

Martinique

THE ONLY COMPLETE TRAVEL GUIDE
TO THE CARIBBEAN PARADISE



MORE THAN
200
STUNNING
PHOTOS

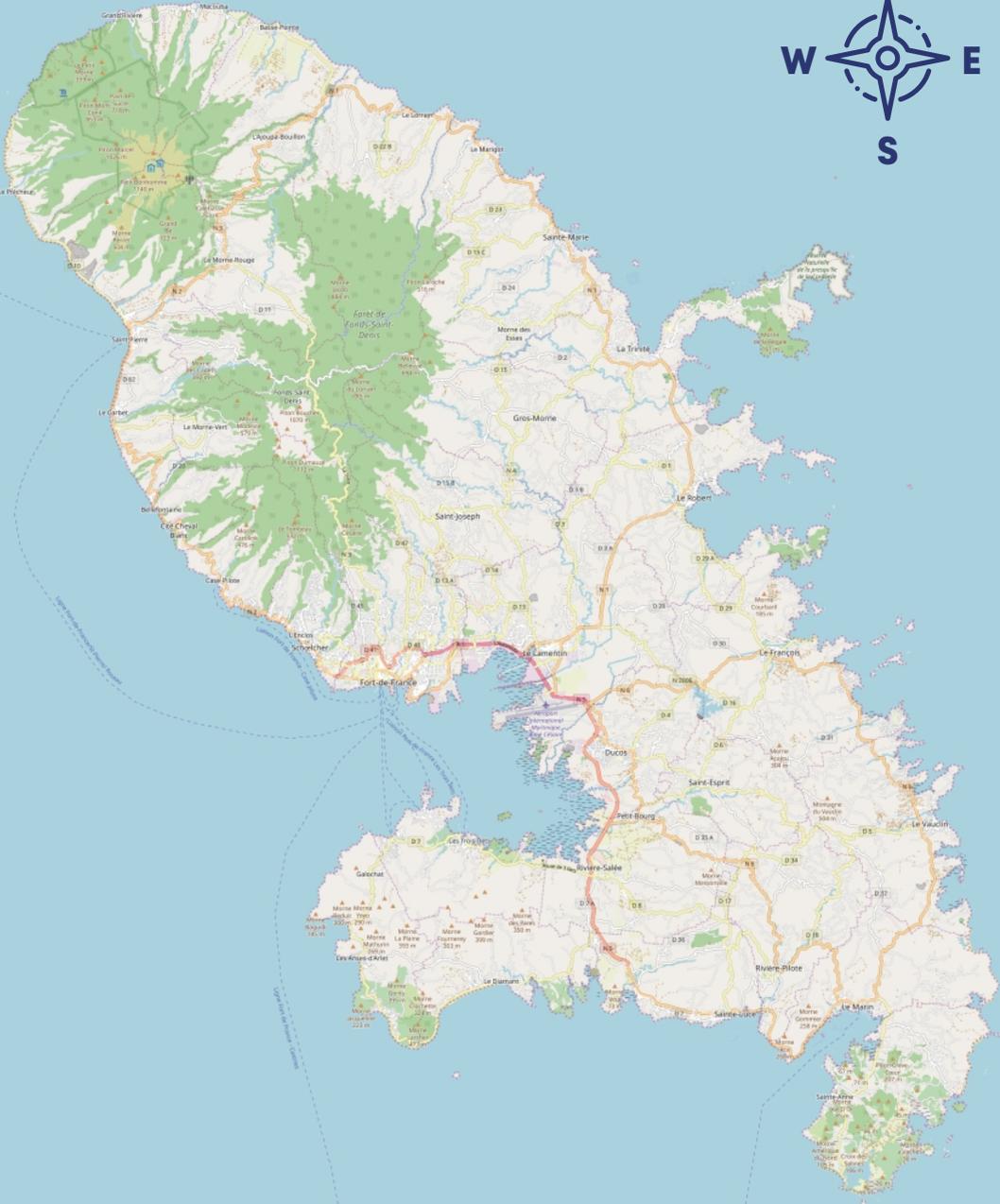
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MAP OF MARTINIQUE



Thanks to all the wonderful people who helped us and gave us support and inspiration for the creation of this book and those who provided information and beautiful photos.

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Welcome to our book!

