Deck the Halls with our Holiday Shopping Guide

"Fa La La La La, La La La La" softly plays as background holiday music, the aroma of vanilla and cinnamon wafting through the air and shoppers bustling about the mall- this is the typical signal in the United States of the start of holiday shopping. But, when you are in St. Maarten/St-Martin where there is no snow to be found, and rum instead of hot cocoa; where can you find that perfect gift? Here is your go-to guide to holiday shopping while on island.

Tommy Bahama and Lily Pulitzer
Ditch the warm winter clothes for cooler clothes with a tropical vibe. This also serves as a terrific gift to remind everyone back home that you just enjoyed a fantastic vacation in the tropics. No other brands conjure up thoughts of coconut drinks and palm trees swaying in the wind like Tommy Bahama and Lily Pulitzer.

Who Put the 'Black' in Black Friday?
Arguably the most popular shopping day of the year, the day after American Thanksgiving has been dubbed "Black Friday". But, how did it get this name?

By Chris Morvan
Read on Page 7

Learn to Sail: Sint Maarten Yacht Club
The St. Maarten Yacht Club provides sailing lessons for the young and young at heart. If you want to learn to sail or want your youngster to participate, SMYC is the place.

By Leslie Hickerson
Read on Page 4

Continued on Page 5

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Letter From the Editor

November 23, 2018

Thank you for choosing ST-MAARTEN.COM Weekly Edition as your newspaper. I hope you enjoy reading about St. Maarten/St-Martin from our unique perspective and that you gain insight as to what island life is all about.

If you would like to continue reading our paper when off island, please scan the QR code to the right with your smart phone for our electronic version.

With Black Friday finally here, the holiday season has begun. This issue focuses on the kick-off of this favorite time of year. I urge you to visit our advertisers as you purchase your holiday gifts for loved ones (and don't forget yourself!).

Also new to this issue is our two page island map located in the center, page 10 and 11. Our map is designed for you to keep with you in the car as you travel the island.

Wishing you a wonderful week ahead.

Hilary Grant, GIA GG
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.

What does the number on each advertisement stand for?
Please refer to the map on Pages 10/11. Regions of the island are marked with a number which corresponds to the number you see on ads.

Emergency Phone Numbers

Dutch Side
Ambulance: 912 or +1 721 542 2111
Hospital: 910 or +1 721 543-1111
Police: 911 or +1 721 542-2222
Fire Department: 919 or +1 721 545-4222

French Side
Ambulance: +590 (590) 52 00 52
Hospital: +590 (590) 52 26 29
Police: +590 (590) 87 88 33

Entire Island
24 Hour Emergency Pharmacy:
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Learn to Sail: St. Maarten Yacht Club
By Leslie Hickerson

Whether you learn to sail at a young age or later in life, a whole new world will open for you. Opportunities to travel the world, exciting careers, or just a new way to explore our small island will now be available. That is the mission of the St. Maarten Yacht Club Sailing Lessons.

Instructors Reinier Callkoven and Max van den Pol are both focused on creating a new passion for their students while teaching them a life-long skill. Starting as young as seven years old any student that can swim can begin taking classes in the smallest boats called Optimists, or for older students and adult beginner lessons, Lasers.

In these boats the students learn the basics, “How to sail, how to tack, how to go up wind. As soon as they have a basic understanding we go into the more detailed areas. Once they have a certain level we try to introduce racing,” says van den Pol.

Introducing racing to confident sailors keeps them engaged and interested in the sport. It also creates opportunities for those who excel to travel and participate in regattas locally and worldwide.

Over the weekend of November 10th, the Yacht Club hosted their 13th annual Sol Optimist Regatta. In this event, all participants raced in Optimist boats, and a record-breaking amount of people traveled from the islands of Antigua, St. Barth's and St. Kitts compete. This year 35 boats crewed by sailors from the age of seven to fifteen years old were part of the Regatta. Antiguan sailor Theodore Spencer took home the championship for 2018.

