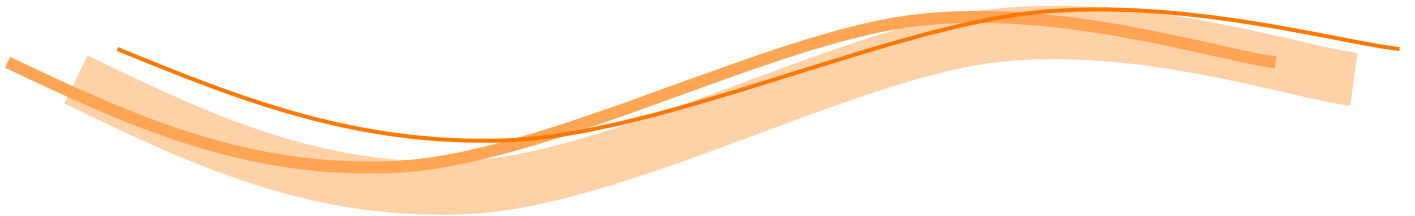




ARUBA





Aruba	<p>Aruba – a playground in the sun!</p> <p>Aruba has over 11 kms of sparkling, sun-splashed beaches - fringed by crystal-clear azure waters. In heart of the southern Caribbean, perfectly located outside the fringes of the hurricane belt, Aruba enjoys predictable, year-round, near-perfect weather. The average temperature is 28 degrees. So anytime is perfect for a tropical getaway, wedding or honeymoon.</p> <p>Aruba is a unique blend of Caribbean friendliness, European charm and Latin flavor – with the broadest smiles in the Caribbean. Arubans love visitors and are proud to show off their country. It enjoys the highest repeat visitor rate of any Caribbean destination at nearly 60%, as loyal visitors return year after year – and that speaks volumes about the quality of Aruba as a destination.</p> <p>Aruba’s infrastructure is unsurpassed in the Caribbean – you can even drink the tap water. The high standards of Aruba’s resorts and restaurants make for a “Miami-style” vacation coupled with tropical weather and island hospitality. And its sophistication is mirrored in the vast array of things to do for the visitor – Aruba is a playground in the sun with activities galore for everyone.</p> <p>Children will love the wide beaches with white sugary sand and warm, gentle waves. The climate is particularly benign with low humidity and cooling trade winds. Often the breezes even blow away the pesky mosquitos! The excellence of most resorts also extends to their Kids Clubs, which are well managed and keep the youngsters busy and happy all day long.</p> <p>Kids will also love the Butterfly Farm, teeming with colourful butterflies from around the world – it also provides fun, educational programs on the life cycle of butterflies and conservation. The Donkey Sanctuary is also a perennial favourite, with the chance to interact with the enchanting, floppy-eared inmates.</p> <p>Of course there is endless fun for Water Babies - including exploring coral reefs and shipwrecks on the Atlantis submarine. Travel 130 feet below the Caribbean in a real submarine for an unforgettable experience.</p> <p>Glass bottom boat rides are another comfortable way to view beautiful underwater scenery and you can snorkel off any of the beaches on the South and West coast. De Palm Island is an adventure for all ages –</p>
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buy an all-inclusive half or full day pass including food and beverage. There is a full water park, snorkeling, and activities like the Sea Trek Underwater Helmet Walk and Snuba – both of which are “easy” ways to explore underwater.

Adrenalin junkies can experience “JetLev” - a water propelled jetpack ride over the ocean. And Aruba’s trade winds make it perfect for wind surfing and kite surfing. But there is almost no end to the ways you can get your pulse racing – with sky diving, parasailing, jet skis and more!

For **Culture Vultures** the weekly Bon Bini festival has folkloric music and dance and is the perfect introduction to the warmth and hospitality of Aruba’s people. It takes place in the outdoor courtyard of Fort Zoutman, Aruba’s oldest building, which is downtown in the capital city of Oranjestad. Enjoy the flavor of the island, its history people, music and cuisine. The great thing about Bon Bini is that it takes place every week – so if you miss the Aruba Carnival (Jan – March) you can still get a taste of the excitement and party atmosphere.

History buffs will enjoy the Archeological Museum, which houses Indian artifacts dating back to the pre-ceramic period of 2500 BC. You can also explore Aruba’s oldest industry at the Aruba Aloe Museum and Store. The beautiful Aloe lotions provide a great opportunity to mix history with Aruba’s other top activity – shopping. And one of Aruba’s most precious landmarks is the Chapel at Alto Vista - the Island’s first Catholic Church. Built in 1750 and renovated in 1953 the site also offers dramatic views at sunrise and sunset.

If you want to **explore nature** – head for Arikok National Park. An area consisting of nearly 20 % of the island of Aruba, the park is home to rare and indigenous flora and fauna such as the Aruban burrowing owl, Aruban rattlesnake, Aruban whiptail lizard, and Aruban parakeet. Caves are also found in the park - The Fontein Cave is the most popular of the caves as it has mysterious drawings on the ceiling, made long ago by Arawak Indians.

There are plenty of opportunities for **sports** on Aruba. Aruba boasts an 18 hole championship golf course (Tiera de Sol) and a 9 hole course (The links at Divi). There is also horseback riding, tennis, cycling and hiking to name a few.

And as the sun goes down, whether you have had an action packed day or whether you have slept on the beach – exciting **casinos** are found in nearly every hotel in the Palm Beach area, plus there is a stand-alone

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	<p>casino (the Alhambra) and 2 casinos in downtown Oranjestad.</p> <p>200 square kilometers of paradise 52 weeks of sunshine 11 kilometers of pristine beaches One happy island!</p> <p>Check out my Travel Blog from my trip to the island in 2013 at: http://www.chrisrobinsontravelshow.ca/Blog/tabid/400/EntryId/79/Aruba.aspx</p> <p>And the Travel Show Pinterest board on Aruba at: http://www.pinterest.com/TravelShow/aruba</p> <p>Aruba is also featured in Top Ten Caribbean Gems and Top Ten Dive Destinations in my Chris' Top Ten series of articles: http://www.chrisrobinsontravelshow.ca/Planning/ChrisTop10Lists/ChrisTop10CaribbeanJewels.aspx http://www.chrisrobinsontravelshow.ca/Planning/ChrisTop10Lists/ChrisTop10DiveDestinations.aspx</p>
<p>Aruba's Happiness Builder</p>	<p>The Aruba website has a new and very unique feature: the Happiness Builder.</p> <p>You can build your own video shortcut piece right on the website to experience this one happy island.</p> <p>1 EXPLORE Click around and explore the video clip collection of all the amazing things you'll find on Aruba.</p> <p>2 ADD Just pick six of your favorite clips, and create your very own Shortcut to Happiness video.</p> <p>3 SHARE When you're done, email your video to your family or friends. And start planning your trip!</p> <p>Just click here to create your own personalized Happiness Builder: http://arubashortcuts.com/</p>
<p>Location</p>	<p>Aruba is located in the heart of the southern Caribbean, just 20 kilometers off the coast of Venezuela. It is 32 kilometers long and 10 kilometers across, at its widest point, with an area of approximately 184 square kilometers.</p>
<p>Geography</p>	<p>Aruba is a generally flat, river-less island in the Leeward Antilles island arc of the Lesser Antilles. Aruba is renowned for its white, sandy beaches on the western and southern coasts of the island, relatively sheltered from fierce ocean currents. The northern and eastern coasts, lacking this protection, are considerably more battered by the sea and have been left largely untouched by humans. The interior of the island features some rolling hills, two of which are called Hooiberg at 165</p>

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	meters and Mount Jamanota, the highest on the island at 188 metres above sea level.
Name	There are two possibilities: either from “shell island”: ora oubao.... or “gold was found here” : ora uba.
Population	There are approximately 120,000 Arubans on the island and they are “more gracious about the invasion of tourists than any other Caribbean island”
Language	The cultural mixture has given rise to a linguistic mixture known as Papiamento , the predominant language on Aruba. The two official languages are the Dutch language and Papiamento. Papiamento is a language that has been evolving through the centuries and absorbed many words from other languages like Spanish, Dutch, English, African dialects, and Portuguese. However, like many islands in the region, Spanish is also often spoken. English has historical connections (with the British Empire) and is known by many; English usage has also grown due to tourism “Mi dushi” is Papiamento for “my sweetheart” “Bonbini” means welcome. And here, you truly are.
Currency	Aruba Florin: 1.36 Aruba Guilders to \$CDN (as at Oct 2016). The US \$ is also widely accepted and is recommended.
Tipping	Most, but not all, restaurants charge 10% to 15% for service, but not all of this goes to the service staff. Some restaurants keep a percentage for overhead, while the rest is distributed among all restaurant personnel, so in general, you are expected to leave a little cash on the table, too. If no charge is included in your tab, leave 15% to 20%. Taxi drivers expect 15%, and porters should get about \$2 per bag. Some of the hotel service charge should trickle down to the chambermaids, but if you're staying in a nice place, leave \$2 per day for the housekeeper anyway. For spa treatments and such, see if a service charge is included. If it's not, leave 15%.
Government	As a Constituent Country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Aruba's politics take place within a framework of a 21-member Parliament and an eight-member Cabinet. The governor of Aruba is appointed for a six-year term by the monarch, and the prime minister and deputy prime minister are elected by the Staten for four-year terms. The Staten is made up of 21 members elected by direct, popular vote to serve a four-year term. Together, the State of the Netherlands, the State of the Netherlands Antilles, and the State of Aruba form a Commonwealth. As they share the same Dutch citizenship, these three countries still also share the Dutch passport as the Kingdom of the Netherlands passport
Documentation	Canadians need a Passport, but no visa is required.
Time zone	Aruba is on Atlantic Standard time year-round. For most of the year, the

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	island is 1 hour ahead of Eastern Standard time
Health	<p>You can relax about water. Aruba's tap water is completely safe to drink and tastes fine.</p> <p>Aruba's sun is very powerful. Wear sunglasses and a hat (with a strap - remember the wind) and use high SPF sunscreen liberally. Limit your time on the beach the first day or two. If you get burned, stay out of the sun until you recover.</p> <p>The wind is usually strong enough to blow mosquitoes away, but the pests can sometimes be a nuisance anyway. Malaria's not a concern, but bring insect repellent for your own comfort.</p>
Safety tips	Aruba enjoys one of the highest standards of living in the Caribbean region and the lowest crime rate; low poverty and unemployment rates are also positives for Aruba. The disappearance of an Alabama teenager, Natalee Holloway, in the spring of 2005 was an anomaly.

