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[ARUBA VACATION](#)

Aruba is VoyageMonkey's favorite Southern Caribbean Island. Located approximately 15 miles off the northern coast of Venezuela, this tiny island paradise host some of the finest world class resorts, elegant casinos, restaurants, nightclubs, pristine beaches, and enjoys dry and sunny 82 degrees weather almost all year around. The water temperature is about the same. The sunny weather is very predictable and Aruba lies outside of the hurricane belt.



Aruba is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the Caribbean attracting well over a million visitors per year. You can obtain direct flights to Aruba from many major US airports and Aruba is a very popular cruise ship destination. Most of the major cruise lines include Aruba as one of their leading ports of call on their southern Caribbean itineraries. It's the guaranteed sunshine and warm crystal clear turquoise waters that attract so many visitors year after year to Aruba. Aruba is the Caribbean's glamour and

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glitz destination.

Just 20 miles long by 6 miles wide, Aruba is a flat desert island with cactus, aloe and rock formations on the interior, and some of the best long stretches of sandy white powder beaches along its western and southern coasts. The most famous of these beaches is Palm Beach where you'll find many of Aruba's top resorts. The highest point on the island, Mount Jamanota, is only 617 feet above sea level. The main population center and Capital city of Aruba is Oranjestad. In Oranjestad you'll find excellent dining, shopping and nightlife. The Dutch colonial architecture of Oranjestad with its pastel colors is simply adorable and very picturesque. It gives you that Disney feel. The second largest city located to the southeast is Sint Nicolaas, which features a main street promenade.



Aruba enjoys one of the highest standards of living in the Caribbean and has a very low unemployment rate. Tourism is the main industry along with some oil processing and other trades. The official currency is the Aruban Florin although US dollars are widely accepted. All the gaming in Aruba casinos is done with US dollars. It's always a good idea to carry both currencies so be sure to exchange some currency at the airport. Most of the major hotels will exchange currency for you and you'll find plenty of banks on the island. If you have traveled through the Caribbean you can appreciate Aruba for its high living standards and strong economy. The island is very clean and has low crime. You'll enjoy the lack of aggressive street vendors and beggars. The population of around 120,000 is well educated.

Aruba is a diverse mix of people and cultures with nearly 80 different nationalities present on the island. This wide mix of cultures makes for some of the best food in the Caribbean. With a rich history under Spanish, British and Dutch rule, Aruba is now an independent state under the Kingdom of the Netherlands. You'll find many languages spoken in Aruba. The official two languages are Dutch and Papiamentu. Papiamentu is a mixture from the various cultures that has evolved over the centuries, mainly from Portuguese and Spanish. You won't find many descendants of slaves in Aruba. Aruba is one of the Caribbean islands that was not part of the slave trade since it had no plantations due to the dry weather.



Aruba has some of the best beaches in the Caribbean. They are wide, clean, the sand is a fine



white powder, and the waters are generally a crystal clear turquoise. The most popular beach is Palm Beach. Palm Beach is where you'll find most of your major resorts. You'll find miles of white sand beach, plenty of water sports, drinks, changing facilities and other hotel amenities and dining along the beach. The water is calm and excellent for swimming. Palm Beach is "the place to be" when you stay in Aruba. Here you'll find beautiful people with an international flavor. Just south of Palm Beach is Eagle Beach. You'll find miles of white sand at this beach with resorts and plenty of water sports and beach activities. You can rent jet skis and indulge in organized dive and snorkel trips. South of Eagle Beach is Manchebo Beach. Manchebo Beach is the largest of Aruba's Beaches and is a tops-optional beach (not legal but not enforced) because of its more secluded nature. If you explore around the island you'll discover many excellent beaches with beautiful sand and excellent snorkeling. We recommend spending a day exploring the coast. Remember, when in Aruba you can never be more than 3 miles from the coast. Bring your snorkel gear, swim clothes, perhaps a change of clothes, and pack a lunch. It will be a day well spent.