Outside of the lessons, events, regattas, races, and fun sails the program is already offering the crew at St. Maarten Yacht Club is hoping to expand to offer their sailing lessons as part of the course work at local schools.

“Other islands are slightly ahead of us, what’s happening there (for example on St. Barth’s and Antigua) sailing is already part of the school curriculum. Instead of a Physical Education class they offer sailing.

Living on an island surrounded by water, usually, after tourism the marine industry is the second biggest industry. So, it makes sense to teach children first how to swim and then how to sail,” states van den Pol.

“I think it should be part of the curriculum. Sailing is a sport that teaches you a lot of things. It’s a sport of discipline, a sport of fair play and sportsmanship, which stand above everything else. It teaches you lessons for life, like how to take care of things. You have a very expensive boat, which you need to take care of. It teaches you a lot of very important fundamentals. Most of all it’s a sport that can lead to a job.”

Currently this program is in its pilot stages with the Sister Regina School where the students attend lessons once per-week as part of their school day. The hope for this program is for it to grow to include five different schools which would each attend lessons one day per week.

Those wishing to sponsor this program should contact the club or the staff to help make this a possibility.

If you are an adult that has yet to learn how to sail the Yacht Club has you covered as well! Contact them to join the adult lessons on Saturday afternoon so you can truly appreciate living on this beautiful island.
Deck the Halls: Our Holiday Shopping Guide

Continued from Page 1

You can find their rum many places on island, but we highly recommend taking a tour of their distillery in Cole Bay, an activity which includes an elaborate rum sampling. You should always taste the goods before you buy, right?

**Ponche Kuba**

Caribbean Feisty Flavors has created a Ponche Kuba with a unique St-Martin spin, thus this rum-based creamy drink now being called Ponche Krema. Think of it as eggnog on steroids. Search on Facebook for Caribbean Feisty Flavors to find places to buy.

**Alexandrite**

If you’re looking for a gift for someone who loves Christmas as much as Buddy the Elf, Alexandrite is the perfect gemstone for them. Green during the day and red at night, this color changing gemstone is reminiscent of the holidays. Alexandrite naturally changes colors between fluorescent and incandescent light due to its complex crystal structure and how it processes the light.

One of the most well-known Alexandrite jewelry brands, Mark Henry, is sold on Front Street at Majesty Jewelers. A phenomenal gem for the jewelry-loving, Christmas obsessed recipient.

**Christmas Tree Ornaments**

What would the holidays be like without having ornaments to hang on the Christmas tree? Shipwreck souvenir shops located in Simpson Bay and Front Street have beautiful ornaments that will commemorate your vacation and dazzle on your Christmas tree.

**Timepieces**

It is now considered passé to check the time on your cell phone; timepieces have made a large comeback in recent years. So, it is time to get some wrist wear.

Jewels by Love specializes in timepieces by the world’s leading manufacturers. If brands like Patek Philippe, Breguet, or Vacheron Constantin instill in you the burning desire to own a piece of ultimate mechanical gadgetry, the passionate staff at Jewels by Love will impress you with the depth of their knowledge.

Shiva’s Gold and Gems on Front Street carries a broad range of brands: If you are in the market for a masterpiece, Shiva’s is your source. Or if a solid watch from Citizen is all you desire, enter the Shiva’s store as well.

Oro Diamante specializes in timepieces with some history: they have a great selection of fully serviced pre-owned watches with much of the inventory being various Rolex models.

Joe’s Jewelry on Front Street boasts a large assortment of timepieces for every budget, with brands like Hamilton, Frederique Constant and Tissot. The sales team is extremely knowledgeable about the brands Joe’s carries and can explain to you the complications on the watch that catches your eye with ease.

**Holiday Cards**

The Good Card shop in Simpson Bay has a plethora of holiday cards ranging from sweet and sentimental, to funny and kitschy. This one-stop shop also has beautiful gift wrap and trinkets to fill up the holiday stockings.

