No Cash, No Banks...What Now?

A few years back a high-level seminar took place in a luxurious residence in Oyster Pond Estates, hosted by some top players of the cryptocurrency world. Cryptocurrencies are ways to store values digitally. Their purpose is to resemble cash and allow electronic payments without the need for banks. The general public, and our local politicians, were not aware that some influential investors had a close look at St. Maarten as a possible home for a rapidly growing industry.

At that time, Bitcoin, the world's most famous cryptocurrency, was valued at around $250. Fast forward to 2018, and the value is now $6,400.

Before you read further, please note that there is a fraud warning at the end of this article, discussing an organization which is attempting to ride the coattails of Bitcoin.

Let's start with a straightforward explanation of what these dubious cryptocurrencies are all about. It's simple: a mathematician invented a revolutionary concept to transfer digital assets without an intermediary. This invention is called 'blockchain'.

In the physical realm, you walk into a store and pay your $20 purchase by opening your wallet and handing over a paper bill to the cashier. The bill is not in your valet anymore, but now in possession of the store. Transaction done...
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Letter From the Editor
August 24, 2018
Hello to our readers! I hope you are enjoying the ST-MAARTEN.COM Weekly Edition. If you just arrived, welcome! And if you are leaving our island soon, please sign up through our website ST-MAARTEN.COM to continue to read our newspaper.

For the last several months, we have been running a Category 5+ Cocktail Contest, to provide some innovative cocktails as strong as their namesake (Hurricane Irma). In this issue, page 14, we have announced the Top Three Finalists that our readers voted for! Please visit each of the locations listed and try their Irma cocktail, and do not forget to vote! The winner will be announced in our next issue. A special shout-out to Island 92’s Dr. Soc, for hosting on-air demonstrations and promotion of this fun contest.

I wish you all a pleasant end of August. Enjoy!

Hilary Grant
Editor

Online Portal
For in-depth information about our island, consult ST-MAARTEN.COM - the official online portal. Please use the convenient QR codes with any smartphone to access individual pages directly.

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Pinel Island: Ready and Waiting for Guests

Continued from Page 1

To go for a short visit, you can join one of the many amazing snorkeling tours around St. Maarten/St-Martin. Several of them stop at Pinel for a dip in the water before heading on to places like Grand Case for lunch or Creole Rock for snorkeling.

If you bring along some snorkel gear you explore the water around the island looking for reef fish and even the occasional sea turtle. Swim away from the ferry dock to find some hard corals not damaged by the storm, which still offer protection for marine life. The further you get from the sand, the more experienced swimmer you need to be. As you round the corner, you lose the protection offered by the island’s hills and are exposed to more wind and waves.

To spend the day there, you can take a ferry over from Cul-De-Sac located on the French side, St-Martin. Service starts at 10 AM and the cost is $12 US Dollars round trip or $10 Euros. Several ferryboats run every 30 minutes back and forth from the island to the parking area. The hard part is being ready to catch the last boat back at 4 PM! If you are adventurous, you can kayak or paddle board from one shore to the other. The area is protected from the strong wind and is often a calm and easy ride. Though the French side of the island has been fighting an ongoing battle with sargassum seaweed, Pinel’s beach is pristine thanks to the wind and waves pushing away from the island rather than towards it.

Wearing the proper shoes, you can explore some of the hiking paths to the backside of Pinel, which faces Anguilla. While the main beach is not clothing optional the more secluded beaches you find here are. The water can be quite rough on this side, so, only the most advanced swimmers should hop in for a snorkel. If you go, make sure you have some fins on and one buddy in the water and another on shore watching you! For less advanced swimmers, stick to the side that faces St-Martin, which has a protected marine area to snorkel in.

Once you are on island there are two choices of restaurants to eat and drink the day away. At the end of the dock is Yellow Beach, and just to the left is Le Karibuni. Both restaurants have mastered the perfect combination of food that is light enough to eat on the beach, but will fuel you through a day full of fun in the sun. The drinks flow quickly and beach service moves fast on busy days to keep you well hydrated!

Don’t forget to stop and feed the iguanas. You can find them on rocks and the hillside on route to the shop. These relaxed lizards bask quietly in the sun waiting on visitors to toss over some extra watermelon for lunch.

