D-Boat - The Floating Waterpark Officially Open

The anchorage at Simpson Bay beach has a new, highly unusual addition attached to a permanent mooring; there is now an old-fashioned commercial vessel visible from shore, with a multitude of colorful extensions connected to a black hull.

This is D-Boat, a floating aqua-park built around a decommissioned 140-feet-long former tanker and the most exciting addition to St. Maarten’s list of available water excursions.

A shuttle boat takes guests from a lagoon-side dock behind Red Diamond through the drawbridge to D-Boat. Onboard, there are three decks to enjoy. Explore a never before seen attraction, shoot down waterslides into the ocean, jump on a floating trampoline, or swing off ropes out into the sea.

Soak up the sun and enjoy a lunch of lobster or red snapper. Cool down by sipping on a fruity frozen drink, cold beer or even a cocktail; they have a well stocked bar. D-Boat is a full-day entertainment center for all ages, guaranteeing a fun-filled day for everyone.

The waterpark attractions are exciting and look pretty daring. What about safety? “We have CPR Certified lifeguards on duty,” explains D-Boat marketing manager Martha Marsden. “This makes our aqua-park safer than any of the island’s beaches.”

And if you are a non-swimmer? Martha laughs and points to the bar and the DJ booth: “This is a party boat, never a dull moment. No need to jump into the water to enjoy D-Boat.”

Next page: Read a full report on a first visit to D-Boat after the ship had opened for business at its permanent mooring.

Competing in the 12-Metre Regatta

By Sarina Alexander

Participating in the 12-Metre Regatta was the first taste of sailing for our contributor Sarina Alexander. Not a bad introduction to the sport by experiencing one of the original America’s Cup yachts, of which several are available for exhilarating competition right here on St. Maarten. Find out how you can be on one of these classic boats.

Cacao-Kanel Gift Art in Simpson Bay

There is a new store in Simpson Bay, and we don’t know if we should introduce Cacao Kanel as an art gallery or a handicraft boutique. The elegant shop has a collection of unique sculptures on display, most of them the work of Christiane Ovide. She was born in Martinique, but discovered her love for St. Maarten many years ago.

There are a lot of new stores in Simpson Bay, and we don’t know if we should introduce Cacao Kanel as an art gallery or a handicraft boutique. The elegant shop has a collection of unique sculptures on display, most of them the work of Christiane Ovide. She was born in Martinique, but discovered her love for St. Maarten many years ago.

Full article on Page 4...

Full article on Page 13...

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As my friendsaid, “A phenomenal day.” We were invited to the soft opening of D-Boat anchored out in Simpson Bay near the bridge into the Simpson Bay Lagoon. The boat is a decommissioned 1965 refurbished 140 ft oil tanker, that’s been turned into an Aqua Park; originally the boat was in Antigua.

The ship moved to St. Maarten awhile back and has been at the dock behind Lal’s, where they have been busy with updating and sorting out all the “boat things” one needs to sort out; after all that is what boats are all about! Finally, they got things in order enough to head through the bridge out to their anchorage a few weeks ago.

On the day we went out the bar, galley and toys were ready to roll and roll they did, we had a glorious time on board. There are two bars and a professional food operation with credit cards accepted and there is WiFi!

The boat has built in slides, a rope swing, trampolines, a high diving board and all those bouncy/floaty things that send one sky-high only to splash back down in the turquoise waters.

The shuttle meeting place was at the dock behind Red Diamond with pick-up every hour. We were there with a group for the first ride out. A very nice “captain” helped us onboard and speedily took us through the bridge to the boat.

Getting onboard from shuttle to boat platform went smoothly and we quickly established a spot at one of the many tables and chair areas or we could choose to sit at the bar.
Hourly people came and went and each time the party became more fun, more exciting. Music was provided by a DJ. The music was great, not too loud and got our feet moving, the boat rocked gently and so did we.