The home of Caribbean stud poker, Aruba has excellent casinos. Some of the casinos are open 24-hours for endless Aruba nightlife and many of the major resorts feature state-of-the-art casinos and entertainment. In downtown Oranjestad try your luck at the Crystal Casino or the Seaport Casino. Both are part of the Renaissance Resort. The Crystal is open 24-hours while the Seaport Casino sits harbor side for great views. Both feature live entertainment, numerous table games, hundreds of slot machines, bars and lounges. After a dinner on the town, the Renaissance Resort is a great place to dance with lady luck. The most popular casinos in the Palm Beach area include the Casablanca Casino, the Copacabana Casino, the Excelsior Casino, and the Stellaris Casino. The Casablanca Casino is located at the Westin Resort and features live entertainment, a Moroccan-style Rick's Cafe, over 300 slot machines and a high roller room. The very popular Copacabana Casino is located at the Hyatt Resort and features a tropical palm theme and an atmosphere of gambling elegance. Live music is played every night except Monday. There are over 20 table games and more than 300 slots. The Excelsior Casino is the Holiday Inn Resort's busy gambling venue. The Casino offers a horse race and sports book, plenty of slots, table games, bar and great live entertainment. At the Marriott Resort you'll find the popular Stellaris Casino. The nearly 18,000 square-ft. casino features over 500 slots, over 30 table games and excellent live music. Aruba's Casinos are always a great place for drinks and entertainment even if you don't gamble.



Aside from the obvious, international dining, shopping and gambling you'll find many activities and fun attractions on Aruba. Golfing is always a popular activity in Aruba. The courses are beautiful and the trade winds can often be your friend and help you drive like a pro. Although there are several non-regulation resort golf

courses in Aruba, there is only one regulation championship 18-hole course in Aruba. The 18-hole par-71 Tierra Del Sol Golf Course is designed by Robert Trent Jones, Jr. and is located on the northwest coast. Tierra Del Sol is the premier Aruba course and features an excellent clubhouse, golf shop, high-tech Parview GPS systems installed in the golf carts, pool, tennis, spa, fitness center and restaurant. Tierra Del Sol is the place for the serious golfer. On the southeast coast you'll also find the only regulation 9-hole course in Aruba, The Aruba Golf Club. The Aruba Golf Club course is popular for its low cost and degree of difficulty. Another popular 9-hole course is The Links at Divi Aruba, a beautifully landscaped resort course open to the public. Aruba Golf & Leisure is also a popular Palm Beach golf course. If 9-holes are too much for you, try Aruba Adventure Golf, the Caribbean's largest miniature golf course. This family fun center features two 18-hole courses, bumper boats, a game room, paddle boats, batting cages, and go karts.

Scuba diving and snorkeling in Aruba is a 'must do' activity. The water temperature is over 80 degrees all year around. The crystal clear turquoise waters have excellent visibility and you'll find several shipwrecks and reefs well worth checking out. The most popular dive spot is the wreck of "The Antilla" a 400 foot German cargo ship that sunk after World War II. She rests in about 50 feet of water just off the northwest coast of Aruba near Eagle Beach. Visibility is very good so it is also excellent for snorkeling. Near the Antilla wreck you'll also find the wreck of "The Pedernalis." To the south you'll find several other shipwrecks and a couple of sunken cargo airplanes. There are also several good reefs along the west and southern coasts that are frequented by local dive operators. A favorite snorkel spot in Aruba is De Palm Island. The private island is a short 5-minute ferry ride and features the Blue Parrotfish Water Park, several restaurants and bars. Here you can rent your snorkel equipment and towels. Island amenities include lockers and changing rooms, beach lounges, volleyball courts, game room and play area.



