Why the Heck Do We Decorate Trees for Christmas?

Long before the dawn of Christianity, year-round trees and greens were of significant value to people during the cold months. While we believe it was a modern-day idea to decorate homes with wreaths, pine trees and spruce, ancient people hung the evergreen branches over their doors. One thought was that the boughs would ward away evil spirits, ghosts and illness.

Winter solstice falls annually on December 21 or 22 each year, giving us the shortest day and longest night in the Northern hemisphere. Another group of ancient people believed that the sun god had become sick, causing winter to flourish and flowers and trees to lose their leaves. They decided to celebrate solstice so that the sun god would heal and evergreen branches were a reminder that when he was stronger summer would come back bringing lush greenery to them again.

If we look to Rome, early dwellers marked the winter solstice with a feast in honor of the god of agriculture. Learning from their predecessors they knew that farms would soon be bountiful. To celebrate this idea early Romans decorated their homes with (wait for it…) evergreens.

But if we want to find the origin of Christmas trees as we know it, 16th century Germany is the place. The traditions of displaying evergreen trees and branches took shape as devout Protestant Christians brought them into the home.

Where Is This Traffic Coming From?

A tiny island in the Caribbean Sea with two countries and traffic rules which are not entirely synchronized: this is Sint Maarten - Saint Martin.

Happy Sustainable Holidays

It is a well-known fact that the waste management on St. Maarten is behind the times. While the landfill on the Dutch side is constantly on fire, we are waiting.

Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center, New York

Full Article on Page 20  By Leslie Hickerson  Continued on Page 7
Letter From the Editor
December 21, 2018

Christmas is finally (almost) here! I hope you are entertained with our Christmas issue; it was enjoyable to put together.

With less than two weeks left in 2018, I am delighted to see that our island is in full swing, filled with people visiting who love our island as much as we do. Thank you to our readers who are tourists for choosing St. Maarten/St-Martin.

A special note to our advertisers, our printer located right here on island and the businesses who proudly carry our publication: you have been instrumental in the Weekly Edition's ability to share our unique island perspective. We look forward to continuing to work with you in 2019.

All of our previous issues are available on the ST-MAARTEN.COM website. If you enjoyed our publication and would like to continue to read from home, wherever that may be, please use the QR code to the right to access our digital publication.

Wishing you and yours a Merry Christmas!

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.

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.

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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:
+1 721 581-6243

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Twelve Days of Christmas:

On the first day of Christmas my true love sent to me: a rum punch at Red Piano!

On the second day of Christmas my true love sent to me: Good Cards for gifts and a rum punch at Red Piano!

On the third day of Christmas my true love sent to me: Wine from GrapeWine, Good Cards for gifts and a rum punch at Red Piano!

On the fourth day of Christmas my true love sent to me: Billiards at Q Lounge, Wine from GrapeWine, Good Cards for gifts and a rum punch at Red Piano!

On the fifth day of Christmas, my true love sent to me: Jewelry at Shiva's! Billiards at Q Lounge, Wine from GrapeWine, Good Cards for gifts and a rum punch at Red Piano!

On the sixth day of Christmas, my true love sent to me: Drinks at Ocean Lounge, Jewelry at Shiva's! Billiards at Q Lounge, Wine from GrapeWine, Good Cards for gifts and a rum punch at Red Piano!

Visit our store to receive your Free Island Charm!

Please note: Oro Diamante is not an official ROLEX dealer.

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On the seventh day of Christmas my true love sent to me: Art from The Art Box, Drinks at Ocean Lounge, Jewelry at Shiva’s! Billiards at Q Lounge, Wine from GrapeWine, Good Cards for gifts and a rum punch at Red Piano!

On the ninth day of Christmas my true love sent to me: Dancing at Lotus, Dine at Sale & Pepe, Art from The Art Box, Drinks at Ocean Lounge, Jewelry at Shiva’s! Billiards at Q Lounge, Wine from GrapeWine, Good Cards for gifts and a rum punch at Red Piano!

