



GUSTAVIA

ST. BARTS

St. Barthélemy is known as one of the most exclusive locations in the Caribbean. Seemingly hidden a few miles across the water southeast of St. Martin, this small French island was a well kept secret for many years. It is as if the class and refinement of the French Riviera merged with the laid back lifestyle of French Polynesia. It is here the “hoi oligoi” continue to cherish their escape from the masses without having to sacrifice the comforts and rewards of civilization.

With a population around 7,000 the atmosphere is warm and congenial. Approaching the port town of Gustavia from the water one immediately sees how her red roofs stand out against the dark green hills rising out of the azure blue sea. Her streets are lined with international shops and boutiques, and the scent of freshly baked baguettes on the breeze reminds those who know this island that the chefs of St. Barts serve up some of the best dining in the world.

Once you've been to this island, this little piece of France, it may become difficult to explain yet easily understood that there is something, some mythical “je ne sais qua” about St. Barts that you will never forget.

HISTORY

In 1493 Christopher Columbus and the crew of his second voyage to the New World were the first Europeans to see and chart this island. It was named for the Admiral's younger brother, Bertomê. As was always the case with the Spanish, if no silver or gold was to be found they sailed away. This opened the door for the French who came ashore a century and a half later with a small group of colonists who sailed over from the nearby island of St. Kitts. Shortly thereafter the Knights of Malta bought the island from King Louis XIV of France. Their attempts at a settlement failed and the island was ultimately deserted after a devastating attack upon the colonists by Carib Indians. The Caribs made sure the Europeans understood they were not welcomed. It was nearly two decades before the French returned.

They were a hardy bunch of farmers and sailors from the French regions of Brittany and Normandy who established the first successful colony on St. Barts in the mid 1600s. It is primarily this group from whom many of the present day citizens of the island can trace their lineage. But conditions in those days were very difficult. Many of the islanders had little choice other than to make their living by plundering Spanish merchant vessels. Slowly the harbor town of Le Carénage (as it was called at the time) grew into a thriving port.

In 1784 France gave St. Barts to Sweden in return for a license to conduct trade through the vital Swedish port of Göteborg. It was a good deal for both countries. With political neutrality established, Sweden renamed their new Caribbean harbor town after their King Gustav III and declared it a duty-free port. As a center for resupply and trade the city quickly grew. Swedes came to St. Barts for business while some Frenchmen sought refuge here from their country's revolution. Yet commerce and markets are cyclical and by 1815 the economy had declined and many people left the island and spread throughout the Caribbean.