We're delighted that you might share a bit of our love for Martinique. We're not native speakers so what we lack in linguistic precision we try to make up for by revealing every inch of this lovely place. We really hope our opinions and tips somehow help you to have a fantastic experience.

USED INFOGRAPHICS



useful tips



pay attention



interesting facts



use your smartphone

You will find these icons throughout the book.

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Why Martinique?

There are many reasons to choose Martinique as your holiday destination or even for a long term stay. This piece of paradise in the Caribbean carries many advantages due to being a part of France. High living standards, good medical care, safety, quality roads, clean streets and convenient flight connections among other things.

Exotic beaches



It combines the best of European culture with the exotic beaches and palm trees. Martinique is a tropical island yet has inherited great bread, cheese and wine from France including some of the **best rums in the world**. The locals speak French and Creole here and the currency is Euros.

Martinique is maybe not the first destination that springs to mind when speaking about Caribbean travel. This not so well known island can be a brilliant option for those wanting to avoid crowds and enjoy some tranquillity. It is the island of never-ending summer. Regardless of when you visit, you will always enjoy warm sunny weather and a pleasant breeze.



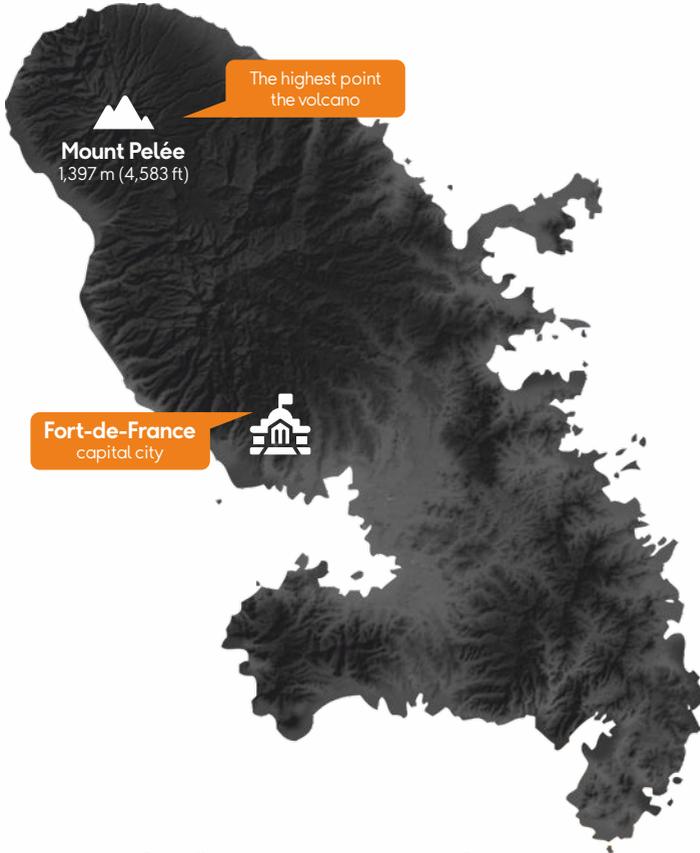
This piece of Europe in the Caribbean has fascinating French history, rich culture, delicious cuisine and breathtaking natural beauty. It isn't called the "**Island of Flowers**" in no reason. The biodiversity is remarkable, including the green rainforest, tropical flowers, volcanoes and beaches. It is up to you to choose between the wild nature in the north with its blackened sand or the popular south with its idyllic white sand beaches.



In Martinique, you'll never be bored, **the island is so diverse and has many activities** to offer you. There are multiple hiking possibilities to be had, so why not climb up the volcano or explore the rainforest? If you are not feeling adventurous, you can choose from numerous beaches where you can relax and enjoy the turquoise water or visit one of the distilleries and taste famous Martinican rum.



Facts



Coordinates

14° 40'0"N, 61° 0'0"W



Population

370,000



Time zone

ECT (UTC -4)



Currency

Euro



Languages

French, Creole



Telephone code

+596



Visitors travelling with hair dryers, electric shavers and other appliances made in the U.S. will need power adapters.



Electricity

Voltage is 220 AC

Size

1100 km² (425 mi²),
80 km (50 mi) long,
35 km (22 mi) across
at its widest point

Density

340/km² (890/mi²)

President

Emmanuel Macron

President of an executive council

Alfred Marie-Jeanne

NUTS reg

France

Religion

Roman Catholicism,
Seventh-Day Adventist,
Jehovah's Witness,
Methodist,
Evangelical,
Baptist, Jewish,
Hindu and Islamic

Climate

average temperature
27°C (80°F) with two
regular alternating wind
currents (les Alizés)
keeping the island cool

Before you go

1



Have your passport ready and verify potential visa requirements.