CLIMATE	
General climate	<p>The even temperatures of Aruba's pleasantly tropical marine climate attract tourists to the island all year round. Temperature varies little from 28 °C, moderated by constant trade winds from the Atlantic Ocean. Yearly precipitation barely reaches 500 mm, most of it falling in late autumn.</p> <p>Most tourist hotels are located on the leeward side of the island, providing better weather and enjoyment of beaches and ocean.</p>
Today's weather	28 degrees Centigrade and sunny (29 th October 2016)
Best time to visit	A year round destination; Aruba lies outside of the hurricane belt

GETTING THERE	<p>Getting to Aruba is easy! A number of Canadian airlines and tour operators offer direct flights from Canada to Aruba as well as package vacations. Here is the current list for winter 2016/2017:</p> <p>Air Canada from Toronto SAT (November 5, 2016 – March 25, 2017) and WED, SAT, SUN (December 15, 2016 – March 25, 2017)</p> <p>WestJet from Toronto SAT (October 23, 2016 – November 5, 2016) TUE, SAT (November 12, 2016 – December 17, 2016) TUE, THU, SAT (December 20, 2016 – April 29, 2017)</p> <p>Sunwing Airlines Toronto MON (October 31, 2016 – November 18, 2016) MON, SAT (November 19, 2016 – December 17, 2016) MON, SAT, SUN (December 18, 2016 – March 25, 2017)</p>
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	<p>Sunwing Airlines from Montreal MON (December 19, 2016 - March 13, 2017)</p>
Flying time	Five hours 15 minutes direct from Toronto or Montreal
Cities	<p>Oranjestad is Aruba's only town of any size. If you want an "urban" environment with a variety of restaurants, nightclubs, and casinos, this is the place for you. The whole island has fewer than 90,000 residents, but most seem to live or work around the capital. Its waterfront bustles with cruise ships, yachts, fishing boats, and cargo carriers. Fueled by the boutiques, restaurants, bars, and casinos radiating from the docks, vehicular and pedestrian traffic in town is heavy much of the day and night. Contributing to the congestion, Arubans cruise the main boulevard to see and be seen, giving the strip an American Graffiti flavour. Much of the architecture combines Dutch gables and baroque ornamentation with Caribbean colours like pistachio, ochre, pink, and aqua. The result is a sun-drenched gingerbread confection with a touch of theme-park squeaky cleanliness.</p>
Distances	Aruba is a tiny island, so no place is very far from another. Only 32km long and 10km across at its widest point, it's slightly larger than Washington, D.C.
Car Rental	Rent a car or jeep, take your trusty guidebook along, and see the real Aruba. You can pass through teeny hamlets (don't blink), discover a new beach, stop for a roadside snack, and rove the aisles of a Chinese supermarket that carries everything from aloe leaves to Dutch chocolate. Be forewarned, though: roaming gangs of goats yield to no one. Because directional signs are practically nonexistent, expect to get lost. No sweat. This is one small island, and the divi divi trees always point west.
Boats	<p>Catamaran Cruises – choose from a variety of offerings – morning snorkel adventure, luncheon snorkel sail, afternoon snorkel sail, dinner sail, sunset sail – offered through DePalm Tours, Red Sail Sports, Pelican Tours and more see www.aruba.com</p> <p>Glass Bottom Boat /Semi submarine – great for all ages. Enjoy the comfort of the ocean breeze along with beautiful underwater scenery. Available through DePalm Tours www.depalmtours.com</p> <p>Atlantis Submarine – travel to depths of 130 feet below the Caribbean in a real submarine to view the remains of two shipwrecks, coral reefs and colorful sea life. www.depalmtours.com</p>
Buses	Aruba has an excellent public bus system, with regular, reliable service. Buses run roughly every half-hour from 6am to 6pm and every hour from 6pm to midnight, Monday through Saturday. On Sunday and holidays, service is less frequent: every hour between 6am and 6pm, every 2 hours between 6pm and midnight. Same-day round-trip fare between the beach hotels and Oranjestad is \$2; a one-way ride is \$1.10, or 2 florins. It's best to have exact change. Schedules are

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	<p>available at the Arubus office at the central terminal on Zoutmanstraat in Oranjestad, but your hotel's reception desk will know when buses pass by. You'll seldom wait more than 20 minutes for the next coach or mini-bus. The trip into town takes 10 to 20 minutes. There's a stop in front of most hotels.</p>
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<p>ACCOMMODATION TYPES</p>	<p>There is a full range of accommodations on the island from high rise, glitzy resorts to small B & B's and condos. The standards tend to be better than elsewhere in the Caribbean. In addition, there are many private villas available. Villas range from high end costing several thousand per week through to smaller basic villas for as low as several hundred dollars.</p>
<p>Featured Resort - Occidental Grand Aruba Resort</p>	<p>Occidental Resorts are now part of the Barcelo family – and that means a marriage of the very best of these two well respected hotel brands. And in Aruba the Occidental Grand Aruba and the Royal Club Grand Aruba Resort are also a marriage of a kind – because the Royal Club Grand Aruba Resort is a mini resort and a boutique hotel offering exclusive, luxurious services within the Occidental Grand Aruba. These are both great choices for your Aruba vacation.</p> <p>http://www.barcelo.com/BarceloHotels/en_US/hotels/aruba/palm-beach/hotel-occidental-grand-aruba-resort/general-description.aspx</p> <p>Occidental Grand Aruba Resort This hotel is exclusive to Air Canada Vacations and received a certificate of Excellence from Trip Advisor in 2013. The 368 room property is located is close to the capital city of Oranjestad and it is situated on Palm Beach, one of the most beautiful beaches in Aruba. Thanks to its stunning location you will experience beautiful sunrise and sunsets with strikingly intense colors.</p> <p>Accomodation includes Deluxe rooms that are available with a pool view, garden view or ocean view. Bright and pleasant, these rooms feature two queen beds or a king bed. All Deluxe rooms have a balcony or a terrace. Family rooms (which are two connecting Deluxe rooms that accommodate 6 people) are perfect for larger families and multi-generational vacations.</p> <p>Deluxe Lanai Pool View or Ocean View rooms are more spacious and also have a large outdoor terrace.</p> <p>Deluxe Jacuzzi Ocean Front rooms are for guests looking for more space and privacy. These larger, well located rooms feature a jacuzzi bathtub where you can relax while contemplating the endless sea.</p>

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Grand Romance Deluxe Ocean View rooms offer guests special services and romantic amenities to make their stay simply unforgettable. Grand Romance rooms feature all the comforts and amenities of the Deluxe Ocean View room and include a King Size or two Double beds. But there is more! Upgraded amenities include: Bottle of Sparkling Wine, Chocolate covered Strawberries, Continental Breakfast in Bed, Nightly turndown service, Romantic Dinner on the Beach, One 30 minute couples massage, 10% discount at the Massage Center, Surprise gift and Minibar (stoked every other day).

But if you are looking for Romance at the Occidental Grand Aruba you don't just have to stay in a Grand Romance Deluxe Ocean View room. Occidental Grand Aruba has designed an exclusive package for the perfect romantic experience that includes accommodation in a pool, garden or ocean view Deluxe room plus:

Luxury car ride at sunset around the Palm Beach area
A bottle of French champagne chilled on ice ready to be served
A professional picture of the special couple will be taken
Rose petals in the room along with a beautiful bouquet of flowers
Breakfast for two in the morning
There is nothing more romantic than a Couples massage – and the Spa Services at the resort also include body treatments, advanced therapies, rejuvenating treatments, mud and mineral wraps.