On the tenth day of Christmas my true love sent to me: Rum from Topper’s Rhum, Dancing at Lotus, Dine at Sale & Pepe, Art from The Art Box, Drinks at Ocean Lounge, Jewelry at Shiva’s!

On the twelfth day of Christmas my true love sent to me: Oro Diamante’s watches, Taco Macho’s arepas, Rum from Topper’s Rhum, Dancing at Lotus, Dine at Sale & Pepe, Art from The Art Box, Drinks at Ocean Lounge, Jewelry at Shiva’s! Billiards at Q Lounge, Wine from GrapeWine, Good Cards for gifts and a rum punch at Red Piano!
Donations for Christmas

Holiday HOPE

Visitor or resident, there are plenty of opportunities to help others for the holiday season. Pre-2017 hurricane season, there were people in need on our tiny island; and certainly, since the passing of Irma we have more that require assistance.

Posted in front of St. Maarten’s Carrefour weekend after weekend has been the St. Maarten’s Leo Club, a younger division of the Lion’s Club. The Lion’s Club states that, “As the youngest members of Lions Clubs International, Leos embody the best qualities of our incredible organization. They are devoted young people who realize the power of action. Together, Leos and Lions form a powerful partnership—one of mutual respect, where Lions learn from the innovative insights of Leos, and where Le- 
os gain access to the proven strategies of those who’ve successfully served the world for decades.”

You might have been handed a slip of paper with a list of canned and dry goods that you could purchase and donate to the Leo Club. On the list were items such as canned vegetables, pastas, rice, beans and ramen noodles. If you took the time to donate to them so that they could disperse the items to those in need, thank you. If you tucked the list in your pocket and thought, “next time”, this weekend is the time. Purchase items and if you cannot locate a Leo Club member, contemplate dropping it off at the Lion’s Club or at one of the churches that makes meals for those who are in need.

The Red Piano

Church on Monday

Christmas Eve
December 24th

Voted “Best Live Music Venue” on St. Maarten!

Enjoy Live Music Nightly

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Bacardi Red Piano Rum Punch
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The Red Piano presents Church on Monday

Monday December 31st

Countdown to the New Year

Champagne Toast at midnight

Party Favors

VIP Tables Available for Reservations for $75.
Includes a Free Bottle of CHAMPAGNE.

*Tables accommodate 4 people max.
   Reservations must be present by 10pm.

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Why the Heck Do We Decorate Trees for Christmas?

Continued from Page 1

Reformer Martin Luther is credited to have been the first to add candle ‘lights’ to the tree.

The tale says that Martin was composing a sermon one winter’s night while walking toward his home. He looked up from his intense focus and was overcome by the twinkling of the stars above the trees.

Martin wanted to experience this again with his family, so once the tree was in place in his home he placed candles amongst the branches.

Funnily enough, when Christmas trees were first introduced in America, it was not accepted and seen as a pagan symbol from the history and origin. By the late 1840s the Christmas tree was finally established as a holiday tradition.

Christmas trees are grown in every US state including Alaska and Hawaii. A recent poll showed that over 100,000 people are employed in the holiday tree industry. The sales of trees started in the 1850s. Taking six to eight years on average to grow, the trees are generally cut before transportation; although some farms allow you to select the tree and cut yourself- if you are wanting to test your lumberjack skills. Otherwise, they are cut by professionals weeks before they hit the Christmas tree lot.

One of the most notable Christmas trees include the Rockefeller Center tree in New York City. This behemoth display is adorned with over 25,000 twinkle lights.
Surprise at Orange Grove

The Orange Grove Shopping Center in Cole Bay is the location of the island's latest home-shopping center: Omni opened an impressive store at the former Cole Bay location of Windward Island Bank. The store features home-entertainment, Samsung phones and tablets and all forms of appliances. Additionally, located on the ground floor, there is a section of beds and mattresses.

