2017 brought destructive Hurricane Irma to our shores, sending shock waves across our island. Repairs and reconstruction, while underway, will not be completed before hurricane season ‘begins’ on June 1. Many are still troubled by Irma, shuddering at the thought of going through that horrendous experience again. With so many conflicting stories about what to expect in the 2018 hurricane season, we thought we would set the record straight...

**Should We Sound the Warning Bells?**

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**Tale of the Island Divide: A Drunk Decision?**

So, we have all made a drunk decision or two in our lives. It might have turned out to be a good decision, such as finally kissing that gorgeous man you’ve been staring at all night. Or perhaps it was a wicked one, which resulted in smooching your boss’ wife at your office mixer. The latter is the type of intoxicated decision we hope to avoid!

It all began with a conflict that could not be resolved for many years between the Dutch and the French...

**Wind, Sea and Rum Punch**

The excitement of chartering a boat and enjoying a day on the water is something both island residents and visitors love to do. There is no better way than to share a day with your friends than while on a cruise along St. Maarten's shores. And by splitting the cost among a larger group, it can be an amazingly affordable experience. Of course, you could also book a scheduled excursion and buy a ticket for each person.

The fleet of local charter boats has been somewhat reduced by last year's hurricane events, but many operators have regrouped and some of the most popular boats are back in service.

However, there are some decisions to be made and the first one is: sail or power? Most of the charter sailboats are not very serious about sailing and will only use their rags for part of the trip. If the winds are not favorable they will motor, but not faster than 7 knots. Their pace will be leisurely and comfortable.

There are numerous sailing catamarans in service. Most of them were specifically designed for the day charter trade and might lack the charm of a yacht. Luckily, Random Wind is back in business, specializing in operating real cruising yachts for their fun days on the sea...

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Letter From the Editor  
May 18, 2018

With over eight months under our belt post-Irma, the island has made great strides in rebuilding both metaphorically and literally. I am delighted to see many favorite destinations reopening their doors and welcoming you, our treasured guests.

If this is your first visit to St. Maarten/St-Martin; welcome! And if you have been here many times before, we appreciate your return to our paradise. I encourage all visitors to try new foods, establishments and experiences while you visit us. In this issue, we have highlighted many things that might peak your interest.

Please visit page 15 for the latest information regarding our Category 5 Cocktail Contest, which was launched with Island 92 radio station.

For videos of these concoctions being made in studio with Dr. Soc, we encourage you to visit our Facebook page @StMaartenInfo.

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.

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
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When looking at predictions for storms and hurricanes, we look to reputable weather services and forecasters. For this article, we are looking at what North Carolina State University, Colorado State University and The Weather Channel are foretelling.

Between these three respectable projections, anywhere from thirteen to eighteen storms are expected to come across the Atlantic Ocean. NCSU and CSU think that seven of those will become hurricanes. The Weather Channel is on the low end, believing the magic number is thirteen storms in total, with six hurricanes and two becoming major hurricanes (note: a major hurricane is a Category 3, 4 or 5).

No matter how you flip the coin, this will be considered an ‘above average’ season. Since 1950, the average number of Atlantic storms was eleven. So, with an estimated thirteen Atlantic storms this year, we will be higher than usual. Regardless, last year topped the charts with seventeen storms; ten hurricanes and six major hurricanes. Phew.

Although it is a significant number of anticipated storms, we must bear in mind that the analysts are looking at our entire region, meaning the Caribbean and up the Atlantic coast of the United States. The forecast is not just for St. Maarten/St. Martin!

So from June 1 to November 30, the island will be sweating bullets as we watch the daily weather updates. Alas, Mother Nature doesn’t have official start and end dates, so it is best to start preparing now. Gather supplies such as water, food that doesn’t require cooking, batteries, flashlights, hand sanitizer, candles, tarps and cleaning supplies.

The prepared list of names for the 2018 Atlantic storm season are:

Alberto
Beryl
Chris
Debbie
Ernesto
Florence
Gordon
Helene
Isaac
Joyce
Kirk

Leslie
Michael
Nadine
Oscar
Patty
Rafael
Sara
Tony
Valerie
William
The National Institute of the Arts (NIA) on St. Maarten has been a safe haven for people of all ages for many years. After the hurricane, this art institution decided to support the community by offering a wide range of classes, with many focused on movement and self-expression.

