



Island Profile

Located in the Caribbean, the island of St. Barth is one of four French owned territories that comprise the French West Indies. It is known for its crystal clear waters and white sand beaches that are punctuated by numerous lagoons. St. Barth measures just eight square miles and has a green hilly landscape that is surrounded by ancient coral reefs. Small, exclusive, chic, and secluded, St. Barth is considered the jewel in the French Caribbean crown.

Discovered by Columbus in 1493, and named for his brother Bartoloméo, St. Barth was first settled in 1648 by French colonists who took control from the indigenous Indians and built small settlements. In 1784, France sold the island to Sweden but repurchased it in 1878. The island has remained a part of France ever since.

In 2007, St. Barth streamlined its political status, changing from a municipality under French island Guadeloupe to an Overseas Collectivity (COM) governed by a territorial council. The move has given the island more autonomy and a senator representing the island in Paris.

Although some Swedish influences remain, including the name of its capital and harbor, Gustavia, St. Barth, with its markets, outdoor cafes, and charming French colonial feel, exudes an ambience reminiscent of Provence. A rich French heritage and Gallic influence are reflected throughout island. Links to the motherland are so strong that food is flown in from France daily. St. Barth's, celebrated cuisine adds to the island's appeal. Restaurant options range from the traditionally classic, offering gastronomic cuisine to casual feet-in-the-sand eateries. The island offers world class shopping with 200-plus duty-free boutiques stocked with designer labels and fashions, jewelry and fragrances unique to the island. The main shopping areas are Gustavia considered the Paris of the Caribbean and St. Jean Village. Water sports include fishing, diving, windsurfing, and ocean kayaking.

Name	Saint Barthélemy (St. Barth, St. Barts)
Capital	Gustavia
Language	French (primary); English
Location	Caribbean; French West Indies; 125 miles south of Puerto Rico
Size	21 sq km; 8 square-miles
Physical Features	Hilly, almost completely surrounded by shallow-water reefs, with 20 beaches
Climate	Arid tropical maritime (little rain)
Population	7,448 (as of 2009)
Currency	euro (EUR); US dollar (USD) accepted
Time Zone	GMT-4 hours, Atlantic Standard Time

Economic Snapshot

St. Barth's economy is based on high-end tourism and duty-free luxury commerce, serving visitors primarily from North America but including many Europeans. The luxury hotels and private villas host an estimated 70,000 visitors per year with another 130,000 arriving by boat. The relative isolation and high cost of living inhibits mass tourism – residents and visitors approve. The construction (nothing taller than a palm tree can be built here) and public sectors also enjoy significant investment in support of tourism. With limited fresh water resources, all food must be imported, as must all energy resources and most manufactured goods. Employment is strong and attracts labor from Brazil and Portugal.

Tourism Overview

The birth of tourism is credited to Dutch aviator Rémy de Haenen who landed the first plane on the island and later opened the now iconic Eden Rock Hotel. Early jet setters, and Hollywood stars like Greta Garbo and Howard Hughes were among the first visitors. Later it was a hideaway for the Rockefellers and the Rothschild's. The mystique continues today, as CEOs, celebrities, music moguls and movie stars flock here. Celebrities, like the rest of island's visitors choose either the ultra privacy or the extreme socializing that the island offers.

Transportation Getting Here & Around

There are no direct flights from the U.S. The nearest airport for international flights is Princess Juliana International Airport (SXM) located in St. Maarten (Netherlands, Antilles), then take a short (10-12 minute) flight to St. Barth. It is roughly a four-hour flight from the East Coast. Airlines servicing St. Barth out of the U.S. include American Airlines, Continental, Delta and U.S. Airways. Airlines offering service from St. Maarten into St. Barth include Winair and St. Barth Commuter. Charter flights are also available from Puerto Rico. Additionally there is an option of a high-speed ferry (approximately 45 minutes).

The island does not have a public transportation system and taxis are available but scarce. A car is really a necessity. All major car rental companies are represented as well as local operators. Most are located at the airport and a major credit card and driver's license is required.