Dawgen GLOBAL

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CARIBBEAN SERVICE DESK · EASTERN CARIBBEAN

Doing Business in Sint Maarten

A practical guide to establishing, operating and growing a business in Sint Maarten

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FOREWORD

Sint Maarten is one of the busiest tourism and transport hubs in the north-eastern Caribbean, a small country with a large international reach and a strong record of recovery.

Investors are drawn to Sint Maarten for good reason: an English-speaking business community within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, a US dollar economy, a major regional airport and cruise port, and a tourism sector that has rebuilt strongly since Hurricane Irma. Opportunity sits alongside complexity. Dutch civil law, licensing, tax and labour rules all need careful handling from the first day.

This guide sets out what you need to know in plain language: how to choose a structure, how the set-up process works, what taxes apply, how to employ people, and which incentives may be available. It is written for investors, entrepreneurs and regional and international groups considering Sint Maarten.

We serve clients in Sint Maarten through Dawgen Global's Caribbean Service Desk, managed from our headquarters in Kingston, and we are ready to help you turn a plan into a well-run, compliant business.

Dr. Dawkins Brown, Ph.D., MCMI, ACFE

Executive Chairman, Dawgen Global

How to use this guide

This guide gives a practical overview of establishing and running a business in Sint Maarten. It is general information, current to October 2026, and is not a substitute for advice on your circumstances. Rates and rules change; speak to us before you act.

OVERVIEW

01 Sint Maarten at a glance

A constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on the southern part of the island of Saint Martin, with an economy built on tourism, trade and transport.

CAPITAL
Philipsburg
Seat of government and main commercial centre

STATUS
Kingdom of the Netherlands
Autonomous country since 10 October 2010

LANGUAGE
English and Dutch
English is the main language of business

CURRENCY
Caribbean guilder (XCG)
Pegged to the US dollar; US dollars widely used

LEGAL SYSTEM
Dutch civil law
Final appeal to the Supreme Court of the Netherlands

TIME ZONE
UTC−4
Atlantic Standard Time all year; no daylight saving

PROFIT TAX
34.5%
30% rate plus a 15% surcharge

TURNOVER TAX
5%
On goods and services supplied locally; no threshold

TRADE LINKS
EU association
EU overseas country; largely duty-free imports

Leading sectors

Tourism and hospitality · Cruise and yachting · Aviation and logistics · Retail and wholesale trade · Real estate and construction · Financial services · Restaurants and entertainment · Professional services

Gateways
Princess Juliana International Airport, with a rebuilt terminal opened in 2024, has direct flights to North America and Europe. Port St. Maarten is a leading cruise port and cargo hub.

One island, two countries
The northern part of the island is Saint-Martin, a French overseas collectivity that is part of the European Union and uses the euro. The border is open, but each side has its own laws, taxes and licences.

INVESTMENT CLIMATE

02 Why Sint Maarten

A regional transport hub, a US dollar economy and the institutions of the Dutch Kingdom make Sint Maarten a natural base for tourism and trade in the north-eastern Caribbean.

Strategic location

Sint Maarten sits at the top of the Leeward Islands, with direct flights to the US, Canada and Europe. Its airport serves as a gateway for Anguilla, Saint-Barthélemy, Saba and Sint Eustatius, giving businesses a wide regional market.

International workforce

English is spoken everywhere in business, and Dutch, Spanish, French and Papiamento are widely used. The community is diverse, with long experience serving North American and European visitors.

Kingdom institutions

Company, contract and property law follow the Dutch civil law tradition. Courts sit under the Common Court of Justice, with final appeal to the Supreme Court of the Netherlands, and financial supervision is shared with Curaçao.

A recovering economy

Hurricane Irma caused severe damage in September 2017. Reconstruction has been financed largely by the Netherlands through a World Bank-administered trust fund, due to close in 2028. The IMF reports growth of 3.3% in 2024, led by tourism, and has urged a move towards higher-value services.

Public finances are overseen by the Board of Financial Supervision (Cft), and government has committed to tax reform with Parliament.

