

SAINT-BARTHÉLEMY: A Growing Partnership With the US

Balancing Growth, Exclusivity and a Timeless Allure

| By Camelia Raoui |

Saint-Barthélemy embraces growth at its own pace, moving forward with a steady and measured hand. It understands that what is rare must be protected, that what is beautiful must be kept intact. The island welcomes those who seek its quiet luxury, those who know that exclusivity is not measured in excess but in restraint.

Xavier Lédée, president of the collectivity, speaks with a kind of certainty that matches the land itself. “The goal is not expansion,” he says. “The goal is to maintain balance.” For years, the island has been a sanctuary, drawing in investors, travelers and dreamers. But with popularity comes pressure. The challenge is not in bringing people here—Saint-Barth has never needed to seek attention—but in ensuring that what makes it special does not dissolve under the weight of demand.

The island's economy is steady, largely fueled by tourism, with 70 percent of visitors coming from the



* XAVIER LÉDÉE PRESIDENT OF THE COLLECTIVITY OF SAINT-BARTHÉLEMY

United States. They step off the plane in search of something elusive—privacy, a different kind of silence, the sensation of slipping into a world that asks nothing of/ from? them. And yet, there is no official economic partnership between Saint-Barth and the U.S. It is an unspoken bond, an understanding that does not require formal agreements.

At **Saint-Barthélemy-Rémy-de-Haenen Airport**, Fabrice Danet oversees an operation that is both small and remarkable: Forty thousand aircraft movements a year. More than 200,000 passengers. A 646-meter runway that demands precision, not expansion. “We are not planning to extend,” he says. “We regulate,

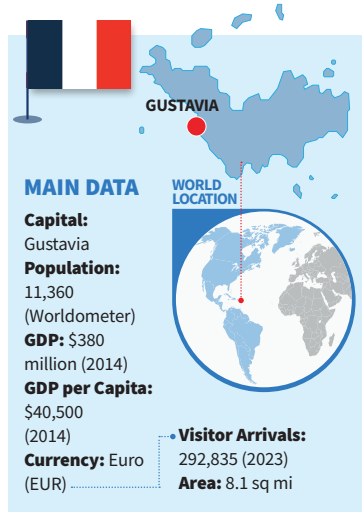


Kenzo Khan, St Barth Pictures

we refine.” The airport moves like clockwork, adjusting to peaks and surges, never breaking its rhythm.

At the **Port of Gustavia**, Ernest Brin watches the island breathe through its maritime arteries. Everything arrives by sea—the essentials, the indulgences, the yachts that anchor offshore with their quiet declarations of wealth. “The port is the island's lifeline,” he says. But like everything in Saint-Barth, space is limited. The marina is reconstructing the Quai de la République. The commercial port is expanding by 2,000 square meters, with further development scheduled for 2027. Growth, but deliberate, to preserve what has already been established.

Then there is tourism, the heartbeat of it all. Alexandra Questel, newly elected chairman of **St Barth Tourism**, understands what is at stake. “The challenge is keeping our uniqueness,” she says. “If we become like every other island, then why come to Saint-Barth at all?” The island operates on security and discretion. No crowds. No sprawling



resorts. No intrusion. Just an island where the sea is still the same color it was yesterday, where the streets are quiet, where even the air seems to hold something sacred.

In 2023, the island welcomed 292,000 visitors—a 10 percent increase from the previous year. Saint-Barthélemy is, in some ways, a victim of its own success. Yet its philosophy remains unchanged: It is not striving to be bigger, but to be better. And that is what keeps the world coming back. ●

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Saint-Barthélemy coastal town

Wings Over Saint Barthélemy: “A Small Island Within an Island”

How Saint Barth Executive and Lacure Villas craft seamless luxury from runway to retreat | By Camelia Raoui |

In the tranquil air of Saint-Barthélemy, a small island tucked away in the Caribbean, aviation embodies exclusivity, challenge and passion. At the helm of Saint Barth Executive, CEO Vincent Beauvarlet speaks of an industry that faces the impossible geometry of an island’s landscape. The airport’s constraints—a short runway, geographic isolation—dictate the rhythm of every takeoff and landing. “We are an

island within an island,” Beauvarlet reflects, explaining the unique difficulties of operating in such a confined space.

There are only two airlines here, one historic and one born from a vision to offer a luxury service that was once the domain of foreign carriers. Saint Barth Executive, launched in 2019, aims to fulfill the island’s unspoken promise to its affluent visitors: discreet, seamless, private. With the run-

way barely large enough for small aircraft, the island’s aviation sector is defined by the rarity of its services. This same principle of refined exclusivity extends beyond the tarmac, where Lacure Villas has spent over four decades perfecting the art of private island accommodations. Their portfolio of meticulously vetted residences—from cliff-top estates to beachfront havens—embodies the same attention to detail and personalized service that defines Saint Barth Executive’s approach to aviation. As island experts with deep local connections, Lacure transforms arrivals into experiences, arranging everything from private yacht charters to beachfront dining, while offering a diverse collection of properties designed to suit varying needs and preferences. Yet the allure of luxury travel comes at a price—strict European regulations, escalating costs and the looming presence of foreign competitors who sail under lighter, more lenient skies. “Operating an airline in Saint-Barth is not easy. The balance



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between costs and competition is tough,” Beauvarlet admits.

Saint Barth Executive moves toward the future with plans to expand, aiming for direct routes to Puerto Rico, Antigua, and more, while balancing sustainability efforts. “Our goal is to create a seamless experience for travelers coming from Europe, North America and beyond,” Beauvarlet shares. In a world where high-end customers expect the finest, Beauvarlet remains unwavering in his vision to maintain the island’s charm and exclusivity, creating a future where aviation, like Saint-Barth itself, remains rare and coveted. ●



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Discover Paradise: Hôtel Christopher and the Rise of Saint-Barthélemy

An Oasis of Luxury in a Changing Landscape | By Camelia Raoui |

Nestled in the turquoise embrace of the Caribbean, Saint-Barthélemy has evolved from a boutique hideaway into a sophisticated global destination. According to Olivier Leroy, general manager of Hôtel Christopher, this transformation over the last decade is a testament to the island’s ability to balance luxury with authenticity. “We’ve moved from a more archaic model to one where

professionalism shines,” Olivier notes, citing the island’s growing portfolio of five-star properties and its enduring appeal for discerning travelers.

At the heart of this evolution is Hôtel Christopher, an intimate retreat with just 42 rooms and a deep connection to the island’s essence. “We’re one of the last independent five-star properties, and that local spirit is our strength,” Olivier explains. With

two restaurants helmed by Michelin-starred chef Christopher Coutanceau, an award-winning Sisley spa and upcoming expansions like the luxurious Villa Saba, the hotel seamlessly blends sophistication with sustainability.

Pioneering green tourism, Hôtel Christopher is Green Globe certified, leading the charge in coral reef preservation, solar energy use and water self-sufficiency. “We’re committed to pre-

“It’s a little piece of France in the Caribbean. A serene, sophisticated paradise.”



servicing what makes Saint-Barth unique,” says Olivier.

For travelers seeking understated luxury, Hôtel Christopher offers a gateway to a tranquil island lifestyle. “It’s a little piece of France in the Caribbean,” Olivier reflects, “a serene, sophisticated paradise.” ●