The cuisine at the Occidental Grand Aruba is excellent - there is a wide choice of international dishes, and a main buffet area that will serve breakfast, lunch and dinner. There are also many restaurants and bars to choose from:

The Palm – main buffet
L'Olio- Italian with a wide selection of wines
El Olvido – Tex Mex with a wine and Tequila selection
Zen Restaurant – exotic and authentic a la carte Pan-Asian cuisine-
show cooking at the teppanyaki tables and extensive sushi bar
Desire – Carribean fusion out door restaurant on the beach front
Beach Club Restaurant – grilled specialties from 12-5pm
Bikini Bar – casual Beach Bar
Splash Bar – no need to get out of the pool for cocktails
Lobby Bar – great place to meet before dinner or a night cap
Desire Lounge – great view of the beach
Sound Lounge - dance and sing night club
You will never run out of things to do as there are many activities taking place in the pool and beach areas. Your days will fill up as you chose

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	<p>from:</p> <p>Tennis courts, beach volleyball, water volleyball darts and bocce ball Water aerobics classes Scuba and Snuba classes in the pool area Snorkel equipment Kayaking</p> <p>At Occidental all-inclusive resorts there are plenty of fun and entertaining activities for the little ones in your family as well. While you relax on the beautiful Palm Beach your kids can enjoy supervised activities at the Kids Club. Aimed at children ages 4 – 12 years the Kids Club features a daily programs of varied and supervised activities so that they can have the time of their life while you can relax on the beach or at the spa.</p> <p>In the evening there is entertainment in the Grand Ballroom that the whole family will enjoy. You will experience shows such as La Reverie, Latin explosion and Grease, as well as live music in the in the Lobby bar. Plus there is a weekly Aruban night celebration with BBQ and live entertainment on the beach and fun for all. And with a casino and DJ sessions on the dance floor, you will lose all notion of time!</p> <p>Royal Club Grand Aruba Resort This mini resort is part of the Occidental Grand Aruba hotel but represents a Royal Club upgrade. It gives you a boutique hotel within a hotel with approximately 35 rooms plus 8 suites, located on the top floors of the north tower.</p> <p>The luxurious services provide a premium all-inclusive experience, including wi-fi access and private check-in/check-out Lounge. The Royal Club Grand Aruba also offers an exclusive restaurant with top-notch cuisine and a lounge area to enjoy premium drinks and a gorgeous view of the hotel. Plus you enjoy your personal concierge services for dinner arrangements, spa appointments and booking tours – so you enjoy the ultimate, pampered vacation.</p>
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LIFESTYLES	The American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA) voted Aruba number one most popular Caribbean destination and it has the highest repeat visitation of any Caribbean destination.
Kids	Family holidays are huge on Aruba and for good reason. It is a safe destination in the sun with great beaches and tons of children’s activities to keep the youngsters happy, both at the resorts and around the island. Many of the resorts have excellent Kids Clubs, but here’s

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	<p>some non-beach based ideas:</p> <p>The Donkey Sanctuary (www.arubandonkey.org), half a mile from the Ayo Rock Formation, is where dozens of these feral yet gentle animals are corralled, fed, and cared for. The staff will eagerly share their knowledge with you about the history and ecology of Aruba's donkeys, many of which still roam the countryside. A small refreshment stand serves drinks and snacks.</p> <p>Another opportunity for animal encounters can be found at the Ostrich Farm, on the road between the Natural Bridge and the Bushiribana Gold Mine Ruins. Here you can tour the grounds and meet the resident ostriches. Visitors can feed a hungry harem of females; compare and contrast the ostriches with their close kin, emus; test the incredible strength of an egg at the hatchery; then head back to the pavilion to browse the impressive gift shop. There has been a recent fire here, so check to make sure that it has reopened.</p> <p>A visit to Aruba's Butterfly Farm is also an unforgettable encounter with nature in all its beauty and diversity and is very highly recommended personally. Step into a tropical garden teeming with butterflies from around the globe and prepare to meet some of the world's most colorful and unusual creatures. Observe the life cycle of these fascinating animals from egg to caterpillar to chrysalis to butterfly.</p> <p>Safari: Take the kids to the north shore on a 'safari' and look for wildlife such as wild donkeys, rabbits, goats, iguanas and all sorts of lizards. Don't forget to look up for pelicans and parrots of all colors. If you get lost, just follow the divi divi trees, which point towards the area of the island where most hotels are. Other activities you may want to check out for older children are horseback riding and miniature golf.</p>
<p>Teens</p>	<p>Explore the Bushiribana Ruins. According to local legend, in 1824 a 12-year-old boy came across gold in one of the dry creek beds on Aruba's north coast. Naturally, the discovery set off a gold frenzy. For 30 years, Arubans were allowed to collect the precious metal, provided they sold it at a set price. In 1854, a gold-mining concession was granted to the Aruba Island Goldmining Company, which built this smelter on the north coast in 1872. Although the facility operated for only 10 years, its hulking ruins still dominate the area. Climb the multi-tiered interior for impressive sea views.</p> <p>Cave exploring: In the deep recesses of rock along the island's windward coast, shallow cave formations intrigue visitors, who, in seeking to penetrate its damp chambers, are rewarded with mysterious</p>

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	<p>views of rock drawings, the sudden, flapping wings of a nervous bat and nature's artwork of stalagmites and stalactites.</p> <p>The Guadirikiri Cave is famous for its two chambers, illuminated by the sunlight streaming through holes in the roof of the cave. The cave extends for about 100 feet. In the darker portions of the cave nest hundreds of harmless bats.</p> <p>The Fontein Cave is the most popular of the caves as it is the only one that has the drawings of Arawak Indians on the ceilings, providing a real sense of island history to this cave.</p> <p>The Huliba Cave is also known as the Tunnel of Love because of the heart shaped opening at its entrance. You will need flashlights to explore the 300-foot-long passageway.</p>
<p>Romance</p>	<p>Romance rules on Aruba – a magical paradise blessed with great stretches of undisturbed beach shaded by tall, swaying palms and kissed by beams of moonlight; secluded coves off the beaten path with magnificent surreal seascapes; starry night skies that take one’s breath away. What better place to kindle love, pop the question, enjoy a honeymoon, celebrate an anniversary, even get married!</p> <p>From one end of the island to the other and throughout its interior, natural wonders such as the mysterious rock formations at Casibari and Ayo, the Natural Pool, the Tunnel of Love, the scenic panorama at the California Lighthouse, alabaster sand dunes and picture perfect Baby Beach each has its own special romantic allure. Couples can discover their own favorite spots to enjoy each other’s company.</p> <p>No need for elaborate planning; just rent some wheels and explore, map in hand, a picnic lunch packed just for two. Catering to those in love, an Aruba vacation also offers a multitude of activities and indulgences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A sunset sail on a luxury catamaran, a sunset cocktail at a beach bar (De Palm Tours, Pelican Tours, Red Sail Sports) - A moonlight dinner for two, right on the beach (Hyatt, Westin, Marriott, Divi Phoenix, Bucuti, Manchebo, The Old Man and the Sea, Pincho’s, Marandi, Flying Fishbone) - Special nights out including sizzling Latin dancing, casino excitement, Las Vegas revues, late night lounges, piano and martini bars for a romantic nightcap, pub crawls, party boats (clubs, shows, resorts, Tattoo and Kukoo Kunuku) - Couples treatments, massages and pampering at resort spas (Intermezzo, Mandara Spa, Larimar Spa, Spa del Sol) - Room service and private time at world-class resorts - Sports for two: Diving, snorkeling, windsurfing, kitesurfing, kayaking, hiking, horseback riding; even take a helicopter ride - together! (De Palm Tours, Pelican Tours, Red Sail Sports) - Special island-wide One Cool Honeymoon Program

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	<p>My vote for the most romantic spot on the island: the California Lighthouse sits on a hilltop perch at Aruba's northernmost tip, but its active days are over. Part of the adjacent restaurant once served as the lighthouse keeper's home. The surrounding area features some of the island's most spectacular scenery - gentle sand dunes, rocky coral shoreline, and turbulent waves. The picturesque structure gets its name from the California, a passenger ship that sank off the nearby coast before the lighthouse was completed in 1916. Watch the sun set from here and you will believe that you can see to the world's end...</p>
<p>Honeymoons & Weddings</p>	<p>Honeymooning couples have always received the red carpet treatment in Aruba. And if you are looking to get married in Aruba you'll find a modern infrastructure with lots of support for your big day. Aruba has a destination Celebration Registry - so your wedding guests can forget the toaster and present you with a sunset sail while in Aruba instead! The Celebration Registry also covers all those other special events from Milestone Birthdays to Anniversaries, Baby Moons to Family Reunions - and more!</p> <p>If you are celebrating a special anniversary, or just looking for special time together, Aruba offers the real deal when it comes to vacations for lovers and your resort will pamper you. Treat your honey to a sunset sail on a luxury catamaran - or a sunset cocktail at a beach bar. Who could resist a moonlight dinner for two, right on the beach? Reconnect and luxuriate in couples treatments and massages at a relaxing spa. Hike hand in hand or go horseback riding together. Or paint the town red and go Latin dancing, try your luck at the casino or chill in a late night piano or martini bar...</p>
<p>Zoomers</p>	<p>Long beaches for gentle sunset – or sunrise – strolls; good food; and some of the best resorts in the Caribbean...all make Aruba a great choice for older vacationers.</p> <p>There is also a recent move towards wellness vacations on Aruba. Here are some of the ways we can reconnect with our minds and bodies when we come to Aruba...</p> <p>Let's start with Water Wellness - The sea can be so healing, especially when combined with a fun, get-your-body-moving activity. Featuring flat seas and favorable wind conditions on the leeward side of the island, Aruba is one of the best places in the world to windsurf. Kitesurfing has become quite popular in more recent years, especially among thrill-seekers.</p> <p>Those looking for a more relaxed way of playing in the water can choose from other more relaxing water activities like standup paddle boarding, canoeing, kayaking, and snorkeling.</p>

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Dance can play a part too...