Just a few weeks after Hurricane Irma, NIA opened their doors and hundreds of people, mostly children, started pouring in. In the initial weeks, the school centered their classes around working through the trauma of the hurricane by utilizing drawing, painting, drama, dancing and fitness. “Art is an outlet for emotion, which can help someone through all sorts of pain”, Clara Reyes, one of the directors of NIA explains.

By 2018, it was not sustainable to offer the Art Heals program for free. However, NIA managed to put together a second stage of the program, which offers classes for a very affordable price of 50 guilders ($27.50) per month. You can take as many classes as you want during the month time period, with choices of over 40 classes per week.

Besides the Art Heals program, NIA organizes various activities and shows year-round. You might catch some of their young dancers at an impromptu dance event on the boardwalk in Philipsburg, or be vacationing on the island just as the right moment to catch a musical production!

For more information on the Art Heals program or upcoming shows, visit the National Institute of the Arts (NIA) Facebook page. NIA is located in Philipsburg, and visitors are always welcome.

National Institute of the Arts
John Larmonie Center
Long Wall Rd 20
Philipsburg
St. Maarten
+1 721 543 0600

For more information:
ST-MAARTEN.COM Weekend Edition
Issue 7, 2018

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Do You Know St. Maarten?

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

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

If you try to solve the puzzle as a visitor to our island and you get stuck: don’t be shy! Approach a local and ask! You might find they struggle to answer as well. Or strike up an interesting conversation and learn a bit about our very unique region. This island is a melting pot of many cultures and languages; setting St. Maarten/St-Martin apart from other Caribbean islands. This is why we love it here.

 cheat?
Find solution to the puzzle on Page 15
Renewing the Memorandum of Understanding at Loterie Farm

Last week, elected tourism officials and stakeholders from St. Maarten/St-Martin convened at the French side’s Loterie Farm to provide development updates in the months post- Irma. It boosted the crowd’s spirits to hear the progress achieved on both the Dutch and French sides of the island, as sometimes it is hard to see the transformations when faced with them daily. It is encouraging that the number of flights and hotel occupancies is anticipated to be on an upward trend over the coming months.

While the officials were in one location, the opportunity was taken to make a joint step forward and re-sign the Memorandum of Understanding. The purpose of the MoU, is to pool promotional strategies and resources, and unite in the public relations image and appeal of our island in the global market.

Moving forward, we anticipate cooperation, sharing of information and comradery between St. Maarten and St-Martin. It seems only fitting as although we are two countries, we are a mere single pebble in the vast ocean.

Soaked in butter and topped with garlic and fresh herbs; escargot is a delicacy served in numerous French restaurants. En français, escargot means ‘edible snail’. This appetizer is usually made using land snails, although not all species are suitable to be cooked or eaten. Some are even too small to make it worth the while, so best the chef sticks to larger species!

You might hear people say they taste like chicken; we would say that snails taste a little earthy, have a light and springy texture and are best served hot.

While snails are believed to have been eaten since prehistoric times, they have certainly never been more deliciously prepared than they are now. To prepare the escargot, typically the snails are removed from their shells, cooked, and then gently placed back into their shells and covered with butter, minced garlic and parsley.

Many restaurants on St-Martin prepare this offering without the shell, and the snails are placed in concave spaces in a dish, then smothered with melted garlic butter and herbs. Some establishments even cover their escargot in puff pastry and serve it with a sauce; delicious!

Some favorite spots to have this traditional French dish are L’Escargot located on the Dutch side’s Front Street, and Bistrot Caraibes on the French side’s Grand Case.

Make sure to get extra baguette to sop up that leftover melted butter; you might even want a whole baguette for that goodness!

Enjoy your scrumptious snails!
Both wanted to claim our lovely island as theirs, yet neither ever managed to claim it for a prolonged period. So, as the legend goes, another tactic was used instead of violence and war...BOOZE! Any decision made while drinking is wise...right?

The challenge was set; the French and Dutch would each choose their drinking champion, and start consuming their poison of choice. When both were tipsy and could hardly stand on their feet, they would start walking in the opposite direction.

The goal? From the starting point to wherever they met again, that would determine where the line would be drawn to split our island into two.

