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NOT-TO-BE-MISSED IN MARTINIQUE: WALKING TOUR OF FORT-DE-FRANCE

A newly reopened 17th century fort, the Caribbean's answer to Central Park, and the region's most eclectic library highlight the capital city's must-see charms

NEW YORK, NY – January 27, 2015 – Martinique's capital city, Fort-de-France, presents one of the Caribbean's most dynamic visitor experiences for those with a love of history, sightseeing, shopping, and exceptional dining. Among the charms not-to-be-missed...

Fort Saint Louis – Originally carved from a rocky promontory jutting out into The Bay of Fort-de-France, Fort Saint Louis dates back to 1640. Closed since 9/11 when it was reinstated as an active military installation, the Fort reopened to the public July 2014.

La Savane Park – The 12-acre Park built in the 18th century from land reclaimed from the sea and mangroves was originally used for training by French military stationed at Fort Saint Louis. In 1830 La Savane became known as Le Jardin du Roi (The Garden of the King). Its new purpose: to harbor scientific experiments on plant species that were new to the island, many of which are still present in the Park today.

Schoelcher Library – Erected for the same 1889 World's Fair in Paris that saw the debut of the Eiffel Tower, the Schoelcher Library stands as a vibrant and colorful tribute to French abolitionist Victor Schoelcher. Designed by Henri Picq, a contemporary of Gustave Eiffel, the Library was dismantled piece by piece following the World's Fair, shipped to Martinique, and reassembled in Fort-de-France along Rue de la Liberté just across from the La Savane Park.

Saint Louis Cathedral – Also designed by Henri Picq, the Saint Louis Cathedral bears a striking Gothic Revival architectural style easily standing out as the most prominent structure in downtown Fort-de-France. The Cathedral in its current form was built in 1895, though it is the seventh such church built on the same location one block northwest of La Savane since 1657. All previous churches were destroyed by fire or natural disasters, prompting Picq to construct its entire frame out of steel, earning the structure the nickname "The Iron Cathedral."

Le Marché Couvert – Another Picq masterpiece, the Covered Market was originally constructed in 1901 and later restored in 1989. Bustling, colorful and full of life, it's still the place to go for the best of local Martinican spices, herbs, fruits, vegetables, arts and crafts. The restaurants within the market offer some of the very best local cuisine too.

Aimé Césaire Theater – Formerly the City Hall of Fort-de-France, where noted playwright, statesman, and civil rights leader Aimé Césaire maintained an office for more than 50 years, the Théâtre Aimé Césaire presents a marvelously preserved example of Neoclassical architecture in the Caribbean. Constructed between 1884 and 1901, the building now houses a cozy museum dedicated to Césaire upstairs.

To help visitors enjoy all that Fort-de-France has to offer, the city's Tourism Office recently launched new self-guided audio tour maps. Available for rent through The Fort-de-France Tourism Office, the new maps are equipped with audio pens that enable visitors to hear details on featured attractions simply by pointing the pens on the attractions on the map. Audio is available in a choice of English, French, Spanish, and Italian, with additional languages to be added in the coming months.

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Page 2

For more information on travel to Martinique, please visit www.martinique.org. For the latest, up-to-date Martinique Promotion Bureau press kit, visit www.martiniquepresskit.com.

About Martinique (www.martinique.org)

The Caribbean Island with French Flair, The Isle of Flowers, The Rum Capital of the World, The Isle of the Famed Poet (Aimé Césaire) – Martinique ranks among the most alluring and enchanting destinations in the world. As an overseas region of France, Martinique boasts modern and reliable infrastructure – roads, water and power utilities, hospitals, and telecommunications services all on par with any other part of the European Union. At the same time, Martinique’s beautifully unspoiled beaches, volcanic peaks, rainforests, 80+ miles of hiking trails, waterfalls, streams, and other natural wonders are the equal of neighboring Dominica to the north and St. Lucia to the south, so visitors here truly get the best of both worlds.

The currency is the Euro, the flag is Le Tricolour, and the official language is French, but Martinique’s character, cuisine, musical heritage, art, culture, common language, and identity are of a distinctly Afro-Caribbean inclination known as Creole Martiniquais. It is this special combination of modern world conveniences, pristine nature, and rich heritage that has earned for Martinique several notable distinctions in recent years, including being named as a “Must-Visit” destination for 2015 by *Caribbean Journal*, “Best Caribbean Destination” by About.com, and “Top Caribbean Island for Delectable Dining” by *Caribbean Travel + Life*. The Bay of Fort-de-France, which fronts Martinique’s charming capital city, was also recently inducted into *The Club of The Most Beautiful Bays in the World*.

Martinique’s storied history further stirs travel passions. Napoleon’s bride, Empress Josephine, was born and raised in Martinique, while the majestic Mt. Pelée volcano and St. Pierre, *The Pompeii of the Caribbean*, are found here.

A special place, to be sure, with so much to offer – *Martinique c’est magnifique!*

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