

Where planes fly just above sand: Inside Caribbean's most thrilling beach

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Dhaka: For most travelers, a beach holiday means calm waves, warm sand, and the sound of the sea. However, on one Caribbean shoreline, the experience comes with a roar so loud it can shake your chest — and a sight so dramatic it feels unreal. At Maho Beach on the island of Saint Martin in the Caribbean (not to be confused with Bangladesh's St Martin's Island), commercial airplanes fly so low overhead that visitors instinctively duck.

Located just beside Princess Juliana International Airport, Maho Beach has become one of the most unusual tourist attractions in the world. The airport's runway begins only a narrow road away from the shoreline, leaving pilots with very little space to descend. As a result, aircraft pass directly over beachgoers' heads while preparing to land. During the busy tourist season, as many as 60 to 70 flights can arrive in a single day.

For first-time visitors, the experience can be overwhelming. The aircraft appear suddenly, growing larger by the second, until they dominate the sky. The engines thunder, the wind blasts across the sand, and for a brief moment, it feels as though the plane is heading straight toward you.

It can be frightening if you are not used to it, said locals. According to them, even after years on the site, the sight of a massive jet descending so close to the ground never fully loses its intensity. “You feel like it’s coming right at you,” reports cited one local who works at the airport saying.



Tourists gather at Maho Beach to photograph a low-flying aircraft as it prepares to land at Princess Juliana Int'l Airport

Yet what might seem dangerous or unsettling to some is exactly what

draws thousands of visitors every year. Aviation enthusiasts, photographers, and thrill-seekers travel from around the world just to witness the landings. Many time their beach visits by checking flight schedules, ensuring they do not miss the arrival of a large aircraft.

Interestingly, the thrill works both ways. An airport employee, as per reports, said, pilots often enjoy the spectacle just as much as the people on the ground. “They know people are watching,” he explained. “For many pilots, flying into Saint Martin is a special moment. They love looking down and seeing the beach full of people.”

Despite the excitement, safety warnings are clearly posted. Standing too close to the runway fence can be dangerous due to powerful jet blasts, and authorities regularly remind tourists to keep a safe distance. Still, the attraction continues to grow, fueled by social media videos and travel documentaries.

Aviation experts said, the airport operates safely despite its unusual layout, thanks to strict procedures and highly trained pilots. Still, the airport is often listed among the world’s most challenging places to land.

Maho Beach stands as a reminder that travel experiences are not always about relaxation. Sometimes, they are about witnessing something extraordinary — where modern engineering meets nature in a way that feels almost unreal. For those who dare to lie on the sand and look up, the sight of a massive jet roaring just meters overhead is an experience they are unlikely to forget.

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