

A cosmopolitan slice of Caribbean life: St. Maarten-St. Martin

By Melanie Reffes
The Suburban

A little French and a little Dutch, St. Maarten-St. Martin is the smallest island in the world shared by two nations. A cosmopolitan slice of Caribbean life, both sides of the island are perennially popular with Montrealers who return year after year to take five on a sun lounge, trot along the sea on horseback, toast the sunset with a fruity guavaberry colada, shop for duty-free bargains or just chill on one of 37 sandy

beaches.

With only a 'welcome' sign separating French St. Martin from Dutch St. Maarten, the island is easy to navigate by renting a car, hopping on a bike or taking the public buses, which are cheaper than cabs and traverse both sides of the island.

There is nowhere else in the Caribbean where can you sip a frosty beer while watching planes fly so close to the beach that some claim they can see the pilots in the cockpits. With radio transmissions between the control tower and the pilots

broadcast to onlookers at the Sunset Bar and Grill, located at the end of the runaway at the Princess Juliana International Airport, planes fly directly over Maho Beach while aviation aficionados snap awesome vacation photos.

For those who prefer their birthday suit over a bathing suit, Cupecoy Beach is the only au natural beach on the Dutch side (there are many on the French side). Majestic with sandstone cliffs and caves, the beach is also home to Dany's Beach Bar where the platters of chicken and ribs are island-famous.

As the only 100 per cent duty-free island in the Caribbean, shopping is a rite of passage for any tourist worth his (or her) sea salt. From diamonds and designer clothing to cameras and computers, the shops along Front St. in Philipsburg are bargain central with prices up to 60 per cent less than those at home.

For island eats, Ital Shack is lorded over by local hero Ras Bushman who, when he isn't farming in his organic garden or stirring pea stew in the kitchen, can be found performing with his Freedom Fighters reggae band.

For family fun on the water, Aqua Mania

sells a variety of tours including the popular Children's Lagoon Cruise aboard the Calypso catamaran, afternoon sails and dinner cruises on the comfy Tango catamaran, and a host of island-hop excursions to nearby Anguilla, Saba and St. Barths.

With able-bodied captains and crews, fans of water sports can also sign up for scuba diving, rides in inflatable boats, parasailing and snorkelling. Tours depart from the Simpson Bay Resort. When the sun sets, the party heats up at Tantra, the largest nightclub in the Eastern Caribbean and on "Da Party Bus" that takes revellers on a spirited tour of the city.

Set up along the wharves in front of the ferry pier, Marigot Marche is chock-a-block with vendors hawking every kind of tchotchke under the sun. At the shoppers refuelling station of choice, Feliz Artsen has been chopping coconuts at his Coconut Juice Bar for nearly four decades. "This will cool you off before another hour of shopping," he said, while pouring a tall glass for a thirsty tourist.

(Note to shoppers: the first sale of the day means good luck for vendors and is the best

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Human



One of only two all-inclusive resorts on the island, Sonesta Maho Beach is ideal for families, couples and gaggles of pals chilling out for the holidays.



Happy Chanukah!



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Joyeux Chanukah!



Some authorities suggest using Alka-Seltzer, Advil, Motrin or Aleve.



Zinc is essential to fight against diseases and boost immunity, which is fundamental for strong nails.

HANGOVER

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play havoc with your normal sleep-wake cycle.

In the end however, there is no magic pill, elixir or substance that will relieve the hangover in spite of what you may see on late night TV or the Internet.

Time is what your body really needs

Dr. Mitch Shulman is an Assistant Professor, Dept. of Surgery, McGill Medical

School and an Attending Physician, Emergency Department, McGill University Health Centre. He's also the CJAD AM 800 Medical Consultant.

HAIR AND NAILS

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chicken, veal, eggs, yogurt and fish.

Get started now, so you'll not only fit into your little black dress but your silky shiny hair and mani-glam will be the talk of the holiday party.

Here's to eating well, Tracy.

Tracy Satov, MS, RD, is a registered dietitian whose column can be read every two weeks in the Suburban Magazine at www.thesuburban.com. If you have any questions you'd like answered, email tracy@thesuburban.com, or call 514-946-4158.



MELANIE REFFES PHOTO

The island is perennially popular with Montrealers who return year after year to take five on a sun lounger, trot along the sea on horseback or toast the sunset with a fruity guavaberry colada.

CARIBBEAN LIFE

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time to haggle for a lower price.)

