

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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# **Port St. Maarten to participate in Dutch Vakantie Beurs. Seen as an investment in sustainable cruise/destination marketing**

**December 13, 2015** – Port St. Maarten will be participating 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 Dutch Kingdom.

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.

Germany is also a very important cruise market which borders the Netherlands, and is the largest group in Europe of 1,771 million cruise travelers in 2014. The aforementioned along with German cruise travelers represents almost two million European cruise travelers.

The United Kingdom and Ireland is the second largest cruise traveler group of 1,644 million in 2014. 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 will be partnering with Caribbean Luxury Club in having a destination promotional booth at Vakantie Beurs Utrecht. This expo fits into the port's destination strategy to infiltrate the European Union tourist market.

“Caribbean Luxury Club decided to participate at the Vakantie Beurs after St. Maarten has not been represented for a few years. The Dutch are not aware of the diversity of St. Maarten and the surrounding islands. In 2016 this will change as St. Maarten will make a big impact at the trade show.

“Island-hopping to neighbouring islands will be showcased as a unique product feature, as well activities such as shopping, sailing, yachting, dining and golfing. Travel aficionados and tourism professionals flock to the yearly exhibition to gather inspiration, leaving with visual impressions and promotional materials.



“This year’s theme is ‘You’d swear you’re there already.’ This year 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,” a representative from Caribbean Luxury Club said.

So far for the 2015-2016 cruise season, Port St. Maarten has received inaugural calls from three cruise vessels last month that cater to European travelers, namely the British Britannia from P&O Cruises. Britannia (4300+ passengers, 1398 crew) is the largest ship built for P&O Cruises for the British cruise market.

The second vessel is the German cruise vessel Mein Schiff 3 which is owned by TUI Cruises. 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.

The third vessel catering to the European market is the new flagship of Cruise & Maritime Voyages (CMV), Magellan, which home ports out of the United Kingdom, and carries 1250 passengers.

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 as 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.

Various aspects of the St. Maarten tourism product will be promoted at the Vakantie Beurs Utrecht.



**PHOTO OUTLINE:** Port St. Maarten

**For further questions, please contact:** [comments@portofstmaarten.com](mailto:comments@portofstmaarten.com)