Patrick, the barman, took our drink orders and what drinks they were. Our fav was the margaritas in jam jars – no straws! Boy did those go down well. Prices are very fair.

When it came time to snack, we ordered from the comprehensive menu. The burger for $12.00 was very worth it. It came with a side of fresh, crispy fries and home-made chutney. The chutney also made an appearance with crisp, hot and truly delicious mozzarella cheese sticks. It really makes all the difference when the oil is fresh and the ingredients are quality.

We nibbled and drank; Patrick kept us amused between our playing on the Aqua Park and chatting at the tables and bar. We danced and joked and watch the men trying to outdo each other on the trampoline and rope swing. We spotted turtle and large fish darting from under the boat. We laughed and enjoyed the most wonderful time. Finally, the hour for our departure came and back to the dock we were swiftly taken.

A day on D-Boat guarantees a unique and fun day on the water with a great bar and really tasty snack food and the waterpark activities for young and those who will always stay forever young.

The costs are reasonable: Inquire about discounts when booking directly. Credit Cards are accepted on board.

Call +1-721-523-2628 for information or visit www.dboatsxm.com
There is a new store in Simpson Bay, and we don't know if we should introduce Cacao Kanel as an art gallery or a handicraft boutique. The elegant shop has a collection of unique sculptures on display, most of them the work of Christiane Ovide, also known under her artist's name Fauve.

Years ago, Christiane started working with ordinary construction materials to create interior decoration objects of amazing beauty. Nowadays, she uses resins, concrete, coconuts, tree bark and branches to conceive pieces which are always unique and individual. She works with an artist's patience to give each creation attention and love.

Christiane Ovide was born on the French island of Martinique and spent most of her professional life in the artistic field, be it as a graphic designer, photographer or video editor. She is a child of the Caribbean and the region's culture. It was over thirty years ago that she visited St. Maarten for the first time and fell in love with this small bi-national island, which is so different from Martinique. She traveled between her native island and SXM for many years until she finally settled here in August 2018.

She opened the art boutique (or is it a gallery?) Cocoa Kanel to sell her creations, but to also represent the works of other artists, such as the ceramicist Jechoux Baker and the painter Adela Yerushalmi.

The collection of artwork is complemented by an eclectic assortment of gift articles, from artisan soaps to unique candles.

Cocoa Kanel fills a niche in offering sophisticated creations which are rooted in her authentic Caribbean background. For the visitor, this is a chance to take home a souvenir which they can be proud to display in an elegant interior setting. For the owners of upscale properties on the island, Cocoa Kanel can deliver that particular element to distinguish the interior design from other homes.

Cocoa Kanel is located in Simpson Bay on 36 Airport Road, opening at 10 AM. Visit the store to meet Christiane Ovide in person and to experience her work. You will find that the prices for the larger objects are very reasonable and that there are also many gift items available, which are affordable to anybody.
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Sophistication is a word often applied to the French, whether we’re talking about fashion, food or art, and it is certainly appropriate for the musical duo known as Avocado Pie.

Virginie Doris and Annabelle Ducrot have been performing together for over a year, building a following, principally on the French side but increasingly on the Dutch.

Ile-de-France-born Virginie and Annabelle, from the Haute Savoie region, are both well-established in St-Martin but proud of their French roots. It’s a very basic line-up: Annabelle provides the instrumentation via a pickup-driven classical guitar, while Virginie is the front-woman, wielding nothing but a microphone, a pure voice and a slinky appearance. Each, though, is a singer in her own right, with Annabelle much more than guitar and harmony vocals. She’s the engine room of the act.

They met in the unpromising environs of a karaoke night, that well-known last resort for the singer without a vehicle for her talent. Virginie takes up the story.

"I had been looking for a woman to form a band with because I had been in bands before but always with men, and I wanted someone I could blend my voice with. And I wanted someone who could play an instrument, either guitar or piano." Her own instrumental ability, wrestling with a guitar, she dismisses with a philosophical shrug.

"I've been a beginner for 10 years."

