

St. Maarten, Antigua or Bust

Contributed by Shannon DeFries

This December yacht brokers will have a tough decision to make, between the Antigua and St. Maarten Charter Yacht Shows. In a recent press release, MYBA announced the acquisition of the St. Maarten Charter Yacht show. The show will be managed by both MYBA and the St. Maarten Marine Trades Association (SMMTA), and will proudly wear the new title of the MYBA St. Maarten Charter Show. The exhibition show is scheduled to run December 4-8, 2007.

This announcement leaves many brokers with the difficult decision of which show they will attend if not both. The St. Maarten show is only in its third year and has received a great amount of criticism from the yachting community for having a weak turnout in the past. Last year the show exhibited less than 30 boats. Since MYBA has stepped in, the brokerage community is expecting MYBA to bring the St. Maarten event up to the caliber of its sister show in Genoa which has been a huge success.

The St. Maarten Show will overlap the Antigua Show although it has been set to run December 5-10, 2007 for some time. The Antigua show will be held at three venues this year, Nelson's Dockyard Marina in English Harbour, the Falmouth Harbour Marina and the Antigua Yacht Club Marina both located in Falmouth Harbour. Antigua has been the most highly anticipated charter show in the Caribbean in past years. It has always been timed perfectly before the official tourist season and the Falmouth marina makes room for only charter boats during the show. St. Maarten has been criticized for being small, but if Fort Lauderdale can continue to make space every year than St. Maarten will surely be able to make it work despite their late start this year. Time is money and brokers will need to decide which show will be worth their time. Antigua Yacht Charter show has been confirmed for some time now, locking in brokerages such as Camper Nicholsons in place. While they and other brokers are remaining loyal to their commitment to the Antigua show, the overlapping of the events is causing a major controversy. Large brokerage houses are able to attend both shows but the smaller brokerages can't afford the costs of participating or the time away from their offices. Since MYBA's announcement that the shows will be overlapping, attending both shows will pose a challenge to most brokers. Should the South Florida brokers shell out the investment to see the same boats they are probably going to come across in October at the Fort Lauderdale Show? With the winter Caribbean Yacht Charter and Tourism season beginning December 15 it is likely that MYBA may not have had a choice but to schedule the show for those dates. After December 15, many of the resorts and marinas begin charging high season rates. Either way, this year's Caribbean Yacht Charter Shows should be exciting. It will be interesting to see what MYBA has planned for St. Maarten in the future.