

Caribbean Currents

Winter and Spring is regatta season in the Caribbean!

Competitive sailors and those who love the Caribbean's rum-soaked regatta parties no longer must choose between two events on the same weekend. The Caribbean Sailing Association (CSA) headquartered in St. Maarten—headed up by St. Thomas' Olympic silver medalist and America's Cup skipper Peter Holmberg—has worked hard through its Calendar Committee to nearly eliminate overlaps, especially during the ultra-busy March and April months. "Two years ago there was no central authority regulating or coordinating regattas," Holmberg explains. "New events were being added, and some small events had grown large where their overlap caused problems."

This year's revamped calendar (caribbean-sailing.com) lists 19 major regattas from January through the end of April. "The CSA is working hard to grow the region into a prominent position in the international racing circuit," says Holmberg. "We hope sailors will come from around the world to enjoy our great sailing conditions and friendly island hospitality."



DEAN BARNES

The 2014 edition of the International Rolex Regatta is renamed the St. Thomas International Regatta.

Dates may no longer be a deterrent, however, choosing what fits a sailor's personality or landlubber's party preference can still be a challenge. Here is a sampling of suggestions:

Hard Core Racing: The St. Thomas International Regatta—formerly the International Rolex Regatta—is known for its top-flight race committee, challenging courses, and crews from the America's

Cup, Olympic and Volvo Ocean Race. Many cruisers will pack a picnic, navigate the courses and watch the competition.

Bareboater's Welcome: The St. Maarten Heineken Regatta, BVI Spring Regatta and Antigua Sailing Week are a few regattas with bareboat fleets of 30 yachts or more. Many teams—most of which come from Europe or the U.S.—rent their race yacht for two weeks and cruise the islands with family and friends either the week before or after the regatta.

Eye-Candy: The Antigua Classic Yacht Regatta welcomes 50 to 60 vintage schooners, yawls, and gaff-rigged yachts. The Day Three 'Parade of Classics' sees spectators line up along the waterfront in English Harbor to watch crews perform such spectacular feats as piping and fiddling on the bow-sprints and acrobatics in the rigging.

Island-Flavor: The native wooden Workboat Regatta at the Grenada Sailing Festival is one grand party on Grand Anse Beach. Food and music meet racing right off the beach.

North at the Bequia Easter Regatta, classes include everything from native-built double-enders to J/24s, plus competition ashore such as a sandcastle-building contest.

Family Style: Kids can compete in Optimists, Lasers and Sunfish, while their parents race in bigger boats in racing and cruising classes at the San Juan International Regatta. All action is centered in San Juan Bay and ashore at Club Nautico de San Juan. Spectating is spectacular from the waterfront in historic Old San Juan.

One Great Party: One regatta that really pulls in the headliners is the St. Maarten Heineken Regatta.

Past musical acts appearing live on Kim Sha Beach have included Wyclef Jean, The Black Eyed Peas and the Marley Brothers. This year's entertainment is still under wraps, but it's sure to be some of the hottest music on the charts. 🎵

BY CAROL BAREUTHER