

Destination Guide: Caribbean at Christmas

DECEMBER 4, 2014
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AS SEEN IN *MEGAYACHT NEWS*
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PHOTO: Howard Eckel

Situated in spectacular turquoise waters, the Caribbean is made up of more than 7,000 islands, islets, cays, and reefs. A near endless variety of anchorages makes it ideal to experience by boat—and its popularity during the holiday season makes the Caribbean’s Leeward Islands even more enjoyable. Our media partner [Yachting Pages](#) spoke with Dayle Reimer, a charter broker at [Select Yachts](#), about the best places to visit during the holiday season aboard a superyacht.

A renowned destination for charter-yacht vacations, second only to the Mediterranean, the Caribbean is magical both on and offshore. The peak yachting season stretches from November into July, with late December “the” time to be here. The Caribbean is a traditional holiday hotspot and the place to see and be seen at Christmas. Simultaneously, you can still enjoy some idyllic privacy.

Sailing regulations and clearances

Entry requirements and clearances for foreign vessels vary from island to island. Check the official tourist website of your chosen island(s) before traveling.

Depending on your nationality and the duration of your stay, you shouldn’t need a visa in the Caribbean. It is always best practice to hold a passport with at least six months of validity. A return or onward ticket is sometimes also required if arriving by air to meet your superyacht.

Sailing conditions

No special equipment or preparations are required for sailing in the Caribbean. However, keep an eye on wind speeds. Festive trade winds, known locally as the “Christmas Winds,” often kick up the seas and can be strong. Sailors may like it, but new sea legs may not. Those same winds provide a welcome respite from the hot sunshine, with average temperatures of 80°F (26°C).



PHOTO: Howard Eckel

Superyacht berthing

Of all the Caribbean ports catering to superyachts, the best can be found in the northern Leeward Islands. The Princess Port de Plaisance Resort in St. Maarten (above), for example, is a dazzling, full-service marina, showcased perfectly by the beauty of Simpson

Bay. Combined with state-of-the-art facilities, including five restaurants, a large casino, spa, and health club, this marina has 70 berths for vessels of all sizes.

Alternatively in St. Maarten, the Yacht Club at Isle De Sol caters strictly to superyachts, with 45 berths for yachts to 360 feet (109 meters). Its secluded location creates a private environment for visitors to spend the holidays. A bar and restaurant are on site, as is shopping, with more of each nearby.

The Antigua Yacht Club and Marina is equipped to hold 60 superyachts to 330 feet (100 meters). It offers outstanding megayacht and guest services, with gourmet restaurants, boutiques, a travel agent, and a supermarket onsite. Chandlery and in-slip fueling at a rate of 66 gallons per minute (250 liters per minute) are available.

Also notable, Port de Gustavia in St. Barths is as exclusive as it gets. Pristine beaches, great restaurants, and indulgent shopping are all nearby. Superyacht services include berthing for 60 yachts up to 200 feet (60 meters), on-site customs, fuel bunkering, and Wi-Fi.



PHOTO: Howard Eckel

Festive Caribbean highlights: The Leeward Islands

St. Maarten and St. Martin: an island of two halves. The ideal yachting center for the holiday season, this island gem is shared harmoniously by two nations. In the north, French St. Martin is less developed and more secluded. It boasts many small, elegant resorts

and fabulous restaurants. Southern Dutch St. Maarten is lively with excellent shopping, restaurants, casinos, and a buzzing nightlife—the place to see or be seen among the rich and famous.

Tax-free shopping makes for the perfect excuse to treat loved ones to high-end jewelry, designer goods, and electronics for Christmas. Once finished, stop in a local bar to enjoy a glass of festive red Sorrel or Guavaberry, the unique Christmas drink of both St. Martin and St. Maarten.

St. Barths: playground of the rich and famous. Neighboring St. Maarten to the southeast, St. Barths (top of page) is a sophisticated and ultra-exclusive French island and superyacht hub. A festive Christmas Village is set up along the quay in Gustavia Harbor. Intoxicating aromas, local foods, and great family entertainment are all highlights. Gustavia Harbor is a place to stay for New Year's Eve; luxury yachts and lavish parties abound, all captured by the paparazzi for the glossy magazines.

Anguilla: high-style and low-key elegance. Carefully managed tourism and offshore banking legislation make Anguilla (above) one of the most exclusive destinations of the Caribbean. North of St. Martin, it has no crowds. In fact, you may find yourself the only person on the gorgeous sandy beaches.

Locally known as “Old Year's Night,” New Year's Even makes Anguilla a competitor for the must-visit destination. The fireworks display at Cap Juluca is noteworthy. Drop anchor below the Viceroy Anguilla resort, across the island and atop the coral point separating Barnes Bay and Meads Bay. Watch the stunning release of wish lanterns into the night. The dramatic fireworks follow.

For serious partygoers, local musician and legend Bankie Banx throws a party at Dune Preserve. CNN voted it the Best Beach Bar in the World. Bankie's daughter Tahirah and son Omari are both exceptional musicians, too, so expect music until morning. A champagne breakfast on the beach follows, while watching the sunrise on yet another perfect day in paradise.