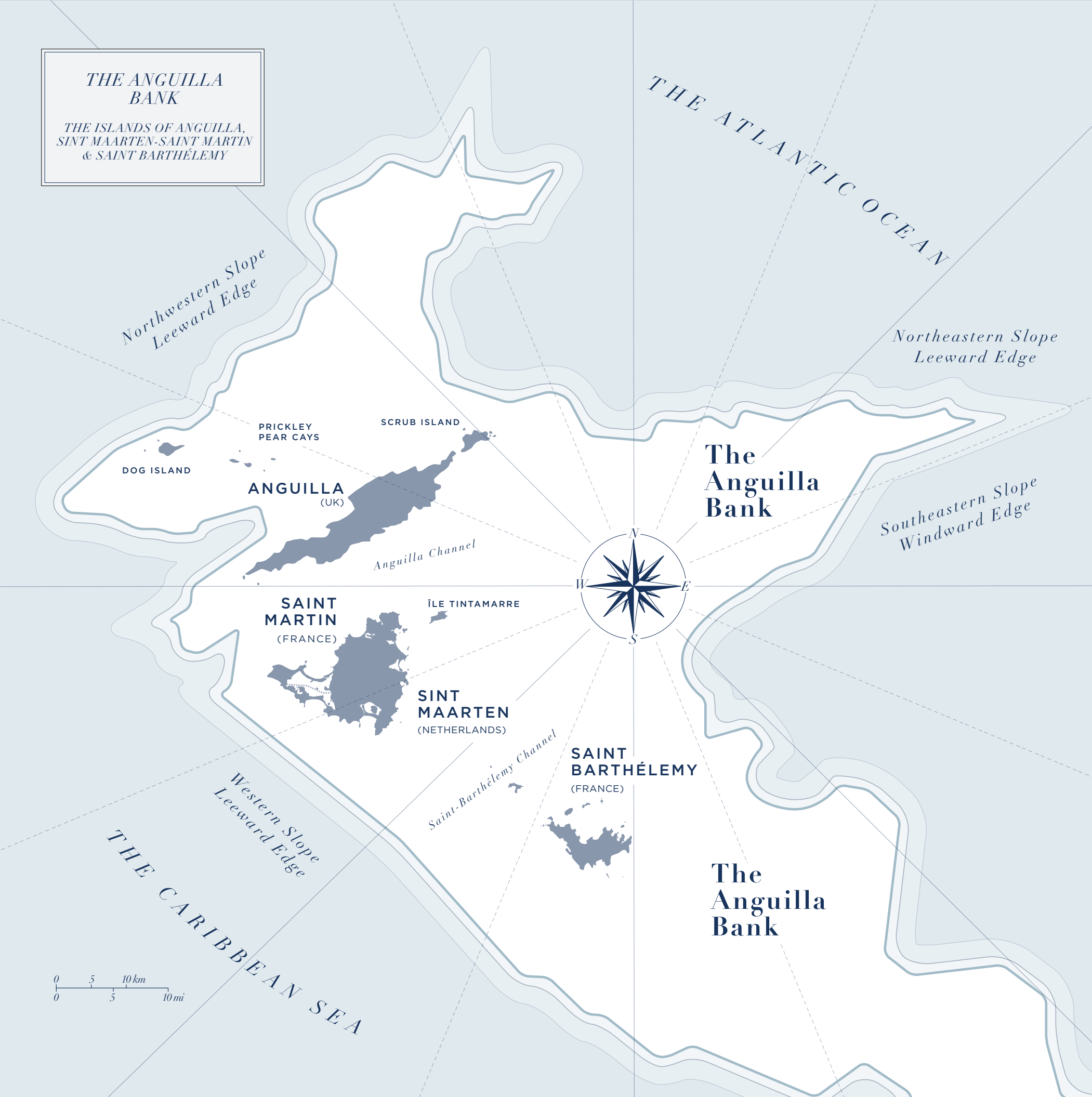


Nature has shaped the island, with an eye for beauty. Rolling hills give way to valleys and shorelines, perfectly suited to relaxed and elegant living. Every one of the 37-square miles offer up a sandy beach, cove, or craggy coastline for exploration and relaxation.

From people, to history, to culture, Sint Maarten-Saint Martin combines a European experience with an island atmosphere – fantastically French, delightfully Dutch, with a whole lot of Caribbean. This unique combination can be seen in every aspect of daily life, from food to fashion, and more.

An aerial photograph of a tropical beach. The water is a vibrant turquoise color, with several people swimming in the shallow area near the shore. The beach is a wide expanse of white sand, with some people walking along the edge. The overall scene is serene and idyllic.

THE
ANGUILLA
BANK



AN ISLAND OF NATURAL WONDERS

BY JONATHAN VAN ARNEMAN



History has transformed the Caribbean. Rising temperatures melted glaciers, swelling global sea levels. This inundation altered coastlines, creating the archipelagic beauty we know today. The thaw shaped the region’s geography, fostering diverse ecosystems and setting the stage for vibrant island life.

