

Club Orient Clothing Optional Resort Severely Damaged by Hurricane Irma

Written by Felicity Jones

Monday, 11 September 2017 18:31 -

Though many parts of Florida were bracing for the worst from Hurricane Irma this weekend, the storm seems to have caused the most damage to a number of Caribbean islands last week. This includes the island of St. Martin, where at least nine people died and Dutch officials said 70% of homes were damaged or destroyed.



(Jonathan Falwell / Twitter)

St. Martin is also home to a premier clothing-optional vacation resort, Club Orient. The large resort sustained severe damage to its property, facilities and 130+ rooms. A number of buildings were flattened, and Orient Beach (a clothing-optional beach accessible to the public) is gone.

One of the resort's unit owners sent out this report:

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“Dear Shareholders,

It's ugly!

Steve and Bert just returned to GCBC from a visit to Club Orient.

Their findings include the following:

All wood units are gone. Presumably the slabs are left, but the buildings are gone.

Gatehouse is gone. In its place is a huge pile of debris that landed there from the winds.

Pedro concrete wall ... gone

Concrete buildings survived. Roofs gone or damaged.

Except for the waterfront chalets 46-52 ... They are gone. No sign of where they went.

The new beach goes from the water's edge back to where the studios used to be. It's about 200 feet.

Hurricane shutters on units left are gone as well as the contents of all the houses ... presumably sucked out by the wind ... no sign of where the furniture, cabinets, appliances, etc., went.

The units' contents have been stripped by the hurricane.

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The villa is standing ... no further detail.

Papagayo is standing but may not be sound structurally. All the contents are gone.

The utility plant is covered with debris so Bert and Steve could not get a close look at the generators, switch panel, etc. It looks like there was about 5' of water in that area, which means salvaging the electric plant is in doubt.

The reception building is still standing. The front desk and other furnishings are gone.

The tennis courts are gone.

Steve and Bert drove through Orient Village where most of the buildings are standing but the contents of the first floors that they could see into are gone.

Looters beat Steve and Bert to the resort. They were clearing out the Boutique. We let them take the contents because presumably they need the stuff worse than we do!

I will continue to keep you updated as new information comes in.

Steve took about 100 pictures but has no way to transmit them until Internet service is restored.

According to Frédéric Lecomte, our Paris attorney, the French media are reporting that 95% of the island is destroyed.

We have a huge job in front of us. We will need a lot of out-of-the-box thinking to reinvent Club Orient ... better than ever."

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The resort's Managing Director Steve Payne and his wife were one of the many residents trapped on the island when the storm hit. He and his wife were sheltered in a hotel where the 2nd story collapsed. The two then took refuge in a bathroom. When everything had calmed down, they found they were barricaded inside by fallen debris but said they were able to push their way out with the shower curtain rod.

In an interview with a CBS network on Thursday, Steve describes their situation and also says he worries about the 132 people employed by the resort who will no longer have a job. You can hear an interview with Steve here: <http://www.kesq.com/news/former-palm-springs-resort-owner-describes-hurricane-irmas-devastation-in-st-martin/617720771>

Update: A reader pointed us to some photos of Club Orient after the hurricane:



Club Orient Resort – damage to beach, Papagayo restaurant and other buildings

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View of Papagayo restaurant in the back and surrounding property

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Club Orient Resort – damage to chalet 76

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Club Orient Resort – damage to chalet 86

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