

attinique agnifique

If you'd love to lie on a sun-baked hearh and Look out onto a turquoise sea, As gentle trade winds carry brightly plumed birds aloft Over dense forests and crystal-clear mountain streams

You are invited

To our beautiful island Where you will discover Pristine beaches langed by Caribbean waters and Rain forests datted with the reds, vellows and blues Of our birds and butterflies.

If you'd love to bask in luxury. To indulge in the finest food and drink. To peruse paintines and sculptures And to acquire some lovely "objets" of your own.

To our heautiful island Luxurious resorts, charming family-owned hotels And outstanding restaurants, shops and museums.

To our beautiful island

You are invited To Martiniaue.

Here you will marvel at the richness and diversity of our culture. Sample our delectable French and Creole cuisine. Admire the originality of our art. Dance to the rhythms of our vibrant music.

Sweet, Sweet Martinique

When thinking of a Caribbean island, one envisions sunshine, white-sand beaches, turquoise

water, and palm trees swaving in the breeze. And usually that's about it - unless the island is Martinique. Martinique is

indeed blessed with lovely beaches, lush and flowering vegetation and an idyllic

so much more to this very special island.

Martinique is a corner of France in the Caribbean, a place that combines a rich And always be gladdened by the friendliness of our people. For there is harmony not only in our music. But in our hearts.

Experience the natural wonders of a tropical island With all the material comforts you'd expect at home. Enjoy the lively Caribbean culture With all the sophistication and savoir-faire you'd expect in France.

We are a part of France, after all. We speak English very well But if you want to "parler français," we can teach you In our state-of-the-art language programs Where French-language instruction Is spiced with Martinican history and culture.

So come to Martinique To learn or enjoy. To learn and enjoy

You'll be in fine company. The film director Euzhan Palcy makes her home here. So does the poet Aimé Cesaire, the renowned writers Patrick Chamoiseau and Edouard Glissant. As have Paul Gauguin, the anthropologist Lafcadio Hearn And Truman Capote before them.

Discover what these artists and writers already found, An island blessed with the bounties of nature and civilization. Come and discover Martinique.



Creole culture with Gallic style and sayoir-faire. Ready to entertain you with her music, art and dance, and to tempt your palate with the delights of French and Creole cuisine. Martinique will seduce you with her many charms.

The versatile Creole language has ample ways of describing the sweet life in

You are invited.

La vi a douce, la vi a bel, and la vi a ka maché. Translation: "life is sweet," "life is beautiful," and "life is going just fine."

These are just a few of the many ways Martinicans describe life on their island - and the time you'll have when you visit there.







Martinique nique

A PORTRAIT OF THE ISLAND

Just south of the Tropic of Cancer, Martinique stretches 40 miles along a northwest to southeast axis, its average width a little over 17 miles

For a small island. Martinique offers a wealth of varying landscapes, from open fields to mountains to lush rain forests, windswept rocky coasts, sheltered coves and rolling hills. Take your pick! All this variety, and yet. because of the island's elongated shape you're never more than 15 minutes from the shore. Let's start with a tour of the

island going from

north to south.



origin is most apparent in its mountainous north, presided over by the majestic Montagne (Mount)

Pelée. Soaring to 4.500 feet, this dormant volcano is the highest point on the island. Climb to Pelée's misty peak, and you'll be treated to stunning views of the entire Caribbean coast

Hidden at the foot of Mount Pelée are the famous Hot Springs of Prêcheur, where the temperature of the water reaches up to 120

south of Mount Pelée are the Pitons du Carbet, a series of spectacular peaks that challenge Mount Pelée in stature, reaching heights of well over 3.900 feet.

degrees. Just to the

Recause of their altitude, the mountains of the north are drenched in rain blown in by trade winds from the Atlantic. Their slopes are covered with rain forest thriving in their warmth and humidity, with tangles of huge bamboo trees and arborescent ferns shrouded in creepers, and dotted with the colorful blossoms of the bright red Alpinia and the delicate pink Rose de Porcelaine.

