

# A CRUISING GUIDE TO THE ABC ISLANDS 2.0

**A**RUBA

**B**ONAIRE

**C**URACAO

By

Frank Virgintino

## **A CRUISING GUIDE TO THE ABC ISLANDS.**

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# A CRUISING GUIDE TO THE ABCs

by

Frank Virgintino

*Dedicated to*

*all the cruising sailors who have a desire to sail far and wide. May this guide provide you with insights that will make your voyage to the ABC islands at the western edge of the Leeward Antilles an unforgettable experience.*



Figure 1. THE ABCS AT THE EDGE OF THE LEEWARD ANTILLES



# INTRODUCTION

The **ABC islands** include Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao. They are the three western-most of the LEEWARD ANTILLES. From east to west they are, in order: Bonaire, Curaçao and Aruba.



Figure 2. THE ABCS UP CLOSE

**NOTE:** At the right side of this chartlet you will see the number 12 degrees N latitude. THAT IS A VERY SIGNIFICANT NUMBER WITH REGARD TO THE ABC ISLANDS AS THIS LATITUDE (12°N) PUTS THEM BEYOND THE REACH OF MOST HURRICANES.



All three islands are part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, although they remain outside the European Union. Aruba and Curaçao are autonomous, self-governing constituent countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, while Bonaire is a special municipality of the Netherlands.

Cruising sailors get confused by the title *Leeward Antilles*. There are six “Dutch” islands in the Caribbean. Three are located in the Lesser Antilles. They are St. Maarten (half the island), Saba and St. Eustatius (Statia). While these are located in the Leeward Islands part of the Lesser Antilles chain of islands, **the ABC islands are leeward of them and thus the Leeward Antilles**. That is fairly easy to understand. However, including the ABCs in the Lesser Antilles chain of islands is, in my opinion, a stretch.



Figure 3. THE CARIBBEAN BASIN

Does it make any difference whether they are included in the Lesser Antilles? In fact it does, as there are attributes associated with the Lesser Antilles that the ABC

islands, the islands of Venezuela and for that matter, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, do not share. The attributes for the cruising sailor relate to wind and sea conditions, reef structures and so forth.

In the case of the Trade Wind, due to the fetch from the Lesser Antilles it will blow harder and be stronger; 5 to 10 knots stronger, than what you have come to expect. During hurricane season the wind may be less and there may even be periods when it comes from the west. During regular Trade Wind season the strongest wind will be in the afternoon when gusts can reach over 30 knots just as you are arriving and attempting to anchor or dock.

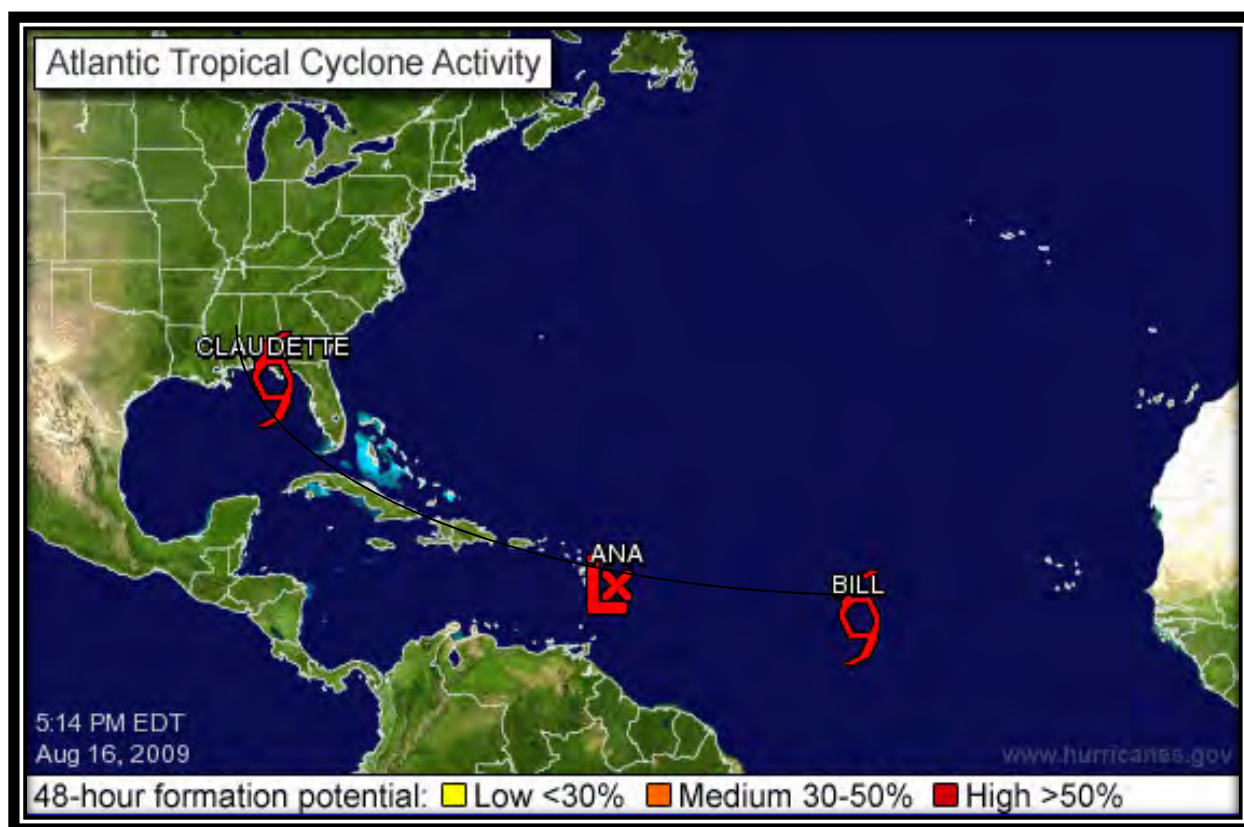


Figure 4. TROPICAL CYCLONE ACTIVITY DIVERTED BY THE CORIOLIS EFFECT

From this exhibit, one can see that as storms form and move from east to west, due to the Coriolis Effect which results from the earth's rotation, storms tend to go west and curve to the north. This and the following chart show the relative distance between the location of the ABCs and tracked tropical storm paths.