If you want your home or hotel room to smell like the holiday season has arrived, check out their selection of fragrant candles. You’ll be singing Deck the Halls in no time.

**Perfume**

Perhaps you want to gift yourself or the one you love with a new fragrance. Make your own perfume at Tijon Parfumerie in Grand Case. With over 300 scents to choose from, you can mix and match the perfect perfume which makes a whimsical island souvenir and holiday present.

**Smokes**

Andi Sieger’s DAS Cigars is our island’s authentic cigar brand. The locally rolled cigars using premium tobacco have a cult following among connoisseurs. Check DAS Cigars on Facebook to learn where to buy.

Pre-Columbian History on the Island's French Side

Archaeological research during the past ten years confirms that the island’s history predates the 15th Century Spanish Conquest by several hundred years. The oldest known human settlement areas are in the Northern part of the island, in the plain of the Grand Case lagoon. They consist of shell accumulations associated with remnants of rudimentary hewn stone tools, indicating the passage of archaic Indian populations as early as 1300 BC These were hunter-fisher-gatherers, living in semi-nomadic groups, ignorant of pottery and agriculture.

The discovery of the Hope Estate site on a plateau overlooking the Grand Case plain brought evidence that the first ceramics were introduced on our island around 550 BC by groups originating from the Amazonian forest. These farming and pottery-making people came by canoe from the Orinoco delta and settled islands as far as the Greater Antilles. During this period, they established a village on St-Martin which remained occupied until 650 AD. This exceptionally rich site, under excavation for many years, has delivered numerous pottery adorned with paint, incisions, and modeling, and ornaments carved from seashells and stone. Burial sites show evidence of certain rituals, the bodies put to rest in a fetal position and accompanied by offerings.

Other villages would later settle on the shores, as the population grew to be increasingly dependent on the marine environment, which became the major food source.

Around thirty archaeological sites are cataloged on St-Martin, the most recent one, an Arawak village, discovered on a hillside near Baie Rouge. This settlement dates back to 1500 AD. The last indigenous populations of the Caribbean islands were decimated by the colonization process, some taken into slavery in the search for gold, others killed by the various diseases brought over from Europe.
We All Rise Together: Chris Morvan Meets Diane Morano Smith

By Chris Morvan

It is testament to the attraction of this island that yachtsies tend to find their way to St. Maarten and then decide to stay. Some come with a plan, but many just get here, think “Okay, I’d like to stay” and only then start to consider their options.

Such was the case with Random Wind Charters owner Diane Morano Smith. The windswept, sun-burnished woman who established a successful, award-winning business came here almost by chance.

“My then-husband and I were looking for a yacht to sail around the world in,” she explains, “We decided on a 47ft Vagabond and we saw one for sale in St. Maarten, so we came down from Charleston, South Carolina. I was eight months pregnant with my daughter. We immediately fell in love with the old boat, Random Wind, which came with a business attached to it, and the plan was to run it for a few years and then take off. We were going to sail around the world for seven years, home school our children and then come back so our son could graduate from a high school.”

They bought the boat, started running the business and then the couple broke up. It happens.

“So my husband left, then the US economy tanked in 2009,” she says without rancor.

A major decision had to be made, and Diane consulted her seven-year-old son. Did he want to go home and just say, “Well, that was fun” or move onto the boat, because they couldn’t afford the apartment they were living in.

“What little boy wouldn’t say ‘Yay, let’s move onto the boat,’” she says, laughing.

“What little boy wouldn’t say ‘Yay, let’s move onto the boat,’” she says, laughing.

So the seven-year-old boy, the three-year-old girl and the mother moved onto the boat and rode out the financial storm. All was going well until Hurricane Irma, which whisked the Random Wind away, to be found twelve days later, submerged beneath three other boats, despite its having been firmly attached to a hurricane mooring.