This generous space is well hidden by the building's exterior design and impresses with its layout and quality of products featured. Omni considers last weekend's soft opening as a preview of the store before the Grand Opening in January 2019. Not all details were finished, but to give Christmas shoppers some options, the company created amazing deals and combined them with low monthly installments. If you are in the market for a new TV set, check Omni now. Having after-Christmas specials before the holidays are a sweet treat.

But the big surprise is a large and well-lit furniture showroom on the second floor.

1
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Adult Entertainment in the Heart of Simpson Bay
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1
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The Unique St. Maarten/St-Martín 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-Martín and the neighboring islands. For example, if we ask for an island directly 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 a bit tricky on purpose. Good luck!

Puzzle Solution on Page 17

ACROSS
1 Two-masted sailboat
5 Capital of the nation St-Martín belongs to
8 French phone company
9 What is Ronny Santana?
14 What is the Florin?
15 Not Windward
16 Active volcano in 160 km (100 miles) distance to SXM
17 Fish, also called Dolphin (not the mammal)
18 Missing at Rainforest Adventures
22 Reason to visit St. Maarten
23 Dutch meatball snack
24 What is an iguana?

DOWN
2 Public transport not available on SXM
3 Don't step into it on the seabed
4 Buy a Hyundai
5 Unpleasant public institution in Point Blanche
6 Aft-most part of a boat
7 Snake hunting mammal
10 Origin of steel-drum music
11 Restaurant in Simpson Bay and Philipsburg
12 What's the title of the thirsty aristocrat in Simpson Bay?
13 What was Loterie Farm in the old days?
19 New home center in Cole Bay
20 Food at Wasabi Charlie
21 Windward Island Bank
Merry Christmas from your Christmas Tree

Seven long years I have waited for this moment. Each year I grew taller and fuller, ready to fulfill my destiny. I had heard stories year after year how I would be taken to a new family of a human variety. I would live in a home with gleaming white snow outside and a fire in the fireplace. I could not wait for it to finally be my turn.

2018 was my time! I said good-bye to my family, waving a limb at them as I was plucked from the forest and carried off to a... shipping container? Where was the magical snow gently falling from the sky? Maybe they didn’t realize I was a Christmas tree and the driver had taken me to the wrong place.

Frightened, I laid in darkness for what seemed to be weeks on end, gently rocking back and forth as I was carried to a strange land. When the cargo doors were finally opened, I peered outside to see an abundance of sunshine and these peculiar skyscraper trees that only had branches at the top and large decorations hanging from them (I later found out these were palm trees).

Well, I must make the best of it. With my long needles, and full branches I was surely more prized to have than those palm trees that swayed in the wind. My dream of snowflakes was crushed and I would have to make do in this tropical climate.

After the long voyage, I finally arrived at the market-ready to be chosen for my new home. Once I was there, I made sure each of my branches was perfectly placed, my needles firmly attached and awaiting jewelry to be placed on it. My excitement couldn’t be contained. I stood up straight and tried to look my best every time a human walked by. Surely someone would see how picture-perfect I was.

And now, it’s time— it is finally here! A sweet family plucked me from the rest of my relatives saying, “that’s the one”. I make the long journey to my new home hoping that I will fulfill every expectation that my owners have of me.

Starting at the top and working their way down, glittering white lights are laid on my branches, and I am adorned with jewelry. Beautiful crystal, glass balls and family heirlooms are given to me. Wow- what an honor.

My natural perfume, a woody green scent, fills the house and brings smiles to the faces of adults and children. I feel the most beautiful I have ever felt, and so lucky to be the chosen one.

A couple weeks pass, there is much joy around me. Every evening my twinkling lights are lit to show my beauty.

But sadly, now the newness has worn off. The present are gone that were laid at my feet and I am being stripped of the jewelry that I was entrusted with for a few weeks. What will happen to me now?