In the Eastern Caribbean, the rising sea levels likely led to the formation of Sint Maarten-Saint Martin, Anguilla, and St. Barths as three distinct and separate entities. While the three islands may be geographically adjacent, increased water levels would have created separate land masses out of what, at one time, might have been one connected land. The unified land, prior to the separation, is known as The Anguilla Bank, and would have been around 2000 square miles, roughly the size of modern-day Trinidad.

“Supporting the theory of The Anguilla Bank are the varying water depths surrounding the islands.”

Supporting the theory of The Anguilla Bank are the varying water depths surrounding the islands. While the waters between Sint Maarten-Saint Martin and Saba can reach depths of up to 900 meters, the waters between Sint Maarten-Saint Martin, Anguilla, and St. Barths run around 60 meters deep, and can vary significantly, ranging from shallow coastal areas to deeper regions, further offshore. These transitions support a diverse marine ecosystem, including coral reefs, underwater formations, and a wide variety of marine life adapted to different depths and conditions, including whale migrations during the winter months.

In addition to a diverse marine ecosystem, Sint Maarten-Saint Martin also boasts diverse inland habitats including wetlands, salt ponds, mangroves, forests, and drylands. The island’s rich ecosystem supports a mix of resident birds, migratory species, and endemic subspecies.





One of the most prominent birds on the island is the Brown Pelican, a distinctive coastal bird with a significant history on the island, and in the wider Caribbean region. The long-billed creature is a source of pride and inspiration for the communities of Sint Maarten-Saint Martin, and has a place of honor on the Sint Maarten Coat of Arms. Its majestic flights and dramatic plunge dives serve as a reminder of the island's natural wonders, captivating both residents and visitors alike. The bird's resilience, particularly in bouncing back from threats like habitat degradation and pollution, resonates with the island's determination and spirit.

Birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts visiting Sint Maarten-Saint Martin often have opportunities to observe and appreciate the island's avian residents in various settings, from coastal areas and mangroves, to inland forests and parks.







INDIGO BAY



COMMUNITY, CONSERVATION, CARE

BY ALITA SINGH



Indigo Bay, for much of its history, has been a quiet valley rimmed by rolling hills and washed by the sea along its sandy beach. This enclave, situated between Philipsburg, the capital of the Dutch side of the island, and its entertainment center, Simpson Bay, is growing into a destination in itself.

The area, named for the once plentiful indigo plants, lies less than 20 minutes from Princess Juliana International Airport, a regional hub with direct or one-stop flights to all major world destinations. Getting to Philipsburg will take just under 15 minutes. Crossing the border to Marigot, the capital of the French side of the island, is a commute of about 17 minutes. This level of accessibility allows for much convenience.

“The hillsides have not changed much since the time they emerged from the sea floor.”

The hillsides have not changed much since the time they emerged from the sea floor. The area is noted for its cacti patches and other shrubs such as the ‘Acacia Tortuosa’ bush. The landscape is rocky with curves made by time and the wind, making it pleasant for hiking and horseback riding. Situated with a view outward to the neighboring islands of Saba and St. Eustatius, Indigo Bay is also a place to see the sun dip for the day.

The development in the area has taken care to blend nature with conservation and care for the environment. This connecting thread will continue with Vie L’Ven, paying special attention to all aspects of the land, sea, and the flora and fauna that make it unique.

A total of six acres of land has been set aside within the resort for preservation. The focus is on enhancing what nature already provides in abundance, and coupling that with healing gardens and manicured landscaping crafted from indigenous plants and trees.











RODERICK & ALEXANDRA – HORSES & HISTORY

BY ALITA SINGH



When Roderick Halley was a boy, he rode his horse up and down the hillsides and across the valley of what is now Indigo Bay. He ended his rides in the clear, cool waters of the bay and basked in the sunshine he loves so much.

That was more than half a century ago, and not much has changed for this island boy. Roderick still rides horses through the land, but with one noticeable difference. He doesn't ride alone; he takes time to share his passion for the land, its history, flora, and fauna with anyone who is interested in learning more.

“Seaside Nature Park covers part of Cay Bay,
the neighboring enclave to Indigo Bay.”

Roderick grew up a short ride away from the area of Indigo Bay. In those days, the Bell family used the land to graze their cattle. Ever the avid horseman, Roderick used to help the patriarch corral the cows. “I used to come there to ride my horse, and sometimes I'd help old Mr. Bell chase the cattle in from the fields,” he reminisces.

Before its use as a grazing area, this valley with access to the sea was once a small-scale plantation where sugar cane, cotton, and indigo were grown. “Maybe that's where the name 'Indigo Bay' came from. Also, if you look around, there are still some cotton plants,” shares Roderick.

The Bell family eventually left the cattle business behind, but Roderick stayed close to the land. He saved up and bought his first horse, and as luck would have it, the mare was pregnant. “Instead of one horse, I got two. I guess that was very lucky for me,” says Roderick. A herd started with those two equines, growing to more than 65 today.

