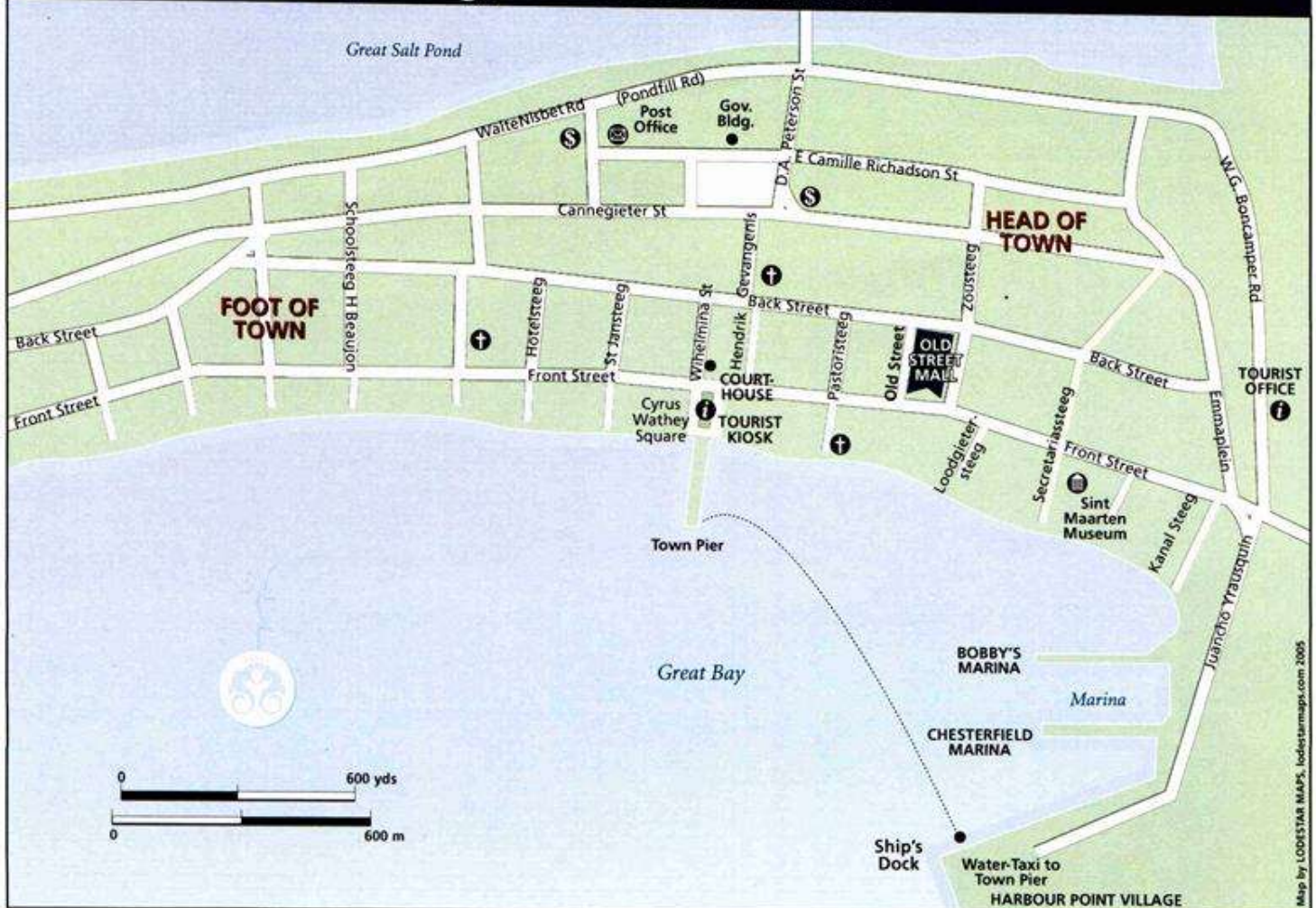




Port Description

St. Maarten/Philipsburg, Netherlands Antilles



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| Docking location: | Crystal Symphony is scheduled to dock at A.C. Wathey Pier on the Dutch side. |
| Distance to town: | Distance to downtown Philipsburg is approximately one mile from the pier. |
| Local Crystal Cruises' Port Representative: | S.E.L. Maduro & Sons (WI) Inc. Emmapplein Bldg. 1, Phillipsburg, St. Maarten. Phone: (011) 5995-4-22472, 5995-5-73310. |
| Exchange Rate: | On the Dutch side the currency is the Netherlands Antilles Guilder or Florin (ANG or NAF). On the French side of the island the Euro is the local currency, although establishments on both sides will also accept US Dollars. |
| Shopping: | Shopping is available at the terminal and along Front Street in Philipsburg. |
| Shuttle Bus: | Not available. |
| Taxis: | Taxis are available on the pier and the drive into town is approximately 5 minutes. |