You can rent chairs and an umbrella to sit in the shade, with a view you can only find on a post card of the French side of St-Martin. Or, if you are early enough, you can ask for a small table to be placed in the water just shy of waist deep. Order your favorite bottle of rosé on ice (magnums available!) and stand or sit in the ocean enjoying the cool water and picturesque sun.

When you come onto the island make sure you support the local business. These hardworking men and women have had to rebuild everything after the devastation of Irma. Every dollar helps!

The main beach offers a calm swim area for those traveling with children. The depth stays shallow for a long stretch. Set up away from the dock area and kids can enjoy the water safely away from large waves or drone-offs.

Make sure you bring reef-safe sunscreen, a hat and protective clothing, like a rash guard, to wear! Your biggest worry for the day will be remembering to re-apply your sunscreen and not missing the last boat back to St. Maarten/St-Martin!
Post- Irma: The Sun Rises Again at Orient Bay

By: Chris Morvan

Anyone who has not spent an evening at La Place du Village – the Village Square – has missed the unique experience of a cluster of restaurants and bars lifted out of the heart of Paris and replanted next to one of the Caribbean’s most celebrated beaches.

In the immediate aftermath of the hurricane, though, Christelle was profoundly shocked. With the island looking like a war zone, the electricity supply was down and with it went all communications, although she says from the very top of Anse Marcel it was sometimes possible to pick up a signal from Anguilla and get through to anxious family and friends for a few minutes.

“I didn’t get much sleep for a while,” she says, her distant eyes betraying the vivid memory of the destruction and the resulting lack of security. With the gendarmerie affected as much as anyone else and some of its members having left the island as soon as they could, there was a general sense of vulnerability in the air.

“Some of the men from around here took over the security,” she explains. “They based themselves in the security hut by the main entrance and took it in turns to keep an eye on things. They built a wood fire there at night.”

This coming together and what she describes as “solidarity” is the key to how she feels now, the communal spirit drawing together even people who didn’t really know each other.

Eventually Christelle and her 12-year-old son managed to get on a flight to Guadeloupe and from there they flew to France, where she stayed for two months and her son remains, living with his grandparents.

All her staff got away too, many going to the French Alps to work for the winter season. Some returned and some didn’t. “There are a lot of fresh faces now,” Christelle observes.

She considers herself lucky to have got back in business so quickly, but it was a huge strain financially and she dreads the thought of such a disaster happening again in the near future. She got back on her feet this time, but a repeat performance would be asking too much.

On the other hand, she points out that others simply lost everything. It’s the sort of situation that makes people reevaluate, and in Christelle it has created a new positivity.

“It was like when somebody dies,” she says. “Somehow you have to draw a line under it and get on with things. If I could choose any time in my life, it would be right now.”

The restaurant is running normally, although at perhaps 70% of what it was doing before Irma.

“What is really missing is the first sitting, the 6:30 PM to 8 PM crowd, mainly Americans,” she says. “The French don’t go out till later.”

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If proof were needed that St-Martin is returning to what it was before Irma, the scene in the newly-reopened Bikini Beach Bar and Restaurant in Orient Bay is pretty compelling. While parts of the surrounding area are still scenes of devastation, at 11 AM on a Wednesday morning in late July, the place is buzzing with customers.

The vast majority are Americans from a visiting cruise ship, but the person I’m here to see is Christelle Barthélémy, co-owner of the nearby Le Piment restaurant in La Place du Village.

Christelle is fresh from the gym and enjoying her free time before heading for her own establishment in the mid-afternoon to prepare for the evening.

Originally from Provence back in the mother country, Christelle has been in St-Martin for 15 years, working initially as a waitress before graduating to manager of Le Piment and then buying in as a partnership with two others.

While her Master’s degree in economics might seem rather wasted in her profession, Christelle loves the restaurant business.

“I wouldn’t want to do anything else,” she says. “I love the relationship with the customers.”

Brimming with enthusiasm, throughout the interview she tells of how lucky she feels to be in this country, doing what she is doing.

Sure, Irma knocked her back, as it did everyone, and while her home suffered only minor damage, the restaurant was destroyed. And yet it was open again on June 7, with a slightly reduced staff but essentially the same as it was before.

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Do You Know St. Maarten?