Why not dance yourself to wellness? Not only is dancing excellent exercise, but it's the perfect way to channel the inner child within who just wants to let loose and be free! On Aruba, you can get your dance on at one of the island's sizzling night clubs.

Alternatively, feel free to grab a partner and take a salsa lesson from one of the island's professional salsa dancers. And don't worry—even if you have two left feet, you're still certainly going to have fun!

Nature also plays a part in the scheme

Absolutely! Connecting with nature, Aruba's nature is made up of desert terrain filled with cactuses, huge stacked-up boulders, wild goat herds, and other unexpected curiosities—and perhaps the best way to explore it all is by foot.

One of the best places on the island to do some nature hiking is within Arikok National Park. This sprawling nature preserve covering almost 20% of the island, is crisscrossed by a number of walking paths. While you're in the park, take the time to explore several caves, a freshwater spring, several beautiful beaches, and the famous Natural Pool. This is a true relaxing wellness experience.

This is '**The Island of Aloes**', so aloe is part of the mix too...

It's no surprise that Aruba has earned this nickname as Aloe vera grows wild all over the place here. Unless you've been living in a cave, you probably know that Aloe vera has an incredible number of health benefits.

Aruba Aloe, one of the oldest aloe companies in the world, harnesses the wellness benefits of Aruban-grown Aloe vera by blending it with other fine ingredients to create world-renowned health and beauty products.

Make sure to visit Aruba Aloe's Factory and Museum to see how the company creates wellness in a bottle on a daily basis, and pop into one of Aruba Aloe's 16 retail stores to sample the company's wide variety of awesome products.

And of course those glorious **beaches** are a part of their wellness program...

Aruba's beaches are stunningly beautiful. Digging your toes into the sugar-white sand and surrounded by palm trees, soaking up the Caribbean sun, and enjoying the refreshing trade winds—now this is truly wellness!

And don't forget—you're not limited to the stretches of beach found in the resort areas. Venturing south to Mangel Halto you can feel free to luxuriate in the peace among the tangle of mangrove trees, or journey a

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	<p>bit further to Baby Beach to visit one of the most beautiful seascapes on the entire island.</p> <p>To really get away from it all, venture to the island's north coast and settle into one of the many secluded little coves. Just make sure to take plenty of water, and don't forget to pack some Aruba Aloe sunscreen, made right here on the island!</p> <p>Time at the spa...</p> <p>Ahhhhh...now we're talking! Spas offer the ultimate wellness experience, and Aruba's spas are on par with some of the best in the world. Whether you're looking for a luxury spa retreat, or a simple day spa, it's all on the menu in Aruba!</p> <p>Spa-goers can choose from a wide range of treatments, including massages, body wraps, scrubs, hot stone therapy, and aromatherapy treatments. Vichy showers, saunas, cold plunge pools, and other amenities round out the spa experience, providing a perfect opportunity to experience some serious wellness.</p> <p>A collection of Aruba's spas is even taking part in Aloe Wellness Month Aruba</p> <p>Vacation time is also an opportunity to get back to healthy eating...</p> <p>A huge part of wellness is eating fresh, healthy food. In Aruba's restaurants, visitors can choose from many healthy food offerings, including locally caught fish, organic fruits and vegetables, vegetarian dishes, and more. Stop at one of the many local "batido" stands for a fresh fruit shake, or ask the hotel bar to whip up something healthy and delicious. The larger supermarkets also carry gluten-free products and other special health-food products for those requiring restricted diets. During Aloe Wellness Month Aruba, the chefs at participating hotels will also be giving cooking demos featuring healthy preparation.</p>
<p>Voluntourism</p>	<p>Aruba is responding to the global demand for voluntourism by offering visitors the opportunity to vacation with a purpose. Help make the happy island a little happier with a variety of volunteer options designed for diverse jetsetters from the eco-minded to animal-enthusiasts. View some of the opportunities available for visitors looking to include a little do-gooding in their Caribbean getaway:</p> <p>http://www.aruba.com/SpecializedVacations/volunteervacations.aspx</p> <p>Here's one example; "Salba Nos Buriconan" (Save Our Donkeys) Foundation</p> <p>For animal lovers, tourists can volunteer at Aruba's donkey sanctuary. Although they were once Aruba's main mode of transportation, donkeys are now cared for at this haven, where volunteers can help feed them, teach visitors about the island's donkey population and help keep the donkeys safe and healthy by acting as veterinary assistants.</p>

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<p>UNIQUES</p>	<p>The divi divi (<i>Caesalpinia coriaria</i>) is a leguminous tree or large shrub native to the Antilles, southern Mexico, Central America and northern South America. It grows to 9 m tall, often much less and very contorted in exposed coastal sites. The leaves are bipinnate, with 5-10 pairs of pinnae, each pinna with 15-25 pairs of leaflets; the individual leaflets are 7 mm long and 2 mm broad. The fruit is a twisted pod 5 cm long. The Divi-divi is one of the more famous species of <i>Caesalpinia</i>; it is a symbol of Curaçao and is very popular in Aruba where it is called "watapana". On the islands this tree is never straight because of the wind. Divi divi trees growing horizontally in direction of trade winds; pod used for tanning leather; gnarled and outstretched to the Caribbean Sea — have been contorted by the steady trade winds into huge, bonsai-like figures, and their limbs point west, to the bustling hotel district.</p>
<p>Surprising</p>	<p>There was a Gold rush on Aruba in 1825 at Bushiribana: On the northern coast, midway down the island, lie the abandoned gold mines that were the centre of Aruba's gold rush during the nineteenth century. In 1824, gold was finally discovered in Aruba, and eventually, the industry produced more than 3 million pounds of gold.</p> <p>If you see a broom upside down against outside wall, this is the traditional way of getting rid of unwanted guests!</p> <p>Aruba is at the forefront of the energy revolution. Ten large windmills line the rugged eastern coast – taking advantage of those trade winds that we mentioned. Within 10 years, 100% of the island's energy will come from renewable sources.</p>
<p>History</p>	<p>Fragments of the earliest known Indian settlements date back to about 1000 A.D, as do the ancient painted symbols still visible on limestone caves found at Fontein, Ayo and elsewhere. Pottery remnants can still be seen at the Museum of Archaeology.</p> <p>Spanish explorer Alonso de Ojeda is thought to have arrived about 1499. The Spanish promptly exported the Indians to Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic, where they were put to work in the copper mines.</p> <p>In 1636, near the culmination of the Eighty Years' War between Spain and Holland, the Dutch took possession of Aruba and remained in control for nearly two centuries. In 1805, during the Napoleonic Wars, the English briefly took control over the island, but it was returned to Dutch control in 1816.</p> <p>1862 last pure blood Arawak died; Aruba's first inhabitants were the</p>

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	Caquetios Indians from the Arawak tribe.
Books	Lonely Planet's Discover Caribbean Islands has a very useful chapter on Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao: http://shop.lonelyplanet.com/caribbean/discover-caribbean-islands-1/
Don't Miss Out	Kukoo Kunuku invites you to party on a colourfully painted '57 Chevy bus. A bar crawl on wheels, it's like getting drunk with the Partridge Family. The coach has no glass in its windows - the fresh air will do you good - and every reveler gets maracas. Prepare to sing a solo and do the macarena. The carousing attracts a mixed crowd with a surprisingly large number of folks over 40; the minimum age is 18. The price of \$59 per person includes champagne at sunset, an Aruban dinner under the stars, and the first drink at each of three watering holes. The carousing begins at 6pm and lasts until about midnight, Monday through Saturday. Pick-up and drop-off is at your hotel.
Pirates Ahoy!	Jolly Pirates (www.jollypirates.com) boards at the Moomba pier, between the Holiday Inn and Marriott, and offers a very casual evening sea cruise. The buccaneer theme can only mean walking the plank and singing "Yo, ho, ho, and a bottle of rum." The sunset sail features an open bar and rope swing (Mon and Fri 5-7pm; \$30 per person).

SPORTS ACTIVITIES	<p>Aruba is an active vacationer's paradise – there are so many activities available for both the more adventurous and the softer adventurer! Here are some of the activities available:</p> <p>Kayaking: The leeward (south) coast's calm waters are ideal for kayaking. Starting near the old fishing village of Savaneta, guided tours hug the coastal mangrove forests before crossing a lagoon to a small island, where you can have a bite to eat and snorkel.</p> <p>Off-Roading: All-terrain vehicles that look like a cross between a dune buggy and a tractor mower let you play Road Warrior, and can be rented by the hour or the day. For those who want the thrill of the ride without the fear of getting lost, guided tours embark from several tour agencies.</p> <p>Parasailing: Aruba looks even better from 180m in the air. Flight time is only 10 minutes, but secure in your boat-towed parachute, you're on top of the world. Several watersports centers along Palm Beach will be happy to put wind in your sails. Take a waterproof camera along to show your friends back home that you've been there, done that.</p> <p>Sailing: Sailing adventures are available day and night. Some include watersports, while others feature drinks, snacks or a full gourmet dinner. For night owls, dance-and-booze cruises include a midnight dip in the</p>
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sea. If you have something special to celebrate, charter a private yacht. Catamarans, trimarans, and ketches are available. The calm waters along the southern coast are also ideal for extra-buoyant individual sailboats like Sunfish. At DePalm Island the trimaran Windriders come complete with a captain to navigate the waters or give you a crash course in sailing.