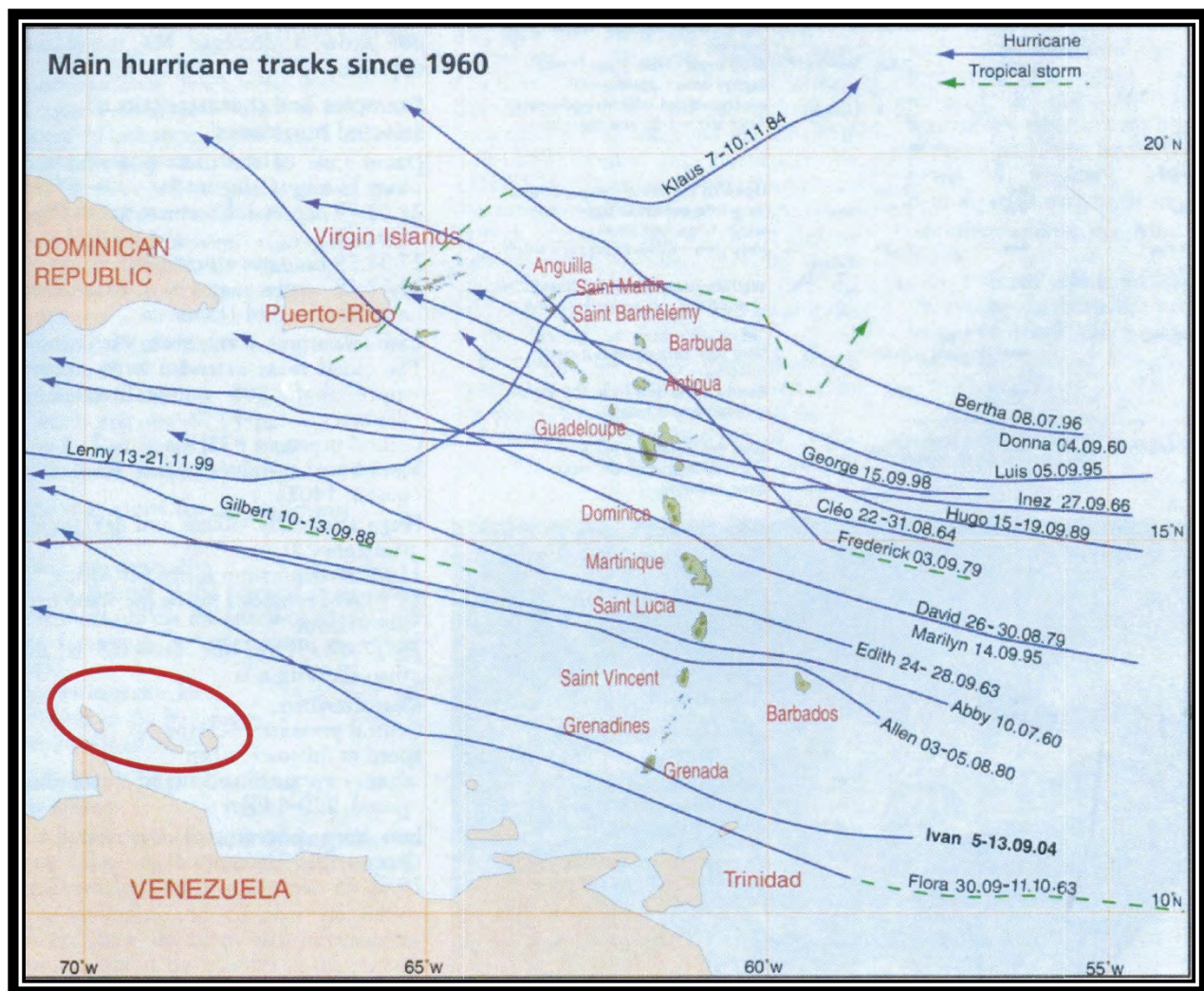


Figure 5. MAIN HURRICANE TRACKS SINCE 1960

**NOTE:** Cruising sailors tend to think of Grenada and Trinidad as the places to pass the hurricane season. The above exhibit demonstrates the tracks of recent hurricanes, and the ABC islands (lower left above Venezuela) are untouched. The last hurricane to hit the ABCs was in 1877 and the last tropical storms in 1988 and 1996, a record on par with Grenada; perhaps better.

## APPROACHES TO THE ABC ISLANDS



Figure 6. JUST ABOUT IN THE MIDDLE OF EVERYWHERE

### ***FROM THE SOUTH***

The ABC islands lie 20 to 55 nm north of Venezuela, depending on the island and from where you depart Venezuela. There is a great deal of trade between Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao, at least at the local level, and no shortage of Venezuelan fish, fruit and vegetables brought from the mainland.

## ***FROM THE WEST***

There are occasions, albeit infrequent, that a west wind will blow; especially during “hurricane season”. On these occasions, one need fight only the current and possibly the sea to make easting. However, in normal Trade Wind conditions, many cruising boats have simply given up. This is especially true east of Aruba as the water around Aruba shoals and the sea can build to impressive heights. With a stiff 20 knot wind on the bow and an average of 1 knot west current, at times even more, making one’s easting is near impossible. It is best to make your cruising plans very carefully so as to not need to back track.

I have always referred to the area west of Aruba as “the Hole.” This is because the distance from the eastern Caribbean is over 800 miles with nothing to block the trade winds and the seas that they produce. Add to this that ocean depths to the east of Aruba are 5,000 ft + and on the west side drop to less than 300 feet. The area of shoal water directly west of Aruba continues all the way across to Cabo Falso, Venezuela; a distance of over 70 nautical miles. When the Trade Wind blows hard this entire area raises very rough seas. Going west, stand to the north to go around the shoal.

The easiest way to get out of “the Hole” is to continue west to Guatemala and Belize; OR to head across the Caribbean to Hispaniola (Haiti/Dominican Republic).

I recall one sailing couple who did this and made Boca Chica, DR from Aruba, somewhat beat up. The mistake they made was that they SAILED NORTH BY NORTHEAST, when they should have freed the sheets and fallen off even if it meant that they were headed for Cabo Beata (DR) or even slightly west of there. The reason is that, because the island of Hispaniola is so large, as you approach it, conditions will moderate, especially inside the five mile line. Make whatever port you can make in the DR and if it is in your intention to go east, work your way east under the shelter of Hispaniola.

**IF YOU FIND YOURSELF WEST OF ARUBA AND WANT TO GO EAST, IT IS MOST ASSUREDLY BETTER, IN ALMOST ALL CONDITIONS, TO GO NORTH BEFORE TURNING EAST.**





Figure 7. THE 'HOLE' WEST OF ARUBA

**NOTE:** Crossing back and forth across the Caribbean is a strategy that most cruising boats do not take; instead they go west. Heading directly west is never the best strategy as you will have ever increasing, following seas and will watch as your autopilot (or helmsman) yaws ever more frequently.