No lineage of horses on the island has been kept. The best Roderick can surmise is the horses came to the island together with the first Europeans. “The first may have been Spanish horses like the Andalusians, but we can't ever know for sure.” What is certain is Roderick's connection with the island; his family lineage, via both of his parents, traces directly back to 16th-century settlers.





One well-known local family, with their own long lineage, is the Fleming family, famed racehorse breeders hailing from the French side of the island. They sold their horses as far away as Jamaica and the Dominican Republic. Today, though, no racehorses are reared. The horses Roderick keeps are for the pleasure of exploring the hillsides, teaching various riding techniques, and for therapy.

Alexandra, Roderick's wife, is a developmental psychologist. She, along with a team of other specialists, offers a specialized variation of animal-assisted therapy at Seaside Nature Park. This is the ideal location for the interactive therapy, focusing on people who need self-care, as well as those with a mental or physical disability, and for children with behavioral problems.

Alexandra, Roderick's wife, is a developmental psychologist. She, along with a team of other specialists, offers a unique form of animal-assisted therapy at Seaside Nature Park, an interactive therapy, focusing on people who need self-care, as well as those with a mental or physical disability, and children with behavioral problems.

Covering part of Cay Bay, the neighboring enclave to Indigo Bay, Seaside Nature Park is the ideal setting for the therapy. The 30 acres of unspoiled nature include trails for horses and hikers, a beach and beachside pavilion, a playground, a pet farm, and Lucky Stables, where Alexandra and Roderick keep their horses.



THE HUB



THE GATEWAY ISLAND

BY ALITA SINGH



Island living requires a new approach to travel, after all, when you're surrounded by water, every voyage must be done by air or by sea. Thankfully, from Sint Maarten-Saint Martin, both options offer the opportunity to travel in sublime luxury.

With its unique position in the Caribbean, easily accessible from a slate of major US and European cities, the island is a hub for transportation. International jet setters will find arrivals and departures a breeze, with private planes parked wingtip to wingtip at the local airstrip, especially in high season. Daily commercial flights reach 35 destinations, operated by 24 airlines. At any moment, you're just a plane ride away from practically anywhere in the world.

“At any moment, you’re just a plane ride away from practically anywhere in the world.”

Long before planes and the construction of Princess Juliana International Airport as a US military airstrip in 1942, Sint Maarten-Saint Martin was already the site of an important juncture for seafarers. The indigenous peoples – the Arawaks and Caribs – came by canoe, seeking sea salt and trading opportunities with the neighboring islands.

Today, the watercraft has evolved and Sint Maarten-Saint Martin now welcomes the *crème de la crème* of the yachting world to the renowned marinas of Simpson Bay Lagoon, the largest inland lagoon in the Caribbean. Sleek sailing vessels and mega yachts sit perfectly aligned in the slips, while those too large to transit the John Sainsborough Lejuez Bridge – like the world's best cruise lines that naturally include Sint Maarten-Saint Martin on their itinerary – sit off shore in the bays.

Ferries are another major mode of local transport, whisking residents and visitors off for a day of island hopping between the British dependency of Anguilla, the French territory of St. Barths, or on to St. Eustatius and Saba, each part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. It's an international tour in less time than it takes to say *bon voyage*.









THE CULTURE



WHERE EUROPE AND THE CARIBBEAN COMBINE

BY ALITA SINGH



Despite its location nestled in the Caribbean Sea, Sint Maarten-Saint Martin brings a touch of Europe to the American continent, combining influences from France, the Netherlands, and other European nations, with customs from North America and around the world.

The fusion begins in the archipelago's culinary trifecta of Caribbean spices, Dutch cheeses, and French wines, and continues in the mindset and mannerisms of the island's people. Non-European visitors will immediately notice the difference in greetings – the formal handshake replaced by a multiple cheek-kiss (one on each side for the French, and three alternating kisses for the Dutch), while the Caribbean hug signals you're already considered family.

“Peaceful co-existence is a credo that defines the island... people here have accepted, and even welcomed, each other's differences.”

English is the main language on the island, adding yet another dimension to this multifaceted cultural mix. It is an official language on the Dutch side, along with Dutch, naturally. The official language on the French side is, of course, French. Spanish and Haitian Kreyol can be widely heard, thanks to the large immigrant population calling these shores home.

Speaking of the spoken word, on the Friendly Island, manners are a must and everyone, regardless if they are a resident or visitor, French, Dutch, or international expatriate, is expected to acknowledge people with an audible greeting, usually a pleasant good morning or good afternoon. To stay silent or aloof can be interpreted as rudeness, and does not go over well with the people of island. And while it may sound formal, the interactions are actually quite casual, making it easy to feel at ease.

People on the island are privileged to have various nationalities. For example, residents of the Dutch side, born to a Dutch parent, automatically receive Dutch nationality, a status only transferable through blood (unlike by birth, in places like the United States and Canada, or naturalization). The French side is similar, conferring French nationality by birth, marriage, or descent.