Gurgling springs, thundering waterfalls and clear cascades abound in northern Martinique, And you can reach them through well-marked trails taking you to such remarkable sights as the Gorges de la Falaise and Absalon waterfalls, the Alma Spring and the more difficult to reach but spectacular Rivière (River) Trois Bras. At the very northern tip, the fishing village of Grand'Rivière. the "end of the world," is a must-see.



THE CENTER

In the middle of the island lie the central plains, in a sense Martinique's waistline, as the island narrows along a spine of hills that get smaller as one moves from north to south. This region contains the alluvial plain of Lamentin, an extension of Fort-de-France bay, and it is here that you'll find the largest of the island's coastal swamps of mangrove trees.

Sometimes described as forests taking a foot bath, the mangrove swamps are one of the strangest and wildest natural environments in Martinique. Among the arched roots of its trees and the salty, muddy waters of its canals and pools lie the



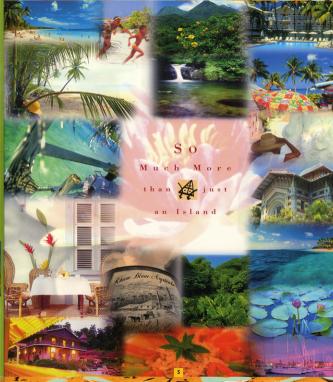
snawning grounds for a large variety of fish and crustaceans, as well as many species of birds.



THE SOUTH

The southern end of the island is known for its rocky hills, called mornes as well as for its intricate pattern of valleys and fjord-like coves, all reminders of ancient geological activity.

The beaches in this region are out of a dream - long stretches of golden sand bordered by seagrape trees swaving palm and coconut trees. and occasionally punctuated by scenic peninsulas jutting into the sea. They stand in marked contrast to the beaches of the north, whose amazing silver-blue sands reveal their volcanic origin. A stellar sightseeing attraction just off the southern coast is the historic landmark, Rocher du Diamant (Diamond Rock), a Caribbean Gibraltar rising 600 feet from the sea. Located only three miles offshore, this massive block of limestone was seized and fortified in 1804 by the British, who turned it into a sort of stationary warship which they dubbed the HMS Diamond Rock, complete with munitions depots and a 107-man "crew." The French recaptured Diamond Rock in 1805 whereupon the defeated British sailors fled to Barbados and were court-martialed for the abandonment of their "ship,



Marinine istorique

"Cric crac", says the storyteller. "God decided to have a party one day." At dusk the children and elderly gather in a circle to hear the island's myths and legends. One of the most interesting stories however, is the history of Martinique itself.

The first inhabitants of Martinique were hunters and gatherers who probably arrived between 3000 and 2000 BC From 100 RC to about 700 AD, there was a more sophisticated civilization of settled inhabitants, the Arawaks, who first developed agriculture, especially the cultivation of cassava They were driven from Martinique and other nearby islands by the Caribs, a warrior tribe originating from Guyana

Columbus sailed to Martinique in 1502. He immediately fell in love with the island

> remarking in his diary "This is the most wonderful, the most fertile, the sweetest, the most equable, the most charming land in the world."

> In spite of his enthusiasm, Spain never colonized Martinique. That was left to the French, who arrived over a century later and founded the town of Saint-Pierre, the island's first capital. They later built Fort Royal. which became Fort-de-France. the island's capital today.

More significantly, they changed the population of the island forever, wiping out the Carib Indians or scattering them to other Caribbean islands by 1660, and introducing African slaves in 1642. Voluntary settlers were

too few in number to work on the labor-intensive sugar cane crop, so French landowners brought in slaves from Africa, who were forced to work in the fields under

dire conditions.



By the end of the 18th century, the slaves of the West Indies were no longer prepared to accept their lot. The French Revolution of 1789 sparked the hope that the spirit of Liberté. Egalité. Fraternité would result in the abolition of slavery. But it wasn't until 1848 that the French government signed a decree abolishing slavery in its colonies. This move resulted in another major population change: the importation of workers from India, adding a new cultural ingredient to the island.