The two decided to try it out, and soon discovered they were on the same wavelength, both musically and personally. With a repertoire derived largely from songs that were popular in France in the 1990s and 2000s, they present a smooth sound that’s big on melody but not so much on drama: you’re not going to get your heart broken at an Avocado Pie gig. What you will get out of it is a sense of wellbeing. Annabelle has a rhythmic guitar style that compensates for the lack of other musicians. She grew up in a musical family and learned her first song, she says, in the womb. "When she was pregnant my mother used to sing Gabriel Fauré’s Requiem, and the first time I heard it as a child, I sang along with it note for note."

While many guitarists use effects to vary their sound and backing tracks to fill the gaps, Annabelle uses nothing but her nimble fingers and a thumb that slaps like a funk bass player. Her only concession to technological trickery is a loop pedal, which works with songs that repeat a sequence around and around. It records the first time (so you’d better not screw it up) and then repeats the sequence ad infinitum, so the guitarist can play variations over the top of his or her own work.

The self-deprecating Virginie describes her musical upbringing as being largely pop-oriented, while Annabelle was more of a rocker, an electric guitar-toting teenager. Accordingly, their lengthy repertoire has three gears, with the potential to start off gentle and sweet and end up pretty lively, depending on the venue, the crowd and the occasion.

Finding out where you can see Avocado Pie is as easy as liking their Facebook page, so if you like a bit of style and quality on your night out, that’s where to start.
If you are a frequent visitor to St. Maarten, you have most likely enjoyed his cooking. Paul Rene, better known by his nickname Shadow, has been the chef of the previously famous Turtle Pier restaurant for many years.

Shadow arrived on St. Maarten in 1979 from his native Haiti - just at the right time, because tourism had started taking off here. He grew up in impoverished circumstances but was determined to make the best of the opportunity given here. Shadow gained the trust and respect of Sidney Wathey, a member of the island's leading business family. Soon, Shadow learned the trade of commercial food preparation at the Caravanserai Resort (now occupied by the presently dormant Alegria). When Sidney's brother Al became general manager of the Mullet Bay Resort, Shadow followed and handled kitchen duties. He knew that he had found his calling with cooking and that if he continued honing his skills, he could become a well-known chef. He also noticed that the expectations of the typically North American guests about Caribbean cuisine did not represent what the locals would eat at home. The typical visitor's idea of Caribbean food and culture was captured later by Jimmy Buffet, who created the Margaritaville chain of restaurants and marketed his songs as Caribbean tunes, even though neither the food nor the music has Caribbean roots.

Shadow did not allow sentiment or false pride to creep into his work: to be successful, he knew that he needed to adjust the Caribbean flavors to suit the American palate - thus creating a set of meals different from anything to be found on other islands and maybe to be accepted as St. Maarten's own food style.

When Sidney Wathey planned to extend the waterfront property which the family owned at the Simpson Bay Lagoon close to the airport, he called upon Shadow to start the construction. Not that he was a trained builder, but he is a practical man and learned by doing. Every morning in the wee hours of the day and before his regular job, Shadow would haul building materials down to the water's edge and started setting pilings into the shallows. Eventually and after much hard labor, the soon-to-be-famous Turtle Pier was born - not a waterfront restaurant but an 'above-water' restaurant, overlooking a charming small marina.

Now Shadow was finally in charge of his own kitchen, serving breakfast, lunch and dinner. Turtle Pier quickly became a mainstay of St. Maarten's entertainment landscape. Many good years followed, during which Shadow proved his skills and created a loyal following, including among the repeat visitors to the island.

It all fell apart when a French couple became the operators of the restaurant. They failed to understand the particular niche Shadow had developed, and in response, he walked away from his job, with the result that Turtle Pier had to close its doors a while later.