Where the opportunities are

Sector	Examples of opportunity
Tourism	Hotels, villas, timeshare, restaurants, attractions and tourism supply chains
Marine	Marinas, yachting services, cruise services and ship supplies
Real estate	Residential, commercial and resilient post-hurricane construction
Trade and logistics	Wholesale distribution to the neighbouring islands, warehousing and freight
Energy and utilities	Renewable generation, storage and efficiency to reduce reliance on diesel

Ministry of TEATT

The Ministry of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Traffic and Telecommunication issues business licences and leads economic policy. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry keeps the trade register and is a first point of contact for new businesses.

LEGAL VEHICLES

03 Choosing a business structure

Most investors use a public or private limited company (NV or BV), formed by notarial deed. Foreign companies may instead open a branch. The right choice depends on liability, tax, financing and exit plans.

Vehicle	Key features	Typical use	Main obligations
Naamloze vennootschap (NV)	Limited liability company with share capital; formed by deed before a civil-law notary; managed by one or more managing directors	Most operating businesses and subsidiaries of foreign groups	Chamber of Commerce registration; profit tax returns; beneficial ownership filings
Besloten vennootschap (BV)	Private limited company with flexible rules on capital, shares and governance; formed by notarial deed	Owner-managed businesses, joint ventures and holding companies	As for the NV
Branch of a foreign company	Registered with the Chamber of Commerce; not a separate legal entity	Projects, contracts and market entry	Registration; 34.5% profit tax on local profits
Partnership	General partnership (VOF) or limited partnership (CV); general partners personally liable	Professional practices and family businesses	Registration; partners taxed on their share of profits
Sole proprietorship	Individual trading under their own or a trade name; unlimited liability	Small owner-managed businesses	Registration; business licence; income tax
Foundation (stichting)	No members or shareholders; assets dedicated to a stated purpose	Charities, associations and some holding structures	Registration; tax position depends on activities

Business licences

Most businesses need a licence from the Ministry of TEATT before trading. Licences are granted to the specific business and activity, and regulated activities such as banking, insurance, trust services and telecommunications need a further licence from the relevant regulator.

Beneficial ownership

Legal entities must file details of their ultimate beneficial owners with the register kept by the Chamber of Commerce: new entities within seven days of incorporation, and changes within two weeks.

GETTING STARTED

04 Setting up: step by step

Companies are formed by a civil-law notary and registered with the Chamber of Commerce. Incorporation is straightforward once documents are ready; business licences, bank accounts and permits usually take longer.

1 **Plan the structure and name** — WEEK 1

Choose the vehicle, shareholding and managing directors, and check that the proposed name is available with the Chamber of Commerce.

2 **Incorporate before a notary** — WEEK 1–3

A civil-law notary drafts and executes the deed of incorporation with the articles, then registers the company with the Chamber of Commerce, including its beneficial owners.

3 **Apply for a business licence** — WEEK 2–8

Apply to the Ministry of TEATT for the licence covering your activity. Allow time for review, and do not trade before it is granted.

4 **Open a bank account** — WEEK 2–6

Banks apply full know-your-customer checks on the company, directors and beneficial owners. Allow extra time where owners are overseas.

5 **Register for taxes and SZV** — WEEK 2–4

Register with the Tax Administration for a tax number, turnover tax and wage tax, and register as an employer with SZV for social and health insurance.

6 **Obtain permits** — VARIES

Apply for labour and residence permits for foreign staff, building permits from the Ministry of VROMI, and sector licences where relevant.

7 **Set up accounting and compliance** — BEFORE TRADING

Put in place bookkeeping, payroll, IFRS-based reporting, a tax and filing calendar, personal data safeguards and anti-money laundering controls where your sector requires them.

Documents you will usually need

Certified passport and proof of address for each director, shareholder and beneficial owner; bank or professional references; a local business address; and, for a branch, certified constitutional documents and a certificate of good standing from the home registry, with translations where needed.

TAXATION

05 Tax at a glance

Sint Maarten taxes resident companies on worldwide income and non-residents on Sint Maarten-source income. The system is inherited from the former Netherlands Antilles. The headline rates are below.