Slavery may have been relegated to the past. but Martinique's woes were not over yet. The now-dormant Mount

Pelée erupted for the last time in 1902, destroying Martinique's most important city -Saint-Pierre - and killing its 30,000 inhabitants. Considered the "little Paris of the Caribbean" because of its beautiful buildings, imposing residences and lively theaters. Saint Pierre was also a thriving commercial port.

Now dubbed "the little Pompei" of the Caribbean, Saint-Pierre could be considered the historic capital of the island . And you'll understand why as you explore the ruins of major buildings, dive among the remains of vessels caught in the harbor during the eruption, or when you visit the Musée Vulcanologique Franck-Perret and the Musée Historique (located in an old town hall), both of which recount the town's history before and

after 1902. In 1990, Saint-Pierre was proclaimed part of the French national natrimoine (heritage) and was designated the "101st City of Art and History."

Martinican history can be explored not only in Saint-Pierre but all over the island. For the architecture of Martinique reflects the island's past in all its romance drama, and intensity.

More than fifty plantations, for instance, are scattered throughout the island, some of them open to the public.

The architecture of the towns also reveals much about the island's history. Farmers migrating to the towns in the 19th century brought their rural styles of architecture along with them and adapted their buildings to an urban environment.



Thus arose a specifically urban architecture, especially in the capital city. Fort de France, with townhouses whose cast-iron balconies create picturesque streetscapes similar in feel to the French Ouarter of New Orleans.

more obvious in the public buildings of Fort-de-France, which were almost invariably built along the graceful lines of French-style classicism; among the best-known examples are the Palais de Justice. the Hôtel de la Préfecture and the former city hall. One major

The French influence is even



departure from this pattern is the late-19th-century Schoelcher Library whose style and materials drew their inspiration from the Industrial Revolution.

Did vou Know?

. The Museum of Archeology in pre-Columbian art. Its remarkable collection of a thousand objects illustrates the continuous presence of the Amerindians in Martinique from 400 BC to 1660 AD.

 Victor Schoelcher was an abolitionist deputy in the French National Assembly who campaigned to end slavery in Martinique Today he is memoria alized by the Schoelcher Library. which was built in Paris (by architect Henri Pico) at the same time as the Fiffel

Tower, and then shipped over piece by piece to Martinique. where it became the symbol of Fort-de-France.

· May 22, the date that slavery was abolished in Martinique, is now a national holiday there.

•In 1946, Martinique became a department of France, which means that it is much an integral part of the country as Hawaii or Alaska is of the U.S.





artinique omar

une histoire d'amour

It is hard not to think of romance on an island that combines French sonhisti-Creole joie de vivre. And the beauty! Wherever you go on the island, you are surrounded by the color and splendor that were once brilliantly captured Paul Gauguin.

the island's charms, you will not be the first. Napoleon Bonaparte may have conquered most of Europe, but his heart was conquered by a Martinican Creole named Marie-Josèphe Rose Tascher de la

Pagerie. She married him in 1796 and

If you are seduced by

became the osephine. And she was not the only leader, Madame de Maintenon

married King Louis



XIV. and Aimée Dubuc de Rivery became Emperor of Constantinople.

Today the feeling of romance is Martinique was featured in the 1999 MGM film, The Thomas Crown Affair, as the seductive hideaway to which billionaire Thomas Crown (Pierce Brosnan) flies off with the tempting female investigator Catherine Banning (Renee Russo).

Of Course you needn't be a billionaire or have royal blood to find a little romance of your own, Martinique is an ideal setting for

a private getaway for two, Reasonably priced honeymoon packages are available at many hotels. And there is bound to be one that suits your taste. whether it's an elegant

The nightlife of Martinique

will add some sizzle to your stay. There are great nightspots in and around Fort-de-France, with until the wee hours of the morning. Many hotels have talented dancers, singers and musicians like, Les Balisiers, Or you can court Lady Luck at Martinique's casinos. Whether or not you gamble in Martinique, you'll always be a winner. For a getaway, Martinique is a sure bet. A wonderful time

is guaranteed.



Know?

The slow and sultry rhythm

The bark of the

Emperor Napoleon's



stronomique

hile its splendid scenery. art and elegant craftwork are a treat for the eyes, and its music a treat for the ears. Martinique has something to offer all your senses. including your sense of taste.