Out of the destruction along the Simpson Bay Lagoon waterfront, and pretty quickly during the late months of 2017, a new location shaped up: a bar and restaurant with the ultimate non-descriptive name of 'Nowhere Special'. Al Wathey's daughter Lillian is the owner, and this new 'Rum Bar and Grill' was an instant hit, catching a significant piece of the local nightlife. To the friends of the now defunct Turtle Pier, Nowhere Special brings back a bit of the old spirit - and not only because it is also an 'above-the-water' restaurant. And so, it should be no surprise that we find Shadow back in the kitchen, bringing his successful recipes even closer to the island's central cluster of visitor accommodation. Nowhere Special Rum Bar and Grill is located in Simpson Bay, close to the bridge and within walking distance of major resorts and hotels.

After spending most of his adult life in St. Maarten, Shadow will soon celebrate a big birthday, turning sixty. His modest demeanor, reliability and willingness to work hard - in combination with his talents as a chef - paid off, and Shadow is a notable St. Maarten success story.
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There are a few tennis courts scattered around the island, but nothing beats the first-class facility at The Country Club at Port de Plaisance. The nine courts are all equipped with lights for nighttime playing and were recently resurfaced.

The tennis courts are available to the visiting public at the nominal rate of $15 for a one-day guest membership. For the tennis aficionado visiting the island, this is an offer hard to beat. Now we understand that almost no one will play tennis for the entire day; this is why you are invited to relax at the Olympic-size swimming pool as well. At the center of the courts and the pool area is the Lobster House Restaurant, doubling as the tennis club bar as well and serving delicious breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

For court reservations or inquiries of lessons with the coaches, Stéphane and Samuel call The Country Club at +1 721 544-4321.

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St. Maarten/St-Martin is not only blessed with an abundance of beaches but also the requisite beach bars. From a simple cooler with an umbrella to a 5-star dining establishment, it all can be found on our beaches.

Recently, Simpson Bay saw the opening of Roxxy Beach - a beach bar and restaurant, clearly inspired by a famous set-up in St. Barths, with prices to match the original. While it is fabulous that Simpson Bay is transforming itself to cater to the beautiful people, it is equally encouraging to see a charming, low key beach bar like the Guayabera Beach Club to compete in the same neighborhood.

The big surprise is that Guayabera is within easy walking distance of all the action in Simpson Bay and yet feels like a world apart. Nestled between a luxury condo building and the remaining cottages of the former fishing village, this beach club has everything to take you back to a simpler time on this over-developed Caribbean island.

Once you enter, you'll first see rows of sun loungers - free to use for guests. To the right is the fully stocked bar, to the left restaurant seating. There are more tables closer to the water's edge. The food menu is compact, on the advanced side of Caribbean cuisine and offers something for everyone’s palate (even burgers for those who must have it). We tried the Grilled Chicken with Mango Chutney, which tasted delicious, was a full meal and a great value at $12.00.

The setting at night is romantic, with a view towards the anchored yachts and the resorts of Pelican. The relaxed ambience brings back memories of Calmos Cafe in Grand Case (a victim of Irma). If you liked Calmos, you would like Guayabera.

Ocean swimming is not a priority for Guayabera Beach Club guests: the water is very shallow and the bottom rocky. There is a prepared path to wade out to deeper water for swimming for the ones who wish to cool off. On the other hand, at this location of Simpson Bay Beach, there is hardly ever any surf, and this might make it an ideal place for small children to play.

To reach Guayabera while driving in Simpson Bay on Airport Road, turn onto Simpson Bay Road (which is the road following the beach) at the Police station next to the bridge. Follow the road for 270 meters, and you'll find the club to your left. Park wherever you can, but the more popular Guayabera becomes, the more difficult finding a spot on the road will be. There is always plenty of parking close to the Police station, and a 270-meter walk should not discourage anyone from visiting this delightful addition to the SXM Beach Bar scene.