Business taxes	
Profit tax	34.5% (30% plus a 15% surcharge), including branches; capital gains taxed as profit
Losses and holdings	Losses carried forward 10 years; participation exemption for qualifying shareholdings
Turnover tax	5% on goods and services supplied in Sint Maarten; no registration threshold; basic food and utilities exempt; not charged on imports
Room tax	Levied on guest accommodation in place of turnover tax
Transfer tax	4% on the purchase of real estate, paid by the buyer
Foreign exchange fee	1% of payments to non-residents

Individuals	
Income and wage tax	Progressive, 12.5% to 47.5% including the surcharge; top rate above XCG 161,540 of taxable income (2026)
Pensioner regime	Qualifying foreign income may be taxed at a flat 10%

Withholding tax (non-residents)	Rate
Dividends	Nil
Interest	Nil
Royalties and fees	Nil

Sint Maarten has four tax treaties, including the tax arrangements within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and a network of tax information exchange agreements.

Recent changes

Parliament adopted the 2026 budget on 27 August 2026 with no new taxes and a commitment to joint tax reform. A 10% dividend withholding tax and a tourism levy were proposed for 2026 but were not in force at the time of writing. A bill to repeal disused taxes, including inheritance and land tax, went before Parliament in 2026, and the tax exempt company regime is being phased out.

PEOPLE

06 Employing people

Labour law follows the Dutch civil law model and protects employees. Employers must register with SZV, withhold wage tax and premiums, and observe minimum standards on wages, leave and dismissal.

Minimum standards

- **Minimum wage:** set by decree and adjusted periodically; XCG 10.86 an hour (XCG 1,882.40 a month) from 1 January 2025
- **Hours and overtime:** limits on working hours, rest periods and overtime pay are set by labour law
- **Vacation:** a statutory minimum of paid annual leave
- **Sickness:** insured employees receive sickness benefits and medical cover through SZV
- **Maternity:** paid pregnancy and maternity leave for insured employees
- **Dismissal:** generally needs a permit from the Department of Labour, mutual consent or a court order
- **Severance:** payable on dismissal for reasons not attributable to the employee, based on years of service

Statutory payroll contributions

Contribution	Employee	Employer
Wage tax	12.5% to 47.5%	—
AOV (old age pension)	6%	7%
AWW (survivors)	0.5%	0.5%
ZV (sickness insurance)	4.2%	8.3%
OV (work accidents)	—	0.5% to 5%

AOV and AWW apply to wages up to XCG 132,824.35 a year (2026). ZV covers employees earning up to XCG 120,000 a year; others need private health cover. Confirm current rates with SZV.

Bringing in foreign staff

Labour permits

Foreign nationals need a labour permit, applied for by the employer at the Department of Labour, which first checks for suitable local candidates.

Residence permits

A residence permit is also needed, issued through the immigration service. Allow time for police and background checks.

Kingdom nationals and expatriates

Dutch nationals do not need a labour permit. Qualifying expatriate employees may receive some allowances free of tax if they apply in time.

HR essentials from day one

Give every employee a written contract, keep accurate time, pay and leave records, register each employee with SZV, and adopt a staff handbook covering conduct, grievances, data protection and health and safety. Dismissal rules are strict, so keep good records.

MONEY AND ASSETS

07 Banking, currency and property

Banking and finance

Sint Maarten has local and regional commercial banks, insurers and pension funds, supervised by the Central Bank of Curaçao and Sint Maarten (CBCS), which serves both countries in a monetary union.

- **Caribbean guilder:** the XCG replaced the Netherlands Antillean guilder in 2025 at one for one, pegged to the US dollar
- **US dollar economy:** prices, wages and accounts are often in US dollars
- **Foreign exchange:** payments abroad go through licensed banks under foreign exchange rules, with a 1% licence fee on outflows
- **Foreign currency accounts** are widely available
- **Compliance:** expect thorough anti-money laundering and know-your-customer checks

Financial reporting

Companies prepare annual financial statements, generally under IFRS. Large companies must file their accounts with the Chamber of Commerce.

Land and property

Foreign nationals and companies may own property. Much land is government land granted on long lease (erfpacht) through the Ministry of VROMI; other land is freehold. Transfers are made by notarial deed and registered with the Land Registry (Kadaster).

