Vacation Dating Challenges for North American Men

Here you are as a single male from North America, visiting one of the world's most cosmopolitan islands, confident that finding a nice girl to spend some fun times with should be easy. You have heard that St. Maarten/St-Martin is a very multicultural place and this translates for you into 'melting pot'... that's where the trouble starts.

As soon as it comes to dating and relationships, the various cultures on St. Maarten/St-Martin are suddenly on a collision course. The clever pick-up line which worked so well on potential love mates in your home country might turn out to be offensive, or at least entirely ineffective to someone from a different cultural background.

Of course, you could just focus on fellow travelers and avoid any complication, but you might also miss out on a valuable life experience. Nothing opens a man's mind more than dating someone from a foreign country.

Where North America follows a somewhat simple courting template - dinner, dinner and hopefully closing 'the deal' - no such thing is familiar to the Europeans, including to the Dutch and French who live on St. Maarten. You might be pleasantly surprised how easy it is to ask a woman to join you for an evening meal; to her, it's just this: a meal. And she might insist on paying her part if she is Dutch. But don't interpret more into sharing dinner with a girl, if no other clear signals...

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No Animals Harmed During the Making of this Article
By: Chris Morvan

In the early 70s in London there appeared a restaurant called Cranks, an ironic name adopted by its founders, who were blazing the trail of vegetarianism at a time when western cuisines were still...

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Drive Your Own Boat on a Guided Tour

The Rhino Rider Safari scores reliably as one of our island's most attractive boating excursions. Rhino Rider boats have been exclusively designed as a hybrid between a personal watercraft...

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Letter From the Editor
October 26, 2018

Thank you for choosing the ST-MAARTEN.COM Weekly Edition as your newspaper. We proudly offer articles for your reading pleasure unlike any other publication on island.

If you enjoy this edition and would like to read past or future issues from the convenience of your home, please scan the QR code to the right for our e-publication.

With the end of the month drawing near, the shift in excitement around the island is palpable. Welcome to our new and returning visitors, we appreciate your patronage of St. Maarten/St-Martin.

Halloween is next week- which means the Dutch side will be alive with electrifying parties over the next few days. Be safe, drink responsibly (get a designated driver!) and enjoy.

I’d like to say a special thank you to our team and writers for their continued dedication and contribution!

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 smart phone to access individual pages directly.

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Where the Students Dine and Party

Jordan Village

A somewhat new urbanization has developed its own heartbeat. Located only one block away from the main thoroughfare in the Dutch Lowlands and in walking distance to Mullet Bay Beach; we present to you, Jordan Village.

New apartments are home to professionals and students of the adjacent American University of the Caribbean School of Medicine.

A cluster of restaurants and bars shape the center of the area.

And because in Jordan Village there also is a supermarket, Carrefour Express, life without a car suddenly seems possible.

All sorts of cuisines are available to please the palate: pasta, sushi, BBQ, pizza and the list goes on.

It is apparent that because of the proximity to the AUC School of Medicine, all entertainment spots are set to be affordable to a college student’s typical budget.

Not a student but your curiosity is piqued? Jordan Village is an excellent destination for island residents looking to enjoy a night out, away from the mainstream tourism hot-spots and pay reasonable prices versus outrageous premium prices at busy tourist locations.

For live entertainment, check out Fat Tony’s, it has a bustling ambience.

You can also tune into Island 92 radio station to hear about the next event at Jordan Village.
Pick Your Beach According to Weather

The island of St. Maarten/St-Martin is fortunate to have beaches all along its coastline and facing all directions. For sun worshippers and beachcombers, picking the right beach can become a helpful skill in certain weather conditions. During the winter months, the prevailing wind comes from East to North East and usually blows considerably stronger than during summer (yes, it is a bit absurd that the typical weather during the Caribbean hurricane season in summer is actually pretty calm).

During winter weather conditions, locations exposed to the Atlantic, such as the island's flagship beach, Orient, can become uncomfortable. Surf is never a problem, as Orient Bay is protected by a reef, but a steady 20-knot wind will put a damper to your beach experience by sandblasting you, and by making it difficult to maintain an open sun umbrella. On a day like this, you should move to areas better protected from the elements. Friar's Bay would be a great alternative, but the very best protection in windy conditions is to be found in Cupecoy. Kimsha Beach in Simpson Bay is also an option... if there weren't ongoing concerns about the water quality.

Now, what to do on a hot and sunny day when there is hardly any wind? The opposite: don't go to Cupecoy or a similarly protected cove to be roasted without mercy, but head over to Orient Beach where you will now find a gentle breeze to cool you down.