Administratively, the island is divided. The Dutch side is an autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, with its own independent parliament and ministers, separate from the European country, guided by a local constitution and local laws. However, foreign affairs, defense, and naturalization fall under the purview of the Kingdom. The French side is an overseas collectivity of the French Republic, with the ability to make local decisions, but under the rule of French law. But there is also an atmosphere that is decidedly Caribbean. And that is the magic of Sint Maarten-Saint Martin, a place where locally-made guavaberry liqueur is served alongside French vintages, Dutch gin, and American beer. Where escargots and Gouda, can be found on a menu also serving conch and dumplings.

Peaceful co-existence is a credo that defines the island. Dating back from before The Treaty of Concordia, people here have accepted, and even welcomed, each other's differences. Everyone is free to practice their religion. Christianity accounts for the majority of worshippers. That, and Judaism, are the two religions that have some of the longest histories on the island, dating back to the 1700s. Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam also have a home here. Vodou, the religion of Haiti, is practiced by smaller groups, as is Rastafarianism, the faith made famous by the legendary Bob Marley.









THE FOOD



CULINARY CAPITAL OF THE CARIBBEAN

BY ALITA SINGH



The title “Culinary Capital of the Caribbean” is an honor taken seriously by the dual-nation island of Sint Maarten-Saint Martin.

The gourmet siren call of this Caribbean isle has drawn renowned and inventive chefs from across the globe to join with local talent. There is no street, tiny alley or - in the case of Grand Case - entire village, untouched by the foods, flavors, and spirit of culinary adventure that define the island.

“Every plate is an opportunity to discover the more than 100 nationalities.”

The intricate French cooking found in the island’s ocean-view restaurants is complementary to the flavorful roadside barbeque huts and food trucks, selling all manner of delights. Every plate is an opportunity to discover the more than 100 nationalities, and their ensuing fusions, that permeate the food scene of Sint Maarten-Saint Martin.

Grand Case, once a tiny fishing village looking out to neighboring Anguilla, is the epicenter of the island’s culinary soul. Here, restaurants expertly combine the essence of Caribbean and French cuisine. The lively main street is also home to art galleries, artists’ studios, and shopkeepers selling handcrafted local wares.

The island’s cuisine is influenced by both its history and its location. For instance, *johnny cakes*, a staple of the Sint Maarten-Saint Martin diet, rose to popularity as a food easily transported in bags on long adventures, or even cooked en route. Made from flour, water, and a pinch of salt, these doughy snacks are fried or baked and served with butter or seasoned saltfish, straight from the sea. The open-air eateries in the center of Grand Case, and on the Marigot waterfront, known as “lolos,” are go-to places for this island bite.

One thing to note about Sint Maarten-Saint Martin is that food is more than just sustenance. It is the fuel of family, social, and professional gatherings. Nothing is achieved without good eats taking center stage, be it a French onion soup, Dutch *bitterballen* with mustard, a *johnny cake*, a Thai or Indian curry, or some ubiquitous form of fried rice. It’s quite literally, food for the soul.













**HEALTH &
WELLNESS**



SOCIAL WELL-BEING



From the moment you arrive on Sint Maarten-Saint Martin, you begin to unwind. First, from the warmth of its people, then from the sunshine, water, and green rolling hills. The overall feeling is therapeutic. The spectacular sunrises and sunsets captivate, the sound of the waves lapping the shore calms, and the variety of outdoor activities inspire. Eco-tourism thrives with an abundance of hiking, horseback riding, sailing, snorkeling, cycling, and fishing tours. Exercise indoors or out, with gyms on hilltops, or yoga classes on the beach. If running is your thing, feel free to join the locals on the boardwalk in Philipsburg or the Simpson Bay Causeway. If indulging at a spa is more your style, homegrown products and services from local beauty brand, *Nectar*, meticulously crafted on the island with 100% natural ingredients, are popular with both travellers and locals alike. Health and wellness permeate the way of life found here, and invite you to relax and rejuvenate body, mind, and soul.





HEALING THROUGH NATURE

BY JONATHAN VAN ARNEMAN



Bush tea. Two words with a rich history in the Caribbean, deeply rooted in the region's cultural heritage and traditional healing practices. The name refers to a variety of teas made from locally-sourced plants, herbs, and spices. Their use in the Caribbean dates back centuries, closely tied to African, Indigenous, and other cultural practices brought to the islands by colonizers and enslaved peoples.

Bush teas were traditionally used not for their flavor, but for their health benefits. People brewed infusions using plants like lemongrass, moringa, soursop leaves, basil, mint, and many others, exploiting their medicinal properties to alleviate ailments such as colds, digestive issues, fevers, and more.

“Bush teas were traditionally used not for their flavor
but for their health benefits.”

Different Caribbean islands have their own unique blends and recipes, often passed down through generations. On Sint Maarten-Saint Martin, there are more than 50 varieties of bush teas still consumed today, including a mixture of mint and lemongrass, commonly consumed at breakfast, and portrayed in *Sint Maarten Bush Tea*, a colorful painting by artist, Nigel Williams, who famously captures “the magic of the sunny Caribbean in every brushstroke.”