Nearly twenty percent of Aruba's land is a protected area known as Arikok National Park. It's an area of hiking, biking and walking trails that take you through landscapes of cactus, aloe, Aruba's famous Divi Divi Tree, lava and limestone formations. The park is home to several reptile and bird species found only in Aruba. You will also encounter some wild goats, wild donkeys and harmless iguanas. Ancient drawings and other artifacts from early native inhabitants can be found in the park. The ruins of abandoned gold mines are also found in the park. If you are looking for exercise while in Aruba, take advantage of these trails and take in the scenery.

Aruba is filled with excellent photo opportunities. Among top places to get those family snap shots are the



California Lighthouse and De Oude Molen Windmill. The tall white lighthouse is named after a ship called the Californian that sank off the Aruba coast. Visitors to the lighthouse also check out the nearby beautiful white sand dunes that can be explored on foot. The popular De Oude Molen Windmill was originally constructed in Holland in the early 1800's and later transported to Aruba and reconstructed piece by piece. Today the Windmill houses a popular restaurant that serves great food and is an excellent place to enjoy lunch.



A favorite spot that is off the beaten path that may involve a camera and snorkel gear is the "Natural Pool." The Natural Pool is a geological formation where the waves crashing over rocks have formed a natural bowl shaped sea water pool. The pool is a great place to relax, swim and check out with snorkel gear. The pool is located on the windward side of the island (eastern) and is truly off the beaten path requiring a jeep ride and a map. Its an opportunity to check out some of Aruba's "moonscape."

Most people come to Aruba for the luxury resorts, fine beaches and watersports, but did you know that Aruba is home to an ostrich farm, a butterfly farm, a bird sanctuary, and a donkey sanctuary? The Aruba Ostrich Farm provides visitor encounters with their more than 50 feathered friends. At the farm's restaurant and bar you can enjoy a mouth watering ostrich meat entre.



Located at the Palm Beach area is the Aruba Butterfly Farm. The tropical garden setting features colorful butterflies from around the world all in different stages of their metamorphosis. Observe them as they go from egg to caterpillar to chrysalis to beautiful butterfly. The farm is a great educational experience for kids. If its birds you enjoy the Bubali Bird Sanctuary is a breeding area for more than 80 species of migratory birds. The sanctuary's observation tower is an excellent place to view and photograph herons, egrets, cormorants, and numerous other species. The most interesting sanctuary is the Aruba Donkey Sanctuary. Yes, a donkey sanctuary! Aruba's main mode of transportation was the donkey. As the donkey was replaced with the modern day car herds of donkeys were left to wander Aruba and fend for themselves. In 1997 the sanctuary was formed to care for the beloved Aruban Donkey. Visitors to the sanctuary can interact with the herd of donkeys, enjoy refreshments and buy donkey themes souvenirs.





Where to Stay

Here are VoyageMonkey's recommended resorts:



Hyatt Regency Aruba Resort & Casino - Located on Palm Beach at J. Irausquin 85 Palm Beach, the 4-Star Hyatt is our number 1 pick for where to stay in Aruba. The 9-story 360-guest room resort sits on twelve pristine beachfront acres at Palm Beach. The

resort is walking distance to fine restaurants and shops. All guest rooms feature a private balcony, ceiling fan, minibar, cable TV, high-speed Internet access and other modern amenities. The resort includes an elegant world-class casino, a three-level swimming pool with cascading waterfalls and waterslide, spa & fitness center, tennis & basketball, freshwater lagoon, outdoor whirlpools, onsite fine and casual dining venues, several bars & lounges, and 24-hour room service. The food at the resort is excellent. Guest parking is free and there is a car rental desk and concierge. Other amenities include a game room, business center & meeting rooms and golf privileges. There are plenty of beach and pool activities as well as onsite entertainment and music. The resort is immaculate, the staff is friendly and helpful, and there is plenty to do at this resort when you're done relaxing.