Tennis: courts can be found throughout the high rise and low rise areas

Beach volleyball and beach tennis: pick-up games are often found on Eagle beach and Palm beach – check out Moomba Beach Bar for beach tennis – a hot new beach game.

Bowling: for anyone who wants to bowl a game or two, try the new Eagle Bowling Palace located just off the stretch of high rise hotels - great fun for the entire family.

Running: Aruba has just completed phase one of its Linear Park making running, cycling, roller blading and strolling a breeze for locals and visitors alike. When completed it will stretch 16kms from the airport to Arashi beach and be the largest of its kind in the Caribbean. I personally ran this trail early one morning: glorious!

Stand Up Paddleboarding: reportedly the fastest growing water sport in the world, visitors to Aruba can enjoy this new sport on the calm waters of Palm Beach. Private or shared paddleboard lessons available. Located at Aruba Kitesurfing School Beach shack near Fisherman's Huts. www.suparuba.com

DePalm Island: privately owned, this island is packed with fun and adventure for visitors of all ages. The island features a full water park, snorkeling – including equipment and instructions, banana boat rides, organized daily activities, pocket beaches and more. Half day or full day passes are sold to this all-inclusive experience – which includes food and beverages and transportation. Sea Trek Underwater Helmet Walk and Snuba are also available at DePalm Island for an additional fee. www.depalmtours.com

Sky Diving: free fall at up to 200 kph and see Aruba from 10,000 ft. Minimum and max weight restrictions apply. Offered by Skydive Aruba aruba@skydivefl.com 297 735-0654

JetLev: soar up to 30 ft in the air or hover over the ocean, walking along the water. Jetlev is a water-propelled jetpack thrill ride with lift created

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	<p>by the thrust of 800 – 1000 gallons of water per minute. Available through Red Sail Sports www.redsailaruba.com 297 586-1603</p> <p>Jeep Safari Tours: see the entire island, including the rugged north coast on a full or half day jeep tour. Prepare to be awed by Aruba’s “other” coastline as you bounce and climb your way through the rugged terrain of the interior. Full and half day tours offered by various tour companies including DePalm Tours, ABC Jeep Tours, Red Sail Sports, Aruba Nature Sensitive Tours.</p> <p>Parasailing: enjoy a 15 minute blissfully peaceful but spectacular parasail ride above the ocean. Available from vendors on Palm Beach in the high rise hotel area. See www.aquaxoticaruba.com</p> <p>Jet Ski or Wave Runner: skip across the turquoise waters and enjoy a refreshing thrill ride on a JetSki – available for rental by various water activity suppliers on both Eagle Beach (near the Amsterdam Manor) and Palm Beach near the Holiday Inn.</p> <p>Bushiri Karting Speedway: excitement and adventure under the sun await drivers at this Kart racing track with high speed passing zones and hairpin turns. For more information www.bushirikarting.com</p> <p>Banana Boat, Tube Rides: an abundance of water sports activities are found on both Eagle beach and Palm beach including wake boarding, water skiing, tube rides, banana boat rides buga boats, speedboat rental, 14’ and 16’ Hobie Cat sailboat rental, and more. Many vendors, one of the most popular is Aruba Watersport Center located on the beach between the Occidental Hotel and the Radisson Hotel.</p>
Golf	<p>On the island's northern tip, Tierra del Sol is one of the Caribbean's best golf courses. The championship 18-hole, par-71 course was designed by Robert Trent Jones II and features stupendous views of the ocean and the California Lighthouse. Bunkers, cacti, and coral rock come into play throughout the course, while water hazards are confined to holes 13, 14, and 15. Gusting to speeds of 64kmph, the wind is the real challenge, though. Club selection is often crucial. Near San Nicolas, the Aruba Golf Club has seen better days and is used primarily by locals.</p> <p>The Divi Links, near Druif Beach, is a picturesque 9-hole course surrounded by landscaped water traps, lakes, and lagoons, and boasting a camera that captures your final shot so you can review the tape over drinks in the clubhouse that overlooks the greens.</p>
Fishing	<p>Local fishermen use simple hand lines (fishing line, hooks, and lead weights) to bring up red snapper and dolphin fish. Most activity takes</p>

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	<p>place along the southwest coast, although some anglers occasionally venture to the north coast, where the rough seas trap fish in small pools carved out of the limestone bluffs. To try your hand at deep-sea fishing, charter one of the many skippered boats. A few restaurants will even cook and serve up your day's catch.</p> <p>Sailfish, white and blue marlin, wahoo, shark, barracuda, amberjack, kingfish, bonito, and blackfin and yellowfin tuna are abundant : costs are around \$300 for 6 people for half day</p>
<p>Horse riding</p>	<p>Aruba's topography offers a variety of exotic locations for adventurous visitors. From the challenging sand dunes to the desert-like plains that will make you feel like the star of your own western motion picture. Riding experience is not required, but suntan lotion is recommended.</p> <p>The Gold Mine Ranch: "Home of the friendliest horses on the island!" Featuring private tours without time frames.</p> <p>Rancho Notorious: "Home of Aruba's Happy Horses." Located a short 5 minutes from the high-rise hotels, this ranch offers 3 different trails for the young and young at heart.</p> <p>Rancho Daimari: Features trips through gorgeous, rugged terrain to Aruba's Natural Pool.</p> <p>Rancho Del Campo: organizes different trails through the untamed countryside of the Arikok National Park. The horses will bring you to Aruba's famous spots the "Natural Bridge" and the "Natural Pool." Free pick-up & return to your hotel.</p> <p>Rancho El Paso: Organizes trips to the Aruban countryside and along the coastline.</p>
<p>Hiking</p>	<p>The sun is hot, and the scant foliage offers little respite, but if you bring water and a wide-brimmed hat, traversing Aruba's hills and coastline is worth the effort. Arikok National Park has the best trails. Climb the island's highest hills, explore abandoned gold mines, poke around plantation ruins, trek through caves, and comb limestone cliffs for coral and small-animal bones. The network of trails is clearly marked. Hiking boots are nice, but sneakers will do.</p>
<p>Windsurfing & Kitesurfing</p>	<p>Aruba's high-wind season is the longest in the Caribbean. Wind speeds are best in May, June, and July, when they average 20 to 25 knots. From December through April, they slow to 15 to 20 knots, and from September through November they range from 10 to 20 knots. Most launches are on the leeward side of the island, near the hotels and major beaches. The most popular site is off the northwest tip of the island on Malmok Beach, an area known as Fishermen's Huts. Near</p>

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	<p>San Nicolas, Rodgers Beach, and Boca Grandi are alternatives to the hotel area. To avoid collisions, kitesurfers and windsurfers take turns throughout the day.</p>
<p>Underwater Adventure</p>	<p>Diving: Aruba offers enough coral reefs, marine life, and wreck diving to keep most wetsuit-wearing folks happy. The water temperature averages 27°C. Due to currents and plankton, visibility varies, but at the leeward dive sites it usually ranges from 18 to 36m. The bountiful plankton nourishes a dense coral population, especially brain, sheet, finger, and mountainous star coral. Freshwater runoff is minimal. Sunken airplane fuselages and shipwrecks (including the largest in the Caribbean) are among the most popular destinations. In addition to snappers, grunts, angelfish, damselfish, and parrotfish, divers regularly spot less common species like frogfish, seahorses, nudibranchs, black crinoids, basket stars, scorpion fish, and eels. Barracudas, tarpons, and jacks also call Aruba's waters home.</p> <p>Snuba: Though not affording you the freedom and excitement of scuba, this technology allows you to breathe while descending up to 6 meters by way of a regulator tethered to a floating tank of compressed air. No experience is necessary; most of the catamaran tours allow passengers the option either before or during the trip to sign up and give it a whirl.</p> <p>On DePalm Island, you can also try Sea Trek, where you don a diving helmet and weighted boots and explore the sea floor; though you won't see much coral, you will see a submerged bus and plane, and can sit for a photo-op at a submerged cafe table. For those who like toys, grab a motorized jet pack and try Power Snorkel; just hold on to your swimsuit with one hand, the jet pack with the other, and pray you don't wind up in Venezuela! http://www.depalmstours.com/de-palm-island</p> <p>Underwater Touring: Another way to experience life at the bottom of the sea is aboard a submarine, where you can descend 45m to observe coral, shipwrecks, and some very curious fish. If you'd rather not have your vessel submerge completely, hop on a glass-bottom boat. The viewing deck is only 1.5m below the surface, but a scuttled German freighter, encrusted with coral and teeming with other marine life, is just feet away. The sub leaves from a pier in front of the Crystal Casino in Oranjestad; the glass-bottom boat departs from Pelican Pier on Palm Beach.</p> <p>Snorkeling: Good visibility, several shallow reefs, and a couple of wrecks give snorkelers an array of options. All sites are on the southern, or leeward, coast. Slightly north of Palm Beach, Catalina Bay and Arashi Reef feature brain and star coral, sea fans, parrotfish, angelfish,</p>

