

Luxury Experience

Bringing the Experience of Luxury to You

Martinique - The Atlantic Side

By Debra C. Argen



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 Joëlle Rosemain, who have lovingly restored this 1919 mixture of a Louisiana manor house and a traditional Caribbean home. Although the Rosemaines 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, Joëlle 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.



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 Joëlle.

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 (Beggars' 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 Joëlle'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
Email: ledomainesaintaubin@ool.fr
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 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

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
www.lemusedelabanane.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.



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

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



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.

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 Henriot 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**

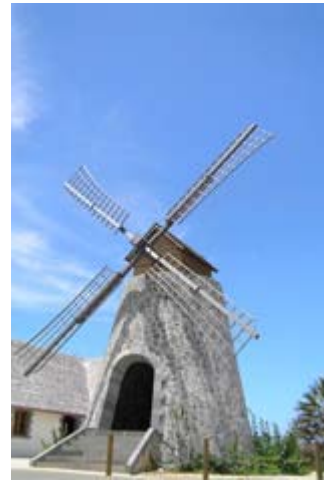
We stayed at **Cap Est Lagoon Resort & Spa**, a luxury hotel that opened in December 2002, and enjoyed a true luxury experience. The staff at the hotel and The Spa at Cap Est Lagoon Resort & Spa knows how to pamper their guests. Chef de Cuisine Hervé Rameau creates inspired recipes at their gastronomic 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.



**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
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

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, Déjeuner, Dîner
Bread	Pain
Butter	Beurre
Beef, Veal (Rare, Medium, Well-done)	Boeuf, Veau (Saignant, A point, Cuit)
Cheese	Fromage
Chicken	Poulet
Fish	Poisson
Meat	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
Water
Wine
Cheers

Lait
Eau
Vin
Sante!

Health

Doctor
Dentist
Help!
Hospital
I am sick
Pharmacy

Docteur
Dentiste
Au secours!
Hôpital
Je suis malade.
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.

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