

Overview of Aruba

Aruba is the smallest and most Western island of the Dutch Antilles, which, known locally as the ABCs, also include Bonaire and Curaçao. Aruba is a popular cruise destination, and it's little wonder why. The beaches are so perfect they're almost clichéd: miles of white, sandy beaches, turquoise waters and the requisite year-round sun. Over a million visitors arrive on this tiny island each year, enticed by its luxury resorts, first-class restaurants, 24-hour casinos and excellent watersport facilities.

Most visitors stay either in the capital, Oranjestad, or just to the north in one of the many resort complexes on Eagle and Palm beaches. The remainder of the island is much less developed and in the arid interior there is nothing more substantial than cacti and divi-divi trees, contorted by the consistently strong trade winds. For those who need more than sunbathing to get their kicks, there are plenty of activities available on the island. There is good diving and snorkelling along the reef on the protected leeward coast and the windsurfing is excellent a little further north at Fisherman's Hut. Deep-sea fishing can also be arranged through many of the hotels.

Key Facts

Language:

The official languages in Aruba are Dutch and the native Papiamentu. English and Spanish are taught in school and are also widely spoken. Some French is also understood.

Passport/Visa:

All passports must be valid for period of intended stay. It is highly recommended that travellers always have six months' validity on their passports after departure. Visitors must hold sufficient funds, onward or return tickets, and all documents for next destination. As part of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), all travellers travelling between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, and the Caribbean region are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. Travellers departing from the USA must present a valid passport to immigration authorities. Most visas can be extended up to a total of 180 days per calendar year.

Currency:

The official currency is the Aruban Florin (AWG). The Florin is tied to the US Dollar. US currency is accepted everywhere and other major currencies can be exchanged at banks. Credit and debit cards are widely accepted and there are ATMs in Oranjestad.

Electricity:

Electric current in Aruba is 127 volts, 60Hz. Flat two and three-pin plugs are standard.

Travel to Aruba

Overview

Windsurfing and kite surfing are undeniably two of the biggest drawcards for visitors to Aruba, with the island providing some of the best conditions possible in the world for these two sports. Whether a beginner or an expert, there are spots suitable for everyone as well as plenty of schools and shops that provide lessons and equipment hire. Further water-based activities include snorkelling and diving along the shallow, world-class coral reefs, tubing, banana-boating, and much more.

Holidaymakers with a yen for horseback riding can indulge themselves in Aruba's topography, which provides plenty of adventurous and enjoyable excursions, from sand dunes to arid desert plains. Riding experience is not required to join a guided outing from one of the two main horse-riding operators, Rancho Notorious and Rancho Del Campo. Most excursions take in the island's sights and landmarks, such as the Arikok Hills, the lighthouse and natural bridge.

A visit to the waterfront in Oranjestad is all it takes for deep-sea fishing enthusiasts to hire themselves a private boat with captain and crew, for a day or a few hours, to set out to sea in search of game. The island's temperate offshore waters boast a wide variety of Atlantic game fish, including white and blue marlin, Barracuda, Shark, Blackfin, Bluefin and Yellowfin Tuna. In high season charters may be difficult to come by, so it may be wise for visitors to book ahead through their hotels.

And of course, for the less actively inclined, there are miles and miles of pristine white beaches, fringed with palm trees and ringed with warm, bright blue water.

Climate in Aruba

With an average temperature of 82°F (28°C) all year round and never dropping below 68°F (20°C), Aruba is constantly hot. Luckily, visitors are kept relatively cool by the constant trade winds. The peak tourist season is between mid-December and mid-April, and if travellers can visit outside this period, they can expect room rates to be almost halved. Rainfall is infrequent, but if it occurs at all it's usually between October and January. Travellers can visit Aruba all year round with great weather, but to avoid the busiest times, it's best to go in late April or early May.

Health Notes when travelling to Aruba

There are no special health requirements for visitors to Aruba, but travellers coming from yellow fever infected countries need an immunisation certificate. Aruba has experienced occasional outbreaks of dengue fever, a flu-like illness transmitted by Aedes mosquitoes that favour densely populated areas. The use of insect repellent is advised. Visitors are warned that some types of fish, including some tropical reef fish, are poisonous when eaten, even cooked. Medical care is good in Aruba, which has one hospital, and four modern medical centres spread over the island. Health insurance is recommended; food and water are considered safe.

Safety Notes when travelling to Aruba

Crime is not a major problem in Aruba and most visits are trouble-free. However, visitors are still advised to take common-sense precautions, such as locking valuables in the hotel safe and taking care when walking home at night.

Duty Free in Aruba

Travellers to Aruba do not need to pay customs duty on 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars, one litre of alcohol and gift articles to the value of AWG 400.

Doing Business in Aruba

Oranjestad is the main business centre in Aruba and the focus for the island's growing international financial services. English is considered to be the language of business. Meetings are generally held in formal settings such as offices or conference centres; smoking and chewing gum are not acceptable. Handshaking is customary for introductions between both men and women; female business associates should be treated with as much respect as men and often hold high positions in companies. Punctuality for meetings is required. Business hours are 9am to 5pm.

Communication in Aruba

The international dialling code for Aruba is +297. Visitors with unlocked phones can purchase local SIM cards and all of the destination's resorts and hotels offer WiFi, as do many of its cafes and restaurants.