Typical costs on a property purchase	
Transfer tax	4% of the value, paid by the buyer
Notary and registration	Notary fees and Land Registry charges
Mortgage costs	Notarial mortgage deed and registration
Long lease	Annual ground rent on leasehold land

Before you build

Building needs a permit from the Ministry of VROMI, and transfers or changes of use of long-lease land need its consent. Designs should meet hurricane-resilient standards.

GROWTH LEVERS

08 Incentives, trade and customs

Sint Maarten relies on targeted tax facilities rather than broad tax holidays, alongside its free-port tradition and association with the European Union.

Key incentive regimes

Regime	What it offers
Investment allowance	Extra deduction of 8% of qualifying investment, or 12% for buildings, where investment exceeds XCG 5,000
Accelerated depreciation	Up to one-third of an asset's cost may be written off early
Tax holidays	Profit tax relief for approved new investment projects, granted by the Minister of Finance
Expatriate facility	Tax-free allowances for qualifying foreign employees
Pensioner regime	Flat 10% tax on qualifying foreign income for new residents

Eligibility and conditions apply to each regime. We can assess which incentives fit your project and prepare the applications.

Market access

- **European Union:** as an overseas country and territory, Sint Maarten has preferential access to the EU market
- **Kingdom of the Netherlands:** close legal and economic ties with the Netherlands, Aruba and Curaçao
- **Regional hub:** distribution to Anguilla, Saint-Barthélemy, Saba, Sint Eustatius and the French side

Customs

Sint Maarten has long operated as a free port. There are no general import duties, and turnover tax is not charged on imports, although excise applies to some goods such as fuel and tobacco. Imports must still be declared to Customs.

COMPLIANCE

09 Regulators and compliance calendar

Who regulates what

Body	Role
Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Trade register and beneficial ownership register
Ministry of TEATT	Business licences and economic policy
Tax Administration	Profit tax, turnover tax, wage tax and other taxes
Customs	Imports, exports and excise
CBCS	Banks, insurers, pension funds, trust services and foreign exchange
Financial Intelligence Unit	Anti-money laundering reporting
SZV	Social and health insurance
Department of Labour	Labour permits, dismissal permits and labour standards
Ministry of VROMI	Building permits, planning and long-lease land
Bureau Telecommunications and Post	Telecoms and postal services

Key filing dates

When	What
15th of each month	Turnover tax return and payment for the previous month, including nil returns
Each month	Wage tax and social premium returns and payments for the previous month
31 January	Report payments to independent contractors for the previous year
31 March	Provisional profit tax return and payment for the previous year
30 June	Final profit tax return and payment, unless an extension is granted
Within two weeks	Report changes in beneficial ownership to the Chamber of Commerce

Dates shown are for a company with a December year-end. Late filing and payment attract fines and interest, which build quickly.

Anti-money laundering

Financial institutions and designated businesses, including real estate agents, notaries, lawyers, accountants and casinos, must identify clients and report unusual transactions to the Financial Intelligence Unit.

ACTION PLAN

10 Your first 90 days: checklist

Use this checklist to track the essential steps from decision to first trading day.

Days 1–30: establish

- [ ] Agree business plan, structure and ownership
- [ ] Check the company name with the Chamber of Commerce
- [ ] Gather KYC documents for directors and owners
- [ ] Instruct a civil-law notary to form the company
- [ ] Register with the Chamber of Commerce
- [ ] File beneficial ownership information
- [ ] Apply for the business licence
- [ ] Apply to open business bank accounts

Days 31–60: register and license

- [ ] Register for turnover tax and wage tax
- [ ] Register as an employer with SZV
- [ ] Apply for labour and residence permits
- [ ] Apply for sector licences and building permits
- [ ] Assess eligibility for tax facilities
- [ ] Lease premises and arrange insurance cover

Days 61–90: operate

- [ ] Set up the accounting system and chart of accounts
- [ ] Set up payroll, wage tax and premiums
- [ ] Issue written employment contracts
- [ ] Build the tax and filing calendar
- [ ] Put AML and data protection policies in place
- [ ] Agree year-end and audit arrangements

Ongoing

- [ ] Monthly turnover tax and payroll filings
- [ ] Provisional and final profit tax returns
- [ ] Annual financial statements
- [ ] Keep beneficial ownership details current
- [ ] Renew licences and permits on time

YOUR PARTNER

11 How Dawgen Global helps

One Dawgen Global team supports you through our Caribbean Service Desk, managed from our headquarters in Kingston.