Please enjoy our original St. Maarten/St-Martin crossword puzzle. You will notice that all of the questions are rooted in the Caribbean hemisphere and might take a bit of research to answer if you haven't spend much time here. It also means: the answers are valid for St. Maarten/St-Martin, but could also be for neighboring islands.

For example, if we were asking for an island to the North of our location, it can only be Anguilla.

If you try to solve the puzzle as a visitor to our island and you get stuck: don't be shy! Approach a local and ask! You might find they struggle to answer as well. Or strike up an interesting conversation and learn a bit about our very unique region.

Mistakes do happen, even though our puzzle is produced right here on island. If you detect a mistake, don't be shy and drop us a line! But, be aware that some of the questions are a bit tricky on purpose. Good luck!

ACROSS
1 Language of Haiti
3 Beach resort on Kimsha
7 Pre-colombian name of St. Maarten
8 Short for Sint Eustatius
9 Airport code of Grand Case airport
13 Village in island center
14 French cop
15 Common fruit
16 Color of sun flashing
19 First name of cake
20 Continent to the East
21 Common rental car
22 Type of local climate

DOWN
2 Settlement on road to Pic Paradis
4 Popular beer on island
5 Furry snake hunter
6 Communications provider
8 Fish to eat
10 Liquor unique to St. Maarten
11 Westernmost beach on Dutch side
12 Locally popular fitness regimen
13 Still not legal
14 Illegal taxi
17 Hurricane 1995
18 Museum named after Starwars character

Cheating? Find solution to the puzzle on Page 14
Continued from Page 1

But, is there a different way to vacation? We think so! Here are five basic rules that you can apply to your vacation to keep on track (or just pay it forward for those delicious frozen cocktails you’re likely to ingest!):

Rule 1- PLAN!

It is easy to bring food while traveling, including flying, but most of us do not think to do it. Here is a list of airport friendly (or just travel friendly!) items to bring along: fresh fruits or vegetables, tuna packets, low sodium beef jerky, protein powder (remember to bring the shaker!), hard boiled eggs, rice cakes, small packs of nuts, instant oatmeal packs (get hot water on the plane) and trail mix.

Rule 2- Don’t be Hungry

Always plan on flight delays. And trust us, there is nothing worse than being so hungry that you become angry (hence, hangry) about missing out on that extra couple hours of beach time. Pack a couple frozen food items that you won’t eat on the plane, so that if your flight is delayed, it will be nice and defrosted when you are ready to eat it. Just don’t pack ice packs as airport security is likely to throw them out!

Rule 3- Scale Back

Remember; roughly 3,500 calories equal one pound. Yikes! US research has shown that the average vacationer gains one pound per day they are on holiday.

Watching your carbohydrate and fat intake during the day will give you the opportunity to ‘bank’ those calories for later. Choose fresher options when possible, like a side salad instead of french fries, or ask for food to be cooked without butter or oil as that can pack on hundreds of calories without filling you!

Thirsty? Instead of sipping wine at dinner, which sneaks in on average 90 calories per glass, drink clear spirits like gin or a flavored vodka, with a calorie free mixer – also known as club soda! Don’t forget the fresh lemon or limes.

Rule 4- Water, Water, Water

Water retention and bloating is extremely common after a day of travel and the duration of vacation. What’s the cure? Drink lots of water, three to four liters is recommended to keep you hydrated and get that water out of you. Tip: bring an empty reusable water bottle, fill after you go through the airport security.

Rule 5- Move That Body

Walk around your vacation destination instead of taking a taxi or renting a car. You will burn calories while having the opportunity to see restaurants and shops that you might have overlooked if driving.

And if you’re in a tropical destination like our island, Beach workouts! Try this HIIT (high intensity interval training) workout to bank those calories and earn a dinner out:

• 5-minute walk along beach to warm up.
• four rounds of each exercise below with 90 seconds of rest in between each round: 30 burpees, 30 mountain climbers, 30 squats, 30 second plank and 30 second sprint.
• cool down with a 5-minute walk along the water’s edge.
No Cash, No Banks...What Now?

