

Created by: Debra C. Argen

## Martinique - The Atlantic Side

Imagine tropical flowers gently perfuming the air, sandy beaches to stroll, and a choice of the **Atlantic Ocean** or the **Caribbean Sea**, ah, the endless possibilities of [Martinique](#).



Martinique, called the "island of flowers," is a 685-square mile island in the Caribbean, 50 miles by 24 miles, and after 8 days, Edward F. Nesta and I had driven 373 miles exploring the beauty of this department of France (since 1946) island. After doing much island dreaming, we finally took a trip to Martinique in April, and fell in love with this island. There was so much to see and to do, that I decided to write a 2-part Destination article, with this article concentrating on the Atlantic side of the island, and the next article featuring the Caribbean side.



Our island discovery on the Atlantic side began at [Le Domaine Saint Aubin](#), a charming plantation home owned by Laurent and Jöelle Rosemain, who have lovingly restored this 1919 mixture of a Louisiana manor house and a traditional Caribbean home. Although the Rosemain's moved to Martinique from Paris, and opened the hotel in August 2004, Laurent's family has lived in Martinique since 1715. Not hoteliers by background, but by passion, Laurent is a jazz drummer who had a jazz school in Paris, Jöelle had a catering company, their style is evident throughout the antiques-filled home, and you can be sure that the background music has been carefully selected.

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Situated high on a hill, and surrounded by sugar cane and banana trees, the house has a terrace that overlooks the Atlantic Ocean, where we enjoyed sitting in the evening drinking a Planteur cocktail, and discussing jazz with Laurent and Jöelle.

We had dinner at Le Domaine Saint-Aubin and were pleased with their sophisticated French Caribbean menu of Aumonière de Noix St. Jacques au Beurre de Corail (Beggar's purse with St. Jacques with Coral Butter and julienne vegetables), Medallion de Filet de Loup en Giraumonade et ses Légumes Croquants (Fish rolls filled with Martinique pumpkin on a bed of thinly sliced tomatoes, eggplant, roasted red pepper and onion, and boiled fingerling potatoes),



and Mousse Saint Aubin (Pyramid of chocolate mousse on a white chocolate base topped with gooseberry and raspberry sauce), which came as no surprise considering Jöelle's background. If you are looking to experience the Martinican lifestyle, Le Domaine Saint-Aubin is the perfect place.

#### Le Domaine Saint-Aubin

Petite Rivière Salée, BP 52

97220 - Trinité

Telephone: +596 596 69 34 77

Fax: +596 596 69 41 14

Email: [reservation@ledomainesaintaubin.com](mailto:reservation@ledomainesaintaubin.com)

Email: [ledomainesaintaubin@ool.fr](mailto:ledomainesaintaubin@ool.fr)

[www.ledomainesaintaubin.com](http://www.ledomainesaintaubin.com)



The next morning we visited **Habitation Fonds Saint-Jacques**, built by the Dominicans in 1658. Father Labot resided here from 1693 until 1705, and is where he invented a still that changed the method of

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distillation of rum. We took a tour with Katharina Blum, who told us the history of the former plantation as we strolled through the grounds, the chapel and the archeological ruins. If you enjoy classical music, be sure to inquire as to the dates and times of the Habitation Fonds Saint-Jacques classical music concerts. We missed attending one of the concerts by a day! Habitation Fonds Saint-Jacques is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 am until 5:00 pm, and admission is charged.

**Habitation Fonds Saint-Jacques**

11 rue du Pavé

Quartier Saint-Jacques

97230 Sainte-Marie

Telephone: +596 596 69 10 12

Fax: +596 596 69 21 58

Email: [ccfrsj@sasi.fr](mailto:ccfrsj@sasi.fr)



Martinique is famous for more than its rum, they also grow bananas. We visited [Le Musée de la Banane](#) located on a working banana plantation, where we learned that there are 300 species of edible bananas and 1,000 species including decorative bananas. We enjoyed tasting our way through this delicious and informative museum. Le Musée de la Banane is open everyday from 9:00 am until 5:00 pm, (Sundays until 1:00 pm from April until the end of November), and admission is charged.