Woefully, I am picked up and taken outside and gently laid next to the other remnants of the holiday—wrapping paper and table scraps. Sigh. I guess it was better than being tossed into a fire and burned alive. You ask if it was worth it for a few fleeting moments of realizing my purpose? Absolutely.
Visit the Island's Party and Dining Hot Spots

1. St. Maarten's Best International Restaurant
   - Mexican - Colombian Restaurant & Bar
   - Happy Hour: Beer $2 - Margarita $5
   - Located at the Allegria Resort - enter at security gate - free parking! Call 1 721 553-6322 for reservation

2. 81 Boulevard de Grand Case
   - For Reservations Call +590 590 290 829 or +590 690 536 144
   - Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner (8 AM to 10 PM)
   - 117 Simpson Bay Road, Simpson Bay
   - Call +1 721 545-3070 for reservation

3. Nowhere Special
   - Rum Bar & Grill
   - "Happy Hour from 4 PM to 7 PM"
   - Open 11 AM to 2 AM
   - Airport Road in Simpson Bay close to bridge
   - Call +1 721 544-7440 for reservation

4. The Boon
   - "Right on pristine Simpson Bay Beach!"
   - Casual Gourmet Bistro
   - Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner (8 AM to 10 PM)
   - 117 Simpson Bay Road, Simpson Bay
   - Call +1 721 545-3070 for reservation

5. NOWHERE SPECIAL
   - Rum Bar & Grill
   - "Happy Hour from 4 PM to 7 PM"
   - Open 11 AM to 2 AM
   - Airport Road in Simpson Bay close to bridge
   - Call +1 721 544-7440 for reservation

6. SNOOPY'S
   - Bar and Restaurant at the Bridge to Snoopy Island
   - Great food, great Happy Hour, live entertainment!
   - Welfare Road, Simpson Bay, St. Maarten
   - Call for Reservation +1 721 580-4202

7. The Boon
   - "Right on pristine Simpson Bay Beach!"
   - Casual Gourmet Bistro
   - Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner (8 AM to 10 PM)
   - 117 Simpson Bay Road, Simpson Bay
   - Call +1 721 545-3070 for reservation

8. 81 Boulevard de Grand Case
   - For Reservations Call +590 590 290 829 or +590 690 536 144
   - Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner (8 AM to 10 PM)
   - 117 Simpson Bay Road, Simpson Bay
   - Call +1 721 545-3070 for reservation

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13. 81 Boulevard de Grand Case
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    - Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner (8 AM to 10 PM)
    - 117 Simpson Bay Road, Simpson Bay
    - Call +1 721 545-3070 for reservation

14. NOWHERE SPECIAL
    - Rum Bar & Grill
    - "Happy Hour from 4 PM to 7 PM"
    - Open 11 AM to 2 AM
    - Airport Road in Simpson Bay close to bridge
    - Call +1 721 544-7440 for reservation

15. 81 Boulevard de Grand Case
    - For Reservations Call +590 590 290 829 or +590 690 536 144
    - Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner (8 AM to 10 PM)
    - 117 Simpson Bay Road, Simpson Bay
    - Call +1 721 545-3070 for reservation

16. NOWHERE SPECIAL
    - Rum Bar & Grill
    - "Happy Hour from 4 PM to 7 PM"
    - Open 11 AM to 2 AM
    - Airport Road in Simpson Bay close to bridge
    - Call +1 721 544-7440 for reservation
Happy Sustainable Holidays

Continued from Page 1

By Leslie Hickerson

It is a well-known fact that the waste management on St. Maarten is behind the times. While the landfill on the Dutch side is constantly on fire and we are waiting for the powers that be to come up with a solution, we can do our part by not contributing to the problem.

This season there are a few simple ways to make sure you aren’t the reason Philipsburg fills with black smoke for the holiday season.

Wrapping Paper
Lots of gift-wrap paper is made with plastic and can’t be recycled, neither can bows with glitter and wire, or cards that are shiny and have foil on them. To combat this you can wrap gifts in festive holiday cloth or use all those craft projects the kids bring home! What grandparent wouldn’t love their gift to be wrapped in artwork made by their grandchildren?