Market entry and structuring

Choice of vehicle, group and tax structuring, feasibility studies and business plans.

Incorporation and corporate secretarial

Company formation, statutory registers and beneficial ownership filings.

Tax advisory and compliance

Registrations, planning, turnover tax, wage tax, returns, transfer pricing and tax audits, through our Caribbean Tax Service Desk.

Accounting and payroll outsourcing

Bookkeeping, payroll and a Virtual CFO.

Audit and assurance

Statutory audits, reviews and special-purpose reporting for lenders and parent companies.

HR, immigration and legal support

Employment contracts, HR policies, labour permit applications and legal process support, with our panel of attorneys.

Risk and compliance

AML programmes, data protection compliance, internal audit and governance.

Technology and cyber

Systems selection, digital transformation, cybersecurity and AI governance.

Incentive applications

Tax facility and licence assessments and applications.

Start with a conversation

Tell us your plans, and we will set out the steps, timeline and costs. Some regulated services are performed by affiliated firms; we will advise you of the arrangements when you make a request. Fees are tailored to each client's circumstances and set out in an engagement letter. Email **sintmaarten@dawgen.com** or **info@dawgen.global**, or call (876) 926-5210.

Talk to the Sint Maarten Caribbean Service Desk

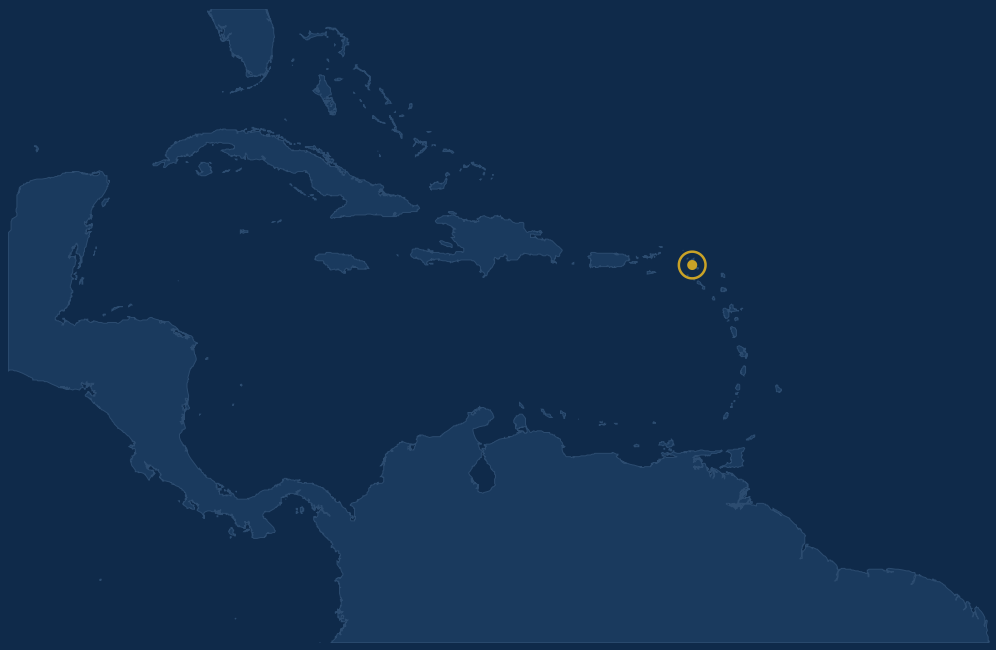
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Key official sources

- Government of Sint Maarten, including the Tax Administration (sintmaartengov.org)
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sint Maarten (chamberofcommerce.sx)
- Ministry of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Traffic and Telecommunication (sintmaartengov.org)
- Department of Labour, Ministry of Public Health, Social Development and Labour (sintmaartengov.org)
- Social and Health Insurances SZV (szv.sx)
- Central Bank of Curaçao and Sint Maarten (centralbank.cw)
- Parliament of Sint Maarten (sxmparliament.org)
- International Monetary Fund (imf.org)



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