

## St. Martin Island: Tourism or Biodiversity?

**Level:** Intermediate

**Genre:** Non-fiction (English for Specific Purposes: Environmental studies/ Tourism)

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Saint Martin\* **Island** is an **excellent tourist attraction** in Bangladesh. The island is 7.3 **kilometers** long and is known locally as Narikel Jinjira (Coconut Island). People who go to Cox's Bazar love to visit this island and stay at night. They can enjoy the sun, sea, and **sand** in one place and they can walk on the **beach**, sit in the sun and eat fresh fish caught from the sea. At night they can see the moon and enjoy the waves on the sea.



This island has many different kinds of sea life, from plants to fish and birds, and there are many **coconut** trees there. The island is a good place for many types of colourful fish, and many **turtles** go there to lay their eggs. Although St.\* Martin Island is famous for its **coral**, **researchers** recently found that the **biodiversity** of this island is reducing **alarmingly**. One study mentioned that 67 **percent** of corals are now dead.

This has happened because there are too many **tourists**. **During** the tourist season, around 3000 people visit the island every day, and this number of people is beyond the ability of the island to **handle**. The boats that carry tourists leave oil and **rubbish** such as **plastic** in the water. Besides this, the **hotels** on the island send their **waste** into the sea. As a result, the water quality has become poor.

Moreover, the tourists leave plastic **bags** and **bottles** which **harm** the coral. The tourists also sometimes **collect** coral and **shells** as a way to remember their **holidays**, and their activities are quietly harming the natural life on and around the island. As a result, there are often dead **turtles**

found on the island. To save the island, the **government** of Bangladesh has declared a protected **area around the island**. This declaration will help to reduce the movement of ships and stop boats leaving waste and destroying the coral.



On March 1, 2021, the government stopped letting tourists stay for the night on the island. However, this decision was later **reversed** for two reasons. Firstly, the local people get their income from the tourists, so they may become unemployed if the tourists stop visiting. Secondly, many businessmen have put **a lot of** money into building the **hotels** and **guest** houses on the island. If the tourists are not allowed to stay at night, these people will suffer from the loss of their **income**.

St. Martin Island is a beautiful place, but like many other lovely tourist spots it is facing many **challenges**.



\*The word 'Saint' is often written in a shorter form as "St."

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## Learning Activities

### Vocabulary

#### 1. Words from the second 1000 High Frequency General Service wordlist.

These words occur often in English, so learn these first.

a lot of	government	rubbish
attraction	guest	sand
bags	handle	shells
bottles	harm/harming	tourist
collect	holidays	waste
during	hotels	
excellent	island	

**2. Words from the Academic Word List.** These words are commonly used in academic settings. For example, it is important to learn these if you plan to study at university.

area  
challenges

income  
percent

researchers  
reversed

**3. Off list words.** While these words are useful to know, they are not so common in everyday English. Only learn these words if you already know all the words in lists one and two above.

alarmingly  
bazar  
beach

biodiversity  
coconut  
coral

kilometers  
plastic  
turtles

### Comprehension Questions

- 1. Remembering:** Answer these questions without looking back at the reading text.
  - a) What percent of corals are now dead?
  - b) During the tourist season, how many visitors go to St. Martin Island each day?
  - c) What has the government of Bangladesh done to try to help reduce the problems facing St. Martin Island?

- 2. Understanding:**

What do the words “*reversed the decision*” mean? What was the result of the government’s decision to reverse its plans?

- 3. Inferring:** If the same number of tourists keep going to St. Martin Island, what do you think will happen? Why do you think the writer decided to tell us about the problems of St. Martin Island?

### Critical Thinking Questions

- 1. Applying:** Have you ever been to St. Martin Island? If so, describe your trip there. If you have not been, would you like to go there? Why/Why not?
- 2. Applying:** Give an example of a time when you have ‘*reversed a decision*’ that you have made. Why did you do that? Would you make the same choice again today? Why/Why not?

3. **Analyzing:** Identify the main problems facing St. Martin Island. Put them into the following categories...

- a) Environmental problems
- b) Social problems (problems that affect the way that people live their daily lives)
- c) Financial problems
- d) Other. (Can you think of any other possible problems that are not described in the reading?)

Explain your answers in English.

4. **Evaluating:** Discuss the questions below and give reasons for your answers.

- a) Do you think St. Martin Island should be closed **completely** to tourists?  
Why/Why not?
- b) Should **the government** control the number of tourists and night stays on St Martin Island, or should this be a decision made by local people who live on the island? Give reasons for your answer.
- c) Do you think people who do **not** live on the island should be allowed to build more hotels and guest houses there? Why/Why not?
- d) What do you think about the fact that tourists pick up shells and take pieces of coral from the island? In your view, is it OK (in general) for tourists to take things away (like plants, shells, rocks etc.) from the places they visit? Why/Why not?

5. **Creating:**

a) Work in a small group (of three or four people). Together, plan and make a poster advertising a holiday on St. Martin Island. Make sure your poster has information about these things...

- Natural life on the island that tourists can see
- Activities tourists can do
- How tourists can care for the plants, animals and ocean of St. Martin Island during their holiday
- Attractive pictures, headings and writing
- A URL link to some websites showing where your information and pictures came from.

Prepare to present your poster to another pair or group. Practise what you are going to say first. Make sure everyone in your group explains a different part of your poster.

b) Imagine you are a tour guide on St. Martin Island. Create a talk that explains the wonderful things about the island, but also the problems. Make written notes. (Do not write out *everything* you plan to say. Just write enough to help you remember each idea.) Practice your talk until you can say it with confidence, then present it to a partner.