Holiday Parties
Throwing a party this holiday season? Make sure you serve your food on plain paper plates or normal ones, not plastic! Skip the straw or opt for a reusable or paper option. When you stock up on food, buy produce without the plastic sack and bring your own grocery bags to pack and bring home.

Skip the Tinsel
The tinsel used for Christmas trees is little strings of plastic and most people don’t reuse tinsel like they do other decorations! When purchasing new decorations choose materials that can biodegrade or be recycled when you are finished with them.

Beach Party Clean Up
Celebrating this year on the beach? Make sure you clean up any debris before you leave. Don’t use plastic decorations or balloons, which can be very harmful to the environment and animals that live there. Take time to pick up before the sun sets, so you don’t leave anything behind accidentally.

Gift the Gift of Conservation
Know someone that is interested in keeping St. Maarten beautiful? Give them one of the following options for their gift this year:

Adopt-A-Shark
Until the end of 2018 you can contact the St. Maarten Nature Foundation to take part in the Adopt-A-Shark program. “By donating a contribution to the Nature Foundation you can adopt a St Maarten shark, you will receive a certificate of adoption and can decide on the name of the shark. As soon as the shark is tagged, updates and pictures about the shark will be sent to you.

With the support of ‘Adopting a Shark’ we can continue our shark research and tagging activities, we will learn more about the sharks in our waters, providing us the knowledge to better protect them” explained Melanie Meijer zu Schlochter. Contact naturfoundationprojects@gmail.com.

The Waste Factory
Located on Front Street, you can find several environmentally friendly gift options like seed bombs, journals made from recycled paper, holiday decorations made from recycled products and much more! They also offer a crafting session (2-hour duration) to make your own Holiday Cards. Contact them via Facebook for more info or stop by.

4Ocean Bracelets
Each bracelet purchased funds the company to clean one pound of garbage from the ocean and coastlines. You can find the bracelets for sale at Cape Café in Maho or through the Nature Foundation in Cole Bay.

Reusable Bags
Perfect for everything from beach days to grocery trips a reusable cloth bag is a great gift for anyone that is eco-friendly.

Joanne Dekker Jewelry
This local St. Maarten artist uses found objects and other materials to create jewelry pieces inspired by nature. Earrings, rings, and bracelets that look like pieces of coral and necklaces with driftwood make beautiful and unique gifts. Joanne Dekker’s artwork is available for purchase at Joga and The Art Box Gallery in Simpson Bay.

Now that you have some ideas on how to reduce your ecological footprint this year it is time to start celebrating! Have a wonderful Holiday Season!
Believing that there is a regular postal service on Sint Maarten is a mistake; yes, there is a post office, and occasionally, a visitor might even find a mailbox. Don't make the error of dropping picture postcards into such a box. They will disappear as if thrown into the trash.

For years, the local Dutch side postal service was operated by foreign corporations. Unfortunately, they were not able to make a cent and abandoned the arrangement so that now the government must support a minimal distribution service.

Locally, utility bills and similar letters are delivered, but the system fails as soon as someone attempts to send mail internationally. And this includes mailing it to the French side, which is only a few kilometers away.

If you have essential documents to be sent to St. Maarten from any international location, please ascertain that your courier service is not using the global postal network! DHL, for example, has such an arrangement and as soon as a parcel or letter is not handled by their system but by the cheaper standard mail channels (ahem, US Postal Service), good luck to ever seeing the item again.

La Poste on the French side is a different story: here we deal with the vast organization of a major nation, and nothing is amiss regarding the reliability of mail delivery. The main downfall are the long lines at the post office, which most certainly discourages any vacationer to waste hours of valuable beach time for the sole purpose of mailing some postcards.