Due to the lack of good soil and dry conditions St. Barts did not have a

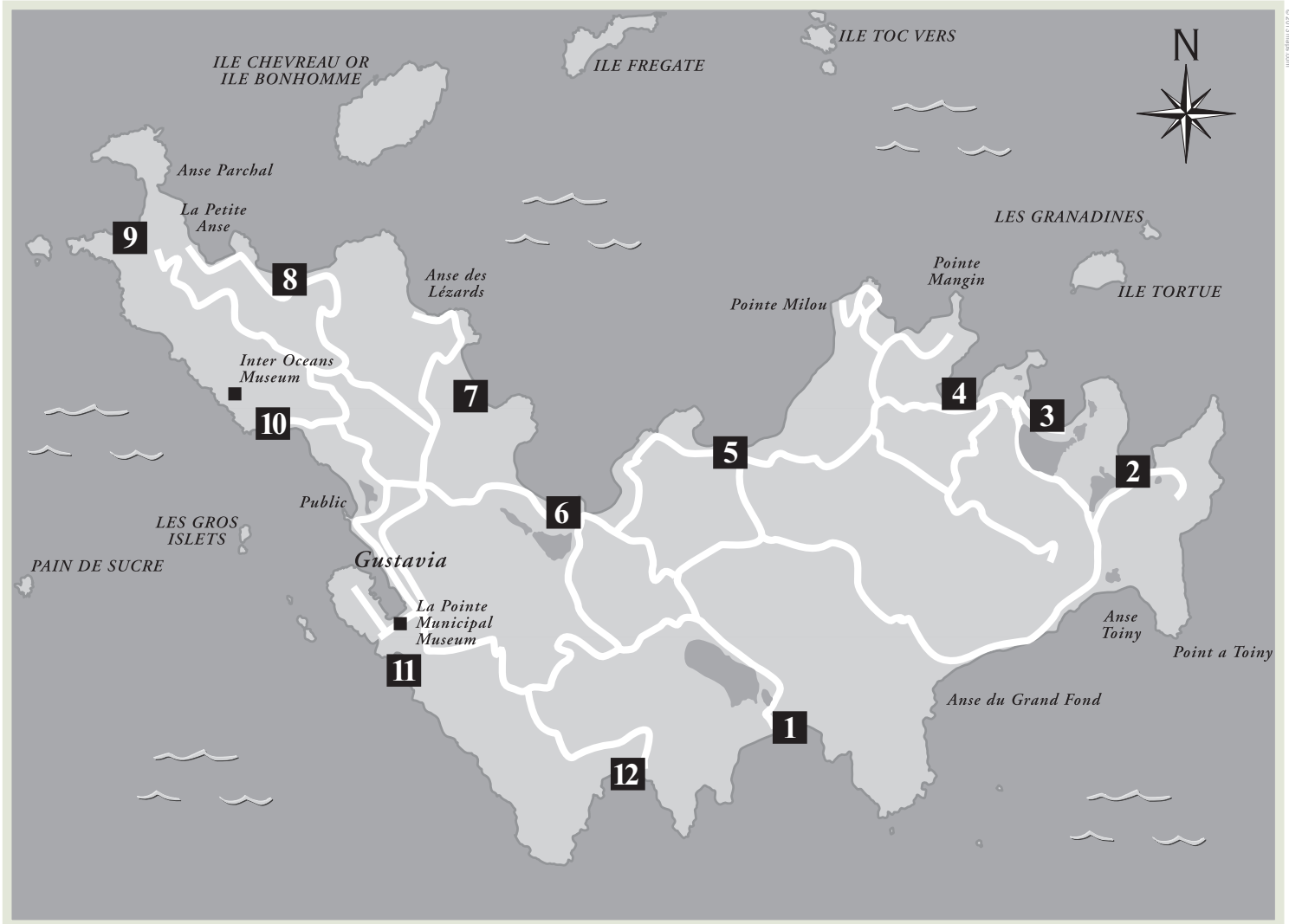


slave based plantation economy. There were slaves on the island however and they were emancipated by the Swedish government in 1847. After their masters received financial compensation directly from the Swedish Crown, the vast majority of freed slaves choose to leave the island.

With the decline of trade through the port of Gustavia the Swedish government realized St. Barts was a drain on their treasury. In 1878 Sweden sold the island back to France for a nominal sum. There were two conditions for the sale; the island must remain a free port and the citizens would not be

required to pay taxes to the French government. The first assurance worked out well. The second...let's just say they're still working on it. The citizens of St. Barts voted in a referendum asking if the island should return to French rule. The tally was 351 in favor, 1 opposed.

Today St. Barthélemy is a French "Collectivités d'Outre Mer" (Overseas Collectivity) and has earned the reputation as one of the most beautiful islands to be found anywhere in the Caribbean.



GUSTAVIA AREA PLACES OF INTEREST

As if with a lovely string of natural pearls, St. Barts is encircled by a strand of creamy white beaches. Our short descriptions will not say "this one is beautiful" or "the other one has brilliant sand" or "the water here is crystal clear"; they all fit this narrative. Keep in mind, this is a French island and going topless at the beach is perfectly acceptable, though optional of course. However, there are a couple of beaches on St. Barts where, despite the fact it is officially frowned upon, "au' naturale" is the common attire.