The knowledge of bush tea preparation and its uses was passed down orally within families and communities, contributing to a rich tapestry of traditional Caribbean remedies. While today, modern medicine is widely available, bush tea continues to hold cultural significance and is often used alongside, or as an alternative to, conventional medicine.





THE ARTS



ARTFUL SPIRIT

BY ALITA SINGH



The light, the wind through the trees, the fauna, and the people of Sint Maarten-Saint Martin act as sparks of inspiration, igniting the creative sense of artists, both near and far. Sculptor Michael Maghiro is one such artist. Influenced by nature and by the stories of the island, his works grace numerous settings across Sint Maarten-Saint Martin, most notably as larger-than-life sculptures taking center stage on many of the island’s busy roundabouts.

The first story Maghiro brought to life, gave a face to a famed local heroine, One-Tété Lohkay, the female freedom fighter who bravely fought the institution of slavery. Born on a plantation on the Dutch side of the island, Lohkay repeatedly tried to escape, and paid a dear price when plantation owners cut off one of her breasts as punishment for her rebellion, and as a signal to the other slaves. But as soon as she healed, Lohkay once again took up the fight, helping people, including many small children, escape bondage and flee into the hills.

“What inspires me are the stories,” says Maghiro,
“I want to bring them to life.”

“What inspires me are the stories,” says Maghiro, “I want to bring them to life.” The lifelong sculptor works in bronze and ebony wood, using techniques he learned watching his grandfather, Simon Dike, in his studio in Nigeria. Through many years of honing his craft, he has also developed techniques of his own, working in the quiet of his studio, located in his backyard.

Maghiro arrived on the island by chance. The Nigerian-born artist was actually en route to Antigua, when he stopped over on the island and fell in love. That was over three decades ago. It’s a story that gives credence to the local belief, that first-time visitors will experience one of two things when they arrive to Sint Maarten-Saint Martin: either they will fall immediately in love with the island, or they will feel no connection. There is no middle ground.

Today, “Michael the African” has made a name for himself as a bold teller of stories, larger-than-life tales that cannot be ignored.





Where Michael Maghiro works in metal, Ruby Bute weaves her stories on canvas, wood, and in poetry. She is the *grand dame* of the local art scene, a self-described “child of the soil.” Her colorful scenes of everyday life on the island paint a stunning tale - a grandmother sitting on her stoop, combing her grandchild’s hair; *Tanny and the Boys*, an oil on canvas depicting a famed string band; *Lady Selling Mangoes*, capturing the local market. Her works can be seen on display at her atelier in Friar’s Bay, in galleries across the island, and in the hands of private collectors in Europe and the United States.



On the streets of Sint Maarten-Saint Martin, art is everywhere. Murals brighten up public spaces through initiatives like Color Me SXM, a project that aims to add color to the island, promote local art and artists, and encourage residents and visitors to explore and share the beauty of this unique culture. Wall Art St. Martin is an association on the French side of the island that does similar work. Their collective vision for color and storytelling have transformed the island into a tapestry of bold graphics and bright hues.

Many artists, from all walks of life, call this island home. Some once donned a suit and tie in the corporate world. Others were born with a paintbrush in hand. But all of them are linked by the common thread of the island, a place where inspiration can be found around every corner.



GLO



28

SHOPPING



THE COASTAL ADVANTAGE

BY ALITA SINGH



Split between two nations, one administered by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the other by the Republic of France, and intermixed with a whole lot of Caribbean flair, Sint Maarten-Saint Martin offers a completely unique retail experience, with the added allure of duty-free status.

The price tag is the first indicator that something is different here. Completely tax-free, the shops and markets are filled with international brands and unique local specialties, with some of the most competitive prices in the world. Bargaining, particularly on the Dutch side of the island, is also welcome, creating opportunities to bond with shopkeepers, and laying the groundwork for lively banter that can lead to an even more attractive bottom line.

“Completely tax-free, the shops and markets are filled with international brands and unique local specialties”

On the French side, shops cater to a more European aesthetic, offering chic apparel, French beauty products, and freshly baked artisanal breads, patisseries, and other food items. The Dutch side focuses on precious metals, gemstones, and jewelry, with Front Street often cited as The Diamond and Gems District of the Caribbean. Get beautifully cut GIA-certified diamonds, set just the way you desire, or opt for a piece from a top jewelry line, but with zero taxes.

The island-based cottage craft industry is also growing on Sint Maarten-Saint Martin. Artisans create paintings inspired by the island's nature and people; jewelry incorporating natural elements; and fashion pieces full of color and stories. The taste of the land is captured in the signature local drink – guavaberry liqueur. This Christmas favorite, made from fermented berries gathered on the hillsides, is now available year round. It is still made in small batches and is a must-try.





When it comes to food products, Sint Maarten-Saint Martin is a cut above. Pick up the catch of the day, freshly fished from the sea at the Simpson Bay Fish Market or the Marigot Waterfront Market. Craving fresh mussels? When they are in season, they arrive via air, direct from Europe.

In Sint Maarten-Saint Martin, the confluence of cultural influences, duty-free perks, and a burgeoning craft scene creates a shopping haven with distinctive Caribbean charm.