One of only two all-inclusive resorts in St. Maarten, Sonesta Maho Beach is ideal for families, newlyweds and gaggles of pals. Five restaurants, spirited swim-up bar, spa, comfy ocean view rooms and plenty of water sports have earned the seaside resort legions of loyal fans.

In St. Martin, Grand Case Beach Club is ooh-la-la fabulous with a perfect petite beach, spacious suites and the Creole Rock Water Sports kiosk where day trips to near-

by Anguilla and St. Barths depart.

For more information, visit www.vacationstmaarten.com, and www.stmartinisl.org. Sunwing and Air Transat offer packages from Montreal, WestJet flies via Toronto, three times weekly and starting December 21, Air Canada will also fly via Toronto.

For more photos of St. Maarten-St. Martin, see the upcoming Dec. 6 edition of the Suburban Magazine at www.thesuburban.com. For Melanie's story on Haiti, see this week's City edition of The Suburban Newspaper.

EXPERTORIAL



Holiday blues?

By Sandra Reich M.Ed.
Clinical Director of The Montreal
Center for Anxiety and Depression.

Anxious? Stressed? Depressed? At The Montreal Center for Anxiety and Depression we are getting a lot of calls of this nature- typical for this time of year. The holiday season is almost upon us... and the pressure is on. Why? Holidays have a built in expectation of family, connection and good times. This expectation can bring on stress and anxiety, if not loneliness and sadness. We especially are susceptible to these feelings when we feel we are not experiencing the perfect holiday "fantasy" life. Those TV shows and movies of happy "perfect" moments add to the sense that everyone else is experiencing what we feel we lack. This is an illusion. They really are TV shows and movies. In reality- we are not alone in feeling these challenging emotions (though we often feel we are which contributes a lot to the bad feelings).

Here are some simple tips and strategies that can help you combat any feelings of overwhelming stress, anxiety or sadness. Firstly validate it; it does make sense. Holidays can be challenging in so many ways. Old family hurts may arise, we tend to be reminded of people we have lost touch with or lost all together, plus we can easily get out of balance with our healthy habits. On top of all that holidays are expensive - a big stressor in itself. These pressures can easily trigger a stress response so acknowledging that "it makes sense" the way you are feeling will help you enormously. 2ndly remind yourself that you are not alone- there is comfort in knowing that we all struggle at times with the "negative emotions" we all dread. Anxiety is one of the most common challenges Canadians struggle with and yet so very treatable which leads to the 3rd strategy: Get help if you need it. At the Montreal Center for Anxiety and Depression we have trained specialists who can make a huge difference in your life with simple but effective tools.

Both anxiety and depression respond so well to treatment and yet tend to get worse if not dealt with. Research online or ask others for referrals for who you would like to work with and consider taking the step to call for help if you are finding it overwhelming with to deal with these feelings alone. Asking for help is a sign of courage not weakness.

In day to day operations consider trying these very simple but effective strategies:

When you have thoughts of panic, anxiety or worry try this simple but effective strategy: Make a self-statement something like this "STOP! These thoughts are not helpful and I have decided to think differently." (Each time you do this you are reinforcing your brain to think in a more positive way)

Remember anxiety is not dangerous -it is just uncomfortable

EXERCISE... Exercise relieves stress as well as relieving depressed feelings

Get enough sleep. Try not to drink alcohol or caffeinated beverages in the evening; take a warm bath one hour before bed; go to bed at the same time every night.

Listen to some music you like- this can soothe the nerves as well as lifting the spirit.

Watch what you eat. A healthy diet can help you handle stress. Eat breakfast, cut back on caffeine, watch sugar intake, and stick to a regular meal schedule.

Take a breath from your belly: Abdominal breathing brings much needed oxygen in to the body and relaxes the muscles. It also slows down your heart rate and helps calm the mind

Talk it out: When you are stressed, a quick call to a friend can instantly make you feel better.

Make time for fun.

Come say hi to us at one of our upcoming talks.

In the meanwhile- take a breath- all is well even if not perfect... Life is not perfect and THAT is perfectly fine.

Sandra

Submit your questions to Sandra by writing suburban@thesuburban.com or by fax 514-484-9616 Attn: Sandra Reich.

The Montreal Center for Anxiety & Depression

DOUBLE FEATURE December 23rd 2013**

Got the Winter Blues?

Date: Monday December 23rd 2013
Time: 6:00pm -7:00pm
Price: 19.99\$ * Insurance receipts available
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