With its colorful mix of French charm and Dutch hospitality, St. Maarten is like two islands rolled into one. In 1648, it was amicably divided and the border between Dutch St. Maarten and French St. Martin, although completely open, exists even to this day. The island covers an area of 37 square miles, 17 of which are Dutch. Small as it is, St. Maarten has something for everyone - hideaway beaches, interesting cuisine and sophisticated boutiques.

Philipsburg

The Dutch Capital of Philipsburg lies along Great Bay on a narrow sand strip separating Great Bay and the Great Salt Pond. Commander John Philips founded Philipsburg, in 1763; a Scot employed by the Dutch in order to protect Great Bay. Front Street is where most of the action in Philipsburg takes place. It is the Bay front road, which stretches for about a mile lined with restaurants, casinos, jewelry shops, boutique stores, and duty free shops selling electronic items, French fabrics, and Danish porcelain.

Marigot

Crossing over the almost imperceptible border separating the Dutch side is the French Capital of Marigot, a 30 minute taxi ride from Philipsburg. Marigot features two commercial centers. One is the area around the harbor front and has a colorful public market. The other center, Port La Royale Marina, is surrounded by several boutiques and restaurants along the Rue du General de Gaulle. Many visitors come here for the duty free shopping, world renowned white sand beaches, and French style bistros. One can say that Marigot is indeed a French Caribbean village and is not as busy as its Dutch counterpart.

Beaches

Between the two sides of the island there are 37 different beaches to choose from, each with its own distinctive attractions. Those on the French side tend to be more secluded and more conducive to quiet contemplation and privacy. Many of the hotels have their own stretch of beach, but the ones that are more difficult to get to are especially worth exploring. Some are hugged by rugged cliffs and dramatic landscapes, while others are gently shaded by palm trees. Orient Bay is particularly enticing for its wide expanse of velvety white sand, its underwater marine reserve with a coral reef that is great for snorkeling, and the variety of water sports that are offered here. At one end there is a naturist resort, where clothing is optional. In general, the attitudes toward topless bathing are fairly relaxed and sophisticated in St. Martin. The secluded and quiet Friar's Bay Beach is located at the end of a windy country road intersecting the main highway between Marigot and Grand Case.

Fort St. Louis

Overlooking Marigot Bay on the leeward side of the island sits the imposing figure of Fort St. Louis, the largest historical monument in St. Maarten. Named for the famous crusading king of France, it was originally built in 1767 to protect the settlement at Marigot from foreign invaders. Now, it no longer serves its former purpose, but the steep climb up to the summit provides a panoramic view of the Island and the sea surrounding it, and the effort is well rewarded.

Grand Case

Called the "restaurant capital of the Caribbean" the one-mile long main street offers everything from Italian, Indonesian, French and Vietnamese cuisine. Located on one of St. Maarten's famous beaches on the French side of the island it is always worth a visit.

Shopping

Not only is St. Maarten a free port, but it has no local sales taxes. Prices are sometimes lower here than anywhere else in the Caribbean, except possibly St. Thomas. On some items (fine liqueurs, cigarettes, Irish linen, German cameras, French perfumes), we've found prices 30% to 50% lower than in the United States or Canada. Except for the boutiques at resort hotels, the main shopping area is in the center of Philipsburg. Most of the shops are on Front Street (called Voorstraat in Dutch), which stretches for about 2km (1 1/4 miles) and is lined with stores. More shops are along the little lanes, known as steegjes, that connect Front Street with Back Street (Achterstraat), another shoppers' haven.

Port Descriptions are provided to our guests compliments of the Crystal Adventures shore excursions staff. Information is intended as a guideline only and cannot be guaranteed by Crystal Cruises in any way.