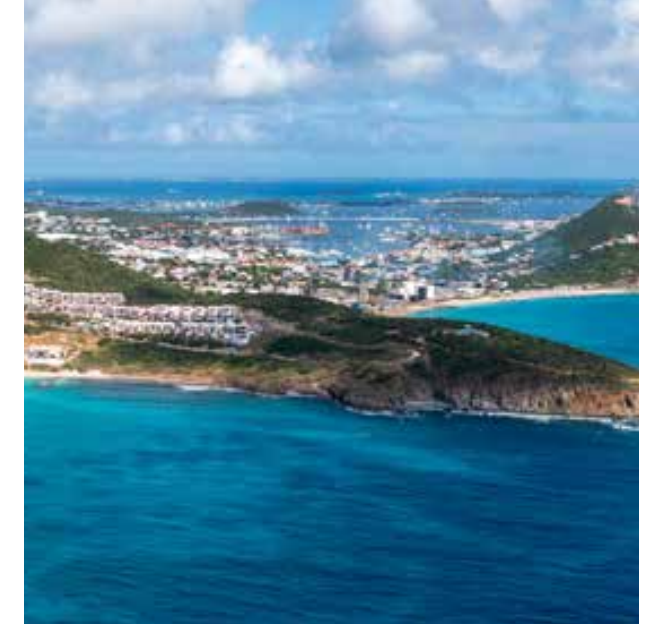


NATURE



A DIVERSE TAPESTRY OF NATURE

BY JONATHAN VAN ARNEMAN



Sint Maarten-Saint Martin boasts a diverse tapestry of nature, extending across lush landscapes to meet azure waters along every coast. Its unique geographic location and topography contribute to a rich and diverse ecosystem, brimming with life.

Situated in the northeastern Caribbean, the island enjoys a tropical climate, with a wet season that runs from May to November, bringing the occasional heavy rainfall and the possibility of tropical storms or hurricanes. The dry season spans December to April, and offers sunny days and low humidity, making it a popular time for tourists from all over the world. No matter the season, the island’s trade winds provide a welcome breeze that helps keep temperatures hovering around a comfortable 80°F throughout the year.

“The convergence of waters create the perfect conditions for vibrant marine life.”

On the Eastern side of the island, where the Atlantic Ocean laps onto the shore, visitors will find spectacular sunrises, a coastline full of personality, and the perfect setting for adrenaline-fueled water sports. On the Western side, white sand beaches and the calm waters of the Caribbean form a backdrop for serene afternoons that give way to the most dazzling sunsets.

It’s this convergence of waters – the meeting of Atlantic Ocean currents and the swells of the Caribbean Sea – that create the perfect conditions for vibrant marine life, fostering a diverse ecosystem that includes over 700 species of fish, sharks, turtles, rays, lobster, conch, and crabs, plus the coral reefs, vital to the island’s marine biodiversity.

Overall, this natural oasis is a blend of coastal beauty, diverse ecosystems, and a wealth of wildlife. Every inch highlights the island’s natural splendor, inviting visitors and locals alike to marvel at the breathtaking surroundings.











LEISURE



LIFE AT YOUR OWN PACE

BY ALITA SINGH



Sint Maarten-Saint Martin offers something for everyone – from the laid-back soul, to the intrepid adventurer. A do-nothing day might involve a beach chair, a good book, and the sound of waves, gently lapping the shore. Or, when adventure beckons, head out and explore any one of the island’s 37 beaches and coves.

Hiking paths crisscross borders, flow through greenery, and scale seaside cliffs. Cycle on and off the beaten path. Zipline at Rockland Rainforest Adventures, Loterie Farm, or Pelican Peak.

“With so much to do, and so many activities to choose from, time is an abstract concept on Sint Maarten-Saint Martin.”

Prefer the open sea? The winds around the island are very favorable for sailing, boating, and all manner of water sports. Whether you’re an avid mariner, or you prefer to relax while the crew expertly navigates and manages the boat, each day on the water brings its own delights. Cruise alongside whales. Watch the sea turtles glide just below the crystal clear water. Dive deep and visit the colorful coral reefs and shipwrecks, teeming with sea creatures. Or try your hand at deep-sea fishing on the Marlin Highway.

When the sun sets, the fun continues and a new side of the island emerges. Nights are alive with casinos, bars, restaurants, and clubs that offer a unique ambiance for every occasion. Live music venues cover every genre, with something happening every night of the week.

When curiosity strikes and you want to explore further afield, Sint Maarten-Saint Martin is the perfect launching point for off-island adventure. Explore the surrounding islets including Pinel, with two delightful restaurants, only accessible by boat; and Tintamarre, once home of self-proclaimed King, Diederik Johannes von Romondt.





Nearby Saba offers an Indiana Jones-worthy setting, with a volcano jutting out of the Caribbean Sea. Here, you can mingle with the descendants of real pirates and hike Mount Scenery, the highest point in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

There's Sint Eustatius, an island that played a pivotal role in the birth of the American republic, with Fort Oranje, the site of the famed First Salute, when the Dutch became the first foreign nation to acknowledge America's independence.