If you belong to the few romantics left who like to send cards to friends and family and to tease them with your fantastic Caribbean vacation, there is an affordable solution: The Business Point at Plaza del Lago at the Simpson Bay Yacht Club. They sell US Mail stamps, and for a minimal fee, transports mail to Miami. This is the ideal locale to drop off letters and cards. The delay will be a maximum of three days. (But you might want to explain to the card's recipients why there is a US stamp on a St. Maarten picture postcard.)

Even more important, The Business Point is also the perfect solution to receive mail; letters or parcels are sent to their Miami address from where they will be forwarded to SXM for a small fee and total reliability.
Thirsty Barons for Sports and Steak

Aristocrats roaming Simpson Bay in search of a drink will now find dehydration relief at Thirsty Barons, but luckily, commoners are welcome as well.

Traveling from the direction of the airport, Thirsty Barons Sports Bar and Grill is located right at the entrance of Simpson Bay. It occupies the upper level of the building shared with Pollos Hermanos.

Walking up the stairs that are decorated with historic photos of St-Martin, you’ll encounter a modern dining room overlooking the lagoon and the end of the airport runway. A few steps further, and you’ll find the spacious bar with comfortable lounges and several high-top tables.

The concept of a sports bar has been pushed up a few notches with Thirsty Barons; by offering a food menu on the fine side of steakhouse dining, in an urban and air-conditioned environment, this restaurant/bar fills a valuable niche in the island’s nightlife scene. There is only so much ‘sand between the toes’ beach bar nightlife the average person enjoys. Sometimes, AC and city attire are a welcomed change for island residents and visitors alike.

The sports element of Thirsty Barons has been handled diligently: there are flat-panel screens mounted in every available spot, and it is virtually impossible to pick a seat were not several screens can be watched simultaneously.

Because the bar stays open until 1:30 AM, Thirsty Baron is the perfect environment to bridge the hours after dinner and before hitting serious nightlife in clubs like Lotus.

Adventures in Sex and Dating on St. Maarten

By Leslie Hickerson

The ever-changing tourist scene on the island makes dating difficult for some and more fun for others. Let’s take Ryan for example. Ryan was a good-looking boat crew member that was lucky enough to stay on the island for an extended period of time. Back in the good old days, when La Bamba was the hottest spot in town, Ryan would never miss a Tuesday Night. Pretty soon he had a reliable routine and could take home a new girl every week. Everything was going smoothly until one unintentional week. Ryan met Jamie who was there for a trip with her friends. They hit it off and instead of a one night stand, Ryan decided to keep it going for the remainder of her stay. After all, why cut off the fun if you don’t have to?

They spent the week meeting for drinks, lounging on the beach and pissing off their roommates by not sleeping when they went to bed. Sadly, for Jamie anyways, it came time for her to go home. Ryan felt a twinge of guilt for how upset she was about leaving, but he was ready to put his party hat back on and find another girl. Sure they had fun, but she understood this was just a vacation fling, right?

Turns out Jamie didn’t think so. Her friends got on the plane and flew away... but that night she turned up at La Bamba. “Surprise baby I decided to stay!!”

All those lines Ryan fed her, Jamie took to heart. She just knew that he would be happy to see her stick around, maybe forever she hoped? According to Ryan he let her down easy and she wasn’t ‘too upset’ about having to buy a second ticket home. We find that hard to believe, but you can decide for yourself if he’s telling the truth. Hopefully he is more careful about the lines he tells girls to get them into bed nowadays.
Keep Your New Jewelry Purchase Twinkling

By Hillary Grant, GIA Graduate Gemologist

When it comes to taking care of your new gleaming jewelry, there are some common mistakes and questions that many people have. Don’t worry! I am here to save your jewelry and ensure that you know exactly what to do to keep your valuables in tip-top shape.

First, it is extremely important to have any jewelry purchase checked and cleaned professionally every six months. A jeweler will check the setting, and ensure that your diamond and gems are safe and that you aren’t missing any prongs.

But what is important to learn for at-home care? First, all jewelry should be put away neatly in a jewelry organizer or box to keep from acquiring scratches, chips or tangling of chains.