For most countries a visa is not required for a stay up to 3 months.

2



Consider travel insurance.

3



Change some Euros.

4



Rent a car to better discover the island.



Check our website for great deals.

5



Don't forget sunscreen and sunglasses as the sun can be very intense.

6



Consider buying bug repellent to keep mosquitos and other insects away.

7



No extra vaccination is needed.

8



Please visit our site to book the best flights, accommodation and activities.

www.meetmartinique.com



Getting there

... By plane

The island is easily accessible by plane as there are direct flights to Martinique from different destinations. Nowadays there are several low-cost companies offering flight tickets for a reasonable price and it is even possible to book a roundtrip for **200-300€** from Europe and **120€** from the USA, depending on the season.

You can book your flight directly through our website: www.meetmartinique.com.

When travelling from Europe, the best option is to fly out from Paris, but sometimes good deals can be found with Condor, flying out from Germany. Many companies offer direct flights and operate every day between Paris and Fort-de-France.

When travelling from the US, you can choose to fly directly from New York or Miami. From Martinique you can also easily get to numerous Caribbean and American countries.

Here is a list of destinations and companies proposing either direct flights from and to Martinique or flights with quick and easy stop-overs in Guadeloupe.



Europe

Paris - Air France, Air Caraïbes, Corsair, Iberia, XL, Level
Frankfurt - Condor

American Airlines  norwegian.no 

AIR CANADA  AIRFRANCE 

 AIRCARIIBES  Condor
www.condor.com

 LEVEL 

 CORSAIR  IBERIA

 XL airways  Air transat

 liat
The Caribbean Airline  CUBANA
Puerta de Cuba al Mundo

America

New York - Norwegian
Miami - Norwegian, American Airlines, Air France
Cayenne - Air Antilles, Air France, Norwegian
Montreal - Air Canada, Air Transat

Caribbean

Santo Domingo - Air Antilles, Air Caraïbes, Air France
Pointe-à-Pitre - Air France, Air Caraïbes, Air Antilles
Bridgetown - Air Antilles, Liat, Air France
Havana - Cubana
Santo Domingo - Air Caraïbes
Saint Martin - Corsair, Air Antilles, Air France
Port au Prince - Air France
San Juan - Air Antilles
Castries - Air Caraïbes

Getting there

... By boat

Martinique is a popular cruise ship destination. These big ships stop here for one day during the main season. If you are already in the Caribbean, you can take a ferry to get to Martinique from other islands. The best known company is **Express des Iles** operating between Martinique, Guadeloupe, Dominica and Saint Lucia almost every day. You can buy a round trip ticket starting **from 80 €**. If you travel from Martinique to the neighbour islands, don't forget to keep your passport, as they don't accept european ID cards.



Don't forget to keep your passport, as they don't accept european ID cards.