TANTALIZE YOUR TASTE BUDS

The cuisine of Martinique is, fortunately, authentically Caribbean - a fusion of indigenous, African. European and Asian influences. The cuisine of

Martinique is also, fortunately, very French. The fact that the island is a department of

France means that the most important "European" influence is actually French influence, an auspicious state of affairs.

France gave Martinique its wonderful delicacies - few other Caribbean islands have such a magnificent tradition of great bread, cheese and charcuterie. Even more importantly, the Martinicans have also inherited

the French spirit of cooking.

interesting, unique and delicious.

the feeling that food is not just a necessity but among the most critical joys of life; indeed, an "art form."

There are two kinds of great cuisine in Martinique: that which shows the French influence very strongly, and that which shows it only barely. The first is found in the more expensive restaurants.



The second, usually called "Creole," is found all over the island. It is based on local ingredients - fish and shellfish, pork, beef, coconut and bananas - and seasoned with a wide variety of spices worthy of an island that was once a crossroads of trade. Creole cooking is

So tantalize your taste buds with a cuisine that gets its generosity from Africa, its savoir-faire from France and its spices from India.



an absolute must.

Go for a French tartine spread with homemade Martinican jams,

a green papaya gratin or a coconut blanc-manger. Or depart from tradition altogether and try some of the exciting creations from Martinique's many innovative chefs, like the lightly sautéed foie gras aux bananes vertes,

You can also savor the fresh seafood and farm products in which Martinique abounds. And fruits! Sure, you're familiar with passion fruits. mangoes, pineapples, apricots or cherries, but in Martinique, their color, taste, size, and nectar are superior to anything you've ever had at home.

There are 365 estaurants in Martinique, one for every day of the year. So you will never run out of culinary delights.



· Sauce au Chien, literally "dog sauce " is a hot sauce used for barbeques and grills

·Colombo, a popular Martinican curry dish made with chicken, lamb or pork, originally came from India.

•The local Martinique-brewed beer, is called

· For christenings, communions or kids' parties. a traditional thick, warm chocolate drink flavored with cinnamon, vanilla and nutmeg is served with pain au beurre, a kind of elaborate and braided brioche.

• Blaff is supposedly named for the sound the fish makes when it is first



water It is a tradition for fishermen to eat blaff early in the morning when they come back from their daily catch.

· A traditional Martinican breakfast consists of cucumber salad, avocado, spicy codfish or herring salad and boiled

· Martinique holds the record for Champagne consumption in France,





Connoisseurs will tell you that

Martinique makes the finest rum

in the world. In all honesty, we

The island has 11 distilleries producing more than 17 varieties of rums du terroir, as well as many local liquors

made from rum, like coconut liqueur,

passion fruit liqueur and orange-fla-

vored shrubb (see below). Martinican rums were

reserved only for

have to admit that...they're right! It is indeed

superb, and an integral part of la vi a douce in

Martinique. When the clock

Martinicans stop whatever

they're doing and engage in the ritual of relaxing with a

drink of rum-based ti-punch.

strikes noon every day,



aged, the portion that evaporates is called



Ti-Punch

Old or white rum

These recipes

favorite drinks:

Planter's

"The word "punch" comes from

syrup

nou di-a, which means "As we said."

a scientist and engineer. invented a conner still that what it is today.



In Martinique, you can enjoy sipping Absinthe, the famous pleasure in the United States.



in oak barrels.

While the rum is being the"angel's share."