Many people would have given up at that point and slunk back home with their hard-luck story, but although obviously being very upset, Diane and the kids were determined to rise again.

Fortunately, the boat was fully insured and Diane received the full payout, but with the need to live for the moment, buy a new boat and start again, the insurance money didn’t leave much to spare.

“But we bought the new boat and we’ve done really well,” she says happily. “We do day charters for people either staying on the island or on the cruise ships. We take them sailing, we’ve got all the scuba gear, a stand-up paddle board and a kayak.”

Random Wind’s USP is a Tarzan swing, on which guests (usually after a demonstration by Diane or her crew) can swing out and fly into the ocean. There’s an open bar and fresh-cooked food for lunch.

There’s a touch of the hippy about Diane and it rubs off on the company, whose mission statement is:

“to bring joy to those who board our boat as well as to those we encounter on land.”

With the children’s education to consider, Diane currently lives in the US, leaving the business in the trusted hands of a skipper and crew, and visiting from time to time to help out.

Her personal philosophy is, “We all rise together”, and she enjoys helping others whenever possible.

“I never wanted to be the successful business person who does well while others suffer” is how she sums it up.


Who Put the 'Black' in Black Friday?

By Chris Morvan

Continued from Page 1

It could be argued that a name is just a name, but to those of an inquisitive nature that is not enough. Take Black Friday, for instance, which is a happy day for shoppers in the US and increasingly abroad.

But surely black days are bad days. When hijacked airliners began plowing into buildings on 9/11 it was a black day for America.

As recently as 1975 there was a song called Black Friday by the rock group Steely Dan, and while song lyrics are not always to be taken at face value, this one was written by two of the smartest men in rock, a couple of intellectuals called Donald Fagen and Walter Becker. Here’s the first verse:

When Black Friday comes
I’ll stand down by the door
And catch the grey men when they
Dive from the fourteenth floor

These grey men were not throwing themselves off tall buildings because they had just bought a nice new suit at 50% off. The Black Friday in question was more likely inspired by the financial crash of 1869 in which two Wall Street financiers attempted to corner the gold market in the US and caused chaos and ruin in the process.

The modern use of the term apparently originated in Philadelphia and was coined by police officers who dreaded the day after Thanksgiving, when hordes of shoppers poured into the city for the annual Army-Navy football game, meaning crowds to control, shoplifters to chase, extra stress and no days off and for the cops.

As is the way of things, the term was misunderstood and reinterpreted until a generally accepted meaning was finally arrived at. Along the way, other theories were put forward.

One of these, taking black to refer to color and ethnicity, proposed that on this day in the 1800s Southern plantation owners could buy slaves at a discounted rate – although this is widely regarded as being completely false (and with far too much genuine racial disharmony in the world, the last thing we need is this kind of troublemaking).

Then there is the plausible but probably made-up theory that this was the day when retailers’ balance sheets finally entered the black rather than the red. Nice idea, but it does sound like something cooked up over a few beers by intelligent people with nothing better to do.

Whatever the origin, Black Friday is here to stay and seems to be good for everyone, so the blacker it is, the better.
The Unique St. Maarten/St-Martin Crossword Puzzle

Find out if you are a truly knowledgeable about our region and its culture, history and geography.

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

For example, if we ask 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 the island. If you detect an error, drop us a line at info@st-maarten.com. But please be aware that some of the questions are bit tricky on purpose. Good luck!