FROM

80€

Martinique • Guadeloupe • Dominica • Saint Lucia

www.express-des-iles.fr
www.jeansforfreedom.com

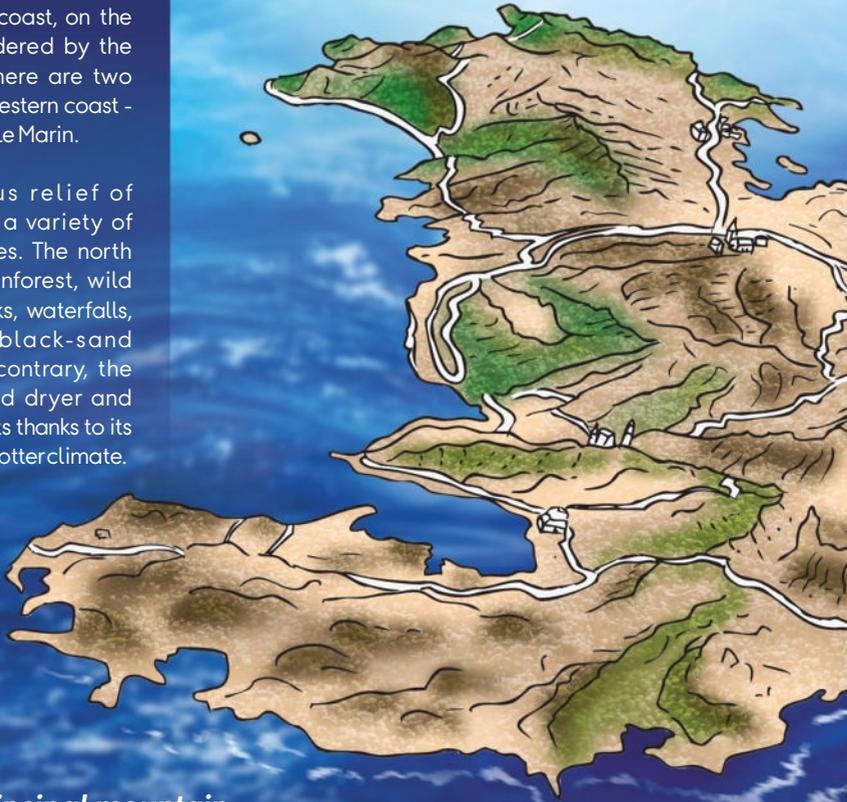


Geography and relief

Martinique is located in the Lesser Antillean archipelago, positioned within a volcanic zone that overlaps several tectonic plates. This arc of islands separates the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. It is situated between Dominica to the north - 40 km (24 mi away) and Saint Lucia to the south - 30 km (18 mi). It covers 1,100 km² (425 mi²) and measures 80 km (50 mi) long and 35 km (22 mi) wide.

The eastern coast of Martinique is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean and is lined by coves and coral reefs. The western coast, on the other hand, is bordered by the Caribbean Sea. There are two large bays on the western coast - Fort-de-France and Le Marin.

The mountainous relief of Martinique offers a variety of stunning landscapes. The north features dense rainforest, wild nature, green peaks, waterfalls, volcanoes, and black-sand beaches. On the contrary, the south is flatter and dryer and attracts more tourists thanks to its fairer beaches and hotter climate.



There are 3 principal mountain ranges composed of volcanoes:



Mount Pelée

dormant active volcano
1,397 m (4,583 ft)



Carbet mountains

with highest peak **Lacroix**
1,195 m (3,923 ft)



Mount Vauclin

504 m (1,654 ft)

There are 3 major topographical areas in Martinique:



The north

a hilly, lush, and misty area, composed of the volcanoes Mount Pelée and Pitons du Carbet. The North is home to a complex mountain range which gently descends on the east side, forming suitable areas for crops.



The center

an area of plains spread around Lamentin and Ducos. It is an industrial and agricultural zone with no tourist interest.



The south

by far the driest part of the island. The land is mostly flat with its highest point, Mount Vauclin, reaching at 504 meters. There are many magnificent white sandy beaches that make it a popular site for tourists.