Radisson Aruba Resort, Casino & Spa - Located beach front on 14-acres of Palm Beach at JE Irausquin Boulevard No 81 Palm Beach, the Radisson features beautifully landscaped lush tropical grounds with cascading waterfalls, two outstanding zero-depth-entry swimming pools, whirlpools, cabanas, and gorgeous beach. The 9-story resort has 354 guest rooms each appointed with four-poster mahogany beds, marble bathrooms, Colonial West Indian furnishings, balconies, mini-bar, safe, cable TV, high-speed internet access and other amenities. The resort features the 13,000 square-foot Larimar Spa, which is often rated as one of the best spas in the Caribbean. The resort includes four restaurants and lounges, fitness center, tennis, beauty salon, shops, concierge & car rental desk, 24-hour room service, game room, live entertainment, and onsite Casino. The resort offers scuba diving, snorkeling, beach activities and other water sports at its rental center. The staff is very friendly and professional. The resort is pristine and the service at the Radisson is very good. Possibly the best Radisson Hotel around.





Marriott Aruba Ocean Club - Located on beautiful Palm Beach at LG Smith Boulevard A. Palm Beach, the 4-Star Marriott is an exceptional resort for families and couples looking for comforts of home in a villa. The 6-story 311-room resort sits adjacent to the Aruba Marriott Resort with it's Stellaris Casino

and the Marriott Aruba Surf Club Resort. The location is excellent and just 3-miles from Oranjestad. Each 1 or 2 bedroom villa features full kitchens, dining area, cable TV, DVD player, ocean views and private balcony. The resort includes an onsite casino, swimming pool, children's pool, hot tub, beach, tennis court, basketball court, game room, onsite dining & sports bar, fitness facility, car rental desk, concierge, free parking, golf privileges, entertainment and water sports. The resort is smoke-free. This resort is an excellent choice for guests who enjoy the convenience of a kitchen and desire a great location. The property is beautiful and the staff is very friendly. The sister hotels, Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino and the Marriott Aruba Surf Club are also highly rated by VoyageMonkey.com as top Palm Beach Aruba hotels.

RIU Palace Aruba All-Inclusive - Located on Palm Beach at JE Irausquin Boulevard 79 Palm Beach, the 4-Star All-Inclusive resort is perfect for the guest who enjoys the everything included vacation destination. The 10-story 450-room resort features all-suites with hydro-massage bathtubs, balcony, ceiling fans, mini-bar & liquor dispenser, safes and other modern amenities.



The resort amenities include two Swimming pools, Jacuzzis, children's pool, spa & fitness center, sauna, beauty salon, gift shop and onsite casino. The resort features five gourmet restaurants, three bars and 24-hour room service. The all-inclusive plan includes all meals, snacks, 24-hour unlimited beverage including mini-bar & liquor dispensers, 24-hour room service, entertainment & music, beach, and onsite activities. The food & drinks are good and the staff is friendly and helpful. VoyageMonkey recommends the RIU for guests looking for that all-inclusive experience while in Aruba.



Renaissance Aruba Resort and Casino - Located in Oranjestad at LG Smith Boulevard 82 Oranjestad, the 4-Star resort is conveniently located oceanside in the capital city of Oranjestad. The 6-story 556-room resort includes the Renaissance Marina Hotel and the Renaissance Ocean Suites. The well-appointed rooms

include a wet-bar, microwave, safe, cable TV, in-room movies, sofa bed and other modern amenities. Resort amenities include a swimming pool, tennis, spa & fitness center, volleyball, restaurants, bars & lounges, shops, concierge & car rental desk, Laundromat, water sports and other activities. The resort features the Crystal Casino and the Seaport Casino. The Crystal Casino is open 24-hours. Aside from the small beach lagoon, the resort's main beach is located at a 40-acre private island just 5-minutes by private guest ferry

service. The ferry runs every 10-minutes. The island has two beaches, and adult beach (topless optional) and a family beach. The island includes a spa, restaurant and bar. This resort is excellent for those who want to stay in town and have the convenience of local shopping, dining and nightlife within close reach.

Other VoyageMonkey recommended hotels in Aruba's Palm Beach include:
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