Gold
Pure 100%, 24KT gold is extremely soft and not often used in jewelry. We alloy gold with other metals to make it stronger or to change the color of it.

If you have a gold ring that you have had “dipped in white gold”, this is called rhodium plating. Depending on your body’s chemistry, this will wear off over time and reveal a slight tinge of yellow. Let that signal you that it is time to have it done again.

Most jewelry stores in the US will do a ‘refinish to new’; for around $55. They will check the prongs to ensure that the diamonds and gems are secure, polish it and rhodium plate it leaving your jewelry looking fresh as a daisy.

Diamonds
Diamonds are the hardest mineral on earth- only diamond can scratch diamond, so you do not have to worry about reaching into your pocket or your handbag. The diamonds can survive almost anything.

Colored Gemstones
Anything that isn’t a diamond is a ‘softer gem’. Extra special care and attention must be paid to these colorful possessions. Every gemstone has a different hardness, which is specified by the Mohs Hardness Scale; this means that care and cleaning is individual to each gemstone.

If you own an at-home jewelry cleaner, or an ultrasonic to shake the dirt loose, avoid using with your colored gemstones. With so many proprietary blends of cleaners, it is hard to know which ones would damage a gem; and the ultrasonic machine is not soft gemstone friendly.

Instead, use warm, soapy water to clean your colored gemstone jewelry. Do not use a toothbrush or similar product to scrub; it can damage the gem. And harsh chemicals, even ones as common as baking soda, can destroy a beautiful gem.

Tip! Opals are made up of 20% water, and when they get parched they will craze (meaning they break when they dry out). To prevent this from happening, store your opals with a shot glass of water, the opals will soak up that H2O goodness.
Are All Diamonds Priced the Same?

By Hilary Grant, GIA Graduate Gemologist

Diamond is diamond. So, aren’t all shapes of diamonds priced the same? No!

The ‘round brilliant’ diamond was formulated specifically to exact measurements and proportions to allow the diamond to possess the most sparkle and fire.

To achieve this, the diamond cutter must cut away majority of the diamond rough resulting in up to a 70% weight loss from the rough diamond.

Choosing to purchase a fancy-shaped diamond of the same size, color and clarity will be less expensive as the requirements to cut the diamond are less specific and complex.

So, in essence, fancy-shaped diamonds (pear, oval, marquis, heart, emerald, cushion and so on) conserve more weight during the cutting process because of a simplified and less complicated cutting style, which lowers the cost during manufacturing and that savings is passed on to you.

Here is a chart showing the differences in price for shape ONLY, their cut grade, carat weight, color and clarity are exactly the same.

Please note that these prices are subject to change as they are based around what is called a 'rap sheet'. The Rapaport Price List is the diamond industry standard for the pricing of diamonds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shape</th>
<th>Carat</th>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Clarity</th>
<th>Cut Grade</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Round</td>
<td>1.00 ct</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>IF/VVS1</td>
<td>Very Good (VG)</td>
<td>$12,191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princess</td>
<td>1.00 ct</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>IF/VVS1</td>
<td>Very Good (VG)</td>
<td>$10,755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerald</td>
<td>1.00 ct</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>IF/VVS1</td>
<td>Very Good (VG)</td>
<td>$7,866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asscher</td>
<td>1.00 ct</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>IF/VVS1</td>
<td>Very Good (VG)</td>
<td>$6,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cushion</td>
<td>1.00 ct</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>IF/VVS1</td>
<td>Very Good (VG)</td>
<td>$7,293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marquise</td>
<td>1.00 ct</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>IF/VVS1</td>
<td>Very Good (VG)</td>
<td>$7,922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radiant</td>
<td>1.00 ct</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>IF/VVS1</td>
<td>Very Good (VG)</td>
<td>$7,277</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Continued from Page 1

A tiny island in the Caribbean Sea with two countries and traffic rules which are not entirely synchronized: this is Sint Maarten - Saint Martin. The carelessness by which local authorities implement certain aspects of their traffic regulations is worrisome. Throw in our dear neighbor to the North, Anguilla, where traffic is driving on the left as in the United Kingdom, and you realize that in this Caribbean region, it is a good idea to read up on special traffic regulations before hitting the road with a rental car.