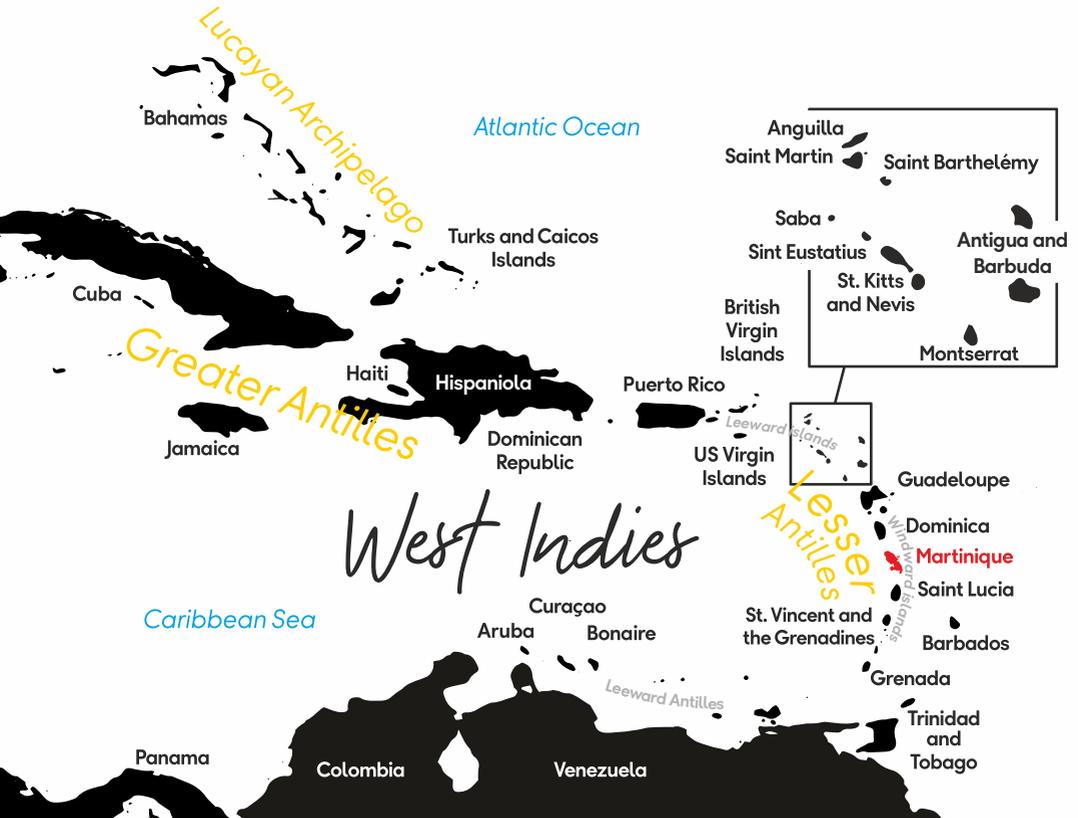
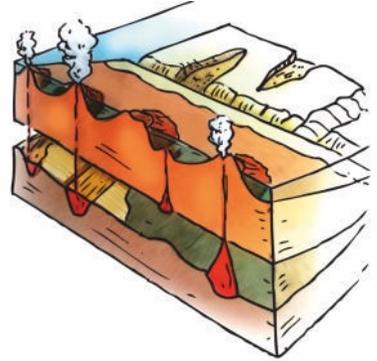
The tortuous relief of the island has created drainage patterns characterized by short river flows. There are many small streams that run down the mountains and some of them are used to irrigate fields. The most important rivers flow from the **Carbet mountains**, rivers such as **the Lorrain, Galion, Capot, and Lézarde**. Two other significant rivers in the north are **La Grande Rivière** and **Céron**. In the south, **Rivière Salée** and **Rivière Pilote** flow down from the peak of **Mount Vauclin**.

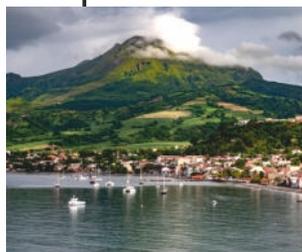
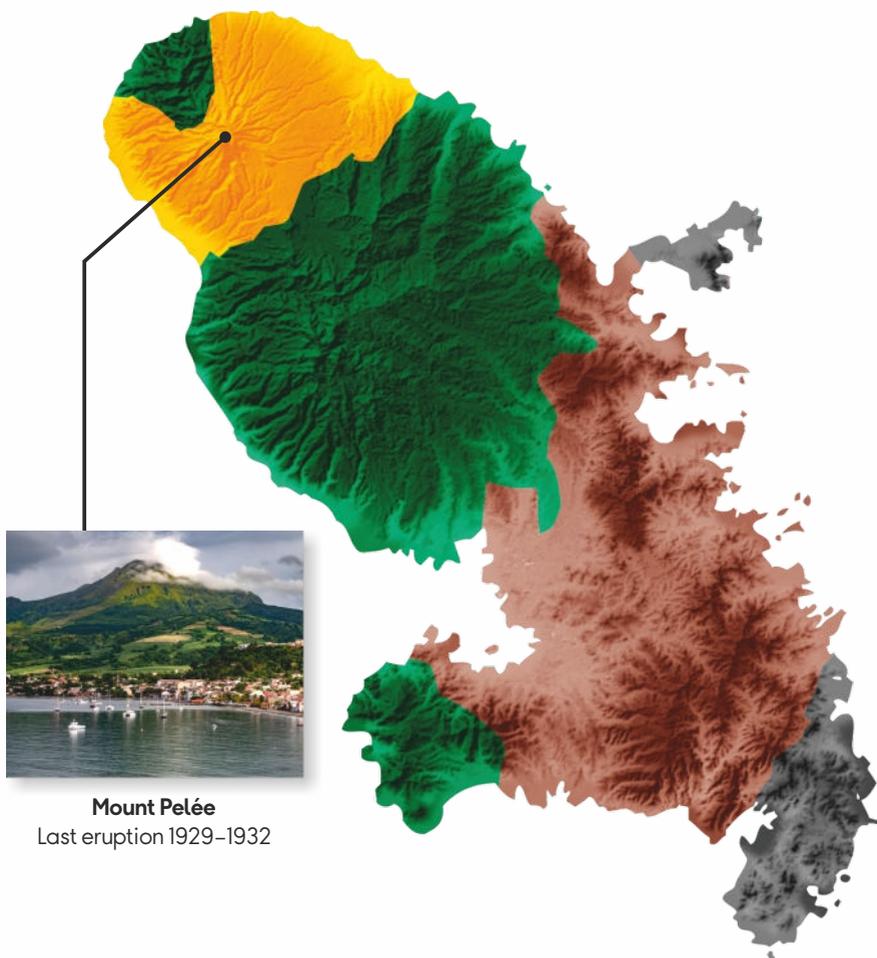
The Lesser Antilles