In the end, the French came out ahead with 21 square miles (54 km2) and the Dutch lost with 16 square miles (41 km2). If you are French, you will claim that this is because the Dutch contestant was delayed because he was seduced by a woman along his walk. If you are Dutch, you will assert the reason is that the French cheated!

Likely, this is not how the dividing of the island was settled. The actual decision was probably made over the course of many official meetings and required a lot of paperwork and land maps. But we realize you are on vacation, where talk of such tedious tasks should not be allowed.

So, when you do cross the border from the Dutch to the French side, or vice-versa, just think of our where our border lies and find the nearest bar to make your own good (or bad) drunk decisions.
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Wind, Sea and Rum Punch

Continued from Page 1

If you want to enjoy a relaxed short sail, have some rum punch and a lunch prepared onboard, together with snorkeling and the thrill of their unique Tarzan swing; check out Random Wind Charters by opening www.RandomWind.com.

Aqua Mania is your one-stop shop for even more ambitious water activities: they have scheduled excursions to Anguilla and the adjacent Prickly Pear Cays with their 50 plus passenger catamarans Tango and Lambada, leaving from their location in Pelican Key. There also are sunset and dinner cruises along the Southern coast of SXM. In addition to the charter boats, Aqua Mania is the island’s most complete scuba diving operation, with packages for complete beginners to seasoned divers. And if you wish to shorten time on the water and really explore a destination: the ferry Edge is servicing both St. Barths and Saba from the Aqua Mania docks.

Now, let’s consider the rush a fast power cruiser can deliver: The options available range from express day-cruisers to real Cigarette-style speedboats. They will cut through the sea with exhilarating speed, turning the experience into a thrill even the best Carnival ride can’t offer. Half an hour of bouncing over the waves of the Caribbean Sea will be exhausting and you will be glad to have reached an anchoring spot. Because of their speed, power boats are able to offer several destinations during the day and you can see much more of the island and its remote beaches. These boats fit under both the Dutch and French side bridges to the Lagoon, they are not subject to opening times and you will be able to board most conveniently at their docks.

For a refined experience (and not necessarily a speed-thrill ride) on a top-notch boat, consider Caribbean Marines. They are located at the Mercure Hotel in Nettle Bay and prepared to create a customized ‘champagne’ experience for their guests. Look them up by visiting CaribbeanMarines.com

But what about piloting your own vessel? Glad you asked, because this is an activity our friends at Rhino Rider Safari are famous for: they created their own type of two-person watercraft, easy to control and fast enough to be plenty of fun. From their location on the shores of the Lagoon in Cole Bay (next to the Pineapple Pete restaurant), a guide will take a group of these boats through the bridge out to the coastal sea and to the island’s best snorkeling spots. This is one great and affordable excursion which shouldn’t be missed!
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Rum Bar & Grill
'the east end’s best 40oz bottle of jager
open 11 am to 2 am

**Best spot to watch air-planes and sunsets: we are at Maho Beach at the end of the runway!"
Species of gemstones are found around the globe, and the Caribbean is no exception. The Dominican Republic is proud to be home to a blue variety of Pectolite, better known as its trade name, Larimar. This rich deposit was found in 1974 by Miguel Méndez and Norman Rilling.

The name Larimar derives from a shortened form of ‘Larissa’, Lari, and the Spanish word mar meaning ‘sea’. Larissa was the eldest daughter of Miguel and is fortunate to have this stunning blue gemstone named after her.

Larimar is a softer gem, and requires care when cleaning, storing and wearing. The gem experts and enthusiasts would equate the toughness of this jewel to jade.

The colors range from white to a blue that reminds us of the Caribbean waters, and the Dominican Republic has the finest colors in the world (Larimar is also found in Québec, Canada). So, when you visit Front Street, head into one of the jewelry stores and ask to see this icy blue treasure.
People You Might Meet: Evelyn

She enters a restaurant with a quiet modesty, her arms wrapped around a heavy bucket full of beautiful roses. Adorning a smile, this slender lady, never does more than approach a table, present her flowers for a few seconds without any further words and then will step back discreetly if she receives no response.

Originally from Haiti, Evelyn's personal warmth and her low-key approach to selling has made her a welcome sight in restaurants and bars from Porto Cupecoy all the way to Simpson Bay/Cole Bay.

She has been making her rounds now for fifteen years, and for the last few months she is occasionally joined by her granddaughter.