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	<p>and an occasional octopus; the 400-foot Antilla shipwreck is impossible to miss. De Palm Slope, off De Palm Island, features magnificent coral as well.</p> <p>I have picked Aruba and sister island Bonaire as one of my top ten dive destinations in my Chris' Top Ten series of articles: http://www.chrisrobinsontravelshow.ca/Planning/ChrisTop10Lists/ChrisTop10DiveDestinations.aspx</p>
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<p>CULTURE</p>	<p>Cas di Cultura The National Theater of Aruba, Cas di Cultura is home to local, regional and international films, lectures, concerts, dance performances, art exhibitions, folkloric show and plays throughout the year.</p> <p>Art Studio Insight Visitors can enjoy the range of solo and group exhibitions of local and international contemporary artists housed here.</p> <p>Osaira Muyale Contemporary Art Studio Osaira Muyale, a contemporary artist living and working in Aruba, created a museum out of her art studio as part of her ongoing dedication and promise to interact with the community. On display are Osaira's works, which she produces in the studio with international artists, as well as local and regional educators.</p> <p>Elisa Lejuez Peters Gallery Art Studio Dutch-born Elisa Lejuez is known for her colorful silk screen paintings and artworks using pieces of fabric, combinations of numbers and letters, gold and silver leaf, and materials gathered from old books and magazines. Her artwork is on display throughout Aruba and can be found in Amazonia Restaurant, the Lounge at Tierra del Sol, Radisson Spa and Towers, and in her own art studio at Malmokweg 42, which doubles as a museum and gallery. For a sample of the artist's work, please visit www.elisalejuez.com .</p>
<p>Music</p>	<p>Music plays a central role in all of Aruba's major holidays as well as its more informal celebrations. Every evening music can be heard drifting down from terrace bars, flooding through the doorways of nightclubs and intimate pubs alike, working in a pied piper-like fashion in drawing in revelers in animated social interaction. Latin rhythms of salsa and merengue, mixed with American top forty and European house music offer a cornucopia of musical backgrounds in which to experience Aruba's exuberant and cosmopolitan attitudes.</p> <p>Local musicians, benefiting from a rich musical background as well as exposure to international trends, often provide a new take on</p>

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	<p>conventional rhythms. Their creativity and musical knowledge can be appreciated during live performances regularly scheduled at the local theater of Cas di Cultura, nightclubs or in Aruba's finest hotels, dinner theatres and restaurants.</p> <p>Musical Morning On the last Sunday of every month, local musicians provide free performances of jazz, classical, folkloric, and classic Antillean music from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm at the French Steak House at Manchebo Beach Resort.</p>
<p>Films</p>	<p>Although the famous E. De Veer Drive-In Theatre, on Kibaima, across from the Balashi Brewery is now closed, there are 13 other screens in Aruba for the cinema enthusiast to catch up on the movies we all miss during our normal busy lives.</p>
<p>Museums</p>	<p>Archaeological Museum of Aruba The first of its kind in the Caribbean, Aruba's National Archeological Museum is located in downtown Oranjestad. The museum complex offers an authentic glimpse into 5,000 years of regional history with entertaining and interactive displays. The complex also includes a research centre and a cafeteria. It includes a film on ancient Amerindian life from the Field Museum in Chicago and works by contemporary island artists with historical themes.</p> <p>Aruba Historical Museum The Historical Museum is located in Oranjestad in Fort Zoutman, the oldest building in Aruba, which was built in 1798 for protection against pirates and enemies. Featuring antique farm implements and household goods, the museum illustrates how the island's first settlers lived and worked.</p> <p>Aruba Aloe Museum & Factory Founded in 1890, the Aruba Aloe factory, located on the 150 acres of Aruba Aloe fields, produces an extensive line of Body, Sun & Hair Care products containing locally cultivated and freshly processed 100% Pure Aruba Aloe Vera Gel. The factory is also home to a museum which gives visitors an inside look into the production process of the Aruba Aloe products and the chance to learn about the 160-year old history of Aloe on Aruba through free tours Monday to Saturday. www.arubaaloe.com</p> <p>Numismatic Museum of Aruba This small museum recently moved to a new building in order to accommodate its rather impressive collection of coin exhibits. Dedicated numismatists can spend the better part of a morning</p>

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	<p>perusing the 40,000 specimens from more than 400 countries, but anyone with a passing interest in coins or history will appreciate this labor of love. The amazing collection was the work of three generations of a single Aruban family, who research and write the detailed historical notes for each item as well as give tours of the museum and create excellent changing exhibits.</p>
<p>Festivals</p>	<p>Check out a calendar jam-packed with cultural celebrations and music, art and culinary festivals. Carnival events run throughout January and February. The Aruba Soul Beach Music Festival is in May and the Caribbean Sea Jazz Festival is in October. Aruba's gourmet cuisine is celebrated during the Aruba Wine, Food and Art Festival in September. And sports aficionados have lots to see and do with the Aruba Hi-Winds amateur windsurfing and kiteboarding event in July, and the Aruba Regatta and Aruba Pro-Am Golf Tournament in August. And this list just scratches the surface!</p> <p>No matter what time you visit, the weekly Caribbean Festival takes place in San Nicolas every Thursday night from 6pm-10pm, showcasing the multicultural charms of Aruba's "Sunrise City." Visitors can relax and enjoy a diversity of cuisines from the region plus a parade of local entertainers. The main street becomes a pedestrian mall filled with colorful booths selling local food, handicrafts and logo souvenirs.</p> <p>For Culture Vultures the weekly Bon Bini Festival has folkloric music and dance and is the perfect introduction to the warmth and hospitality of Aruba's people. It takes place in the outdoor courtyard of Fort Zoutman, Aruba's oldest building, which is downtown in the capital city of Oranjestad. Enjoy the flavour of the island, its history people, music and cuisine. The great thing about Bon Bini is that it takes place every week – so if you miss the Aruba Carnival (Jan – March) you can still get a taste of the excitement and party atmosphere.</p> <p>Carnival Aruba's Carnival celebration is a yearly colorful event which includes street parties, festive parades and creative contests for locals and visitors alike. Parties are held in various districts of the island, giving everyone the opportunity to participate and dance to Aruba's most popular brass band, steel band and road march tunes. Highlights of the three-month celebration include: the Torch Parade, which kicks off the festivities in January; elections for Mrs. Carnival and both youth and adult Carnival Queens; the Lighting Parade; and the Grand Carnival Parade, which takes place the Sunday before the official end of Carnival season.</p>

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	<p>Dande Dande is a traditional Aruban New Year's celebration. The word dande means to carouse, revel or have a good time. This celebration began after King Willem III of the Netherlands declared slaves to be free. The traditional song is performed by a group of well-wishers who form a band and go door-to-door to sing their song of peace, happiness, goodwill, and prosperity for the New Year. The chorus repeats the ai nobe (aña nobo or New Year) refrain in this lively melody. It is an African rhythm, the same as the tumba or the tambu of Curaçao. The music is played by guitar, accordion, raspa (local percussion instrument) and drum. At each house, money is collected by the host to share with the entire ensemble. Some districts now have their own dande groups that continue to perform even after the New Year. Ever since 1971, a festival has been organized on the last Saturday of the year to elect the Dande King or Queen.</p>
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<p>ATTRACTIONS</p>	<p>Bus and Jeep Tours: This is a great way to navigate the island in a single day without a map! You are now part of a "wagon train" that will often contain 10 or more four wheel drive jeeps. Organized tours often stop at the California Lighthouse, charming Alto Vista chapel, Seroe Crystal, the Bushiribana gold mill ruins, through the back roads to the Guadirikiri caves and finishing off on a private island that is located just a five minute ferry boat ride from the main land. A tasty barbeque lunch is often included on the island and there are also excellent snorkeling opportunities.</p> <p>Casibari Boulders: Just north of Hooiberg, a rock formation rises up from the desert soil. The boulders' freshly strewn appearance has created some unique scenery for the area. Some of the boulders weigh several tons and feature peculiar forms. The Government of Aruba has created walking trails and steps through the boulders, allowing hikers to reach the top to obtain breathtaking views of the island.</p> <p>De Palm Island: located just a 5 minute ferry ride from the mainland. It's the "hot spot" for snorkeling, snuba and scuba diving in Aruba. Abundant with spectacular coral formations and colorful blue Parrot Fish that are a thrill for young and old alike. Hammocks, food and beverage facilities, fun games, a playground for the small ones, snuba and snorkeling (including equipment) are all available. http://www.depalmtours.com/de-palm-island</p>
<p>Beaches</p>	<p>The 10 best beaches in the world as voted by TripAdvisor includes Eagle Beach in Aruba!</p> <p>Aruba's got beaches, some of the best in the Caribbean . . . in the world,</p>