**Puzzle Solution on Page 15**

---

**ACROSS**

1. Most common currency on Sint Maarten
6. French-side gas station with convenience store
7. Sport played at Mullet Bay
8. Not a watch, but better - sold at jewels by Love
11. Male sheep
13. Who is Willem-Alexander to Sint Maarten?
16. The highest mountain of The Netherlands
17. A farm won in a lottery but missspelled
19. Tiny bird with whizzing wings
20. Floating bar
21. Second part of Harley's name
22. From scuba to catamaran trips, all in one shop

**DOWN**

1. In the water, but not a fish
2. Ferry to St. Barths
3. What do you watch from this beach bar, where you can also see the planes?
4. Established jeweler at the end of the alphabet
5. Our largest car dealership
7. Famous for power outages
9. Who is Macron to Saint Martin?
10. Our island's national tree
12. What is the type of entertainment at Red Diamond?
13. Official name for beach paddle ball
14. Electronic store with two outlets
15. Carib/Mex restaurant in Simpson Bay
18. National bird of St. Maarten

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2. **Snoopy’s**
   - **Location:** Bar and Restaurant at the Bridge to Snoopy Island.
   - **Specials:** Great food, happy hour, live entertainment.
   - **Phone:** +1 721 545-4202

3. **RDVous Lounge**
   - **Location:** Porto Cupecoy
   - **Specials:** Enjoy the elegance of marina dining.
   - **Phone:** +1 721 545-3070

4. **The Boon**
   - **Location:** Right on pristine Simpson Bay Beach.
   - **Specials:** Casual gourmet bistro, open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.
   - **Phone:** +1 721 545-3070

5. **mélange**
   - **Specials:** Steaks, Seafood, Grille.
   - **Phone:** +1 721 545-3070

6. **Bistrot Caraibes**
   - **Location:** Grand Case
   - **Phone:** +590 590 290 829 or +590 590 536 144

7. **Lagoones Bistro-Bar**
   - **Specials:** Coffee, Lunch, Tapas, Dinner, and more crazy good sunsets on the Lagoon.

8. **Mario Bistro**
   - **Location:** Porto Cupecoy
   - **Specials:** Blend of French, Asian, and Caribbean cuisine.
   - **Phone:** +1 721 523-2760

9. **Little Mobay**
   - **Location:** Maho Village next to supermarket
   - **Specials:** Authentic Jamaican cuisine.
   - **Phone:** +1 721 545-0279

10. **Orient Village Plantation Restaurant Bar & Lounge**
    - **Location:** Simpson Bay
    - **Specials:** Authentic Caribbean cuisine.
    - **Phone:** +1 721 527-5019

11. **Pineapple Pete**
    - **Location:** Serving Lunch and Dinner Non-Stop!
    - **Phone:** +1 721 545-3070

12. **NoWhere Special**
    - **Location:** Happy hour from 4 PM to 7 PM
    - **Phone:** +1 721 544-2440

13. **Calimex Jimmy’s**
    - **Location:** Home of the Margarita!
    - **Phone:** +1 721 545-3070

14. **Calypso Rum Bar & Grill**
    - **Location:** Open 11 AM to 2 AM
    - **Phone:** +1 721 544-3070

15. **Forty niner’s**
    - **Location:** Open 10 AM to 11 PM
    - **Phone:** +1 721 545-3070

16. **Marina and Lagoon View Dining**
    - **Location:** Open for dinner (Sunday Lunch)
    - **Phone:** +1 721 523-2760

17. **St. Maarten’s Best International Restaurant**
    - **Location:** Open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.
    - **Phone:** +1 721 545-3070

18. **The Boon**
    - **Location:** Open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.
    - **Phone:** +1 721 545-3070

19. **mélange**
    - **Location:** Open 5:30 PM to late.
    - **Phone:** +1 721 545-3070

20. **Pineapple Pete**
    - **Location:** Serving Lunch and Dinner Non-Stop!
    - **Phone:** +1 721 545-3070

21. **NoWhere Special**
    - **Location:** Happy hour from 4 PM to 7 PM
    - **Phone:** +1 721 545-3070

22. **Calypso Rum Bar & Grill**
    - **Location:** Open 11 AM to 2 AM
    - **Phone:** +1 721 544-2440

23. **Forty ninder’s**
    - **Location:** Open 10 AM to 11 PM
    - **Phone:** +1 721 545-3070

24. **Marina and Lagoon View Dining**
    - **Location:** Open for dinner (Sunday Lunch)
    - **Phone:** +1 721 523-2760
Where to Find the Dutch on St. Maarten

Even though St. Maarten is part of the Kingdom of The Netherlands, the mountainous terrain dotted with palm trees and English as the common language hide its Dutchness pretty well. One way to experience that The Netherlands are still a force behind the local administration is if you are dragged into court, where the prosecutor, judge and - hopefully - your attorney speak Dutch.

