



## PRESS RELEASE

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# Dutch Vakantie Beurs kicks off on Tuesday. Port St. Maarten present to promote destination

**January 16, 2016** – Representatives of Port St. Maarten are currently in the Netherlands to participate in the 46th edition of the Dutch Vakantie Beurs Utrecht (Holiday Expo), which takes place from January 12-17, 2016 at the Convention Center in the Dutch city of Utrecht.

Destination St. Maarten has been absent from the aforementioned trade show for several years resulting in a low brand awareness of the country in the Dutch market.

Vakantie Beurs Utrecht caters to business to business and business to consumers. More Dutch travelers are becoming aware of cruises, and the St. Maarten cruise brand is the largest and most developed cruise port in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

In 2014, approximately 109,000 Dutch travelers took a cruise. The proximity of Belgium and Luxembourg to the Netherlands – known as the Benelux - also allows travelers from those countries to visit the Vakantie Beurs Utrecht, and they both represented a total of 77,000 cruise travelers in 2014. The Benelux countries have seen their number of cruise travelers grow by 11.5 per cent on average over the five-year period 2010-2014.

Port St. Maarten management says its presence at the Vakantie Beurs is very important in order to increase airlift to the country which would benefit the development of the cruise homeporting business out of the country. This would have an overall economic spin-off for various businesses such as hotels, restaurants, jewelry/electronic stores, nightclubs, taxi's, car rentals etc. because cruise passengers would spend two days on the island before boarding the cruise ship to take their cruise and another two days after the ship returns.

This year's theme is, 'You'd swear you're there already.' This year at the expo a raffle will be held for all the visitors with a chance to win an all-inclusive vacation to St. Maarten for two persons. This trip is provided by TUI Travel. The German cruise vessel Mein Schiff 3 which is owned by TUI Cruises is visiting the country for the 2015-2016 cruise season. The vessel has 1,253 state rooms and 2,500 lower beds along with a crew of 1,000. TUI Cruises, is a joint venture of the German tourist firm, TUI AG and Royal Caribbean Cruises. Port St. Maarten Management points out that TUI Cruises is also a travel agent and a port partner for the country.

According to Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), 6,387 million Europeans took a cruise in 2014. In 2014, approximately 1,578 European travelers took a cruise to the Caribbean Region.

Port St. Maarten has partnered with Caribbean Luxury Club to have a destination promotional booth at Vakantie Beurs Utrecht. This expo fits into the port's destination strategy to infiltrate the European Union tourist market.

The Ministry of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Telecommunication and Transport/St. Maarten Tourist Bureau is also represented at the expo and is part of the destination booth.

In 2015, Vakantie Beurs Utrecht attracted 117,063 visitors over the six-day expo. 62 per cent of the visitors to the expo sought holiday information from five areas around the globe including the Caribbean. There were also 1259 participating businesses from 166 countries.

The five main reasons for consumers visiting the expo in 2015 were: to find information before booking a holiday 71 per cent; a fun day out 45 per cent; select a holiday destination 27 per cent; find information about a planned/booked holiday 20 per cent; and book a holiday five per cent.

The number of professional visitors that visited the expo in 2015 were 18,869. They were interested in the following: keeping up to date with developments in the sector 69 per cent; meeting colleagues from the sector 65 per cent; meeting existing contacts 58 per cent; making new contacts 48 per cent; and attending program activities 27 per cent.

Port St. Maarten management says the survey results indicate a demand for destination information, and that it is essential for the country to have a presence at such events in order to keep the island profiled in the tourism and travel market where there are hundreds of competitors.

The second important aspect of having a presence is the contact with tourism and cruise oriented businesses and tour operators who would like to be kept abreast of what is happening at different destinations. Here Port St. Maarten reps will make valuable contacts.

A CLIA study revealed that there was a shift in Dutch cruise travelers from the Mediterranean to the Caribbean in 2014, making the Caribbean area a third choice out of Mediterranean/Black Sea followed by Northern Europe. The number of Dutch cruise travelers to the Caribbean in 2014 was 16,000.

“This once again shows that destination marketing is essential and the statistics show that the interests is there and the travelers have booked cruises to come to the Region.

“Stayover tourism is a main component of the country’s tourism industry and is linked to Port St. Maarten. A cargo imported serves the tourism sector on a daily basis. Without stayover visitors, the cargo business at Port St. Maarten will be different. It is up to us to sustain this and continue to grow and therefore that is why as a port we are investing in our future by attending this expo,” Port St. Maarten Management pointed out.



**PHOTO OUTLINE:** Port St. Maarten

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