Anguilla and St. Barths round out the neighboring islands and offer even more barefoot luxury, with stretches of silky sand beaches, flowering gardens, and turquoise bays that welcome the jet set.

With so much to do, and so many activities to choose from, time is an abstract concept on Sint Maarten-Saint Martin. Here, life moves at your own pace, expanding or contracting for whatever the day brings.











THE LOCAL
FESTIVALS



A YEAR-ROUND CALENDAR OF LOCAL COLOR

BY ALITA SINGH



From January to December, Sint Maarten-Saint Martin offers a full calendar of exciting festivals and events.

The most recognizable is Carnival, the Caribbean tradition where feathers fly and confetti rains down across the island, from Marigot to Philipsburg. With two nations comes two celebrations: the first takes place on the French side of the island in February, while on the Dutch side, the party begins in April and continues in a three-week extravaganza.

In between these two events is the annual St. Maarten Heineken Regatta, held the first weekend of March. This more than four-decades-old boat race attracts the best sailors in various classes from around the world. The regatta tagline, “Serious Fun,” is an apt description; each day’s races are capped off by an evening of big headliner concerts in Regatta Village in Port de Plaisance.

“From January to December, Sint-Maarten-Saint Martin offers a full calendar of exciting festivals and events.”

Also in March is the SXM Music Festival. Since its inception in 2016, the event has turned the island into a hub for top electronic music artists and their fans. Each Spring, they make the pilgrimage to the Caribbean for a jam-packed weekend of beach parties, music, and fun at a selection of secluded beaches, lush rainforests, boats, and beach clubs, where they dance from sunrise, to sunset, and under the stars.

In summertime, the St. Martin Book Fair arrives, usually in June. The Fair attracts writers from the Caribbean diaspora, telling stories about the islands, and the struggles and triumphs of their people. This is a chance to encounter often little-known, but truly outstanding, tales that bring island history to life.





November is the month to indulge in culinary excellence, beginning with the annual St. Martin Gastronomy Festival. Chefs from Michelin-starred restaurants join the island's top gastronomic talents, to create unique experiences delivered via meals, workshops, and more. Mixologists from far and wide join in, creating mouth-watering libations using the festival's featured flavor, a local ingredient, decided via public poll.

While the St. Martin Gastronomy Festival takes place on the island's French side, St. Maarten Flavors gives foodies an opportunity to savor even more flavors on the Dutch side of the island. Restaurants create special prix fixe tasting menus for lunch and dinner, serving up everything from comfort food like grilled flank steak, to exotic twists on the classics, including a pineapple tiramisu.

Twelve months a year, Sint Maarten-Saint Martin offers a lineup of events that will delight all five senses, and create lasting memories.

CONTRIBUTORS



PAUL ALEXANDER

Paul Alexander's remarkable capability to create stunning "on-the-fly" portraiture comes from having had the privilege of working with some of our generation's biggest and brightest stars including Academy Award winners, Grammy Award and Noble Peace Prize winners, supermodels, sport stars, business icons and world leaders. Paul's work has been published in Italian GQ, L'Uomo Vogue, HELLO!, Vogue Sport, British ELLE, Cosmopolitan, Maxim, Zoomer and Vogue UK. Paul has executed global advertising campaigns for Miller Beer, Bacardi, Coca Cola, Motorola, Jack Daniels and has just finished working in Sint Maarten-Saint Martin for Vie L'Ven, a luxurious 5-star resort and residences by Atree Developments.



KIM APPELT

From red carpets and runways to movie stars and models, Kim Appelt is one of the globe's leading personal and celebrity stylists. Host of her own YouTube channel with 8 million views, Appelt is also a best-selling published author, and a style expert for InStyle, People Magazine, and Business Insider.



ALITA H. SINGH

Alita H. Singh is a versatile writer who seamlessly transitions between feature writing and hard-hitting news. A former senior journalist, now communication strategist, Singh's own story includes heading the island's oldest charity, Island Gems Charity Foundation. In 2023, her contributions, on and off the page garnered recognition from the Dutch King and Queen, who selected her as one of the 100 impactful people in the Kingdom on the occasion of their tenth anniversary on the throne.

This island girl has received various awards and recognitions for her work, particularly in the areas of environment and economy (tourism). She has been named Person of the Year by EnviroNews magazine, given Crystal Pineapple Award for Excellence in Journalism and the Prominent Women's Award for Media Excellence. She is named a "Community Ambassador" and a "Woman of Value" by the international organization - I Change Nations. Singh is a primary writer of the island's main tourism guide: Visit St. Maarten/St. Martin magazine.