The **Lesser** and **Greater Antilles** compose the Antilles (Caribbean), which are a chain of islands in the Caribbean Sea. Together with the **Lucayan Archipelago**, they are known as the **West Indies**.

Most of the islands in the Lesser Antilles were formed due to subduction of the South American Plate under the Caribbean Plate. This process is still happening and is responsible for both volcanic and earthquake activity in this area.

The islands of the Lesser Antilles are divided into three groups: the Leeward Islands in the north, the Windward Islands in the south, and the Leeward Antilles in the west.





Mount Pelée

Last eruption 1929–1932

VOLCANIC ACTIVITY



more than
24 millions years ago



between 5,5 and 0,5
millions years ago



between 22 and 5,5
millions years ago



less than
500 000 years ago

Climate

Martinique is the island of "never-ending summer" with an average temperature of 27 °C (80,6 °F). It has a typically humid tropical climate characterized by sunny days and short showers. In general the island has two main seasons:

Rainy season (hivernage) – lasting from June to November. The air is hot and heavy as the trade winds do not cool the atmosphere and there tends to be frequent rainfalls.

Dry season (carême) – ranging from December to May. The weather tends to be sunny, with regular trade winds that bring refreshing breezes and lower temperatures.

The weather in Martinique is generally pleasant throughout the entire year with the temperature only varying within 5 degrees depending on the season. The weather is constantly changing, with rain passing quickly, giving way to more sunshine. It's recommended to visit Martinique during the dry season, which happens to be the tourist period; however, due to recent weather changes, the climatic differences are less obvious. In this case, it is not a bad idea to visit the island during the rainy, low season, to enjoy tranquility, lower prices, and minimal tourists.



There are three different types of climates depending on the part of the island:

Humid tropical climate

in the rainforest in the central part of the north, around the mountains (**Mount Pelée, Pitons du Carbet, Plateau de Morne Rouge**) with average rainfall of **10,000 mm**. The temperature here is much cooler and can drop to 15 °C.

Intermediate climate

on the coasts of the middle and northern parts of the island with average rainfall ranging from **2000 to 4000 mm**.



Dry climate

from the southern to southeastern coast up to Caravelle peninsula with average rainfall falling below **2000 mm**. This area is not really affected by the seasons and most of the time the weather here is nice and hot.

The trade winds are strongest during the dry season, coming from Africa at speeds of 30 - 50 km/h. During the rainy season, winds are constantly blowing, but are slower and more irregular.

During the rainy season, tropical waves can develop into storms or hurricanes if the atmospheric and oceanic conditions allow for it. The waves are fueled by heat in the air and tropical depression, with the eastern winds pushing across the Atlantic potentially turning waves into hurricanes.

Tropical cyclones have different names all over the world, and in the Caribbean they are referred to as hurricanes. A hurricane is a large storm system that has very low pressure and rotates at high speeds. It can be identified as a spiral of thunderstorms that create massive amounts of rain. Hurricanes form over large bodies of warm water and draw their energy from evaporated water on the ocean's surface. This, in turn, forms clouds and rain. The rotating winds come from the momentum of the Earth's rotation.



