

Statia's gateways to the world

Welcome to Statia! No matter which gateway to St. Eustatius — harbour or airport — you use, this Dutch Caribbean island puts a smile on your face. Everybody is waving and greeting one another. Yes, honking the horn is only meant as a way to say hello. In general, traffic is pretty relaxed and so is the rest of the island also known as 'The historic gem'.



Everything started on the water. The first settlers, same as the Dutch, English, French and US-Americans, came and went by boats. You can learn about the pre-Columbian times as well as how the political and economical heydays of the island came to an end in the museum (take a look at their article).

We know it is hard to believe, but in the 18th century, Sint Eustatius was the most important trading centre in the world. That's when the island got the nickname 'The Golden Rock'. The name still refers to the island as a whole and is proudly used by many local businesses, many of them presented in in this booklet.

On a mission for the island: Sustainable and safe port and airport operations

These days, the Directorate of Transport is responsible for the transport of people and goods to and from St. Eustatius. Its mission is to secure sustainable and safe port and airport operations. The pillars of the department are safety, customer-friendliness and efficient logistics within the two ports. Vishal Oedjaghir, the commercial manager of Directorate of Transport at public entity St. Eustatius, describes the vision as creating economic opportunities through commercial port development.



The directorate consists of the unit of harbour, airport and security. With a broad educational background in management, mechanical and aerospace engineering as well as experiences in aviation, space and maritime sectors he aims to innovate, create and deliver a positive impact on society. After all, the ports are the lifelines to the island. Just like back in the days.

St. Eustatius Port Authority & Charles Austin Woodley Pier

To this day the vast majority of goods enters Statia via the harbour. Without security, 10 people are working at the port. Just like all the other islanders, I am awaiting the container ships delivering goods for the supermarkets as well as our personal orders with great anticipation. Don't be surprised to find many shelves empty from Monday on — sometimes and with certain goods even earlier. The regular arrival time of the ships bringing the main supplies of food to the island is Wednesday. *Muttys Pride* comes via Saba from Saint Martin, while the *Orion* originates in the Dutch part of the island. From Sint Maarten the container ship heads out to Saba and then St. Kitts before it stops at St. Eustatius and St. Barth on its return to St. Maarten.



Either *Tropic Opal* or *Tropic Palm* arrives every week directly from Florida. Last but not least, the *Midnight Dream* brings supplies to the island, too. Since 2022, there is a major add-on expanding the role of Statia harbour as a gateway to the island. Thanks to the support of the government, the *Makana Ferry Service* was installed successfully. There are six connections per week from and to Sint Maarten, five from/to Saba and two from/to St. Kitts for the local population as well as island hoppers exploring the region.

The port authority is neither in charge of the service nor the schedule of the ferry or container ships. Their role is to provide the facilities for third party operators to do business and provide services. Goods can be stored up to three days in the harbour warehouse. After that time, a storage fee will be charged. All cargo payment is handled by the cargo agents. Only blocks, cement, and vehicles will be paid at the port office by the consignee.

Basic port information

Operating hours harbour and warehouse:
Monday to Friday 8.30 am to 4 pm
Security 24/7

UNI/LOCODE: BQ EUX
VHF: channel 16 / 14
Coordinates: 17° 28' - 6" N
062° 59' - 3" W

Anchoring fee up to 50 tonnes: 35 USD
Anchoring fee 50-500 tonnes: 135 USD

Additional passengers: 5 USD per person

Services/facilities:
2 toilets
2 showers
Fresh water to yachts (price depends on size of holding tank and is based on the price the harbour buys from as STUCO, soon there will be meters installed)



In April 2023, Johnny van Nek became Harbour Master. After being captain on ocean vessels for more than 20 years, he brings in a lot of experience to handle the big boys. Regarding citizens and visitors using the harbour, he is asking for help: “What do you think about our facilities and services? What is working well? What can we improve? What do you need? Your feedback is highly welcome and will be taken into account as long as the request or suggestion falls under our responsibility.”

Statia harbour is already equipped to serve private yachts and boats. I asked Gilberto Maduro, for many years the acting Harbour Master, which procedures arriving boats should follow. “Call the harbour on channel 16 (VHS radio), tell the name of your boat and request anchoring. If a longer chat

is necessary, you will be asked to switch to channel 14 for a detailed description of where to anchor. The maximum capacity in 2023 is 23 yachts. At the moment, there are no mooring buoys installed for ships visiting the island. Use your own anchors, please. Once you are safely secured for the night, come to the harbour to pay the fee [see box] and fill in your customs information. If you arrive outside of the operating hours, report to security and use the phone installed on the jetty to contact immigration. In the future, hopefully, there is online payment available.”