## FROM THE WEST

If you sail the Caribbean in 'QUADRANTS' as I often recommend, then to visit the ABC islands you will find yourself either west of them or north of them. If you are east of them, perhaps Grenada or Trinidad, you can use the wind and the seas and the current in your favor. In all cases you will most often have a fast passage.

Due to conditions at this time in Venezuela it is best to give both the mainland and the off lying islands of that country a wide berth. I would recommend a heading

NO CLOSER than 30 miles off the closest point of contact with Venezuela. Perhaps the chart below will assist you in making your route decisions. The chart was taken from data supplied throughout the Caribbean and summarized by Free Cruising Guides ([www.freecruisingguides.com](http://www.freecruisingguides.com)) through its CSI (Caribbean Security Index). The CSI is a guide that predicts the PROBABILITY of crime in a given area in the Caribbean.

If you follow this strategy, your heading west will be west by northwest. When you find yourself north of Aves de Barlovento and Aves de Sotovento, (the eastern most islands of Venezuela, you can change your heading to west by southwest making for the southeastern tip of Bonaire. This route may very well add 30 to 40 more sea miles to your trip, but will afford a much higher level of safety( recent reporting statistics indicate a very high number of crime, both violent and non violent on the mainland as well as in the islands of Venezuela). The additional benefit is that you will, most often, be sailing on a broad reach rather than a run, depending on the Trade Wind direction at any given time of the year.

## ***FROM THE NORTH***

If you are north of the ABC islands, from any point EAST of Cabo Beata, DR, you can sail south on a port tack and make for any of the ABC islands. You MUST take the westerly current into consideration as well as the wind direction. Early in the Trade Wind season the wind tends to come from the east northeast while later in the season, as summer approaches, the wind tends east southeast. The average distance across the Caribbean from Puerto Rico or the Dominican Republic is approximately 350 nm; normally a very pleasant two day sail for most boats. Be careful on your departure to schedule it so that you do not make landfall at night; especially in Aruba as it is surrounded by reef.

If you think your chartplotter can safely take you through the reefs, REMEMBER THAT WHAT YOU SEE ON THE SCREEN IS NOT NECESSARILY WHAT IS SO IN THE WATER. MANY CHARTS CAN BE OFF BY HUNDREDS OF YARDS AND IN SOME CASES MORE THAN THAT!

***NOTE:*** Each of the ABC islands is a separate and autonomous country. Each has its own requirements for entry as well as for how long you may stay and how long your boat may stay. For short visits I have never had a problem and in fact you will find the ABC island officials to be very pleasant in most cases.

## COMMERCIAL TRAFFIC

In and around the ABC Islands, there is a higher concentration of commercial shipping than you may have grown accustomed to in the Caribbean. Between oil refineries and other business with the mainland, it is wise, regardless of where you are headed, to-keep a sharp eye out for traffic.

If you are equipped with AIS (Automatic Identification System), spotting traffic as well as knowing their course and speed is made much easier. However, many local fishing boats do not transmit an AIS signal and it is wise to look out as well as to watch your radar carefully. Many local fishing boats do not have adequate nighttime lighting and on a dark night present a real hazard.

The point is, **STAY ALERT AND DO NOT NOD OFF AT THE HELM.**

### ***SPECIAL NOTE***

If you are reading this guide, it may very well mean that you are considering cruising to the ABC islands. Many people have asked me, “Which is the best one to visit?” This question presupposes that one is either short of time or somehow thinks that the three islands are more or less the same.

If you are short of time, I very much recommend that you reconsider your cruising plans to find a way to be able to slow down. Too many cruisers rush past this area after having cruised the Lesser Antilles, thinking that it may very well be “more of the same.” **THE ABC ISLANDS ARE NOT THE SAME AS THE LESSER ANTILLES ISLAND CHAIN TO THE EAST.** The ABC islands are unique and distinct and should not be missed or rushed through.

Moreover, each of the three islands, Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao, is different one from another.

Perhaps a brief description of what can be found in each of the islands is appropriate at this time. Descriptions are a form of editing and thus never easy. They are generalizations meant to produce an insight and I apologize to any of the islanders for a generality that may be too broad.





Figure 8. THE ROUTE FROM BONAIRE TO ARUBA (EAST TO WEST) IS 110 NM

## LANGUAGE IN THE ABC ISLANDS

The official language of the ABC islands is Dutch and there is a clear Dutch patina in all three islands. However, English is also spoken virtually everywhere. The local language is a Creole called Papiamentu or Papiamentu. Most, if not all the locals, speak it. Spanish is also widely spoken.

Some basic phrases in Papiamentu

How are you?	<i>Con ta Bai?</i>
I am fine, thank you	<i>Mi ta bon, danki</i>
Have a good day	<i>Pasa un bon dia</i>
Good morning	<i>Bon dia</i>
Good afternoon	<i>Bon tardi</i>
Good evening	<i>Bon noche</i>
Goodbye	<i>Te aworo</i>
OK	<i>Ta bon</i>
Water	<i>Awa</i>
Beautiful	<i>Bunita</i>
Thank you	<i>Danki</i>

## CLEARING IN~IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS

For all three islands this is not an easy topic as the process is not uniform. Each island must be cleared into and out of independent of the other. Visas can be issued from 30 days to 90 days depending on who is following what directive at a given time. Most often you will receive a 90 day visa. Those carrying a Caribbean passport are normally given 30 days which can be renewed only if they leave the country and then check back in.

In most cases boats can be left up to 6 months without a problem.

Many times you will find that the rules of immigration are not printed when you arrive and depending on the country and the officer, you may find information that can be contradictory. If you plan to stay with the boat for hurricane season, which is generally 4 months, it is best that you be very clear on what the law is and how it will be applied.

In order to be clear with the immigration officer when you arrive if you are planning to stay for a number of months, it is best that you have accurate information obtained in advance. Research in all ways the most current applications of the laws before you arrive. They change from time to time and are subject to interpretation by the officer.

## ***BONAIRE***



FLAG OF BONAIRE

The background symbolizes peace, liberty and tranquility while the blue represents the ocean that surrounds this island nation.

Sometimes it is best to start with a name and see what it means. Bonaire means good air and the air in Bonaire is very, very good. You will find the island very laid back. There is not a great deal of infrastructure. It is for nature lovers and if you love nature, this is the place for you. The waters around Bonaire are known to be pristine and they are amongst the clearest in the Caribbean.