Officially the hurricane season runs **from July to October**. The highest risk for hurricanes is from early August to late September; however, it's unusual for hurricanes to occur across the island more than twice every 10 years.



Average air temperature



Average water temperature

January	26°C	78,8°F	27°C	80,6°F
February	27°C	80,6°F	27°C	80,6°F
March	27°C	80,6°F	27°C	80,6°F
April	28°C	82,4°F	28°C	82,4°F
May	28°C	82,4°F	28°C	82,4°F
June	29°C	84,2°F	28°C	82,4°F
July	29°C	84,2°F	28°C	82,4°F
August	29°C	84,2°F	29°C	84,2°F
September	30°C	86°F	30°C	86°F
October	29°C	84,2°F	29°C	84,2°F
November	28°C	82,4°F	28°C	82,4°F
December	27°C	80,6°F	28°C	82,4°F

History

The first inhabitants who settled in the Antilles were Amerindians, men and women from Central and South America. They arrived around the year 4000 BC on boats called "gommiers", made from a single tree trunk.

The Arawaks, the original inhabitants of Martinique arrived on the island around 300 BC. They were Amerindians originating from the Orinoco Basin (today Venezuela). It was a peaceful tribe and their main activity was agriculture. They cultivated different crops and brought new cultures and other activities such as ceramic pottery. Later, they were driven out by nomadic tribes known as the Caribs, who arrived in the Lesser Antilles around the 14th century.

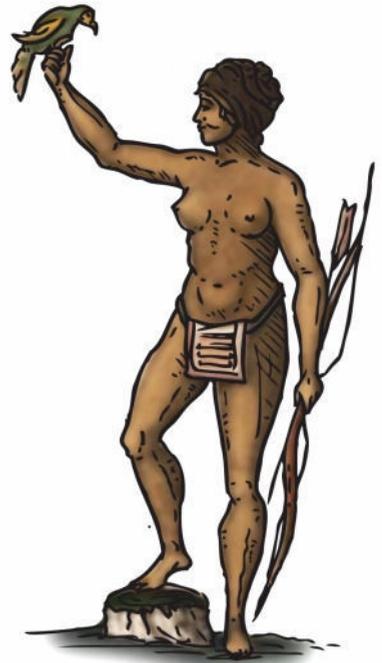
The Caribs were known as **Galibi**, modified by the Spanish to Canibal which is the origin of the English word cannibal. They did indeed practice cannibalism and they were extremely wild, warlike, and engaged in sacrifice.

Aside from this the Caribs cultivated cassava, practiced fishing and hunting and they were also expert navigators. The Caribs called the island **Madinina** which means "**Island of Flowers.**"

In 1502, **Christopher Columbus** landed in Martinique during his fourth expedition, with the island still largely inhabited by the Caribs. By the 17th century, however, they had all been exterminated as European colonisation began.

Martinique was first colonized in 1635 by a Frenchman, **Pierre Bélain d'Esnambuc**. He landed on the north-west side of the island with one hundred French settlers from Saint-Kitts. The city **Saint-Pierre** was established, with a small fort being built, becoming the capital of the island. One year later, in 1636, d'Esnambuc died and his nephew, **Jacques Dyel du Parquet** assumed command of the settlement.

In 1636, **King Louis XIII**, signed a decree which authorized the use of African slaves in French colonies. Many forests were cleared in order to make room for growing different plants and with the help of slave labor, the settlers started to grow sugar cane, cassava, indigo, tobacco, potatoes, cotton, cocoa and eventually coffee. The island was soon transformed into a prosperous colony. In 1638 another fort was established, called the Fort Saint-Louis in **Fort-de-France**. In the following years, the French took full control of the island and the rest of the Caribs who had survived were forced to flee the island.



The Arawaks

In 1685 the **Code Noir** (The Black Code) was signed by France's King Louis XIV. It defined the conditions of slavery in French colonies. This decree also prohibited the exercise of any other religion than Roman Catholicism and Jews were not allowed to reside in the French colonies.

At many times Martinique was attacked by the British and the English Empire occupied the island for most of the 1794-1814 period. One of the most famous battles was the one at **Diamond Rock** (page 19). The island was definitively restored to France in 1814.

On the 22nd May 1848, slavery in French Antilles was abolished by Victor Schoelcher, the French minister for foreign territories and this day was declared a national holiday in Martinique. After the abolishment of slavery, Indian workers replaced slaves. An Indian community was created and about 10 percent of today's inhabitants of Martinique have Indian ancestry.