There is another factor to consider: Bugs! Sand flies come out close to the end of the beach day, and they have this nasty habit of feasting on human blood while being so small that they are almost invisible. That's why they are fondly nicknamed ‘No-See-Ums’. If you like to enjoy beach time during sunset, try to find a windy place like Maho Beach. This keeps sandflies and mosquitoes away.

Incidentally, the more consistent breeze is one of the enormous advantages of staying on our island's Atlantic or Eastern coast, because bloodthirsty insects have a much harder time there to navigate to their victims.

Vacation Dating Challenges for North American Men

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are coming. In Europe, friendships between men and women without sexual undertones are common, and this could even include going to the nude beach together. What you think will be an easy date with a European woman is suddenly very complicated.

Caribbean women, on the other hand, are entirely familiar with New World dating procedures and as a North American, you will be in a more familiar territory. The problem you face is that prospects as a visitor are not the best: Everyone living in a community as small as St. Maarten, with many transient visitors, learn to not get emotionally invested in someone who leaves within days. The ones who pay you some attention might not have your best interest at heart, but rather see you as a mark (and yes, escorts are legal here). Playboy beware!

If all of this sounds discouraging, do not give up your hopes of a hedonistic island vacation and let’s get to the good news. Because your typical pick-up tactics are useless in a multicultural environment, you are suddenly entirely free to be yourself! No need to boast about your important job, no reason to expla-in why you only drive a Hyundai i10 (the most common rental car), absolutely no point in ordering a bottle of Roederer Cristal champagne. If a lady is paying you any attention, it is the real 'you' she wants to meet.

Last but not least, to enhance the likelihood of attracting female attention it is time to reevaluate your wardrobe. Yes, you are on a Caribbean vacation and the tropical nights are warm. But, if you go to restaurants, bars or clubs; a little effort goes a long way. As island residents, we tend to assume that you’ve been partying all day and are well on your way to an embarrassing public intoxication incident- cue the girl wearing her bikini at 8PM stumbling down the Simpson Bay strip (yes, this happens!).

Flip-flops, tank tops and covered in a film of sunscreen are not ideal. St. Maarten is a somewhat urban island, and beachwear is not for nighttime. Trade in the beach bum look for some nice shorts, jean or slacks and see how the female attitude changes. You will encounter men that do not heed our advice, but they are not on the prowl and if they are, they do not stand much of a chance.
No Animals Harmed During the Making of this Article

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very much meat-based. Almost 50 years later the world has moved on to a large extent, but it is fair to say that not eating meat remains a minority approach.

But there is a group in St Maarten dedicated to extolling the virtues of eating neither meat nor dairy: no animal milk and no eggs. Not just vegetarian but vegan.

Although it had been practised in ancient Indian and eastern Mediterranean societies, the term “vegan” was only coined in 1944 by a Briton, Donald Watson.

The case for the prosecution today is led by a team of three: Jenny Budhrami, Jackie van Zand and Marianne Marchant.

Your correspondent, being an unrepentant carnivore, is in the dock, although to be fair this is a pretty friendly court.

First up is Jenny, who tells me she was born vegetarian because of her parents, followers of a religious group which has strict ideas on the subject.

“As a child I would only eat ‘hidden’ eggs,” she explains, “in cakes and pastries. It’s the law of karma: you don’t kill to survive, and killing plants is the lowest form of it.”

Immediately, then, we come to two issues that make this difficult for certain people to accept. Firstly, in an increasingly irreligious world, it goes against the grain for many individuals to be told they shouldn’t do things because someone’s God says so. And even for those of us who are believers, different religions have different rules and regulations.

In addition to that, it is brave of Jenny to put forward a concept that includes plants among the living things we’re supposed to respect and not harm.

Religion being such a contentious subject, perhaps it’s best to respectfully accept Jenny’s beliefs and move on to aspects of veganism that the general public can more easily relate to. She points out that for the rest of St Maarten’s vegan group, religion is not a factor.

“lt’s what’s going on around us in the world,” she says. “The way we treat animals.”

The driving factor for many vegetarians and vegans is this issue of cruelty to other creatures. It is something that most of us probably sweep under the carpet and try not to think about.

But then there is our own welfare, a subject much dearer to our hearts. How would our health improve if we non-vegans cleaned up our act and gave animals a break?

“Hormones in milk,” is the immediate response. “There is so much stuff in the milk nowadays. At home we drink almond milk, coconut milk, occasionally soy, because we found we were getting infections, there was mucus build-up, there was a lot going on, so we just changed it.” This is Jenny talking, but Marianne has an even more vivid story of health issues that prompted her to completely reevaluate her diet.