TRADITIONAL FISHING

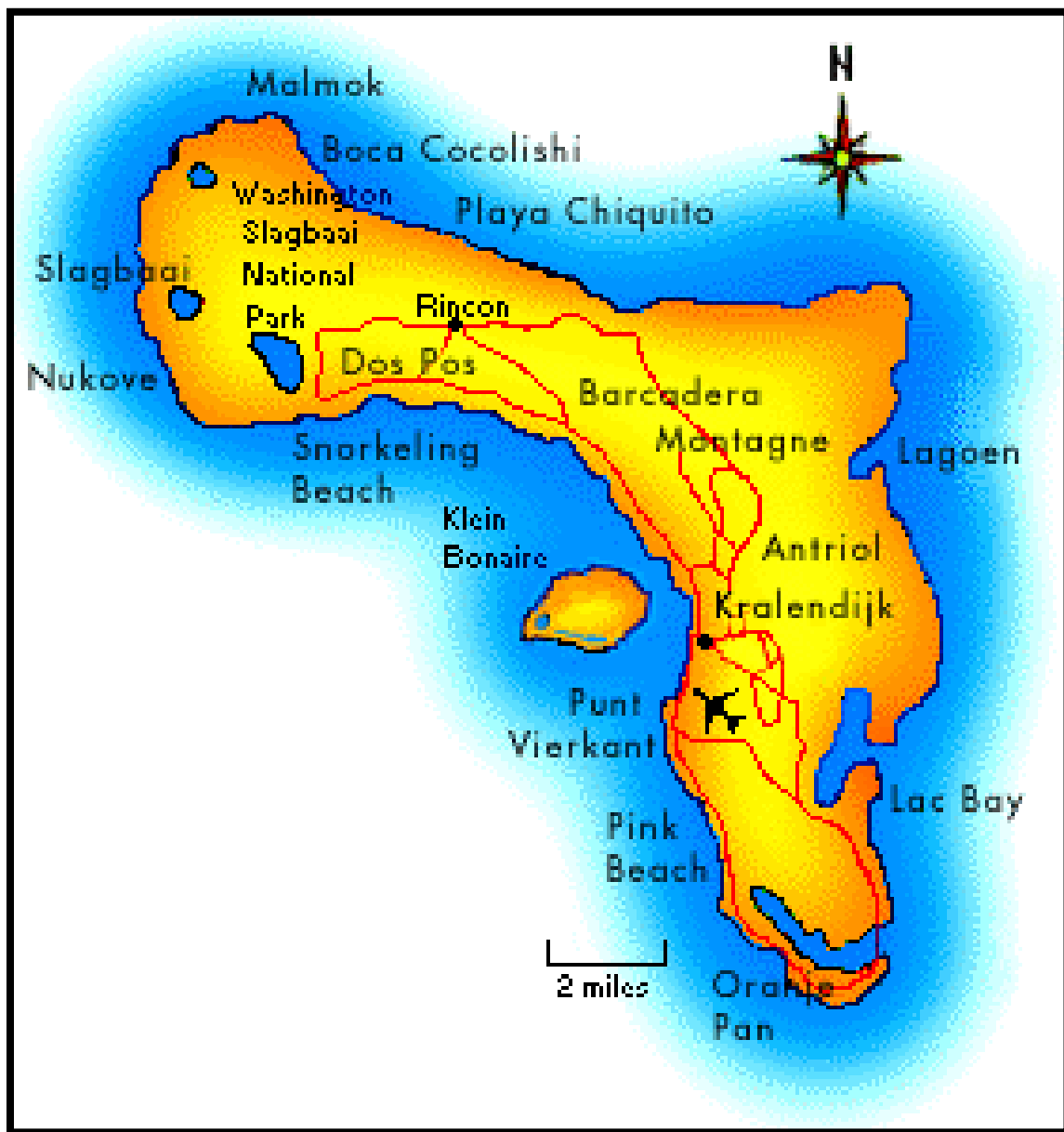


Figure 9. BONAIRE

Bonaire is a small island known for its pioneering role in the preservation of the environment, in particular the preservation of the marine environment; and for its excellent scuba diving, snorkeling, windsurfing and kayaking in the mangroves. Cycling and mountain biking are also very popular.





It is often said that a picture is worth a thousand words. The above is the 1,000 words about Bonaire in picture form.

Even if you do not scuba dive, there are many great locations to snorkel. To scuba dive, snorkel or swim in Bonaire waters requires a permit that can be obtained at local dive shops.

## *CURAÇAO*



FLAG OF CURAÇAO

The concept of **Liberty** was a big factor in the design of the Curaçao flag.

The name Curaçao most likely evolved from the Spanish who called the island “Corazon” (heart). The famed Portuguese mapmakers of the time adopted this word into their own language as “Curaçau” or “Curaçao.” Today, the locals know the island as DUSHI KORSOU (pronounced Korsow and means “sweet Curaçao”).

Curaçao was one of the largest slave depots in the Caribbean.

Curaçao has a great deal of infrastructure. Willemstad may not be the biggest city in the Caribbean but it is easily **ONE OF THE PRETTIEST AND CERTAINLY ONE OF THE MOST COSMOPOLITAN** with nearly 50 different ethnic groups making up the population. The Jewish community and its synagogue are over 350 years old.

The diversity that is Curaçao will interest you but what is really fascinating is how well it all ties together and functions so harmoniously.



Figure 10. MAP OF CURAÇAO WITH KLEIN CURAÇAO



MOST PEOPLE DO NOT KNOW THAT CURAÇAO HAS 7 OF THE BEST BEACHES ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD. THEY ARE ALONG THE WEST COAST OF THE ISLAND.





WILLEMSTAD~CAPITAL OF CURACO



NATURE ABOUNDS!





#### GREAT SCUBA SITES

Diversity is the right word to describe Curaçao. Culturally, entertainment wise, food, language and so much more leave you breathless. Walking across the floating pontoon bridge between Otrabanda and Punda will present you with vistas to challenge even the best photographer. Add restaurants and a vibrant nightlife and you have Curaçao.



## CURAÇAO HAS SOME OF THE BEST BEACHES IN THE WORLD

***ARUBA***

FLAG OF ARUBA

There are a number of theories about the meaning of the Aruban flag. One is that the four pointed star represents the island itself and the four points, its four main languages (Dutch, English, Spanish and Papiamentu). The light blue is the sky and the sea. Some say that the yellow stripes stand for abundance and liberty.





Figure 11. MAP OF ARUBA

Aruba has beaches and scuba diving, and other dedicated nature areas and activities as well. It also has infrastructure and a great deal of it. However, it is not as laid back as Bonaire and the city of Oranjestad is very different from Willemstad in Curaçao.