Continued from Page 1

It’s different if you pay by credit card, a digital transaction; you need an intermediary. Visa or MasterCard to the rescue: Your card will be swiped and Visa removes money from your account and transfers it to the merchant. For this service, the credit card company charges a fee or percentage. The transaction is also recorded and not anonymous. This can be good or bad, depending on what you bought and who is reading your credit card statements at home.

digitalized items can be handed over as well. It has the potential to revolutionize governments and administrations. Car titles, land titles, votes to elections... anything can be done with total security through a blockchain application. This is why the big shots in the investment industry pay close attention to the world of crypto and why they already support it with billions of dollars.

Where does St. Maarten and the broader Caribbean fit into this picture and how do cryptocurrencies have any relevance for the region?

Our island is an economic hub, surrounded by small nations which offer fewer job opportunities. Not everyone qualifies for a bank account, especially not in places with less developed economies. Many of the hardworking expatriates send remittance to their families in their home countries. They endure humiliating hours of waiting at Western Union, only to be robbed 10% of the transferred money for the privilege of using their services.

Imagine now, a world where a few seconds on a smartphone would take care of the money transfer. Small or large amounts, it does not matter: a sister in Dominica asks for a quick $30 because her baby is sick and needs the doctor? It would take about 15 seconds to help her out.

What about e-commerce? Online shopping without credit cards is possible! Major e-commerce giants like Overstock or Expedia accept Bitcoin. Even our very own St-Maarten.com allows rental car bookings, activity bookings or advertising payments to be done through our Bitcoin account!

All of the hard lifting for creating solutions for secure, cheap and almost anonymous money transactions is completed. What is needed now, is the willingness of politicians to educate themselves and to help install legislation that the crypto industry is craving.

Yes, it’s strange: there is a complete financial sector looking for governments to give them a legal framework to function in.

The Isle of Man, an island between Great Britain and Ireland, is actively courting the crypto industry. They even offer free office space and other goodies! But they also have awful weather, and therefore it’s not too late for St. Maarten to enter the game. There is a unique chance to attract a significant, upcoming industry and to become a tad less dependent on tourism.

Now to the warning: there are organizations out there trying to cash in on the success of Bitcoin and other legal currencies. There is OneCoin, a multilevel marketing organization led by a Bulgarian lady and various executives with shady backgrounds.

They are very active in St. Maarten and several other Caribbean locations to promote their scam.

Don’t get involved with it, please! OneCoin is not an accepted cryptocurrency, and the offerings are not legal in the USA, India or many other major countries.
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Learn to Play Roulette in Five Minutes or Less

Walking into a casino can be overwhelming. With the question of what to play rolling around in your head, you check out the table games such as blackjack, roulette and poker; and wander through the endless rows of slot machines. You choose to play a slot machine because the table games seem overly complicated and it is much easier to press a button. Well, that is about to change! Here is a quick and easy tutorial on playing roulette.

Roulette in French means ‘little wheel’, which is an appropriate name for this game. The first version of roulette was invented in France during the 1700’s. Numerous historians cite that Blaise Pascal presented an even earlier form of roulette during the 1600’s in his quest for a perpetual motion machine.

Roulette as you know it has been played in this form since 1796, beginning in Paris.

During the late 1790’s, the roulette wheels had red for the single zero and black for the double zero. But this confused the bets. In the 1800’s the color green was selected for the zeros in roulette wheels.

So, how do you play? Players may choose to place bets on a single number, many groupings of numbers, the colors red or black, whether the number is odd or even, or if the numbers are low (1-18) or high (19-36).

Once you’ve mastered this, take it to the next level with some more complicated bets:

Bet and Nickname for the Bet
Red or Black: Red / Black
Even or Odd: Even / Odd
Set of 5 numbers: Basket Bet
Set of 4 numbers: Square Bet or Corner Bet
Set of 3 numbers: Street Bet
Set of 2 numbers: Split Bet
One number: Straight Bet

Now, you don’t have to place just one bet at a time. Feel free to make multiple bets. Most casinos will allow you to place your bets while the ball is still spinning, and will wave their hand over the wheel when you are no longer allowed to make additional bets.

To decide the winning number and color, a croupier, or dealer, spins the wheel in one direction, then spins the ball in the opposite direction around a tilted circular track running around the outer edge of the wheel.

When the ball ultimately loses momentum, it falls into one of 37 (in French/European style roulette) or 38 (in American style roulette) colored and numbered pockets on the wheel.