Jackie chips in with the point that cows’ milk is for baby cows, not humans.

Our three vegans all being professional-standard cooks who prepare food for customers, it is refreshing to hear that they make their own dairy substitutes including cheese from ingredients such as cashews. And what about the rennet, the enzyme that turns milk into cheese and is traditionally taken from a cow’s stomach lining?

"Agar-agar," the ladies chorus, explaining that this is derived from certain seaweeds, but then they point out that vegan cheese is not made the same as conventional cheese anyway.

And there lies a key point. Anyone who has ever tried to give a vegan the same meal as a carnivore is doomed to fail. You can give them a Portobello mushroom when everyone else is having steak, but it is better to play to the strengths of vegan cuisine, and that means learning what to use and how to use it.

Butter is another thing on the black list here, obviously because it is made from milk, but the other word that crops up is cholesterol, a common bugbear in the modern age. And then there is red meat, which is a cause of concern among vegans, not least for its fat content.

Ironically, Hurricane Irma may have proved a bit of a watershed in this island, with a huge amount of meat and fish being spoiled when the power went down, prompting people to make better use of what they had.

Veganism is a subject that goes far beyond the scope of an article such as this, and fortunately help is at hand.

As part of Vegan Week, the local group is holding two events. On Saturday 1 November there will be a pop-up dinner at Mandarin Panasian, Port de Plaisance at 7pm. Tickets are $50; contact veganSXM@gmail.com /+1(721)580-6946.

Sunday 4 November sees a day of vegan activity at Belair Community Center from 10am to 3pm. There will be lectures, cooking demonstrations, food and product stalls and a vegan burger competition.
Tucked away, high above the noisy streets of Marigot, is the studio of an internationally acclaimed artist. Jean-Michel Lengrand’s work is available through select dealers in Europe and the US, and yet the new pieces – of which there is a steady stream – are produced in the unlikely environs of the apartment he shares with his wife Dominique.

Lengrand works from six in the morning till 8:30 in the evening – an astonishing regime for a man in his sixties. The apartment, although not huge, has enough space for a small studio and another room where a heavy steel press sits, on which he produces prints of his etchings.

Works in progress center around his current style: the naked female form adorned with zebra stripes, and a flick through his catalog, which Dominique rustles up for me at the drop of a hat before emailing me a comprehensive selection of material, shows a fertile imagination that plays with reality, challenging and teasing the viewer. Noah’s ark as a Viking-style longboat made of books; a nun-like figure displaying her breasts, with here a nod to the great Impressionists and there an effortless twist on the Old Masters.

Lengrand’s interest in the female nude brings with it the need for a suitable model with not just the body for it but the confidence to bare all in the name of art. The position is currently filled by a young lady whose main job is as a stripper.

In addition to the paintings and etchings, he shows me some small bronze sculptures, also of naked women.

It is natural for us to want to put a name to an artist’s style, so I ask him how he would describe it. The word that comes first is surrealism, which is how many people categorize him, but Lengrand doesn’t agree. Surrealism, he asserts, is the art of the unplanned. The term he prefers for his work is metaphysical.

“For everything I produce I give an explanation,” he says. “People like to have things explained. So I tell them what was in my mind when I began the piece, even if that was nothing, and I say how I see it now it’s finished.”

When Lengrand’s style was establishing itself he decided it would be useful to analyze his dreams, so he sought the help of an 85-year-old retired psychiatrist.

At this point he goes into a lengthy and scholarly discussion of art in general. Surrealism, he says, began at the same time as Sigmund Freud came to prominence, and he was more interested in the great Austrian psychoanalyst than the painters, although he did, of course, study what Salvador Dali and the others were doing.

Lengrand’s formal art education took place at the Academy Farrey in Montmartre and then at the Mousssais Academy in Bourges, both of which are now defunct.

Just as the erudite analysis and the thick French accent are becoming hard to follow, light relief is introduced by the third member of the household: a parrot named Cajou.

“He speaks French and English,” Dominique assures me, but Cajou refuses to co-operate, restricting himself instead to his impression of a wheeeoo wheeoo police siren.

Jean-Michel Lengrand was born in Paris in 1955 to very young parents and was raised at first by his grandparents. Grandpa André Lengrand was quite an artist himself, as evidenced by a big, classical painting of his that hangs in the Lengrands’ bedroom. A dark and atmospheric view of the Seine with the rich stonework of the riverside buildings and a bridge, it could hardly be more different from Jean-Michel’s work, yet the talent that passed down to the grandson is quite clear.