The area from the high water mark down to 30 metres (99 feet) of depths around Statia is a designated Marine Park. There is a Northern and Southern Reserve where no anchoring or fishing activities are allowed. St. Eustatius National Parks (STENAPA) hands out maps and further information regarding the topic (see their contribution in this booklet). Up to now, captains of small pleasure (non-commercial) and fishing vessels don't need a special licence to operate around the island.

However, boats have to be equipped with life jackets along with a first aid kit, life ring and fire extinguisher. Local boat owners have to register their boats at the harbour office (annual fee 60 USD per vessel and another 60 USD yearly for the harbour entry pass).



From the future into the past

This port was finished in 1993. At the moment, the total length of the jetty from one end to the other is 90 metres, 60 metres at the RORO section (Roll-on-roll-off) and 70 metres inside where up to now the ferry, dive and fishing boats moor up. Gilberto hands me a map showing future projects around the harbour. The area to store containers will be paved. If all goes according to plan, three completely new sections for small boats and dinghies will be constructed. Furthermore, the idea is to extend the main jetty and deepen the area next to it from six to seven metres. This would allow small cruise ships with up to 250 passengers to pull up to the jetty instead of shuttling the guests with tenders to the island.



This procedure of using smaller boats to bring people and goods to shore is pretty much the way it used to be for centuries. In the old days, ships were laying at anchor in the bay. Smaller boats, so called sloops, were going back and forth to the centre of Oranje Bay. Goods were registered and weighed at the old scale house. That building has been renovated

and is part of the dive centre Scubaqua. Eventually, a jetty was built to allow the sloops to bring passengers to the island in more comfort. Even without this first construction, the harbour was the economic driving force behind the golden era of Statia.

Already a busy port within the region, Statia's economy really took off in 1756. In that year, the Dutch declared the island a free port. Without any customs duties, Statia turned into a hub for all kinds of goods — legal and illegal. The island offered neutral ground for business in the middle of British (Jamaica, St. Kitts, Barbados, Bermuda), French (Saint-Domingue, Sainte-Lucie, Martinique, Guadeloupe), Spanish (Cuba, Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico) and Danish (Virgin Islands) territories.

Neutrality and tax-free haven were the man-made reasons for Statia's golden era. Natural factors gave the island its blessing. Conveniently located between destinations, Statia was favourable as captains could make use of the trade winds bringing ships from the east towards this volcanic rock. Obviously, there are more islands around. However, Statia was the only one providing a natural harbour that is protected from these easterly winds and offers sandy anchoring at depths of 10 to 30 meters (33 to 99 feet). This depth provided shelter even for the biggest boats of those times.

With more than 3,000 ships per year, Statia was THE busiest port in the world. Hence, trade turned the island into 'The Golden Rock'. Two rows of about 600 warehouses stretched along the shore. For some time, 9,000 people lived on the island of 21 km² (8 mi²). That number has dropped to 3,300 people since then. In addition to trading, the island economy ran on sugar, tobacco, and cotton. With traders, sailors, and slaves, around 20,000 people must have brought quite some life to Statia back in those days.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt Airport

On the contrary to the goods, the majority of the visitors arrives by plane. In 2022, 33,861 passengers passed through the airport. At the moment, the average of in and outbound passenger is approximately 75 per day. The number of flights from and to Sint Maarten per day is still below the level of flights that were offered before Covid-19. In spring 2020, all off-island travels came to a complete hold. Slowly but surely, the island opened up again for locals and workers until in August 2021 the first tourists were allowed to visit again.



These guests were greeted with a complete new airport structure. The terminal features 700 square meter inner space (1,100 m² roof) and is constructed in a way to allow future expansions. In total, there are four check-in desks, three airline offices, and luggage as well as a full body screening available now. The waiting area with 44 seats at the gate overlooks the runway. The arrival section is separated from this area by the booth of customs welcoming island visitors and returning locals alike.

There is even an baggage conveyor belt. People accustomed to the old terminal tend to get a little nostalgic looking at these development. Granted, it was a special experience how the luggage was handed through a hole in the wall before. Some of the guests visiting the island for many years are even fondly talking about the times planes had to fly an additional loop to allow the ground staff to chase goats or sheep off the runway. These day only roosters and chickens make it over the fence surrounding the airport. Maybe these nostalgic passengers can be appeased with the bar that opened on the outside next to

Basic airport information

Fees: \$2 security fee & passenger tax \$15, sometimes it is incorporated in the ticket.