**Le Musée de la Banane**

Habitation Limbé

Quartier Fourniol

97230 Sainte-Marie

Telephone: +596 596 69 45 52

Fax: +596 596 69 45 51

Email: [infos@museedelabanane.com](mailto:infos@museedelabanane.com)

[www.lemuseedelabanane.com](http://www.lemuseedelabanane.com)



After spending the morning driving and sightseeing, we were ready for traditional Creole cuisine, and had lunch at **Le Découverte**, a restaurant that is as colorful as Tatie Simone, the owner, with tropical painted scenes on the walls, and each table dressed in brightly colored tablecloths. The restaurant opened in 1983 and won a Médaille d'Or in 2001 from the l'Academie de Gastronomie des Antilles.

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Tatie Simone joined us while we enjoyed an amuse bouche of pickapaw peppers filled with fish and fried, and accras (a type of fritter) made from fish and shrimp. The specialty of the restaurant is Couscous Royale, a decadent mixture of a ½ lobster, shrimp, octopus, fish, carrots, couscous and raisins. The restaurant is open everyday for lunch except Wednesday, and in the evenings with reservations.

#### **Le Découverte**

**Saint-Jacques Forêt La Phillippe - Route de Marigot  
97230 Sainte-Marie**

**Telephone: +596 596 69 44 04**

**Fax: +596 596 69 07 34**

**Email: [mady.decouverte@wanadoo.fr](mailto:mady.decouverte@wanadoo.fr)**



What would a trip to Martinique be without a trip to the famous rum distilleries? We began our education by visiting **Distillerie Saint James**, where we learned a most valuable lesson. If you are interested in touring the distillery and seeing the production, you must visit in the morning. Although the tasting room and museum are open in the afternoon, the factory closes at 3:00 pm, so we could not see the rum process. We did enjoy seeing their museum and sampling a few of their rums with Mr. Jules-Michel Fayad, and returned a few days later to experience the tour with Madame Fabienne Claude, which was definitely worth returning as it was very informative. Distillerie Saint James opened in 1765 in the town of Saint Pierre, and in 1974 the factory was moved to Sainte-Marie. Distillerie Saint James is open every day from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, and tours are at 9:30 am, 11:30 am and 1:30 pm.

#### **Distillerie Saint James**

**Le Bourg**

**97230 Sainte-Marie**

**Telephone: +596 596 69 50 37**

**Fax: +596 596 69 29 60**

**Email: [rhums.st.james@wanadoo.fr](mailto:rhums.st.james@wanadoo.fr)**



We had a fabulous dinner at **La Méridienne**, a casual-chic restaurant on the beach that was a sleeper of a restaurant. Their young chef is turning out a sophisticated creative menu, and their cocktail menu and homemade ice cream alone give reason to return.

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A sampling of their menu included Tartar of marlin, fig, olive, pink peppercorn and crispy salad, Tempura of scallops, crunchy vegetables with sesame and balsamic vinegar, and Magret Duck served medium rare with oranges, fennel tagliatelle, pink peppercorn basmati rice with grapes and an orange sauce.

**La Méridienne**

**Plage de l'anse l'etang**

**Tartane**

**Telephone: +596 596 58 79 91**

**Fax: +596 596 58 78 59**



We wanted to continue our rum (the French spelling) education and visited [Habitation Rhum Clément](#), one of the oldest estates on the island, and took a tour of the beautiful house which is now a museum. Bernard Hayot bought Habitation Clément in 1986, and opened it to the public in 1988. In 1996, the 18th century house received a Historic Monument classification, and has received many important heads of state including President Mitterrand and President Bush. Although you can tour the museum and sample the rums, if you are looking to tour a distillery, it is important to note that they only age their rums at this facility. Their actual rum factory is in Simon. They are open everyday from 9:00 am until 6:00 pm, and are closed in September.