JONATHAN VAN ARNEMAN

Jonathan van Arneman is a creative from Soualiga. He left the island in 2010 to further his studies and returned in 2019 to work as Artist in Residence at the National Institute of Arts. In 2020, he received a grant from Prins Bernhard Cultuur Fonds to choreograph and produce Atlantis Rebirth - a film that explores the defiant history of Caribbean people and the imagination of a post-colonial Caribbean utopia. The film was later featured in St Martin's first Afro-Soualigan film festival. In 2021, van Arneman founded Johnny SXM Tours, a community based organization that champions a holistic view of Soualiga that is inclusive of all her complexities. In 2023 he was selected to be a member of the Advisory Committee on Slavery, Atonement and Reparations (ACSAR) whose research will be provided to the Sint Maarten Government for policy reform. He is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Dance Movement Therapy at Drexel University in Philadelphia.

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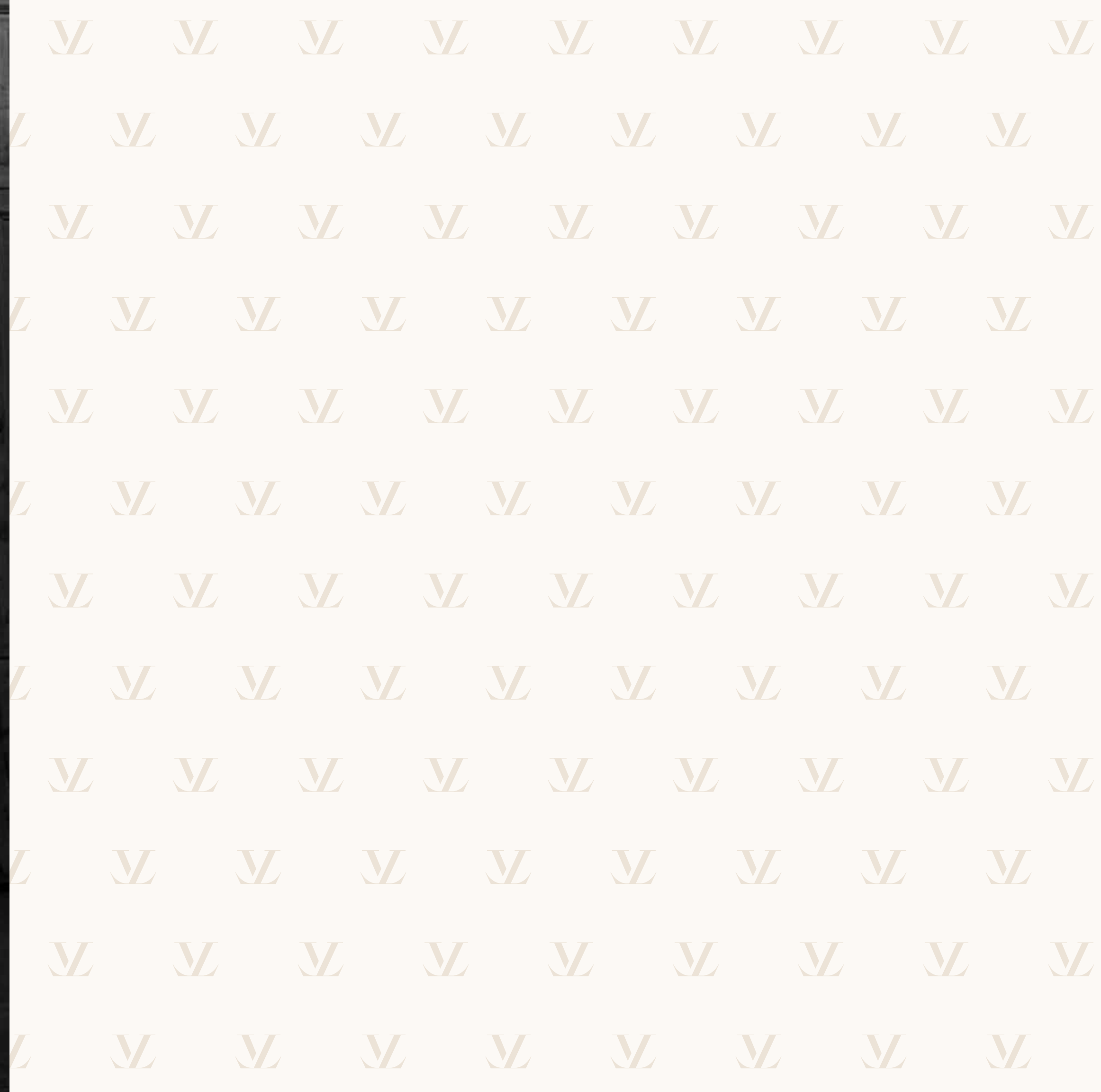
*THIS DEVELOPMENT IS NOT JUST A TESTAMENT TO LUXURY;
IT IS OUR HOMAGE TO SINT MAARTEN.*

With a commitment to sustainable practices and community engagement, we aim to contribute positively to the island's economy and ecology by working with The Nature Foundation to protect the coral reef, and flora and fauna of the conservation area; by providing training and jobs for the community; and by creating opportunities for local artisans and businesses alike. It is our goal to ensure that the benefits of this project are shared with all those who call this beautiful island home.



“ONE LIFE, ONE LOVE,
ONE ISLAND”

~ Karine Doumenjou, One by K





A L T R E E