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**Soaking Up The Sun And Taking In The Sites In Aruba**

**By Justin Burch**

In addition to white sand beaches and Caribbean beauty, Aruba has a wealth of history and

exceptional sites to offer. Though you may not want to leave your plush beach resort, you should certainly explore some of these sites located throughout the island. Here are some helpful travel tips for the adventurous traveler.

Throughout the 15th and 16th centuries, adventurers traveled throughout the Caribbean in search of wealth and treasures. One of the most precious sites of that era was the island of Oro Ruba, or red gold. Today, the island of Aruba retains traces of this colorful history, courtesy of remains from the Bushiribana and Balashi gold mining operations and longstanding pirate lore.

The caves of Aruba are commonly cited by locals as former pirate hideouts, though each site is visually fascinating enough to warrant a visit. The Guadirikiri Cave is famous for its dual sunlit chambers that create a picture perfect backdrop. The Fontein Cave is the most popular of the caves being one of the most accessible sites with Arawak Indian drawings. The Huliba Cave, known as the Tunnel of Love, features a heart-shaped opening and an expansive 300-foot long passage. One of Aruba's most photographed sites, the California Lighthouse is named for the famous wreck off these same shorelines. Located at the northwestern tip of the island, the terrain surrounding the lighthouse features both dramatic rock shorelines and rolling sand dunes.

The bizarre rock formations of Aruba are another worthwhile site as they are truly unlike anything you can find at home. The area surrounding the Casibari Boulders has several trails, offering some of the best views of the island from atop the stones. The Ayo Rock Formations are often compared to the fictional town of Bedrock from "The Flintstones." Once an ancient settlement, petroglyphs are visible on many of the boulders.

The Government of Aruba has dedicated approximately 18% of the island to the Arikok National Park. With miles of walking trails, this public park is the centerpiece of Aruba's environmental preservation efforts. To learn more about the park and its unique wildlife, it is worthwhile to schedule a guided tour as part of your vacation package. Prepare yourself for everything from exotic cacti, flowers, divi-divi trees and massive aloe plants to rare birds and photogenic iguanas. Also, this is the best location for

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those panoramic Caribbean views, as Aruba's highest peaks lie within the park.

Of course, there is more to Aruba than natural splendor. In addition to excellent shopping opportunities, Aruba's capital of Oranjestad features a number of distinctive museums. The Historical Museum, situated in the oldest building in Aruba, displays a fascinating collection ranging from indigenous artifacts to Spanish and Dutch colonial items. To learn more about Aruba's past, visit the Archaeological Museum, an organization dedicated exclusively to the display and preservation of ancient pottery, tools and art from Aruba's indigenous cultures. Also in central Oranjestad, the Numismatic Museum displays over 30,000 historic coins from around the world.

The second largest city in Aruba, San Nicolas, is a great stop for the "alternative" tourist. For decades, Charlie's Bar has been one of the city's primary destinations, owing to its fame as a makeshift museum of underwater discoveries. Since the 1940's, scuba divers have hung anything and everything on Charlie's walls. The diversity of Charlie's strange collection has only added to San Nicolas' relaxed,

offbeat reputation. Just a short drive from San Nicolas you'll find the Lourdes Grotto, an enchanting Catholic shrine built directly into a black rock hillside.

For the fan of such religious architecture, Aruba has several other unique sites to offer. The picturesque Chapel of Alto Vista, constructed by the Spanish as Aruba's first, exudes tranquility from its spectacular setting above the ocean. Church of Noord, constructed between 1914 and 1919, is a fine example of neo-Gothic architecture. It is even possible to be married in one of Aruba's churches as part of your vacation package.

For a little privacy after your exploring, try escaping to one of the smaller islands surrounding Aruba. Renaissance Island is a private hideaway for guests of the Renaissance Hotel. This unique beach resort lies just off shore and features all the amenities one might need for a day in the sun. Also just a 5 minute ferry ride from the mainland, De Palm Island is a favorite of snorkelers and scuba divers in search of that perfect reef.

This article was written by Justin. Justin writes select pieces about travel in Aruba for the

<http://marriott.com/property/propertypage/AUAAR>

### **Make A Visit To Aruba**

#### **By Martin Stoleman**

I love nothing more than sitting down with someone or a family of people and helping them to plan their next vacation. Why? Well, a few reasons I guess. First, I love to go on vacation. I have loved travel for as long as I can remember, so I love infecting other people with the travel bug. I also love helping people plan trips because I know that life is short and I believe that it was meant to be enjoyed. So I love helping people escape from it all and enjoy time somewhere nice. One of my favorite places to suggest for a visit is Aruba.

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I often suggest Aruba because it is a beautiful place to visit that is still somewhat undiscovered. I like that about a place. I rarely encourage people to visit a place that will be filled with nothing but tourists. You don't get a real taste of Mexico, for example, if you are on the beach with no one other than vacationers. So I encourage my clients to go for something a bit off the beaten path, like say Aruba.

Aruba is beautiful, there are none that would deny it. And beauty, I believe, is an essential part to any great vacation. Now of course people will have a wide variety of views on what exactly makes a thing beautiful, but I think most would agree that white sand beaches, clear blue skies and sunshine make any place great. So if you are looking for sun and beauty, look no further than to the island of Aruba.

Located in the Caribbean, Aruba has a wonderful mixture of things to do and beaches to relax on. You want the option of doing several different things on any vacation, so choosing something like Aruba that has options for business or relaxation is perfect no matter who you are or what kind of trip you want.

Talk to a travel agent about your desire to see Aruba. See what kind of package deals you can come up with and find out if any packages even include airfare. Be sure to share with your travel agent all about the things you hope to get from your trip so that she or he will be able to help you as much as possible. Let them fill you in on some of the lesser known things to experience in Aruba.

Grab your family or your closest friends and head off for some great time in Aruba. Once there, you will have the vacation of a lifetime. So get planning and then you can relax and enjoy all that Aruba has to offer.

Martin Stoleman is a travel agent that loves sending his clients to Aruba. See

<http://www.arubagoods.info>

for more on planning a trip there for yourself.



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