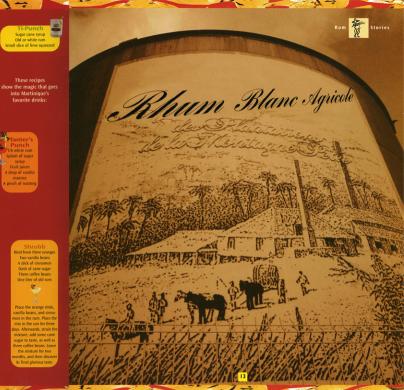
quality to fine cognac.

means mixing. The equivalent of "cheers" or

century plantation located on the Atlantic coast, Père Labat, helped make Martinican rum



springs in the north of the waters in the world: Eau de Chanflor, famous for its Eau de Didier, a naturally



the finest cheeses and wines in France.

awarded with the prestigious French

contrôlée, previously

designation appellation d'origine

Marinique, quatique

Swimming

There are beaches to suit every taste. Beaches on the southwest coast, like Anses of Arlet and Anse Mitan, are ideal for swimming. These white-sanded beaches are lined with coconut trees and lapped by the crystal clear waters of the Caribbean, which are always settle and moderate in temperature. There



are lovely beaches on the nearby southern coast as well, like Diamant, Sainte-Anne and the spectacular Grande Anse des Salines.

You may prefer to roam the untouched, isolated beaches of the southeast coast, like Cap Chevalier and Anse Trabaud, where the Atlantic Ocean meets the Caribbean sea. For the other extreme, go farther

the other extreme, go farther north, to Le François or Le Robert. There you'll find fonds blancs, or sand bars protected by coral reefs, where the water is no more than three or four feet deep, 0' you may prefer deep. O' you may prefer be deep. O' you may prefer deep. O' you may prefe

a beauty all their own.

All beachfront hotels have windsurfing gear for use by guests, and many also offer lessons. Away from the hotes, there are many windsurfing havens, especially in the south, where it is very easy to rent equipment. Among the best spots are Sainte-Anne, Sainte-Luce and Cap Michel (near Cap Chearlier).

Snorkeling

Snorkeling is an easy way to explore the coral reefs, the colorful fish and underwater plants that thrive along the coasts of Martinique.

The waters near Pointe du Bout and

Anse Mitan offer great snorkeling, as do the small bays around Sainte-Anne and Anses d'Arlet. Some hotels have glass-bottom boats for snorkeling trips, and most have fins and masks for rent

Scuba Diving

Fascinating dive sites, ideal water temperatures, abundant marine life and incredible shipwrecks make scuba diving an ideal sport in Martinique. There are many fine facilities and licensed instructors to help you

enjoy the sport even more. And so much to see! In the north of the island, for example, there is Cap Enragé, with its coral garden teeming with colorful fish, Just off



the coasts of Bellefontaine and Le Prêcheur are plateaus of coral that are well worth exploring. Best of all are the shipwrecks in the harbor of Saint-Pierre. Made famous by Jacques Cousteau, these are the remains of a dozen or more boats that sank when Mount Pelée erunted in 1902.

The diving is also great at Trois-Ilets, a resort area across the bay from Fort-de-France, as well as on the southern coast at Anses d'Arlet, Cap Salomon, Sainte-Anne, and



especially at Diamond Rock. The underwater world of this Caribbean Gibralar is crystal clear; it is challenging to the driver but very rewarding, offering an abundance of beautiful coral formations, multicolored fish, sponges, and a firsh cannon or the Caribbean around Diamond Rock include beautiful coral formations around Diamond Rock include beautiful coral formation and Diamond Rock include beautiful complete driving equipment and

Fishing

Findings are faither out on the native fee some devices affining the most popular notice are lingfuls, homics, barracuda and tuna. The Association Couple Serme, based in Bellefontaine, can arrange for you to fish in typical situand tashion with heal fishermen O'you can wasten of the two the cuperts do it at the Poursan international de Piche, Souther International Fishing Tournament, Every Souther International Fishing Tournament, Every Carribona (Guadeloupe, Venezuela, Trinidad and Chabay, Gernada, Antiqua, Sarbados, etc.) Compete



to catch the biggest and most beautiful blue marlin. Each day's contest is followed at night by parties featuring live bands.

Sailing & Yachting

Martinique is a paradise for sailing, whether on boats rented at a hotel by the hour or on yachts (with crew or without) chartered by the day, week or month. Fort-de-France has one of the safest, most beautiful bays in the Caribbean, long the yachtsman's Avortie port of call.