1 Anse de Grande Saline is located on the south shore of the island. There are no accommodations or facilities. The long cove does offer plenty of room to spread out in pri-

vacancy. This is one of the two "naturalist" beaches.

2 Petit Cul de Sac is a cove protected by an outer reef. The water is calm making it a good place to snorkel or dive. Please do not remove any of the conch shells you may find as this cove is a protected reserve.



3 Grand Cul de Sac offers plenty of water sports. Windsurfing is popular here with equipment rental and lessons available. There are hotels, cafés and restaurants along the beach.

4 Anse de Marigot is a small beach popular with the locals for its easy access.

5 Anse de L'Orient is another nice, long, family beach. This is a great place for swimming and when the surf is up, this is the spot to catch a wave.

6 Baie de St. Jean is a family beach with lots of water activities and good snorkeling. There are cafés and restaurants along the beach.

7 Anse des Cayes is popular with surfers and windsurfers.

8 Anse des Flamands is long and wide. The small fishing village at the water's edge helps to create a beautiful setting. There are cafés and restaurants available where visitors can enjoy a wonderful beachside meal. Be aware of the fact that the currents here can be very strong.

9 Anse de Colombier is not easily accessible. The hike takes about a half hour but reaching the secluded cove makes it all worth it. This is a favorite spot for pleasure boats to drop anchor.

10 Corossol is a small, quiet fishing village with a nice little beach.

11 Anse du Grand Galet (Shell Beach) is in town and easily accessible. It is great if you have been shopping in Gustavia and want to take a nice, quick and refreshing dip in the sea.

12 Anse du Gouverneur is a quiet and secluded beach. It has good snorkeling however most people come here for the privacy thus making it the other of St. Barts' "au' naturale" beaches.

SHORE EXCURSIONS

To make the most of your visit to Gustavia and St. Barts we suggest you take one of our organized Shore Excursions. For information concerning tour content and pricing, consult your Shore Excursion Brochure or contact the Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, be advised to take only necessary items and secure any valuables onboard.

LOCAL CUSTOMS

Bargaining: Prices are generally fixed. Local vendors may bargain.

Tipping: A "service compris" (service charge included) of 12% is added to most restaurant bills. It is appropriate and appreciated to tip the waiter or waitress a little extra. A 10-15% tip is appropriate for taxis.

LOCAL CUISINE AND DRINK SPECIALTIES

St. Barts is famous for the number of fantastic restaurants and cafés sprinkled throughout the island. Prices can be steep yet the freshness and quality is unsurpassed. This is simply some of the best dining to be found, not only in the Caribbean, but anywhere in the world. Flame-grilled lobster together with stuffed crab, scallops, mahi-mahi and tuna are just a few of the popular sea-foods. The côte de boeuf is said to be amazing while Asian accents on Creole dishes bring traditional flavors together in delicious new combinations.

Though rum is not produced on St. Barts there are a few companies on the island who import white rum from other distilleries in the Caribbean and add their own flavoring of tropical flowers, spices or fruits.

SHOPPING

Gustavia has been a duty-free port since the Swedes took over control in the late 1700s. When St. Barts reverted to France in the late 1800s the duty-free status was maintained. For such a small town Gustavia has an extensive collection of international shops and boutiques which include everything from designer fashions to jewelry and perfumes.

LOCAL CURRENCY

The official currency on St. Barts is the Euro (€ - EUR). U.S. dollars and major credit cards are widely accepted. ATMs are available.

POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE FACILITIES

The Post Office in Gustavia is located on rue du Centenaire.

Dial the following access numbers to use a personal calling card from a public phone:

AT&T: 0.800.99.0011

MCI: 0.800.99.0019

TOURIST INFORMATION

A Tourist Information Center is located at the main pier.

TRANSPORTATION

Rental cars, taxis and scooters are available.