Opening hours: 6:00 am – 22:00pm
Opening hours KMAR: 06:30 am – 19:00 pm

Customs (Duane) Airport
Opening hours: 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
17:00 pm – 19:00 pm

Ground handlers / airport information:
There is 4 Piek and Tarr Aviation Services

No liquids in hand baggage above 120 ml

the check-in. At least, there they can talk about the good old days.

Statia's second gateway to the world started off as Golden Rock Airport with a building looking very much like the average Caribbean house in 1946. Shortly thereafter, the airport got renamed after the 32nd President of the United States of America. Franklin Delano Roosevelt was the first and, so far, only US President to touch Statian soil in 1939. His visit



Golden Rock Airport's terminal building around 1960. Only the Quill has remained the same ...

on Statia Day (November 16th) acknowledged the role Statia played in the fight for independence. By saluting the Andrew Doria, an American merchant ship that had been upgraded into a 'man of war' ship by the Continental Navy, Statia became the first foreign nation to recognise the newly independent USA in 1776.

Though widely unknown to American citizens, this first salute is celebrated on Statia every year to this day.

A second house was added serving as 'the tower' eventually. The terminal itself got extended multiple times over the years. The first major upgrade and modernisation took place in 1972. The second major renovation was combined with an expansion in 1993. That is when the old terminal got the shape that you still see today. The current plan is to renovate it in order to use it for cargo operations and office space. The building was damaged by the hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017. As the terminal wasn't in line with international standards any more, a complete development programme to renew the facilities of the airport took off in the very same year.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt Airport serves as the base for the emergency helicopter services for St. Eustatius as well as Saba. Further plans for the future of the airport are extending the parking spots for aircrafts parked at the airport. "We'll look also for hangar space in case an aircraft needs maintenance for a long period," explains airport manager Darold Doest.



“We also cater for private charters. They must file a flight plan at the civil aviation authority (CAA) of origin. The CAA sends note to all the airports based on the flight plan. PJIA informs Statia that the flight is planned.” SXM Airways, EZAir, Trans Anguilla Airways and ST BARTH COMMUTER offer private charters. For those looking to regular flights, WinAir has daily connections from and to Sint Maarten. In their twin-otter planes with 20 seats you reach Statia in less than 20 minutes. Two times per week there are connections from St. Eustatius to Bonaire and Curacao, too.

During the official inauguration in August 2021, former Deputy Government Commissioner Claudia Toet acknowledged the new airport as an important milestone to handle more passengers and to better connect Statia to the region. “I am delighted with the result of the new building and also the pictures in the arrival hall that show the beauty of Statian citizens and the environment.” According to Mrs. Toet, the next step is to arrange more and cheaper connectivity within the Caribbean Region. However, the airport only provides the facilities and isn't actively involved in the extending the air services offered by third parties.



There are also local voices pointing out that the airport lost its charm with the new terminal. The old one had a window towards the street. Departing passengers could stay in touch with the loved ones outside. Actually, it wasn't particularly uncommon for passengers to leave the exit hall after the security check to say a last goodbye to friends or family. Darold Doest confirms my suspicion that this procedure, endearing as it may be, is not in line with the current safety and security standards.

Excluding security, there are 10 people working at the airport. After I registered and put my yellow reflective vest on, Ashley Vliese, the operations supervisor, gives me a tour to take pictures. I enjoy the history presented in the old terminal and the outside area the most. However, the best is still to come. A little before 6 pm, we are entering the new airport tower. It is three stories high. The cabin on top serves as the operational room for flight and airfield safety as well as for communication. In July 2023, a brand new air control system will arrive giving the airport the finishing touch.

As we enter the cabin, the take-off from Sint Maarten is confirmed. Ashley gets down a folding ladder, allowing us to climb onto the roof of the tower. What a view! As I am already

enthusiastically describing the potential to promote airport tours ending with a sunset drink on the roof of the tower, I realise that this idea most likely isn't in line with the safety and security standards either.

Luckily, there is a lot more to discover and experience on 'The Golden Rock'.

Hiking, both in the Quill and Boven

National Park, offers stunning views over the island. As an elevated sunset spot, I recommend Round Hill with its 360° view. There are historic walking tours organised by the museum, island tours by car and many bars and restaurants to meet locals as well as fellow travellers. No matter which gateway to Statia you choose, don't forget to go snorkelling, diving or swimming as everything started on the water.

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