The other and more pleasant possibility to immerse yourself into Dutch culture is a visit to Marty's in Simpson Bay. With the slogan 'Go Dutch!', Marty's is the preferred location to watch football games (not of the US-American variety and we do avoid the term soccer on purpose to describe 'proper' football).

If the Oranjes are playing, a good part of the crowd will wear the color orange, and this is your first hint that you have entered our island's official bubble of the Dutch universe. Since young Formula One driver Max Verstappen has become a top-contender in Grand Prix racing, Marty's is also the place to watch the races.

When there are no sporting events to attend to, Marty's attracts patrons with live entertainment of different themes. From disco to Latin night, some of the island's most renowned musicians perform at Marty's.

Dutch cuisine has never attempted to gain the status of French or Italian cooking. Pretensions and fancy rituals are not part of the Dutch mindset, which is usually well grounded and down to earth. The tasty and straightforward comfort food reflects this. Marty's has a complete menu of Nederlandse dishes, and the chef goes to great lengths to guarantee authentic flavors. That's why you'll find the island's best French Fries at Marty's. After all, Pommes Frites are a Belgian/Dutch invention, and they still know how to do it better.

Marty's Go Dutch Bar and Restaurant is located next to Toppers and Rhythm & Booze and in the back of Kimsha Beach. The atmosphere is very casual, drinks and food are reasonably priced.
Adventures in Sex and Dating on St. Maarten/St-Martin
Our New Regular Column Dishes on Island Dating

By Leslie Hickerson

Traditionally a double date means that two couples are going out together, each going home with their original partner (again, traditionally). But sometimes things just don’t work out that way. Occasionally it works out that one person had two dates at the same place. Story time!

Double Date
Jessica went on a first date with Peter. The date was nice and they got along but later in the evening Peter went on and on about how terrible his ex-girlfriend was. Not a total deal breaker but a bit of a red flag. He complained ad nauseam about how mean she was and how difficult she was to deal with. Jessica decided to overlook it because they had gotten along so well and they continued to casually date.

Eventually she asked him to an event and Peter said he couldn’t go with a long excuse. No problem. Jessica decides to attend on her own, independent woman for the win.

Low and behold Peter is at the same event...shocker! Not only is he there but he brought along a date. Guess who it is.... That’s right. The ‘Ex’ girlfriend he whined about on their first date. I guess he was too busy thinking of the excuse as to why he couldn’t go with Jessica to figure out the fact that he would be attending the same event with his Ex and would run into her! Not smart.

So what happens next? Peter thought he could handle the situation by sending a quick text to Jessica. “I’m here. Will talk to you tomorrow.”

Luckily Jessica is not the type to put up with that type of nonsense. She came over and introduced herself to the girlfriend and told Peter, “Enjoy your f***ing life!”

Get it girl- you dodged that bullet. Lesson to be learned: This island is small. If there is an event, it’s likely the only one that day and you will be seen.

St. Maarten Crossword Puzzle - Solution

We publish the solution to our crossword puzzle in the same issue as the puzzle itself.

This is for a good reason: Many of our readers are vacationers who won't have a chance to wait for the next issue of St-Maarten.com Weekly Edition.
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Where Are the Deals? Are Real Estate Services Lacking?

