

Understanding the Port

Martinique is France in the Caribbean — euros, espresso, pastries, and the only rum on Earth with a French appellation. It is also home to the volcano that erased a city in 1902. Ships dock downtown, so the capital is yours on foot, and the island's drama is a drive north.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

The Port Area

Most ships dock at Pointe Simon, right in downtown Fort-de-France. A second ship may use the Tourelles terminal east of town, which needs the shuttle or a taxi.

Cash & Currency

This is France: the currency is the EURO, not the dollar. Dollars are not accepted outside the pier shops. Visa and Mastercard work almost everywhere; Amex often does not.

Getting Around

Taxis wait at the pier and sell by the hour — agree the price first. The passenger ferry across the bay leaves from the same waterfront and beats the road.

GOOD

Fort-de-France on Foot

Best for: Short stops, easy days, minimal logistics

- ✓ La Savane park on the bay, minutes from the pier
- ✓ The covered market: spices, rum, madras cloth
- ✓ French bakeries and cafes at every corner

Low effort, high reward.

BETTER

Ferry to the Beaches

Best for: Couples, families, beach lovers

- ✓ Fifteen minutes across the bay from the pier
- ✓ Calm sand and beach bars at Anse Mitan
- ✓ Skips the traffic entirely

Check the last return sailing before you go.

BEST

The Volcano Day

Best for: First timers, history lovers, photographers

- ✓ Saint-Pierre, the city Mount Pelée destroyed
- ✓ Rainforest and rope walkway at Balata Gardens
- ✓ The Depaz distillery, free to walk around

Timing management required. Plan around all aboard.

Top Experiences to Consider

GOOD

The Capital

Fort-de-France rewards wandering: the shaded lawns of La Savane, the ornate Schoelcher Library, and a covered market stacked with vanilla, spices, and rum. Go in the morning — and not on a Sunday, when the market is shut.

BETTER

Across the Bay

Little ferries run from the waterfront beside the ship to Pointe du Bout in about fifteen minutes, with Anse Mitan beach a short walk from the landing. Calm water, loungers, and lunch with a view back at your ship.

BEST

Saint-Pierre & Mount Pelée

Drive the coast north to the ruins of Saint-Pierre, the volcano that buried it looming above. Pair it with the Balata rainforest gardens and the Depaz distillery at the mountain's foot for a full, unforgettable day.

Where Staff & Travelers Recommend

Saint-Pierre

The consensus pick for anyone who likes a story. Theatre steps, a prisoner's cell, and a mountain that took a whole city in minutes.

The Bay Ferry

The easy favorite: a few euros, a quarter hour on the water, and a beach afternoon without a single traffic light.



Fort-de-France across the bay, the Pitons du Carbet behind



The Schoelcher Library, Fort-de-France

Key Considerations

Money is the thing to get right. Martinique is French soil and runs on euros — shops, cafes, and the ferry will not take dollars, and the few pier vendors who do give a poor rate. Bring a card with no foreign transaction fee, use it for almost everything, and pull a small amount of euros from an ATM for the market, the ferry, and taxis.

Expect French, not English. Outside the terminal and the tour desks, English is limited. It costs nothing to open with *bonjour* before you ask a question — in France that greeting is simple good manners, and skipping it lands badly. A translation app downloaded before you go ashore covers the rest.

The other trap is the clock. Plenty of smaller shops still close for a long midday break, Saturday is a half day, and Sundays are quiet across the island — including the covered market. Attractions are the exception: Balata, the Saint-Pierre museum, and the distillery all run straight through. Note too that metered taxi fares carry a 40% surcharge on Sundays and holidays.



Mount Pelée above Saint-Pierre



Jardin de Balata, in the hills above the capital



Grande Anse des Salines, at the island's southern tip

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Port Orientation

FROM THE PORT (FORT-DE-FRANCE)

● La Savane & the covered market	Short walk from Pointe Simon
● Schoelcher Library	A few minutes on foot
● Fort Saint-Louis	Guided tours only, Tue–Sat
~ 15–20 min by ferry	
● Anse Mitan & Pointe du Bout	Beaches across the bay
~ 20–30 min by taxi	
● Jardin de Balata	Rainforest garden
~ 45 min by taxi or tour	
● Saint-Pierre & Distillerie Depaz	The 1902 ruins
~ 1 hour or more	
● Les Salines beach	The island's famous sand, far south

DON'T FORGET

Confirm your all aboard time before you leave the ship.
Set a phone alarm. The ship will not wait for you.

Key Takeaway

Martinique is the Caribbean with a French accent: good coffee, great rum, and a volcano with a story you will not forget.

Walk the capital, ferry to a beach, or drive north to Saint-Pierre. Just bring a card and a few euros.

ETA will help you choose the right experience based on your travel style.

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Did You Know?

Actually France. Martinique is not a country but an overseas region of France and part of the European Union — which is why you pay in euros and the bread is that good.

The City That Vanished. In 1902 Mount Pelée destroyed Saint-Pierre, then called the Paris of the Caribbean, in about a minute, killing nearly 30,000 people. A jailed man survived in his thick-walled cell and later toured America with Barnum & Bailey's circus.

A UNESCO Volcano. Mount Pelée and the pitons of northern Martinique were added to the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2023 — the island's first inscription.

Protected Rum. Martinique's rum agricole is the only rum in the world with an AOC, awarded in 1996 — the same French protected-origin system that guards Champagne and Roquefort.

A Library by Boat. The Schoelcher Library was built for the 1889 Paris Exposition, then taken apart, shipped across the Atlantic, and rebuilt here in 1893 to hold the books the abolitionist Victor Schoelcher gave the island.