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Tippling in Aruba

A 10 or 15-percent tip is usually included on restaurant, bar and room service bills in Aruba. Otherwise, a tip should be added, usually 10 to 20 percent depending on the service. There is an 11-percent room tax on hotel bills. Taxis should be tipped around 15 percent and porters expect a tip of US\$1 per bag.

Passport/Visa Note

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Entry Requirements

Entry requirements for Americans:

United States passport holders must have a passport valid for period of intended stay. A visa is not required for stays of up to 90 days.

Entry requirements for Canadians:

Canadian nationals require a passport valid for period of intended stay. A visa is not required for stays of up to 90 days.

Entry requirements for UK nationals:

UK nationals require a passport valid for period of intended stay and may stay for 90 days without a visa.

Entry requirements for Australians:

Australian nationals require a passport valid for period of intended stay, but no visa for stays of up to 90 days.

Entry requirements for Irish nationals:

Irish nationals require a passport valid for period of intended stay, but no visa for stays of up to 90 days.

Entry requirements for New Zealanders:

New Zealanders require a passport valid for period of intended stay, but a visa is not needed for a stay of up to 90 days.

Entry requirements for South Africans:

South African nationals must hold a passport valid for period of intended stay, and a visa. Holders of a valid multiple entry 'C' or 'D' visa issued by a Schengen member state can stay for up to 90 days without a visa.

Tourist Offices

Aruba Tourism Authority, Oranjestad: +1 800 862 7822 or <http://www.aruba.com>

Aruba Embassies

In the United States:

Royal Netherlands Embassy, Washington DC, United States (also responsible for Aruba): +1 202 244 5300.

In Canada:

Royal Netherlands Embassy, Ottawa, Canada (also responsible for Aruba): +1 613 237 5030.

In the United Kingdom:

Royal Netherlands Embassy, London, United Kingdom (also responsible for Aruba): +44 (0)20 7590 3200.

In Australia:

Royal Netherlands Embassy, Canberra, Australia (also responsible for Aruba): +61 (0)2 6220 9400.

In Ireland:

Royal Netherlands Embassy, Dublin, Ireland (also responsible for Aruba): +353 (0)1 269 3444.

In New Zealand:

Royal Netherlands Embassy, Wellington, New Zealand (also responsible for Aruba): +64 (0)4 471 6390.

In South Africa:

Royal Netherlands Embassy, Pretoria, South Africa (also responsible for Aruba): +27 (0)12 425 4500.

Foreign Embassies in Aruba

American Embassy

US Consulate General, Curacao (also responsible for Aruba): +599 (0)9 461 3066.

Canadian Embassy

Consulate of Canada, Curaçao (also responsible for Aruba): +599 (0)9 560 9936.

British Embassy

British Consulate General Amsterdam, Amsterdam (also responsible for Aruba): +31 70 427 0427.

Currency

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Port of Call - Oranjestad

On the south coast of Aruba, Oranjestad is the island's capital - a port of call warmed by glorious sunshine, lapped by turquoise waters and lined with miles of white, sandy beaches. The dock is in the northern section of town and attracts many cruise ships bringing passengers from all over the world to enjoy this island's charm. Oranjestad offers a great selection of first-class restaurants, boutiques and shopping complexes, as well as 24-hour casinos and excellent water sports facilities to entertain cruise passengers. And if there's still time, there are a couple of interesting museums in town, and a visit to the nearby Eagle and Palm beaches wouldn't go amiss either. Cruise ships dock at one of the three terminals operated by the Aruba Ports Authority and there are Tourist Information desks inside for any passenger queries. The port has three berths for mega cruise ships and two for medium sized ships. The maximum water depth in Oranjestad is 32ft (9.7m) and there is over 4000ft (1240m) of docking space.

Shopping in Oranjestad

In the port terminals, there are several outlets selling a variety of local and Caribbean handicrafts and souvenirs, such as exquisite crystal, Dutch Delft (pottery) and locally dyed batik prints. Oranjestad town centre is within walking distance and boasts excellent boutiques and shopping complexes. Duty is very low, generally making shopping good value for money - most shops price in both Florins and US Dollars.

Best Buy: Arawak-style pottery and Dutch shoes (El Bohio, Port of Call Marketplace)

Dining in Oranjestad

Wacky Wahoo's Restaurant - fresh seafood caught that day, crabcakes, fresh vegetables, and bold Caribbean flavours. Papillon Restaurant - classic French recipes with a Caribbean flair, famed for its pan-fried Grouper with garlic and herbs. Cuba's Cookin' - try the plantain chips with guacamole, and wash it down with a fresh Mojito.

Best Dish: Dutch pancakes (crêpes)

Overview of the Attractions in Aruba

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Public Holidays in Aruba

	2020	2021
Betico Croes Day	Thu. January 25	Thu. January 25
New Year's Day	Mon. January 1	Mon. January 1
National Anthem and Flag Day	Mon. March 18	Mon. March 18
King's Day	Sat. April 27	Sat. April 27
Good Friday	Wed. April 10	Tue. April 2
Easter Monday	Sat. April 13	Fri. April 5
Labour Day	Wed. May 1	Wed. May 1
Ascension Day	Tue. May 21	Mon. May 13
Christmas Day	Wed. December 25	Wed. December 25
Boxing Day	Thu. December 26	Thu. December 26