Once the ball has landed, the dealer will place a marker next to the winning number while announcing the color and number. Next, the croupier will collect the losing bets, then make the payouts by placing the chips next to your bets. The final step is removing the marker next to the winning bet. Word of caution if you don’t like to be scolded; wait until the marker is removed before you grab your chips. You will be so excited about winning that you might forget, but this is an important rule to follow!

Now that you’ve learned your first game, try it out at the casino! There are many choices of casinos on the Dutch side to select from. For celebrity treatment, visit Hollywood Casino located in Pelican Key. Drink for free while you play in a cozy ambience. And bonus- they even offer free valet parking.
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Music, paintings, and writings are supposed to give us profound insight into a culture. The Caribbean is not short of significant achievements in any of these art forms.

But today, I give you the art of preparing food. To understand the daily lives of people you’d like to learn more about, find out what they are eating!

You heard that St. Maarten is the Caribbean’s gourmet island and that the island is crowded with excellent restaurants. Does that mean local residents check for Michelin stars before they order dinner? What are St. Maartener’s eating at home? Budgetary considerations aside, what are the dishes that islanders prepare for themselves?

Our island is the ultimate melting pot (yes, pun intended!). The Dutch side is influenced by the history of the Dutch Kingdom, which includes far-away places such as Indonesia, with its own distinct cuisine. For starters, this is where the peanut sauce came from, which is frequently appreciated in local cooking. Or take Suriname in South America, another part of the former Dutch empire. Among the exotic items, they like to prepare ‘down there’ is alligator tail, and you can find this delicacy sometimes locally served on a stick with a variety of sauces.

But what came from Holland, other than Gouda cheese, which you will find in large quantities? Now, we must be fair: the Dutch never, ever planned to compete with the French in cuisine (and they would not have succeeded anyway). But they gave us some comfort food which would fit right into the appetizer menu of TGI Friday’s, like Bitterballen or Friandell. And if you are a Sushi lover, go for the original: Matjes Herring (don’t be stingy on the onions!). Find Dutch food at Marty’s in Simpson Bay, Mark’s Place in Philipsburg and Café Rembrandt in Madame Estates.

You’ll find true local eateries all over the isl-
and: from the Lolos in Grand Case to the small local restaurants at the waterfront in Marigot, from the snack shacks at the Simpson Bay fish market to the restaurants on Philipsburg’s Back Street. Rice and peas with chicken, grilled snapper, barbecued lobster…the choice is yours.

The Captain’s Rib Shack in Simpson Bay has attracted a considerable following from both visitors and locals. Their menu items exceed the concept of a barbecued ribs by a far broader selection of other Caribbean dishes.

The Melting Pot (no affiliation with the US fondue chain) is a restaurant in Simpson Bay/Cole Bay, across from the Atrium Beach Resort and Spa.
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Finalist #1
The Boon Beach Bar in Simpson Bay

Finalist #2
The Palms Restaurant in Simpson Bay

Finalist #3
Lagoonies Bistro Bar in Cole Bay

Hurricane Irma changed our lifestyle dramatically. The few bars which were able to open soon after had to deal with limited supplies and make do with whatever they could get their hands on, resulting in a few new cocktails - all based on Irma.

Over the last few months you have frequented the participating bars and restaurants and voted online for your favorite. We are now proud to announce our Top Three Finalists!

It's your job now to try each of these cocktails, and vote for the one that you think should be the St. Maarten Cat 5+ cocktail.

Voting ends September 5, 2018 (the almost one year anniversary of Irma) and the winner will be announced in Issue 18.

Thank you to all of our participants and Island 92 for hosting on-air mixology demonstrations! Happy drinking!

Crossword Puzzle Solution

To vote, visit ST-MAARTEN.COM by using the QR code to the right:

Full List of the Cocktail Contest Participants
*The Boon Beach Bar
*Buffalo Wings
*Driftwood Boat Bar
*Jimbo's Rock & Blues Cafe
*The Red Piano
*Rendez-Vous Lounge
*Wasabi Charlie
*Isola Ristorante
*Taco Macho
*Lagoonies Bistro Bar
*Little Moby
*Ocean Lounge
*The Palms Restaurant
*Nowhere Special
*Topper's Bar & Restaurant

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