What Aruba is known for is SHOPPING and NIGHTLIFE. That is their strong suit. It is also an ideal jumping off point for cruising sailors heading west to reach Colombia and the western Caribbean. If you are heading back north, you can follow the wind and the current very easily and make the northeast corner of Jamaica at Port Antonio, a safe and wonderful stop before heading through the Windward Passage to make for the Bahamas.

ARUBA is a shopper's paradise. It is a FREE PORT.







A SIMPLE CASE OF 'SHOP TILL YOU DROP'







ARUBA SHOPPING MALL

And when you are all done shopping, if you still have energy (and money) left to spend, there is a terrific nightlife. Casinos, shows, bars; an unparalleled range of what constitutes the ideal “nightlife”.



THE CASINOS ARE SAFE AND CLEAN



SOME LIKE THEIR NIGHTLIFE INFORMAL AND LOCAL WHILE OTHERS LOOK FOR THE GLAMOROUS~ARUBA HAS IT ALL!





We started this discussion with the question, “Which of the ABC islands do I visit?” Hopefully you will make time to visit them all as I do not believe you will have any regrets. They make perfect stops along the way west (or north), averaging 25 to 50 miles apart.

**NOTE:** If you run out of time and hurricane season is upon you, and/or you need to leave the boat and fly home, the ABC islands are a good and safe place for you to leave her. Curaçao is clearly the favorite of the three for boat storage during hurricane season, but all three of the islands have marinas, yacht clubs and boat yards that will accommodate you.





## DO I STOP AT KLEIN CURAÇAO ON THE WAY FROM BONAIRE TO CURAÇAO?

You know how most of us are as cruising sailors; we are fascinated by remote uninhabited islands. You can stop on the lee side and go to visit the island. Aside from an abandoned lighthouse there is not much to see. The island is quite flat and unremarkable.



ABANDONED LIGHTHOUSE ON KLEIN CURAÇAO

There are a few reasons not to stop. The first is that, if you are going west, you have not cleared into Curaçao and your stop would be illegal. The second is that you still have a few hours of sailing to arrive at Spanish Waters or Willemstad and it is best to arrive in daylight.

I also do not like dilly dallying in waters so close to Venezuela.



KLEIN CURAÇAO~ABOUT 6 MILES OFF THE SOUTHEASTERN TIP OF CURAÇAO TO THE SOUTHEAST



BEACH AT THE ANCHORAGE AREA

## PORTS AND ANCHORAGES

### ***BONAIRE***

**Kralendijk** Moorings facing town-normally OK, but in wind reversal can get rough

**Harbor Village Marina** Nice marina; well protected, but a walk to town

**Plaza Resort Marina** Local boats -- 7ft depth

**Nautico Marina** Inexpensive; open to westerly winds

### ***CURAÇAO***

**The approved anchorages that are permitted by the anchoring permit are:**

**Fuik Baai** Isolated/south end of island

**Spanish Waters** Where all the cruising boats anchor; crowded/protected

**Willemstad** Location of Curaçao Marine

**Piscadera Bay** Protected anchorage, location of Royal Boatyard

**Santa Martha** Protected anchorage, remote and buggy due to mangroves

**Santa Cruz** Small anchorage; good for early morning departures

## **ARUBA**

<b>Rodger's Beach</b>	Isolated/south end of island
<b>Barcadera</b>	MUST-STOP FOR CLEARANCE IN; commercial and unattractive
<b>Oranjestad</b>	Capital of Aruba.... upscale marina
<b>Airport Anchorage</b>	South of marina - most popular cruisers' anchorage
<b>Bucuti Lagoon</b>	Marina/Boatyard and Yacht Club with very protected anchorage to the south of the facilities
<b>Spanish Lagoon</b>	Small anchorage and private nautical club
<b>Eagle Beach Anchorage</b>	Busy and rolly
<b>Hadicurari Beach</b>	Nice day stop ~swimming, close to bar/restaurant/dinghy dock