And finally, what's in the name Guayabera? It's a somewhat formal shirt, worn in tropical Latin countries, where a jacket would be uncomfortable. The Guayabera is standard gentlemen’s attire in Cuba, and there seems to be a consensus that the style originated there.
The Unique St. Maarten/St-Martin Crossword Puzzle

Our crossword puzzle truly is unique, and many of the questions need intimate knowledge of Sint Maarten/Saint Martin and the Caribbean. We ask questions of local interest, geography, tropical biology, and even history. So, don’t feel bad if you are stumped! If you try to solve the puzzle as a visitor to our island and get stuck, don’t be shy: ask a local.

The questions are valid for our hemisphere; this means that if we ask about an island to the north of our location, it can only be Anguilla. Crossword puzzles don’t allow for names with spaces, so we might pull together a name or compound word. If the answer is 'Orient Beach', we will use ‘orientbeach’.

Sometimes, the questions are a bit tricky. But that’s part of the fun. Mistakes do happen, even though our puzzle is produced right here on the island. If you detect an error, drop us a line at SXM@EMAIL.COM.
Where to Dine and Party

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Restaurants & Bars

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**Where to Dine and Party**
Racing in the 12-Metre Regatta
By Sarina Alexander

In competitive sailing, no event carries as much prestige and status as the America's Cup - the pinnacle of regatta sailing. Ultra-high-tech yachts operated by teams from different nations and equipped with budgets in the hundreds of million dollars each are competing every four years. The winning country has to host the following event; which will be New Zealand in the year 2021.

American yachtsman Dennis Connor became a worldwide household name by winning the cup four times with his legendary race boats 'Stars and Stripes'. Homeport to the legendary 'Stars and Stripes' is now Sint Maarten, where the yacht is part of a fleet of authentic 12-Metre America's Cup racing boats, which form one of the Caribbean's most exciting visitor attractions. The 12-Metre Regatta is an excursion that cruise ship passengers, island guests, and the local population have the opportunity to participate in, seven days a week. Guests are welcome to enjoy the exhilarating ride or jump into the action without prior sailing experience.

Recently, our contributor Sarina Alexander accepted the invitation to participate in a 12-Metre Regatta. Like most of the other crew members, she had zero prior sailing experience. Here is her report:

By Sarina Alexander:

Ever dreamt of being part of the Heineken Regatta? Or perhaps you've imagined yourself sailing on a famous boat like America's Cup “Stars & Stripes 87”? What if I told you it was possible, right here in Sint Maarten?!

As the Honorary Videographer aboard the SV Canada II, I take it as my duty to report my experience upon one of the four sailing vessels at the 12-Metre Regatta in Point Blanche! (Why am I speaking like that?)

Do names like Stars and Stripes 86 (US-50) or true True North IV (KC-IV) ring a bell? If they don't, it's okay! The great thing about going on an excursion at 12-Metre, is that you will be learning something new all through the journey. Maybe even discover a new muscle...

Along with a few adventurous people, ready to discover and be a part of history, we gathered around our high-spirited briefer Daniel; in charge of letting us know what we got ourselves into. Animatedly and with much humor, he takes us back to 1851 when Queen Victoria extended invitations to the first international yachting competition, which would until this day, carry the name of its first winner: the Americas Cup.

Two captains are diligently handpicked by Daniel and given a team. Whether it is to trim the sails or grind the winches; we are each assigned to an active role for this hour-and-a-half to two-hour race. For those less able or willing, there are also more passive roles such as the timekeeper, the bartender, or the iceberg spotter. Unless you have a powerful imagination, less active than an iceberg spotter between the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, you won’t find.

It is pleasantly surprising to see how much the strength of the wind can change your entire sailing experience, from the speed to the heeling of the sailboat. You suddenly create a bond with people that were complete strangers just a couple minutes ago and all put in the work and energy towards the same goal: winning. To top it off, the professional crew members aboard skillfully make the experience that more enjoyable by creating the ambiance to match the dynamism of this century-old sailing competition.
Crossword-Puzzle Solution

CABBAGE  GOLF
AT  AP
SONESTA G
DRIFTWOOD I
NA MARIJUANA G
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