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	<p>for that matter. The photos only look as if they've been doctored. What you see is what you get: miles of white, sugary sand; warm, gentle surf; turquoise and aqua seas; and plenty of space. Here's a handful:</p> <p>Eagle Beach provides shaded picnic areas and plenty of parking right off the main road. Several hotels are nearby, just across the street from the beach.</p> <p>Palm Beach is famous for calm waters and is located right in front of the major resorts.</p> <p>Arashi Beach and nearby Boca Catalina are located just south of the lighthouse near the northwestern tip of Aruba and is known for terrific snorkeling.</p> <p>Rodgers Beach features slightly rough surf. It is located close to the Baby Beach, and offers shady areas and shower facilities.</p> <p>Baby Beach, known for its tranquil swimming cove, is located in Seroe Colorado at the southeastern end of the island, near the oil refinery.</p>
<p>Wildlife</p>	<p>Bubali Bird Sanctuary -- Bring a camera or binoculars and enjoy the view at this relatively small area which has become a nesting and breeding area for more than 80 species of migratory birds. How many brown pelicans, black olivaceous cormorants, herons, and egrets can you spot? It's located within walking distance of the high rise resorts near the Westin Hotel.</p> <p>Butterfly Farm – A tropical garden teeming with butterflies from around the world. Guided tours help you observe the life cycle of these colorful and unusual creatures. Great for photographers and visitors of all ages. Located within walking distance of the Westin Hotel and Divi Phoenix Resort.</p> <p>Donkey Sanctuary – The Santa Lucia-based sanctuary welcomes guests offering information and a tour of the grounds; the sanctuary provides a fun environment to interact with the donkeys and an opportunity to stop for a snack and refreshments or to buy original, donkey-themed gifts and souvenirs.</p> <p>Arikok National Park – Consisting of nearly 20% of the island, Arikok National Park shows Aruba's commitment to preservation is huge. The park is home to priceless gems that are rare and indigenous to Aruba. Birds here include hummingbirds (common emerald and</p>

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	<p>ruby-topaz), rufous-collared sparrows, tropical mockingbirds, ospreys, yellow orioles, American kestrels, black-faced grassquits, yellow warblers, Caribbean parakeets, long-tongued bats, common ground doves, troupials, crested caracaras, and Aruban burrowing owls. Great for hiking or horseback riding; The Park’s modern Visitor Center contains information on all that can be seen and heard within the park. Guided tours are available. The Guidirikiri, Fontein and Huliba caves are among the natural formations located in the park. An admission fee is charged. See www.arubanationalpark.org</p> <p>Natural Pool —in a unique formation of rock, volcanic stone circles a small depression, creating a tranquil pool known as “conchi”. Inaccessible by car – this secluded environment is only reached by foot, horseback or 4 x 4 vehicle. Situated near a deserted stretch of the northern coastline. Truly a natural wonder.</p> <p>Rock Formations at Ayo and Casibari with walking trails and steps for hikers. The presence of these unusual hills and monolithic boulders that dot the countryside are truly an enigma. These odd geological formations are excellent vantage points from which to better view the island. Rock drawings dating back thousands of years are found at Ayo where huge stones appear to have been scattered like marbles.</p>
<p>Parks</p>	<p>Arikok National Park is a preserve of desert resources, including several indigenous species. The National Park takes up approximately 18 percent of this tiny island, including three primary geological formations, the Aruba lava formation, a quartz diorite formation, and a limestone formation that extends inward from the coast. These formations have directly influenced Aruba’s human settlement, as well as its natural wonders. Aruba is home to several species which only live on the island, including two unique species of snake and two bird species. Rock outcroppings also create micro-climatic conditions to support these unique plant and animal species, as well as settlements. These are located within the Arikok National Park almost exclusively. Inside the park are some of the island's oldest Arawak paintings, and has since drawn attention from the government. The two snake species are the cascabel (<i>Crotalus durissus uni-color</i>), and the santanero (<i>Leptodeira bakeri</i>), called the (Aruban) Baker's cat-eyed snake. The shoco (<i>Athene cunicu-laria arubensis</i>), known as the Aruban burrowing owl, and the prikichi (<i>Aratinga pertinax arubensis</i>), the Aruban parakeet. Another indigenous species, the kododo blaw (<i>Cnemido-phorus arubensus</i>) is the Aruban whiptail lizard. First designated as an important national area in the 1980s, Arikok</p>

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	<p>National Park is home to popular hiking trails, covering all kinds of terrain from hills to gold mines, and even plantation ruins. There is a new Visitor Centre that explains the geology and natural world of Aruba.</p>
<p>Natural Bridge</p>	<p>The 100-foot-long natural arch, which loomed 25 feet above sea level, was an awesome spectacle that existed for thousands of years, but disappeared in just one evening, early in September 2005. The same wave action, which carved out the limestone structure, was the cause of its demise.</p> <p>Other natural archways along the island's windward coast have since garnered greater attention. Although significantly smaller in size, a natural archway still exists at the Andicuri site, standing off to the side from the collapsed older and larger twin. On either side of Andicuri, other natural bridges are also worth a look, including natural archways at the sites of Wariruri as well as at Black Stone Beach. Other intriguing natural sculptures, created by pounding seas against rough-hewn rock, can be appreciated through a drive along the island's pristine northern coast.</p>
<p>Historical Sites</p>	<p>Fort Zoutman and Willem III Tower During the 18th century, pirates menaced Oranjestad's harbour, raiding for horses and anything else of value. To defend the island, the Dutch erected Fort Zoutman in 1796. Aruba's oldest example of Dutch architecture, the bastion stands on what was once the shore (landfill construction in 1930 altered the coastline). In 1867, it gained Willem III Tower, named after the then-reigning Dutch monarch. Over the years, the site has served as an aloe garden, jail, courthouse, junk room, and tax office. The fort was restored in 1974, the tower in 1983.</p> <p>Chapel at Alto Vista One of Aruba's most precious landmarks; the island's first Roman Catholic Church, built in 1750 and renovated in 1953. The site exudes tranquility with dramatic views of both sunrise and sunset. Alto Vista is reached by a winding road marked with white crosses designating the Stations of the Cross. Also suggest visiting Santa Ana, situated in Noord near the hotel zone and tourist area, known for its famous solid oak, hand-carved altar in classic neo-gothic design.</p> <p>Gold Mill Ruins Gold was discovered in Aruba in 1824 and a colorful history of gold prospectors helped shape the island's history. Eventually, the industry produced more than 3 million pounds of gold. Remnants of the gold industry are found on the northern coast at Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins (great photo opportunity) and at Balashi Gold Mill at the tip of the Spanish Lagoon near Frenchman's Pass.</p>

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OTHER ACTIVITIES	
<p>Shopping</p>	<p>In two words: go crazy!</p> <p>Because the island's part of the Netherlands, Dutch goods like Delft porcelain, chocolate, and cheese are especially good buys. Items from Indonesia, another former Dutch colony, are reasonably priced, too. Although Aruban souvenirs tend toward cheesy cunucu (farm) houses or divi divi trees made from resin, the same items, when painted by hand and crafted from bisque or pottery, can hold their own in any folk art collection. Skin- and hair-care products made from locally produced aloe are also popular and practical. If you're looking for big-ticket items, Aruba offers the usual array of Swiss watches; German and Japanese cameras; gold and diamond jewelry; Cuban cigars; premium liquor; English and German china; Spanish porcelain; French, Swedish, and Danish crystal; and French and American fragrances.</p> <p>From designer brands to local souvenirs and handicrafts, Aruba is a shopper's paradise. Shopping Malls include Renaissance Mall, Royal Plaza, The Village, Paseo Herencia, Palm Beach Plaza Mall, the weekend flea market and more. Most stores in downtown Oranjestad are closed on Sunday but many stores in the high rise hotel area remain open on Sundays.</p> <p>Aloe: Island Remedy, Aruba Aloe's latest upscale line of products made with 100% pure Aruba Aloe Vera Gel and enriched with the finest natural extracts from a wide range of known remedial plants. Take a tour through the state-of-the-art Aruba Aloe Factory and see the production process firsthand from aloe vera leaf to finished Aruba Aloe lotions. The tour guides will explain you all about the aloe plant and its uses and you will have the opportunity to learn all about the 160-year old aloe history of Aruba in the museum which is a national depository for ancient aloe tools and equipment with a complete library on the history, manufacture and qualities of aloe vera. All Aruba Aloe body, sun and hair care products can be purchased at the factory store. Aruba Aloe Balm N.V., Pitastraat 115, Hato. Website: www.ArubaAloe.com</p>
<p>Markets</p>	<p>Merchandise stands clutter Oranjestad's waterfront. Catering to cruise-ship passengers who pass by on their way to the more varied shopping in town, most sell garden-variety T-shirts and souvenirs. Fruit and vegetables brought daily by boat from Venezuela add colour to the hubbub.</p>
<p>Nightlife</p>	<p>Aruba nights add excitement to the island's quiet desert island persona. Mingle with locals and tourists at any of the scores of casual beach and pier bars that dot the southwest coast from downtown Oranjestad to the far end of the high-rise strip. Weekly managers' cocktail parties and daily happy hours are island traditions.</p>