# BONAIRE

**12° 01.48N 68° 42.02W**

**Point off southeast corner 12° 06.20 N 68° 56.27 W**

**At entrance to Kralendijk**

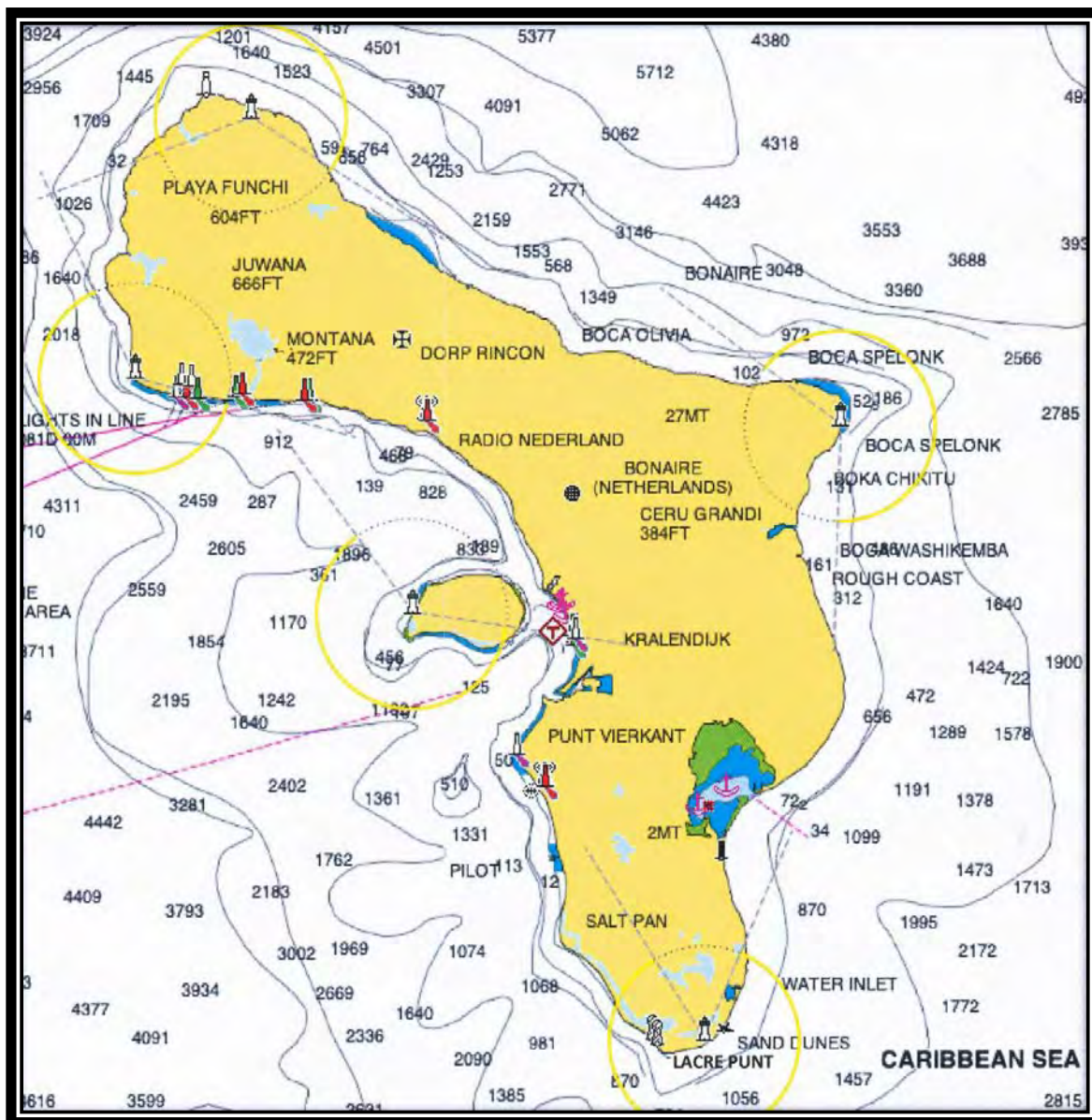


Figure 12. BONAIRE WITH DEPTHS



Bonaire is best approached from the southeast around Lacre Punt (southeast corner of the island). Once at the point you will normally have a wonderful reach up to the island's only port, Kralendijk (pronounced "crawlen-dike). Because the island is low, you will be in the lee of the seas but feel the full effect of the Trade Wind. As you pass the extensive salt flats perhaps you will see the flight of pink Flamingos.

Kralendijk is open and somewhat protected by the low island just to the northwest; Klein Bonaire. Be careful, for in the rare occasion that the wind reverses to the southwest, the mooring area can become quite rough.

Just north of the town is a marina that sits in a protected basin. If you have any doubt about the weather, particularly late in the cruising season, seek shelter there.



MAIN COMMERCIAL PIER~KRALENDIJK

The customs building is at the head of the NORTH DOCK, just north of the main commercial pier.



FIRST STOP~THE YELLOW CUSTOMS HOUSE WITH THE RED ROOF

To clear in you can tie up to the dock, or take a mooring, or tie up in a slip at Harbor Marina. You may only stay at this dock while you are clearing in. Clear first at Customs and then at the pink Immigration building in town. If Customs and Immigration are closed, go to the Police Station (adjacent to Immigration) in town to announce your arrival.

## ANCHORING IN BONAIRE

**THERE IS NO ANCHORING PERMITTED AT BONAIRE IN ANY CONDITIONS EXCEPT IN EMERGENCY AND THEN ONLY WITH THE HARBORMASTER'S APPROVAL.**

If you want one of the moorings fronting the town, you can rent them through the Harbor Village Marina. They monitor VHF channel 17. The moorings are owned by the National Marine Park and are priced very reasonably. Dive moorings have a yellow marker. These can be used but only for very short term. The moorings you want to use are the town moorings. The moorings to the north, closer to

Harbor Village Marina, tend to be more tranquil as there is more noise the closer you get to town. If you decide to use a mooring, you must use your own line. I always like to put on two; one with more slack than the other. This allows for a margin of safety if the first one breaks or chafes through.



BOATS ON MOORINGS ALONG TOWN WATERFRONT

## MARINAS AND YACHT CLUBS

Harbor Village Marina monitors VHF channel 17. It is well protected and has nice facilities. Water, electric and fuel are available. The entrance is located just 1,000 meters east of Klein Bonaire. They collect the mooring fees for the Marine Park.

Plaza Resort Marina is a small marina that monitors VHF channel 18. They are located 1 mile south of Kralendijk. It is a nice facility but most often is fully occupied with local boats. Call first before entering the narrow entrance. Draft is 7 feet or so at high tide.

The Nautico Bonaire is a stone's throw north from the town. It is exposed and not safe in rough conditions. They have room for 10 boats and prices are inexpensive.

Do not tie up with old halyard lines that do not stretch; sometimes there is a surge here as well.

Just below Nautico Bonaire to the south is Karel's Bar. This is the dinghy dock for cruising boats and the most popular watering hole. Bands play on Friday and Saturday. If you are anchored close by the music will come to you without volume control.



POPULAR SPOT!

## SERVICES

Bonaire has all the basic services that are most needed. There are supermarkets in town that are well stocked as well as a good laundromat. Just about everything you may be looking for is **east of the north pier and south of the Nautico Yacht Club.**

On the way to the airport, Warehouse Supermarket (delivers free) is across the street from Cash and Carry Wholesalers. Both facilities are very well stocked and you can reprovision without difficulty. Cultimara is a smaller supermarket located in the town center. In addition, Venezuelan boats come from the mainland twice a week with an abundance of fresh fruit and vegetables. You will find them on the town pier.





VENEZUELAN FRUIT AND VEGETABLE MARKET

There is a Budget Marine as well as sail repair, mechanical repair and fiberglass repair. Parts can be brought in duty free for a vessel in transit but you will need the help of an agent to do so. You can speak with Rocargo Shipping who handles such needs (VHF channel 9).

Dental and medical services are readily available as well.

The banks have ATM machines. Currency in the ABC islands is the NAF at \$1.79 to \$1.00 US.

Bonaire is a tourist area and there is no shortage of restaurants. I found most of them reasonably good and priced not inexpensively. Everyone you speak to has his or her own favorite.

There is also no shortage of dive shops in Bonaire. This is one of the principal attractions of the island. If you want to learn, this is the place to do it as the island caters to all levels of divers.

# SLAGBAAI NATIONAL PARK

At the north end of the island is the Washington Slagbaai National Park. The park is extensive, with a museum at the entrance that includes all aspects of the ecosystem of the island as well as history and culture.

You can drive through, bike through, or hike through the park.

The activities you can engage in are:

- Car touring
- Mountain biking
- Hiking
- Kayaking
- SCUBA diving
- Snorkeling & swimming
- Nature study
- Bird watching





Figure 13. DIVE SPOTS AROUND BONAIRE

The island is ringed with dive spots. The National Park at Washington Slagbaai is extensive and covers virtually the entire northern portion of the island.