Edward MacMan came to St. Maarten/St-Martin with a single mission: to buy himself a nice, comfy place for spending part of the year on this island. As a seasoned hospitality industry executive, he has the means and of late, also the time to enjoy his life stretched out over various locations around the globe. He has seen it all. His lifestyle choices could be described as hedonistic, but he is also realistic in expectations and not the type to enjoy pretensions.

There is a budget for his real estate purchase, and it’s not much, about USD 200k. Should be enough for a nice little condo, since many of the storm-torn neighborhoods have not been adequately cleaned up, never mind rebuild. There must be a multitude of deals out there, MacMan reasoned. Quickly he found out that only a few of the island’s real estate offices are interested in the market below half a million dollars and that he had to visit each of the ones who were willing to concern themselves with more modestly priced units.

Even though he spent a lot of time on St. Maarten, he has been here immediately following the passing of Irma, and is well connected in the business community; the absence of a Multiple Listing Service surprised him.

"In the US, properties for sale or rent are all listed in one giant database. Licensed realtors have access to the complete national inventory, and they split commissions. Some are better in finding new listings, some are good in selling them. All make their money, and the market turns fast."

MacMan went from one real estate office to the next, to make appointments which turned into disappointments.

"I have to admit I’m frustrated. A home listed as reduced in price due to some hurricane damage turned out to be nothing more than a building lot with a huge pile of rubble on it... nothing there to renovate. Other places claiming damage reductions would come out much more expensive after fixing them up than they could have sold at peak market in the best of times."

What caused disappointment for Edward MacMan might be a positive sign regarding the general St. Maarten real estate market, explains Arun Jagtiani. "But first we must address the fact that Mr. MacMan might have come with unrealistic expectations. And for us realtors, it is of utmost importance to squelch these kinds of wrong starting points for a property search."

"The values are holding up, because we have a reduced inventory, but still good demand. Everybody presently looking at properties knows that the island will bounce back as a top location in the Antilles and this is what keeps the prices steady."

"What is perceived as bad news by Mr. MacMan is actually good news for the real estate market," adds Ritika Nanwani Head Broker of Century21 Island Realty.

"Among the more modestly priced properties, there are no fire sales. Owners trust that the island will make a full comeback. Where we do see some deals are more at the high end.

There are more townhomes and condominiums on the French side listed within the price range of MacMan. Slow insurance payouts are the primary reason many properties are still in shambles. Some individual units in larger developments were restored by their owners. However, the overall progress in rebuilding is painfully slow - as even the French president Macron noted with anger in his recent visit.

MacMan remarks that real estate agents on the French side seem “to be only interested in their listings and don’t have any understanding of the larger picture.”

"Yes, I liked a unit in a certain condo building. But the rest of the project was still badly damaged, and the listing agent hasn’t done any background research to find out when the remaining apartments would be presentable again. I don’t want to be surrounded by trash for years to come. There is a reason why I’m not looking for property in Bagdad, but St-Martin!"

He said that he expected a real estate agent to do some homework before showing a listing.

"Unlocking the door and pointing out where the kitchen is, that’s just not good enough to earn a commission."

Ritika Nanwani can understand MacMan’s frustration: "The real estate industry is entirely unregulated. That's why it is so important for all agents in our Century 21 office to strictly follow the standards of highly governed markets to guarantee true professionalism and outstanding transparency to our clients."

Arun Jagtiani has similar views: "Island Real Estate Team is a leading local organization. The reason we were able to grow as a company over the past decade is based on our policy of strict honesty in dealing with both sellers and buyer."

There is a happy ending to our story: Edward MacMan found a beautiful townhouse in Orient Village. He had a phone conference with the owner who lives in Europe and had never seen the home because it was an investment based on French tax incentives. An offer was accepted and the contract is now in processing.

"Only four months until closing... there is a backlog in the administration," says Edward MacMan, still smiling.

Once he has settled in and started to enjoy life on Orient Beach, we are permitted to call this man, now sporting shorts and flip-flops, Eddie.
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