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	<p>Cruises depart from Palm Beach piers; hop aboard for a sunset sail, romantic nighttime interlude or a wild party with rope swing. At resorts, carnival shows and Las Vegas-style revues boast talented dancers and brilliant costumes. Sumptuous outdoor theme night buffets are perfect "stay at home" entertainment. Ten exciting resort casinos offer non-stop after-dark gaming action, lively house bands and exhilarating ambiance. The high-rise area now rivals downtown Oranjestad for trendy venues and after-hours haunts, from karaoke and martini bars to upscale bistros and casual pubs. The strip comes alive after dark with shops, kiosks, movie theatres, cafés, restaurants and bars. Let loose on a wild and wacky barhopping bus.</p> <p>If you're still not sated, head for one of the high-energy dance clubs, but don't show up before midnight or 1am - that's when the party really starts. To find out what's happening, check any of the free local magazines: Aruba Nights, Island Temptations, Aruba Experience, Menu, Aruba Events, Destination Aruba, and Aruba Food & Wine.</p>
<p>Casinos</p>	<p>Exciting casinos are found in nearly every hotel in the Palm Beach/high rise area, plus a stand-alone casino (Alhambra) in the Eagle Beach/low rise area plus 2 casinos in downtown Oranjestad.</p> <p>For many years after Aruba's first casino opened in 1959, gambling was the island's major attraction (next to the beaches, of course). Today, Aruba boasts 12 gambling venues, as at October 2016, most of them casually elegant. Table games like baccarat, blackjack, poker, roulette, and craps usually start in the afternoon or early evening; slot machines can be played at 10am. Bingo, another diversion, starts in the afternoon at some places, in the evening at others. The action goes on as long as there's a crowd, usually until 2, 3, or 4am. The Crystal Casino in downtown Oranjestad is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.</p>
<p>CUISINE</p>	<p>Few places as small as Aruba can boast such a variety of quality restaurants. In fact, with the exception of the French islands and Puerto Rico, Aruba leaves most of the Caribbean in the dust. There are over 200 restaurants on this small island!</p> <p>This is due in large part to fierce competition. Most restaurateurs never stop thinking of new ways to bring you through their doors. Many add a personal touch, taking the time to chat and thank you for your visit. And most are loath to leave anyone behind, so there's usually something for vegetarians, kids, and couples celebrating special occasions (how about a romantic private room or a table on the beach?). Because some form of entertainment has become almost de rigueur, expect to be serenaded by live bands, jazz saxophonists, or singing waiters.</p> <p>Frequent culinary competitions spur chefs to experiment and hone their skills, constantly raising the quality bar. And over the past few years, ethnic spots have burgeoned: when you're not feasting on steak,</p>

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	<p>seafood, or Aruban specialties, you can try something Argentinean, French, Caribbean, Indonesian, Cuban, Belgian, Mexican, Japanese, Chinese, or Indian.</p>
<p>Food</p>	<p>Here's some local dishes:</p> <p>Bananas hasa - Fried plantains served as a side dish.</p> <p>Empanadas - Similar to pastechis but smaller and made with cornmeal rather than flour.</p> <p>Funchi - Cornmeal polenta.</p> <p>Giambo - A thick gumbo made with fish filets, salted beef, okra, fresh basil (yerba di hole), and shrimp.</p> <p>Keshi yena - Edam or Gouda cheese rinds stuffed with beef, chicken, fish, or shrimp, embellished with raisins, grated cheese, bread crumbs, olives, capers, and spices; created by frugal Dutch colonists who had to stretch their provisions to last until the next ship arrived, this recipe ensured that nothing would be wasted.</p> <p>Kesio - Eggy caramel custard with caramel sauce.</p> <p>Madame Janette chile - Considerably hotter than the jalapeño and Aruba's favorite way to spice up almost anything; better known as the Scotch bonnet pepper, it's an integral ingredient in the Creole relish that accompanies any dish prepared "Arubiana."</p> <p>Pan bati - A thick, sweet, corn bread-like pancake cut in thin wedges and served as a side.</p> <p>Pastechi - Crescent-shaped, deep-fried turnovers filled with spicy meat, shrimp, fish, or cheese; popular for breakfast and as a snack.</p> <p>Ponche crema - Creamy eggnoglike drink laced with rum and flavored with nutmeg.</p> <p>Pudin di coco - Coconut pudding made with rum and served with lime sauce.</p> <p>Salsa creollo - Red sweet creole sauce made of tomatoes, onions, and peppers and served with fish.</p> <p>Sopinan - Soups made with salt pork or beef, whole fish, shellfish,</p>

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	<p>greens, potatoes, onions, tomatoes, garlic, peppers, and spices.</p> <p>The Bon Bini Festival is a folkloric, touristy show that features hoaky and asynchronous dances performed by a handful of local amateur junior talents. A few arts and crafts booths and one or two trays of homemade, local food surround the makeshift bar. The show takes place year-round every Tuesday, from 6:30 to 8:30pm at Fort Zoutman in Oranjestad</p>
Beer	<p>After a day out in the tropical sun, nothing satisfies thirst like the clean, crisp taste of an icy bottle of Balashi beer. Aruba's national beer is produced in a fully automated brewery with cutting edge technology.</p>
Restaurants	<p>Chef's Table restaurants Dine at The Kitchen Table by White Cuisine - a 16 seat only dinner starts with a refreshing cocktail set against a back drop of a beautiful sunset and then takes you on a culinary journey with a 7 course Aruban-Caribbean meal.</p> <p>Papiamento - the Ellis family has served award-winning Caribbean food in their 200-year-old cunucu (farm) home for almost two decades. Over the years, tables have spilled out from the thick-walled, antiques-filled interiors to the large fairy-lit palm garden. At twilight, birds serenade outdoor diners around the luminescent pool...It's a magical setting for fine food and I spent my last evening on the island here.</p> <p>Hostaria da' Vittorio – A splendid Italian restaurant where the Master Chef flies in most of his ingredients fresh from Italy. You have the choice of air-conditioned comfort inside, a large open-air patio under the stars and even a half-way house conservatory space which is where I chose to dine.</p> <p>Buccaneer – This is a seafood restaurant with a difference! Themed to the inside of an ocean galleon, most tables are also beside large aquariums full of tropical fish and one massive tank that features free swimming turtles. The seafood is great and if you ask the owner nicely he may let you help him feed the turtles!</p> <p>Chez Mathilde – opulence and first-rate French cuisine make Chez Mathilde a superb choice for special occasions. The restaurant's ambience is classically elegant, and although the service is formal, it's never intimidating.</p> <p>Gasparito – Here's a favorite with people in love. Located in a restored cunucu (farm) home - the well out front is especially picturesque - Gasparito features intimate dining rooms inside and a breezy outdoor</p>

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	<p>patio and bar. The tinkling of a fountain, modern rattan chairs, and lambent candlelight enhance the courtyard's warmth. Inside, vaulted ceilings embrace cozy rooms made more romantic by the sounds of classical piano.</p> <p>Passions Beach Bar & Restaurant, located on Eagle Beach at the Amsterdam Manor Beach Resort, is open Wednesday through Sunday from 6 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., offering fresh seafood and romantic barefoot dining under the stars. All entrees are grilled, and range from seafood to meat, with daily specials. Reservations are highly recommended.</p>
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MORE INFO	
Brochures	For information about visiting Aruba, contact the Aruba Tourism Authority tel. 800-TO-ARUBA or 1-800-862-7822
Websites	Website: www.Aruba.com Happiness Builder: http://arubashortcuts.com/ Facebook: https://www.facebook.com Pinterest: https://www.pinterest.com/arubatourism/ Twitter: https://twitter.com/ArubaTourism

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES	<p>From my trip in 2013: California Lighthouse Alto Vista Church Bushiribana gold smelter ruins Baby Natural Bridge Rock formations at Ayo Arikok National Park Fontein Cave Santa Cruz San Nicholas DePalm Island/Blue Parrot Water Park snorkeling Oranjestad Linear Park Butterfly Farm</p> <p>Resorts: Brickell Bay Beach Club & Spa Boutique Hotel; Renaissance Island/Ocean Club; Divi and Tamarijn Resorts; Amsterdam Manor Resort</p> <p>Restaurants: Papiamento Restaurant in Noord; Hostaria da' Vittorio; Buccaneer Restaurant; Tomato Charlies at Brickell Bay</p> <p>Beaches: Eagle Beach; Palm Beach; Baby Beach</p>
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Islands: Renaissance, De Palm

Here is a personal memory from my **Magic Moment** on the Aruba Travel Show:

“Aruba is a unique blend of warm island hospitality, European charm and Latin flavour – and all-embracing sub-tropical sunshine. I have come here in the depths of a Canadian winter and I am relishing the heat on my cold bones. There is so much to see on this small island and I am rushing round to see it all. Desert, crags, caves and national park; lighthouse, gold mine, ancient petroglyphs and natural bridges; magnificent resorts, casinos, Dutch gables and pampering spas; watersports, land sports, underwater delights and beaches...oh those beaches! And after a hectic few days, my guide and mentor on all things Aruban – Colleen LesSard from the Aruba Tourism Authority – has brought me on my final evening on Aruba to one of its top restaurants: Papiamento. Here the Ellis family has served award-winning Caribbean food in their 200-year-old cunucu (farm) home for almost two decades. Over the years, tables have spilled out from the thick-walled, antiques-filled interiors to the large fairy-lit palm garden. The seafood is divine and has a local island twist. And as twilight settles over the garden, birds serenade outdoor diners around the luminescent pool...It’s a magical setting for fine food and charming company and the perfect finale to my Aruba experience.”

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