

Oranjestad, Aruba

Aruba is 20 miles long and 6 miles wide, located by Bonaire and Curaçao, the chain is called the ABC Islands. Aruba is completely unique from other Caribbean islands as instead of being a lush jungle, the landscape is desert.

History

Evidence of the original habitation by the Arawak and Caquetio dates from 2000 BC. Spanish explorer Alonso de Ojeda is credited with discovering the island in 1499. In the 17th century the Dutch seized the island, but lost it to the English several times, before finally regaining control.

Aruba was home to a mini gold rush after the mineral was found on the island in 1846. The gold mill, Bushiribana, is located on the northern coast of Aruba.

In 1986 it became an independent country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands with Oranjestad as its capital.

Local Flavors

- Keshi Yena - translates to “cheese filled” in Papiamento, Aruba’s official language; made with stewed meat (beef, pork, or chicken), rice, cheese, onions, peppers, tomatoes, and spices then stuffed in edam cheese.
- Pastechis - fried half-moon pastry filled with various sweet or savory ingredients.



Culture

Aruba celebrates its National Anthem and Flag Day on March 18th. Carnaval is a significant cultural event. Aruba has competed at the Olympic Games since 1988. The most popular sports are association football, basketball, baseball, and volleyball.

Animals

Animals endemic are: Aruba Island Rattlesnake (venomous pitviper), Aruba Whiptail Lizard, Curacao Striped Anole, Aruba Leaf-toed Gecko, Hieroglyphic Cone (predatory and venomous marine gastropod mollusk), Aruba Burrowing Owl (a burrowing owl), and the Aruban Conure (parrot).



Business

The economy is dominated by: tourism, aloe, petroleum refining, and offshore banking. Aruba enjoys a low unemployment rate and one of the highest standards of living in the Caribbean.



Currency

USD widely accepted. The official currency is the Aruba Florin. Major credit cards are widely accepted.



Cell Service

Widespread and fairly reliable.

Internet Service

Wifi is available with a purchase at most restaurants, pubs, and coffee houses.

Driving

On the right side of the road. No cell phone use. No right turns on red.

Sites to See

Within walking distance

- The cruise port here is in the center of town, there's shopping, restaurants and car rentals nearby.
- Surfside Beach is 1.5 miles south and Druif Beach is 1.7 miles north.
- Fort Zoutman & Willem III Tower - circa 1798, is the oldest building in Aruba this site is now the Historical Museum of Aruba. (1/2 mile walk)

Excursion or transportation needed attractions:

- California Lighthouse is an iconic landmark, it stands at 98 feet, the tallest structure in Aruba. Named after the steamship California which sank off the shores of Aruba in 1891.
- Donkey Sanctuary. Historically donkeys were the main mode of transportation on the island. Now over 100 donkeys reside here, you're invited to pet and interact.
- The Butterfly Farm consists of a tropical garden that is full of a variety of butterflies.
- Arikok National Park covers almost 20% of the land in Aruba. This large park is open to explore, from the rugged desert landscapes to seaside cliffs and caves with indigenous paintings.
- Ayo Rock Formation; the towering formation is imposing but easily accessible, and you can walk in between the massive boulders through a series of pathways.
- Hooiberg Lookout is a volcanic formation that is located in the center of the island, the highest peak. The climb up is steep with lots of steps. On a clear day, you can see Venezuela from the mountaintop.
- Arashi Dunes are a unique feature, near California Lighthouse.
- Quadirikiri Cave is a pair of dome-shaped limestone caves with petroglyphs & ceiling openings that let in natural light.
- Conchi Natural Pool - small natural pool on the coast protected from the rough seas by encircling rocks.
- Fontein Cave - small limestone cave with pictographs created by Arawak people and graffiti left by early Europeans.
- The Aruba Aloe Factory & Farm is over 100 years old and home to a factory and museum that visitors are welcome to tour.
- Beaches!
- San Nicolas Street Art Murals. New murals are added every year, currently there's over 40.