Until 1902, **Saint-Pierre** was the island's capital and the most advanced city of the Antilles. On the 8th of May 1902, Saint-Pierre was completely destroyed when volcano Mount Pelée erupted. (page 127) Due to this, the capital was moved to **Fort-de-France**. In 1946, Martinique became the French Overseas Department and in 1974 it was made a French Region.

Slavery

Martinique became the leading French colony in the 1650s, and settlers on the island became rich thanks to sugar cane cultivation, which they shipped to Europe. As the sugar industry of Martinique began to grow, the French began bringing African slaves to the island to work in the sugar plantations. In 1636, a decree authorizing the use of slaves in the French West Indies was signed.

In 1685, France's King Louis XIV signed the Code Noir (The Black Code), that regulated the trade and conditions of black slaves in the French colonies. According to this decree, slaves were the property of settlers and had the same value as a piece of furniture.



African slaves lived in wooden huts on the estate owned by their masters. Whilst the men were working on the plantations, the women were servants in the home of the wealthy landowners. Physical violence, poor living, low working conditions and undernourishment were a part of their lives, with settlers giving slaves the bare minimum required to perform their daily work. The slave masters also had to baptize their slaves to the Catholic religion. In the 18th century the slave trade had reached its greatest intensity with nearly **30,000 captives** arriving each year in the West Indies.

In Martinique, slavery was abolished on the 22 May 1848 by Victor Schoelcher.

The revolt of slaves

During the time of slavery, there were several slave revolts. The biggest and most known one was on the 12th October 1822 in Carbet, when fugitive slaves armed with cutlasses were involved in a bloody massacre of the whites. They associated themselves with the slaves from other plantations and killed their masters. The movement was becoming more and more widespread and the slaves were more numerous, which enabled them to defeat their masters to regain their freedom.

The Governor of the King mobilized the king's guard, who went very quickly in search of runaway slaves. Eventually, those involved were captured, sentenced and tortured to death.

British occupation

As the British saw the French colonists profiting from sugar cane farming, they tried to take control of Martinique. During the 18th century, the possession of the island changed several times. The governing was inconsistent and some neighbouring islands experienced the same. In Martinique, several battles took place between the French and the British, the most important one was probably that of **Diamant**. In 1804 British sailors landed on the rocky island called **Diamond Rock** and built a small fortress, with barracks and a warehouse. For more than one year they were attacking French ships with cannons from this strategic vantage point. However, the French were clever and their admiral had a good plan, sending a boat full of rum on the island. The English fell for the trap and drank the rum. The French took advantage of this and took over the island. Martinique was finally returned to the French in 1815, after the Napoleonic wars.



Flora

Martinique is called the „**Island of flowers**” because of its breathtaking flora. Its unique biodiversity includes many endemic and remarkable species.

The flora in Martinique is one of the richest in the West Indies, consisting of **3008 species of plants**, including 396 tree species.

The island has different zones and its vegetation and landscape varies according to the microclimate and altitude. It combines lush nature with rainforest, savannah of cactus, mangroves, tropical flowers and much more.

Flowers



Angel Trumpet
Brugmansia



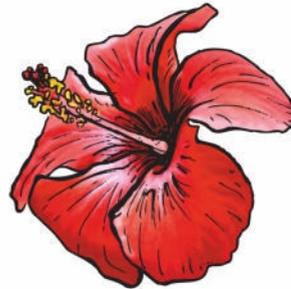
Heliconia
Heliconia bihai



Balisier
Heliconia caribaea



Alpinia (Atoumo)
Alpinia zerumbet



Hibiscus
Hibiscus

Angel Trumpet - A beautiful yet very dangerous shrub, it's advised to not touch them due to their toxins which can cause severe problems and even death. **Heliconia** - It used to be exported and its sweet nectar attracts hummingbirds. **Balisier** - A native Caribbean plant from the Heliconiaceae family often used as a symbol, seen in tourist magazines or on postcards. **Alpinia** - You can make a delicious tea from its leaves and blooms and this plant is capable of healing many illnesses. **Hibiscus** - Present everywhere in Martinique in very various different forms and colours. Often used as a symbol of the island. It comprises around 200 decorative species. It is also used to make jams, liqueurs, tea and some species of hibiscus are grown as food crops.