**Héritiers H. Clément S.A.**

**Habitation Rhum Clément**

**Domaine de l'Acajou**

**97240 Le François**

**Telephone : +596 596 54 62 07**

**Fax : +596 596 54 63 50**

**[www.rhum-clement.com](http://www.rhum-clement.com)**



We stayed at [Cap Est Lagoon Resort & Spa](#), a luxury hotel that opened in December 2002, and enjoyed a true luxury experience. The staff at the hotel and The Spa at Cap Est Lagoon Resort & Spa knows how to pamper their guests. Chef de Cuisine Hervé Rameau creates inspired recipes at their gastronomic restaurant Le Belem. Read articles on [Cap Est Lagoon Resort & Spa](#) in the **Hotels and Resorts**, **Restaurants**, **Spas**, and **Chefs' Recipes (English and French versions)** sections. Please note that the hotel closes from September to mid-October for annual maintenance.

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**Cap Est Lagoon Resort & Spa**  
**Quartier la Prairie**  
**97240 Le François**  
**Telephone: +596 596 54 80 80**  
**Fax: +596 596 54 96 00**  
**Email: [info@capest.com](mailto:info@capest.com)**  
**[www.capest.com](http://www.capest.com)**



The last distillery on our list to visit was [Trois-Rivières](#). We took a tour of their facility, and learned that they had merged with La Mauny in 1996, and made their last rum production at this facility in 2003. If you go, pose by their famous windmill and be sure to visit their sampling room. They are open Monday through Friday from 9:00 am until 5:30 pm, and Saturday from 9:00 until 12:00 pm.

**Trois Rivières**  
**97228 Sainte-Luce**  
**Telephone: +596 596 62 51 78**  
**Fax : +596 596 62 32 13**  
**[www.rhumdemartinique.com](http://www.rhumdemartinique.com)**

We returned to [Cap Est Lagoon Resort & Spa](#) for one last evening of pampering, and left the next afternoon to return to New York with fond memories of our trip to Martinique. À bientôt!

Please note that the times listed may vary throughout the year. It is always best to call or check their websites for seasonal differences.

The Martinicans are very friendly and helpful, but I find that it is always helpful to learn some basic vocabulary when traveling. Brush up on your French and enjoy your visit.

### **Basic French Vocabulary**

Do you speak English?

Parlez-vous anglais?

Excuse me

Excusez-moi

Good Morning, Good Evening

Bonjour, Bonsoir

Good bye

Au revoir

Please

S'il vous plait

Thank you

Merci

You're welcome

De rien

Yes, No, Maybe

Oui, Non, Peut-être

Open, closed

Ouvert, Fermé

Where is?

Où est le (or la)...?

Food

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Petit déjeuner, Dejeuner, Diner

Bread

Pain

Butter

Beurre

Beef, Veal (Rare, Medium, Well-done)

Boeuf, Veau (Saignant, A point, Cuit)

Cheese

Fromage

Chicken

Poulet

Fish

Poisson

Meat

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Viande

Pork

Porc

Salad

Salade

Shellfish: (Lobster, Mussel, Oyster, Shrimp)

Homard, Moule, Huitre, Crevette

Vegetables

Legumes

Beverages

Beer

Biere

Coffee, Tea

Café, The

Ice

Glace

Juice

Jus

Milk

Lait

Water

Eau

Wine

Vin

Cheers

Sante!

Health

Doctor

Docteur



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Dentist

Dentiste

Help!

Au secours!

Hospital

Hôpital

I am sick

Je suis malade.

Pharmacy

Pharmacie

Read other articles on **Martinique** in the **Destinations, Hotels and Resorts, Restaurants, Chefs' Recipes, [Fashion](#), Liquor Cabinet, [Events](#), [Gastronomy](#)**, and **[Travel News](#)** sections.

For more information on **Martinique**, please contact the **[Martinique Promotion Bureau](#)** at **[www.martinique.org](http://www.martinique.org)**.

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