



Sint Maarten – Fact Sheet for Lakehead University Placements 2023 (updated Oct. 2022)

Flights

- From Toronto to Sint Maarten, the cost of a round trip ranges from roughly \$1000 - \$2000 Canadian.
- The flight duration is approximately 5 hours direct, or 7.5+ hours with a stop
- Westjet has direct flights to St. Martin varying days a week, typically on Wednesday, Saturday, or Sunday. Other airlines that fly to Sint Maarten include Air Canada, Caribbean Airlines, Delta, American Eagle, and United Express.

Visas

- A visa is not required for stays up to 90 days. You must present a valid passport upon entering, and you might also be asked to present your return ticket, proof of sufficient funds for your trip, and proof of lodging. Visitors staying more than 90 days must apply for an extension at an Immigration office.

Language

- In Sint Maarten (the Dutch side of the island), there are two official languages: Dutch and English. In St. Martin (the French side of the island), the official language is French. On both sides of the island, English (a Creole English) is widely spoken throughout.

Currency

- The US dollar (US\$) is the preferred, and often required, mode of currency.
- The *official* currencies are the Netherlands Antillean Guilder on the Dutch side and the Euro on the French side. Guilders are only accepted on the Dutch side while Euros are usually only used on the French side due to a steep exchange rate.
- ATMs are widely available and the easiest way to access cash, and will give you a choice of US dollars or Euros.
- Credit cards are accepted throughout the island.

Food

- The island is known for its excellent cuisine. Local dishes are influenced by a combination of European and Creole/Caribbean cooking. Dishes are often spicy, and seasoned with many different flavours and toppings.
- The food is heavily meat/fish based – only some restaurants offer vegetarian meals.
- Sint Maarten alone has more than 300 restaurants to choose from!
- Common dishes in Sint Maarten include: Conch and Dumplings, Callaloo, Johnny Cakes, Codfish Fritters, St. Maarten Spareribs, Locri, Whelk Soup and Crabmeat-Stuffed Shells.
- Note: many (but not all) hotels and restaurants include a 15% service charge, in which case no further tipping is necessary (otherwise, add 15% to the bill).

Water

The tap water in Sint Maarten/St. Martin is safe to drink in most places. Many establishments serve desalinated water. Bottled water is inexpensive if you do not like the taste of the tap water.

Vaccines

- As of October 15, 2022, unvaccinated residents are no longer required to be tested prior to arrival.
- Non-residents who are not fully vaccinated are required to submit a negative 24 hr. Antigen test or 48 hr. PCR result.
- No specific vaccinations are required for visiting Sint Maarten/St. Martin, although all routine vaccinations should be up-to-date, including measles-mumps-rubella (MMR), diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, varicella (chickenpox), influenza and others.
- Keep up to date with travel requirements here: <https://stmaartenehas.com/travel-requirements/>

Travel Advisories

- Visit <https://travel.gc.ca/destinations/saint-martin> for latest notifications.
- Currently, there is a Level 1 travel advisory, recommending that travellers take normal safety precautions. There are no significant safety or security concerns; the overall safety and security of the island is comparable to Canada.

General Information about St. Martin and Travel Tips

- Sint Maarten/St. Martin is in the Atlantic Time Zone, meaning it is either on the same time as Ontario or there is a 1-hour difference during daylight savings time.
- The population of the entire island is approximately 77,000. The Dutch side is slightly more heavily populated (approximately 40,000) than the French side.
- The size of the entire island is approximately 37 square miles (the smallest land mass in the world to be shared by two separate nations!)
- St. Martin's beaches are well-known for their *vivre et laisser vivre* philosophy on swimsuits (in other words, expect to see some nudity).
- Visitors should be mindful of the jet blast when watching the planes take off and land at Maho Beach. Blasts of sand can be powerful depending on where you're standing, and spectators should prepare by bringing a brimmed hat and umbrella, in addition to plenty of sunscreen (the strong winds can make it hard to determine when you're sunburned).
- If you are planning on diving, make sure to register for proper divers' insurance. Try DAN (www.diversalertnetwork.org).
- Things move at a more leisurely pace in the Caribbean, so take advantage of that by taking the bus to the top tourist sites. There's no set schedule for drop-off and pick-ups, but you'll get where you want to go for about \$1.50 one-way.
- When taking a taxi, tip about 10% to 15%.
- The island has two small but well-equipped hospitals.
- Crowds are dense in Sint Maarten, so travelers should exercise common sense when moving around the tourist areas; leave your valuables at home, and only carry small bills.
- Email, don't phone. Making a call from the French side to the Dutch side, and vice versa, is considered an international call.
- The island of St. Martin/Sint Maarten is proud of its dual heritage and customs. There is no physical border between the French and Dutch territories and people and goods may travel freely between both sides of the island.

Cellphones and Wi-Fi

- It is recommended to purchase a new SIM card, or to use an app that allows you to talk and text over Wi-Fi.

-Apps such as **WhatsApp** and **TextNow** that allow you to text/call over Wi-Fi are alternatives to buying a new sim card. Verizon offers a plan called a “TRAVEL PASS” and it is a cheap plan that allows you to use your phone the way you do at home.

-Wi-Fi networks are available on every corner of the island. Most restaurants and bars provide internet access for free.

Temperatures and Weather in March/April

-The average temperature in March and April is approximately 28°C during the day, and approximately 23°C at night. Rainfall is not very abundant in these months (March is the least rainy month of the year), although mild rains may occur on approximately 8-10 days per month. Expect a good amount of sunshine.

-Sunscreen and a hat should always be worn, since the island is located between the Tropic of Cancer and the Equator, receiving the full force of the sun. A good pair of sunglasses is also a good idea.

-Hurricane season in St. Martin is from June-November. In September 2017, St. Martin experienced a Category 5 hurricane (Hurricane Irma) that impacted many buildings and infrastructure on the island.

Travel and Tourism

The island is known for its gorgeous beaches (37 in total, some busy and some quiet), its sprawling shopping malls and casinos, restaurants, beach bars, local rum, and more. There are countless options for hiking, mountain-top views, historic site-seeing, and water sports (including diving, kayaking, snorkelling and yatching). The annual Saint Maarten Carnival starts in April and ends in May.

Further information to prepare students for placements and travel in Sint Maarten/St. Martin, including a packing list, will be organized through Lakehead University.