Figure 14. WASHINGTON SLAGBAAI NATIONAL PARK

The National Park is well worth the time and the effort to make the trip. Be sure to prepare with adequate sun block and bottles of water.

*There are only about 2,500 yellow-shouldered Amazon parrots remaining in the world due to relentless poaching. A quarter of them, plus another 200+ bird species, call Bonaire home. You can see them all plus other animals and birds in Slagbaai National Park.*



## ADDITIONAL ATTRACTIONS

### *TOUR OF A KUNUKU HOME*

Ellen Cochrane-Herrera, a Bonaire native, invites visitors to tour her countryside home, KUNUKU ROOI LAMOENCHI. This home has been in her family more than 100 years. She leads the walk which is about 2 hours long. The house is located in the countryside east of Kralendijk. Taxi drivers will have no difficulty getting you there. The price of admission is reasonable and if you like history and nature, you are going to love this.

You must make an appointment for the morning or afternoon tour. The tourist office in town can assist you. KUNUKU is a Papiamentu word meaning ‘a place away where you can grow things’, a farm; and those who farm or ranch on Bonaire are ‘kunukerus’.



KUNUKU ROOI LAMOENCHI

## ***GO AHEAD, MAKE AN ASS OUT OF YOURSELF!***

It seems that there are more than 600 wild donkeys on Bonaire who became unemployed when they were displaced by trucks and machinery that now do the donkey work; e.g., carry water, carry people, carry crops or whatever other jobs that beasts of burden were given to do. (Personally, this is where I think the donkeys from Pinocchio all ended up.)

In any event, Merina Melis who was visiting from Holland, being a hard core animal lover, decided to obtain a 61 acre parcel of land and to make it a Donkey Sanctuary.



MERINA DOING WHAT SHE LOVES

You *may* meet donkeys strolling about Kralendijk. You *will* see donkeys at the Sanctuary.

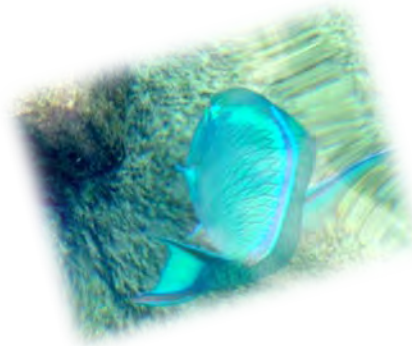
The refuge is open Tuesday through Sunday and there is no charge for admission. Bring whatever leftover food you have that you think donkeys like and they will eat it out of your hand. If you really love it and have the means, donations of any size are much appreciated.



SMILE! YOU'RE ON WATERPROOF CAMERA!

Bonaire is so many things, but the reefs surrounding the island coupled with the clarity of water, make for a scuba and snorkeling paradise. Even if you have never scuba dived in your life, if you know how to swim and you know how to breathe, the dive shops will do the rest for you.

DON'T MISS IT!





# CURAÇAO

12° 02.47N 68° 43.76W

Just off southeast corner of island at Point Kanon

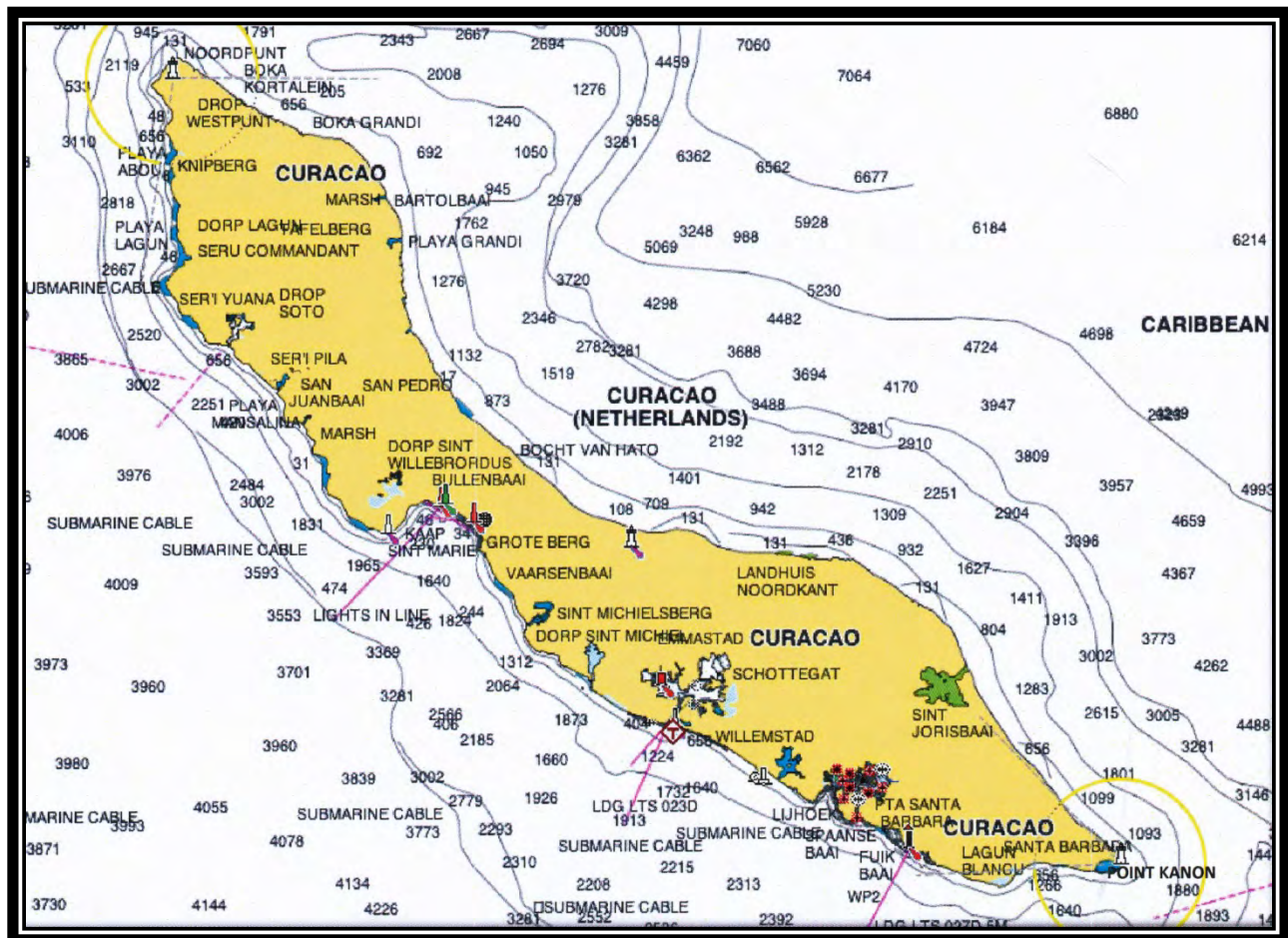


Figure 15. CURAÇAO

When arriving Curaçao, the place where you will need to clear in is at the capital, Willemstad. Because there is no anchorage area there that is suitable, most cruising boats go to Spanish Waters or Piscadera. Spanish Waters is the clear favorite.