The French side follows the Rules of the Road as set by France and the European Union in general. Cars coming from the right by default have the right of way, if not signaled otherwise by road signs. On the Dutch side, the rule is similar with the exception that unpaved roads never have the right of way over a paved road. Considering the condition of some roads, if paved or unpaved is frequently debatable.

The Dutch side also makes a difference between fast and slow traffic, such as bicycles: they never have the right of way. The rulebook also informs that animals don’t have the right of way, but thoughtfully points out that they might not know this. On T-intersections, drivers going straight on top of the T have the right of way, all others must yield.

Road signs on both parts of the island are not adequately maintained by the administration, to the point of recklessness. And no, this is not only a result of the hurricane 2017, but the problems were already apparent years before. There are intersections where one corner is equipped with a road sign giving the right-of-way, but the signs for alerting the other drivers to yield are missing. Who will pay for the resulting collisions? Or there is a Stop-sign, but the other corner doesn’t have a signal to indicate right-of-way. Less dangerous, just slowing down traffic unnecessarily.

There are perilous hillside roads, which show a Do-Not-Enter One-Way sign, only to be decorated with a Not-For-Vehicles above 5.4 tons, which cancels the One-Way sign out for regular cars.

Main thorough-fares should be labeled with a y w sign to give them a blanket privilege. The end of this privilege is indicated by the yellow sign being crossed out. Simple but almost always missing, except on L.B. Scott Road, leading to the suburb of St. Peter’s. Otherwise, drivers must sense which road is the main road and which one is not. Good luck if you are a visitor.

Good to know: Round-abouts or circles are always privileged. No signs needed.

There are no radar guns or speed traps on our island. To get a speeding ticket, you probably need to overtake a starting jet at Juliana International Airport by racing down Airport Road which goes parallel to the runway. The official speed limit on Dutch St. Maarten is 50 km/h on regular roads and 30 km/h in ‘built-up areas’. No definition is given of what is what.

On French Saint Martin, the highest legal speed is 80 km/h. The French speed limit has been lowered past summer down from 90 km/h. Again, there is nobody with equipment to check the speed; a driver has to be reckless to get in trouble.

Where Is All This Traffic Coming From?

This is the ‘Friendly Island’. Some drivers are so friendly that they feel the need to greet every acquaintance they see by stopping in the middle of the road and having a ten-second chat. They mean well, and it’s just ten seconds, so what is the problem?

Unfortunately, it is every twentieth driver who has the urge to demonstrate his or her joy by seeing a known face and pausing for a few seconds, leading to permanent traffic jams through the accumulation of stopping time.

Message to the stoppers: Yes, continue being friendly to your social circle, but also be polite to the vast majority of drivers who are delayed by your action. Wave, even honk; but don't block the road by having a conversation. Please.

The reasons that busses are holding up other cars are not as friendly: Many times, the bus driver stops in the middle of the road and doesn't pull into a bus stop, because he doesn't want to be overtaken by a competitor. And passengers can’t walk ten meters to join other waiting passengers but force the bus to stop at ridiculous intervals.

Yes, taxis are often driving mind-numbingly slow. But we understand this: they are giving an island tour to first-time visitors, and there is no point in rushing. After all, pleasing visitors is the commercial purpose of SXM and first comes business - for all of us living here.

But most countries have a rule for slow traffic (including heavy equipment as well): if a queue is building up behind a slow vehicle, this moving obstacle is obligated to pull over frequently to allow cars to overtake. Now, even if we don't have this rule written down in our local Rules of the Road, wouldn't it be friendly if taxis would follow it anyway?
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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