As Martinique's popularity in the yachting world has grown, marinas have opened in other parts of the island: at Pointe du Bout in Trois-llets; in Le Robert and Le François on the Atlantic; in Sainte-Anne down south; and, most potably in the

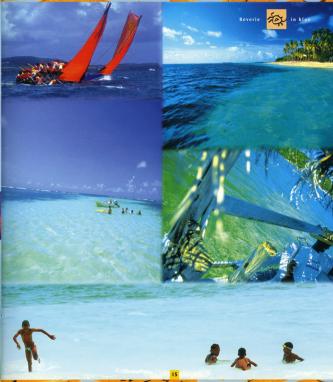


southern town of Le Marin, whose "Port de Plaisance" is now the island's largest and best-equipped marina.

You can also have fun watching others ply the waves. A major cent in Martinique is the Régates de juin (June Regattas), a spirited week-long yacht race around the island. Each evening there are lively parties in the towns and villages and on the beaches where that day's Jan has terminated.

Yole Racing

An exciting spectator sport unique to Martinique is yell enzing, a tradition inherited from the Carib Indians and from Indians and Indians and Indians and Indians and Indians and Indians Ind





Canoeing.

Kayaking, and Canvoning Try canoeing, kayaking or canyoning,

Kayaking is an ideal way to explore the

islets of Sainte-

Anne, in the south. It's also ideal for exploring the mangrove swamps, the

best examples of which are found along Fort-de-France bay (in the Génipa reserve) on the west coast and on the Caravelle peninsula on the Atlantic coast.

Tucked away in the heart of the northern tropical rain forest, the Gorges de la Falaise is a remarkable

> little "canyon," with a beautiful waterfall perfect for the sport of "canyoning" - climbing and leaping into the falls. At the Absalon Falls, guided canyoning is the local sport, but it's also popular at Rivière Mitan in Morne Vert, the Alma Spring, and at Rivière Claire in Fonds Saint Denis,

Hiking

Martinique, hiking is one of the best organized. And because Martinique has so

Of all sports on

many natural treasures - tropical rain forest, alpine peaks, mornes, and wide stretches of virgin beaches - hiking is by far the most appealing way to see the island.

engage in sports that immerse you in the island's glorious scenery, whether inland or along the coasts.

Martinique has a network of more than 30 trails, all wellmarked, well-maintained and designed for hikers who want to go on their own. Among the available tours for hikers is a two-hour guided climb up Mount Pelée that takes you through thick foliage and overgrown trails.



A highly recommended tour is the 12.4-mile trek from Le Prêcheur, the northernmost town on the Caribbean coast, over to the town of Grand'Rivière, a fishing village at the northernmost point on the Atlantic coast. The six-hour trek takes you through the tropical rain forest, untouched beaches and past three rivers that meet at Rivière Trois Bras, forming three stunning waterfalls at the foot of Mount Pelée. There is no road between Le Prêcheur and Grand'Rivière; the only way to go is by foot. But until the turn of the last century oxcarts drove along this trail, and the stone bridges, tunnels and other remnants of that era make for fascinating exploring.



Mountain Biking The 18-speed VTT (vélo tout terrain or all-terrain

bike) makes for great cycling, and you can rent them all over the island. In cooperation with local bike clubs, the Parc Naturel Régional has designed some unusual itineraries. There are also plenty of reasonably priced tours that



Horseback Riding If your preferred speed is one-

horsepower, Martinique offers many equestrian itineraries, some along scenic beach routes, others through tropical forests. There are stables throughout the island, most notably in Trois-Ilets. Le Diamant, Sainte-Anne and in the Fort-de-France area.





Martinique otanique The Island of Flowers

Patchouli, vlang-ylang, vetyver and citronelle are but a few of the heady aromas that envelope strollers as they wander

through the gardens of Martinique Known as one of the most beautiful islands of the Caribbean, Martinique has a warm and humid climate that makes it ideal for the myriad tropical plants and blossoms that grow there.

