

MARTINIQUE HOLIDAYS and SPECIAL EVENTS

On Public Holidays, government offices, banks, and most businesses are closed.

JANUARY

New Year's Day. Public Holiday on January 1

Epiphany / *La Fête des Rois*. Celebration in many homes and hotels, culminating in the serving of a traditional cake called galette des rois

Carnival de Martinique. Begins in early January with preliminary events and continues through the culmination of Carnival on Ash Wednesday. Various activities.

FEBRUARY / MARCH (dates vary with the Easter Holiday)

Carnival. 5 days of parties, parades and costumed revelers in the streets, culminating on Shrove Tuesday (Mardi Gras in the US).

Ash Wednesday. Each year as revelers in other Carnival hot spots wind down with the close of Shrove Tuesday, the party in Martinique keeps going, reaching a decadent climax on one of the most solemn days on the Christian calendar, Ash Wednesday, with a final parade and Burning of King Carnival, Vival, on a funeral pyre. Most businesses closed.

Schoelcher Nautical Week. Four days of racing attracts boaters from the Caribbean and France each winter.

MARCH

Martinique Expo. Features craft items and clothing created in Martinique and around the world.

APRIL

Le Pince d'Or Crab Festival. Annual event in Grand Rivière.

MAY

Labor Day. Public Holiday on May 1

Victory in Europe Day. Public Holiday on May 8

Ascension Thursday. Public Holiday. Date varies

Pentecost Monday. Public Holiday. Date varies

Slavery Abolition Day. Public Holiday on May 22

Sainte-Marie Culinary Week. A week-long festival celebrating Martinique's unique gastronomic heritage and traditions.

May in Saint Pierre. Formerly known as the Paris of the Caribbean, the northern coastal town of Saint Pierre was instantly transformed into the Pompeii of the Caribbean when on May 8, 1902 Mount Pelee erupted. Out of the centuries-old destruction Saint Pierre has emerged a quaint yet vibrant town, offering visitors a unique view of the island's storied past. The "May in Saint Pierre" event commemorates the anniversary of the eruption with a series of lectures, presentations and guided tours offering greater insight into this historic event.

JUNE

La Fête de la Musique. Some of the world's greatest musical forms hail from the Caribbean, with reggae (Jamaica) and calypso (Trinidad) the most widely known, but true music lovers know that Martinique also ranks among the music capitals of the region. Martinique is the birthplace of *Zouk*, a rhythmic music developed in the 1980's through a mix of many different styles. *La Fête de la Musique* is a celebration of Martinique's rich musical tradition with concerts performed in Fort-de-France and throughout the island.

Madiflora Flower Fair. Celebrates orchids and the other tropical blooms for which Martinique is justifiably famous.

JULY

Fête Nationale / Bastille Day. Public Holiday. Pageants, parades, fireworks. July 14

Tour des Yoles Rondes. Carnival and the sea are brought together for a celebration unlike any other during Martinique's famed Yawl Boat Race (Tour des Yoles Rondes). Held each summer over a one-week period, the Yawl Race attracts local and international yachtsmen skilled in sailing traditional yawls for a race around the island. The race is contested in stages with throngs of locals and visitors crowding the shores to cheer on the racers. Carnival-style celebrations punctuate each day's victory earned along the way, while on the high seas, hundreds of yachts, catamarans, speedboats, and other private vessels trail the racers, partying along the way.

Le Tour de Martinique. This smaller version of the famed Le Tour de France bicycle race is held each July and features an international field of riders competing in stages. The race reaches virtually every corner of the island, with fans and spectators lining the day's route to offer cheers and support.

AUGUST

Assumption Day. Public Holiday. August 15

Biguine Jazz Festival. This annual event celebrates the traditional music of Martinique and the other islands of the French West Indies.

NOVEMBER

Armistice Day. Public Holiday. November 11

La Belle Martinique. Less competitive than Le Tour de Martinique, this amateur cycling race is ideal for recreational riders seeking an alternate way to tour The Isle of Flowers. Local as well as visiting riders participate annually, with crowds lining the course each day.

Pool Art Fair. Held annually at the Impératrice Hotel in Fort-de-France, this exhibit of contemporary art attracts island and international artists.

International Deep Sea Fishing Contest. Anglers from around the world compete to land the biggest swordfish and marlin. Marin Port is the site of weigh-ins.

DECEMBER

Martinique Jazz Festival. The Caribbean's longest running jazz festival, the Martinique Jazz Festival has long provided a showcase for local and international artists to share their talents with a lively and appreciative crowd of music lovers from all corners of the globe.

Rum Festival. Held annually at St. James Distillerie.

Christmas Day. December 25. Public Holiday

Réveillon de la Saint Sylvestre / New Year's Eve celebrations and fireworks in Fort-de-France.s.