PORT DAY REAL TALK · ST. MAARTEN

The port where you can *skip the walk entirely.*

St. Maarten is the only country in the world with a beachside capital, so a free beach day genuinely works here. Better still, there are two ways to reach it — and the second one removes the walking altogether for about five dollars.

The short answer

ASHORE	Docked
FREE BEACH	12–20 min flat, or a $5–7 water taxi
HARDEST PART	The step into the water taxi

DOCKING CAN DEPEND ON YOUR CRUISE LINE

Celebrity lists St. Maarten among ports where **its** ships tender, though it is normally a docked call. Ask your line what your ship does on your date.

Two ways to reach *the beach*

- **On foot:** Great Bay Beach is roughly a mile from the ship, about 12 to 20 minutes, flat the whole way along the harbour to the left.
- **By water taxi:** roughly $5 to $7 from Captain Hodge Pier, straight to the boardwalk. It replaces the entire walk, and on a hot afternoon it's worth every cent.
- **A free trolley** runs between the ships and the taxi area, which shortens the pier end of the journey.

That combination is why this port rates so well for a body with limits: the distance is optional.

THE BEST LOW-EFFORT PORT DAY IN THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN

Water taxi to the boardwalk, settle at Great Bay, eat where you're sitting, water taxi back. Shade, real seating, restaurants and bars along the whole boardwalk, and flat ground everywhere near Philipsburg.

What the day *asks of you*

- **Flat ground.** Philipsburg and the boardwalk are level, which is not true of many Caribbean ports.
- **Heat and sun** if you walk. The route is exposed, with little shade for those 20 minutes.
- **A boarding step** if you take the water taxi. Small boats move against the dock, so this is the one transfer to ask about in advance.
- **Saying no, repeatedly.** Vendors approach constantly about chair rentals along the beach.

The Port Fit Check question that matters most here is the one about stepping onto a moving surface — it decides whether the water taxi is your easiest option or your hardest.

TWO THINGS WORTH KNOWING

Maho Beach, where the planes land low over the sand, is famous and a genuine drive away — and the jet blast has seriously injured people. It isn't a casual add-on to a beach day.

Crossing to the French side means bringing your passport.

If walking is *out entirely*

Philipsburg itself is flat, walkable and full of places to sit, so a slow morning of shops and a waterfront lunch is a complete day here. A driving island tour with stops is the other good option: you see a great deal and get out only when you want to.

Check with your cruise line

- **Ask whether the water taxi is accessible for your mobility aid**, and how many steps boarding involves on the day you're in port.
- **Ask where the free trolley picks up** and whether it takes wheelchairs or scooters.
- **Ask the shore excursion desk about accessible vehicles** if you're booking an island tour — step height into the vehicle is the thing to confirm.
- **Confirm your all-aboard time** before you go ashore, and give yourself a wide margin coming back.

Where this comes from

- Firsthand observation on recent sailings, with the date noted above.
- How we check things — our method, and what "last checked" means.

Last checked 22 September 2026.

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