> The flowers of Martinique dd dashes of bright color gainst the lush green background of the island's fields and forests. The blazing reds of bougainvillea are to be seen everywhere, along with wild tropical flowers like the

red-and-vellow Bird of Paradise: the pink-and-yellow Heliconia; the Golden Trumpet: white frangipani: vel-

low allamandas; and Hibiscus, which comes in red, pink, purple, blue, vellow and white. The Carib Indians called Martinique "Madinina", which means "Isle of Flowers." a nickname that remains to this day



Martinique also has many digenous plants, including the artinican Mountain peanple, the Martinican

huge trees that make the rain forest their home. like the white gommier and mahogany, not to mention giant ferns and philodendrons.

The island is also a natural cornucopia, with a wide variety of fruits, vegetables and spices.



There is one site Empress Josephine Golf Course melding heauty

18-hole course designed by

and history that most sports- architect Robert Trent Jones views of the sea. What golfers minded tourists won't miss: Sr., they'll notice that the may not realize is that the The Golf de L'Impératrice, near island's natural heauty has course is also historic. It was Trois- Ilets. As golfers test been incorporated into the built on land that once themselves on this challenging layout of the course; with it's belonged to the Empress lovely landscape, fairways,



- Martinique has 1000 distinct varieties of ferns
- Sugarcane fields in bloom are a sight worth
- an Impressionist painting.
- . The flower of the breadfruit is used to make candy . The bakoua, the traditional Martinican hat, is made
- from the leaves from a plant of the same name. Martinique is the only island in the Caribbean with a

museum of dolls made from plants.

. Atoumo, a plant whose name literally means "all ailments," is traditionally used as natural medicine.

. Martinique is justly famous for its flowers, but the island's fauna also delight the eye. There are beautiful butterflies, like the monarch, decked out in black, red and yellow, and the mourning cloak, with its soft black wings trimmed in striking yellow. Coral reefs around the coasts teem with an amazing variety of sea life. Scuba divers

are treated to sightings of surgeon fish, sergeant majors, boxfish, butterfly fish, parrot fish and angel fish, to name but a few. There are also a lot of crustaceans along the coasts, including rock lobsters and crabs.

. And there are birds. The bananaquit. known locally as the sucrier fall jaune is



so ubiquitous on the island that it has become the symbol of Martinique. It's asily recognizable by the plumage, which is black on top and yellow on the bottom. The bananaguits have plenty of company: the Martinique oriole, a small blackbrown- and orange-plumed bird unique to the

island; the rufous-throated solitaire, also unique to the island, a small, gray-blue bird with black wings and red throat, whose melodious song can be heard in the forest; the magnificent frigatebird, a sea bird with a broad wingspan that catches its prey by skimming across the surface of the water: the winged hawk and peregrine falcon; many varieties of egret who live in the mangrove swamps; and several varieties of tiny hummingbirds.

- . Local mammals include the manicou, a marsupial that is Martinique's answer to the onossum one of the few species native to the island, and the mongoose imported from India.
- . The natural bounty of Martinique can be enjoyed in its gardens, like the Exotarium, the Balata Botanical Gardens, Macintosh Plantation, the Flower Gardens in Domaine de la Pagerie, and "Les Ombrages" Botanical and Floral Path.





a group of local painters founded the "Caribbean Negro School," which delved into Martinique's African heritage. This movement was carried on during the 1980s by the artistic group "Fromajé," whose aim was to convey "the words of our ancestors, the strength of our roots, the memory of our people."

Today, the next generation of talented young artists is studying drawing painting sculpture and other fine arts at the Ecole des Beaux Arts de la Martinique. Who knows what new ideas or questions they'll explore. or what daring new aesthetic directions they'll take?



hand-made pottery.

exquisite 18 karat gold

Martinican traditions are also given artistic expression in dance

and music. There are over thirty companies and workshops specializing in contemporary dance, as well as in traditional dance forms such as bel-air. aghia, quadrille and haute taille. The many talented dance groups in Martinique provide an exciting cultural offering for visitors to the island. The weight of

Music is a part of everyday life in Martinique. You will bear traditional forms of music based on drums like chouval bwg and bel-gir but also the strumming of guitars and banios, the hallmark of the famous Martinican biguine. Here too, drums are heard, marking the rhythm of melodies that are enriched by the addition of clarinets and violins. Nowadays, the most popular form of music is zouk, which means "party time". Give it a try!