André, though, was a businessman who painted in his spare time, and when Jean-Michel announced to the family that he was going to be a full-time painter, he was met with the age-old opposition of “get a proper job”. The young man’s answer was similarly typical – he ran away from home, only to be returned eventually by the gendarmes. André finally intervened on his grandson’s behalf and Jean-Michel’s studies duly began, leading to a highly successful career that has taken him to many countries, initially Holland and Germany, an earlier stay here in St-Martin, a spell in Morocco, and various parts of the US. That career shows no sign of slowing down.

While the images Lengrand creates gleam with modernity, he is a keen student of the techniques and materials of the past, experimenting with gums and papers that owe nothing to any 21st century stationery store. He shows me ragged-edged papers with large fibers strewn through them and explains how he prepares the wood he likes to paint on sometimes to get unusual textures.

This, along with the sheer volume of work he has produced, reveals a man who not only loves what he does but considers himself extremely fortunate to have been able to devote his life to it.

He speaks frankly about the fact that he is so prolific, and of the vital relationships in the artist’s life – those with his collectors and art dealers. The popular image of the artist as a sensitive soul who can only work when the muse is with him has no place in Lengrand’s world. He feels a responsibility to his collectors and also to himself. Each of the thousands of pieces he has produced is catalogued. He knows the when and the where, for whom and how much.

As is the case with the modest apartment in Marigot, the fact that he chooses this island as his base is something of an accolade, even if it feels somehow incongruous. In addition to his international market and exhibitions, Lengrand has a permanent exhibition, refreshed every two months, at Hotel Mercure, Nettle Bay, where locals and tourists alike can admire the Zebra series and other pieces.
Drive Your Own Boat on a Guided Tour

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(wave runner) and a classic run-about with an outboard engine. It takes only a few minutes of instructions to master operation of the vessel with no license is needed, and yet; these little boats zip along with great temperramenti, reaching speeds of almost 50 km/h (30 mph).

Today, we participated in a Rhino Safari, where a whole fleet of these boats are guided along the coastline of St. Maarten/St-Martin to some of the best snorkeling spots. We arrived at 9:45 AM to check-in at the Rhino Safari docks on the lagoon front in Cole Bay (located right behind the well-known Pineapple Pete restaurant).

We joined a group of eight visitors and settled down on benches in the shade. First, we each received a lifejacket and a complete set of snorkeling gear, followed by basic operating instructions: throttle lever forward accelerates, pulling it back into neutral will instantly slow down the boat. Easy enough.

Now we were introduced to our guide, who would drive the lead boat. On a chart the itinerary was laid out, which would take us along the Northern coast of the island. The use of five simple hand signals was drilled into us: "in line", "stop", "need help", "speed up" and finally the all-important, "I see but-naked people".

At last, we could board the boats to get the hang of basic operations. We all had to take a practice lap away from the dock, while a professional photographer used the opportunity to capture these anxious moments in great detail. At the end of the Safari, these images are available to purchase as a framed high-quality print for the fair price of $15 USD.

The fleet was now ready to depart; all boats were lined up behind each other. We drove past the anchored yachts in Simpson Bay Lagoon to cross into the waters of the French side and towards Marigot. We ran past mega-yacht marinas, and saw a few wrecked boats, sunken by the hurricane season of 2017. Once in Marigot, we entered a channel leading into the open ocean - a thrill with adrenaline kicking in, as the waves picked up and let us bounce a bit.

Our final destination was Creole Rock, known as one of the island's best snorkeling and diving spots. On our way along the Northern coast and with the island of Anguilla visible to port, we passed the beaches of Friar's Bay and Happy Bay until we arrived at Grand Case and we were finally at Creole Rock. This beach-less islet is located only a few hundred meters off the coast.

Before we started exploring the deep blue, water bottles were handed out to help us rehydrate in the hot Caribbean sun. Once in the water, the aquatic life surrounding us was amazing; colorful parrot fish were busy nipping on corals, schools of yellowtail snapper passed us and elegant stingrays lazily moved about.

The hour of snorkeling went by fast, and it was time to return to the Rhino docks in Cole Bay. The ride back was decidedly more comfortable, as we were now going with the direction of wind and waves. After the group had proven to the guide on the way to Creole Rock that we had acquired basic competence in operating the boats, we were given a bit more freedom to enjoy their performance.

Docking was easy with dock hands assisting us. And it was great to find fresh water showers to rinse off the salty crust which had formed on our skin. We bought the picture which was taken earlier and we were delighted to find out that we received another five images in digital form included in the price.

Rhino Safari was a wonderful experience, combining the fun of operating one's own boat with the advantage of seeing the island's lagoon and coastline. Throw in a full hour of underwater exploration and the Rhino Safari package is hard to beat.
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