

It is just one island, politically divided between France and Netherlands, in which coexist different administrations, greenery and coast urbanization.

Discovered by Christopher Columbus in the day of Saint Martin (4th November 1493), the Spanish were succeeded by the Dutch and the French: it seems that a sport challenge (a French and a Dutch should had to walk all the perimeter, while who had completed the most long route would obtained the sovereignty of the land) established the Dutch in a limited southern zone (however rich of salt mines) and the French in all the rest of the island.

Abandoned the sugarcane cultivation and the salt extraction, the Dutch zone built an international airport and was the first to improve the tourism, followed by the French zone.

Saint Martin is then French Overseas Department of . The spoken language is English and it is a free port. **Marigot**, lively and colourful, is the capital.

Tourist centres and hotels are spread everywhere close to the beaches protected by coral reefs, with most harbours downwind then appropriately sheltered.

The great Marigot Bay and the Lagoon on the north west coast allow to several boats to stay at anchor all year long, while up-wind in the east zone there are natural reserves and the bays

Orient Beach

and

Flamands

that at

Oyster Pond

close the border with the Dutch area.

Saint Martin is an autonomous colony of Dutch Indies and free port (it is called the Hong Kong of Caribbean); it boasts important hotel complexes and in the capital **Philipsburg** flow cruiser, especially Americans, taking advantage from free tax purchases.

At **Simpson Bay Lagoon**, in the west zone, the nautical assistance is good and there are superb and fine accommodation groups.