A rose is a symbolic gesture of love, admiration, or just simply a way to say, 'I was thinking of you'. In 2003, she sold a single rose for five Dollars. She has never changed her prices. To this day, you can still select a beautiful rose out of her bucket for five Dollars.

If you are not dining out with your significant other, but rather friends, we encourage you to still buy a rose. This will be especially crucial if your night out took a little longer than planned and your liquor intake was a bit more intense than appreciated at home... a single rose you take with you will go a long way to mend domestic irritations.

Purchasing a rose or any trinket from a peddler can be a somewhat corny experience. While dining with your better half or on a date, very few couples will welcome being approached by a typical vendor.

That's how we know that Evelyn is special.
Where Not to Eat

If a bar or restaurant can't expect a guest to ever return, there is limited motivation to offer service and product above common standards.

"Poor online reviews which will scare off future visitors!" might be a response to this remark and given as a reason for greedy restaurant owners to still offer at least acceptable meals. Glad it got mentioned...

Let's check out how honest these reviews can be and if certain online services can really be good advisors for our trip.

Hurricane Irma provided us with a unique chance to acquire insights into the reliability of online rating sites. Because a large number of restaurants had been destroyed or badly damaged, we should expect a sharp drop in guest reviews right after September 6th, 2017.

But online it appears that Irma had 'missed' many of the places where we know, for a fact, that only rubble exists now. There is, for example, a glowing review by S.M. from Sydney, Australia about a perfect Christmas dinner party at a certain beach restaurant and what a wonderful way it was to finish off the year 2017. These guests must have picnicked on what is now a few remaining concrete blocks of what used to be the restrooms. But to balance it out, there also is a review published in March 2018 by Collin O. from the UK about an overpriced and mediocre meal at a neighboring competitor, who has also been reduced to a pile of trash by Irma.

Good reviews, bad reviews... we find them every month since Irma passed until present day, for restaurants which don't exist anymore. While it is reasonable to assume that a tiny number of travelers published their opinion many months after their actual visit and fail to mention this in their post; majority of these reviews seem to be fake.

This teaches us to take online reviews with a grain of salt. So here are two simple rules to follow. Rule #1: don't plan to eat at a restaurant which doesn't exist anymore. Rule #2: Don't skip a great restaurant only because of some bad reviews, because they might be fake.

St-Martin/St. Maarten worked hard to earn its reputation as the Caribbean's gourmet island. The gastronomic environment is so competitive that it takes some effort to find a bad meal. Any restaurant which offers 'just average' fare will have a hard time surviving. And following the title of this article: we are definitely not planning to dine in any eatery which doesn't exist... but more about this in a paragraph further down.

Because there are so many fantastic dining spots and beach bars, there is no reason to support the few classic tourist traps we do have here. They are easily recognized as establishments mostly frequented by short-term visitors, usually coming from cruise ships.
Ongoing 'Category 5 Plus' Cocktail Contest

First there was a big hurricane, the strongest ever measured. Our island was shaken up severely.

Who could blame the bartenders for naming their concoctions 'Category Five Plus'? Now we have a few too many Cat 5 drinks around and this is why we need a contest to decide which one is the public favorite.

The Category 5+ Hurricane Irma is now part of our history. We made it through and we don't mind if vicious Irma is remembered as a drink that causes a serious hangover.

Here is how it works:
Go on a bar crawl and visit the participating bars and restaurants from all around the island and order each different version of Category Five Plus. (Please make sure that you have a designated driver for the occasion!) Happy drinking!

To view a list of contestants and to vote, visit ST-MAARTEN.COM by using the QR code to the right:

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Simpson Bay

BUFFALO WINGS
Simpson Bay/Cole Bay

DRIFTWOOD BOAT BAR
Maho Beach

JIMBO'S ROCK AND BLUES CAFE
Simpson Bay Yacht Club
LAGOONIES
Cole Bay
OCEAN LOUNGE
Philipsburg
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Simpson Bay
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TOPPER'S BAR & RESTAURANT
Simpson Bay

THE RED PIANO
Pelican
RENDEZ-VOUS LOUNGE
Porto Cupecoy
WASABI CHARLIE
Simpson Bay/Cole Bay
TACO MACHO
Beacon Hill - Maho

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