For a great overview of the arts in Martinique, don't miss the many festivals that take place every year on the island. especially two of them: the Festival de Fort-de-France, a theater. dance and music festival in July; and the Festival du Marin, which

offers folk, religious and country music, films and art exhibitions every August. Both festivals feature artists from Martinique and from abroad.

There is also a lighter side to Martinican creativity. You will delight in the fine crafts at which Martinicans excel, like their intricate weaving.

This lighter side extends from crafts to couture. Martinicans have always known how to dress with flair. The traditional costumes show Martinique's eclectic cultural influences Spanish custom is seen in dresses that bare the shoulders. Skirts are cut in the French style with a train made of Indian madras (a brightly colored fabric of cotton and banana fibers) and decorated with English lace. That flair for fashion continues today in the cutting-edge innovations of Martinican designers like

Paul Hervé Elisabeth, Gaelle Alexis and Olivier Bernard.

Martinique doesn't only create its own art, the island has been known to inspire and nurture it in foreign visitors. It was in Martinique that French artist Paul Gauguin was first inspired to paint tropical themes. André Breton found refuge in Martinique during World War II. And Truman Capote also spent some time on the island drawing from his experience to write his famous short story, "Music for Chameleons."



Martinican history is explored in the island's literature, which boasts brilliant writers like the poet Aimé Cesaire and the novelists Edouard Glissant and Patrick Chamoiseau, all of

whom explored the CHILDHOOD question of identity: as well as Joseph Zobel. whose novel. Rue Case-Nègres evokes the barsh conditions of black workers on sugar cane plantations. In 1983, Martinican director Euzhan Palcy made Zobel's novel into a film, Sugar Cane Alley, which won the Silver Lion

> Other Martinicans have confronted these issues with a brush instead of a pen. During the 1970s

award at the Venice Film

Festival.

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CARNIVAL Martinicans express themselves and their traditions in many creative ways, but the hest time to see their creativity in action is Carnival when there is a veritable explosion colorful costumes.

dance and music.



"Last night there was one marvelous marching group: fifty men carrying black umbrellas and wearing silk top hats...I loved the old ladies with goldtinsel wigs and sequins pasted all over their faces...and the millions of children holding candles glowing like fireflies." Truman Capote, "Music for Chameleons"

The most important festival of the year in Martinique. Carnival is the object of intense preparation. Popular marching bands compose songs for the occasion, floats are made, and children rehearse



for weeks in advance. The four-day revelry is marked by vidés (parades) with Carnival queens, dancers and performers on stilts. And music! During Carnival, an intense rhythm seizes the whole island, drums, lots f drums, are the basis of Carnival music.



A striking complement to the music is the magnificent costumes including glitter, colorful make-up.

feathers and whatever else fancy or whim can devise. Some people dress up as traditional Carnival characters. like Marianne la po fig, a female figure covered with leaves and symbolizing womanhood and fertility; neg gro siro. Tebellious slave: and King Vavalane king of the Carnival.

day is actually n a different orful theme. On

everyone will be in multicolored costumes. performing humorous burlesques on the theme of marriage. On Mardi Gras Tuesday. on the waterfront in the theme is red devils, when crowds of revelers dress in

red devil costumes studed with little

A phenomenon unique to Martinique is the extension of the celebrations to include Ash Wednesday, which has its own theme. Black and white are the costume colors for that day's festivitie

and in the evening poor Vaval is burned in effigy Fort-de France.

During Carnival, the whole island is caught up in the laughter, rejoicing, dancing and singing. It's Martinique's

open-house party to which everyone is invited.



Another holiday that generates a special spirit throughout the island is All Saints Day (Toussaint), actually commemorated over two days, November 1 and 2. Martinicans honor their lost loved ones by cleaning their graves and covering them with flowers and candles.

At night the cemeteries of Martinique present a strikingly beautiful sight, glowing in the light of thousands of candles. This is a time of prayers and remembrance, but it is also a time of socializing, rejoicing...

