Figure 16. ENTRANCE TO WILLEMSTAD: QUEEN EMMA FLOATING PONTOON BRIDGE, FOREGROUND; QUEEN JULIANA BRIDGE IN THE BACKGROUND.

## *CLEARING IN*

Normally your boat will not be boarded. What you do is, first, go to Customs. Willemstad is a twin city connected by a floating pontoon bridge and a high span bridge. You can walk across the floating pontoon bridge in a matter of minutes and it is quite pleasant.

It swings open frequently to allow traffic to enter and depart.

If you enter through here, to arrange for the



pontoon bridge to open you must contact the Port Authority on VHF channel 12. You do not have to go through a long conversation; just say the name of your boat slowly and indicate that you want to enter. The bridge operator may ask you where you are and why you want to come in. You can say your location and indicate that you want to go to Curaçao Marine.

The pontoon bridge stays open in rough weather, but at such times or when the bridge is out of service there are free ferry boats that go back and forth across the river.

Customs is your first stop. It is located in Punda adjacent to the floating fish market.

You are in for a very big surprise. These are the absolute friendliest officials I have ever met in my life. Once you clear customs you need to walk a few blocks southwest to the floating pontoon bridge. After you have crossed the bridge, turn right and head for the high span bridge. You will find Immigration and Port Authority directly under the bridge. (See Figure 16.)



**EXTREMELY FRIENDLY AND HELPFUL**



CUSTOMS BUILDING

WILLEMSTAD, the capital of Curaçao, is a twin city. Punda to the east and Otrobanda to the west.



COUNT THE PONTOONS!





Figure 17. WILLEMSTAD: A TALE OF TWO CITIES



## ***IMMIGRATION***

The Immigration office and the Port Authority building are just a few hundred feet apart. Go to Immigration first. When you clear in you will normally receive 90 days on your visa. If you plan to stay longer than 90 days, you will need to discuss this with the officer. Your boat will be allowed to stay for up to 6 months.



CURAÇAO IMMIGRATION (LEFT) AND PORT AUTHORITY (RIGHT)

After you have cleared Immigration, walk over to the Port Authority building and climb the long staircase to the second floor. Here you will pay for an anchoring permit. The fee is a one time payment of \$10.00 US. **The bays in which you may anchor are:**

- Fuik Baai**
- Spanish Waters**
- Piscadera Bay**
- Santa Martha, and**
- Santa Cruz**

Be sure to pay this fee; do not skip it. The Curaçao Coast Guardsmen do patrol their waters and at times will ask you for your paperwork (clearance and anchoring permit).

## CURAÇAO~WILLEMSTAD

**12° 06.16N 68° 56.29W**

**At entrance to Willemstad**

**NOTE: Maintain shipping lanes entering and departing**



**Figure 18. WILLEMSTAD, CURAÇAO**



## ***FACILITIES***

Curaçao Marine is located past the Queen Juliana Bridge (the high suspension bridge) and to starboard. Have no fears ~ your mast **WILL DEFINITELY CLEAR**. The Curaçao boatyard is first class and many boats use it for hurricane season layover on the hard. The yard has a full complement of workmen for all the different jobs you may have on your vessel. There is also a Budget Marine in their facility. The yard has about 25 slips for those that prefer to be in the water.



**Figure 19. ENTRANCE TO CURAÇAO MARINE: TO STARBOARD AFTER THE BRIDGE AND THEN TO STARBOARD AGAIN**

### **CURACAO MARINE**

[www.Curaçao marine.com](http://www.Curaçao marine.com)

The yard is located just off Schottegat Bay in Baai Van Versali. Entry is straightforward.



THE YARD IS CLEAN AND WELL MANAGED, WITH A NEW HEAVY DUTY TRAILER ON DUTY

## PUNDA and OTRABANDA

### **“I THINK I’M GONNA LIKE IT HERE!”**

If you recall the story of Orphan Annie, this is her famous line and the basis of a song when she arrives at the mansion of Daddy Warbucks.

The capital of Curaçao, Willemstad, is an extraordinary place in every sense of the word. It is truly one of the great cities of the Caribbean. Its two halves, Punda and Otrabanda, are separated by the channel and connected by a pontoon bridge.

Curaçao is a country diverse in heritage and ethnicity. In fact, 42 different ethnic groups call the island their home.



The island's residents, most of whom are of European or African descent, represent various cultural heritages and have a strong sense of cultural awareness. The heart of Curaçao's heritage beats with the rhythm of African culture, and the majority of the island's population consists of people of African descent. You can see it clearly in the language, music and art. However, there is a distinct Dutch patina, which makes itself known in many different ways. Add to these two cultural imprints those Curaçaoans of Latin, Jewish, Middle Eastern, and East Indian background, and you can begin to appreciate the complexity that is Curaçao.

Somehow it all works together to make for a city with an unmistakable personality.



VEGETABLE MARKET -- PUNDA

The fruit and vegetable market as well as the fresh fish market are across the street from the Customs Building. If you want to buy fresh, this is where you will find it. The market area is full of color, sound and activity; be sure to go!

The boats that bring the fresh fruit and vegetables, and fresh fish as well, must navigate the Queen Emma Pontoon Bridge which connects Punda and Otrabanda, and then turn to starboard through the L.G. Smith Bridge which connects Punda and Scharloo. Originally a plantation (“Charloo”), as the area became the community of Scharloo, the early residents were primarily well-to-do Sephardic Jews.



THE LG SMITH BRIDGE, AN ELEGANT PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE BETWEEN PUNDA AND SCHARLOO

Self guided walking tours through the various neighborhoods that highlight historically and architecturally significant buildings have been thoughtfully laid out, even down to the recommendation that they be undertaken in the morning and late afternoon for the best (photographic) lighting!





AT THE PUNDA END OF THE PONTOON BRIDGE

Walking northeast from the Pontoon Bridge you will walk along the waterfront with its myriad tables and colorful umbrellas. You can sit and have a drink and take it all in or you can even have lunch or dinner. The sense is entirely European.



SHY CITY DWELLER



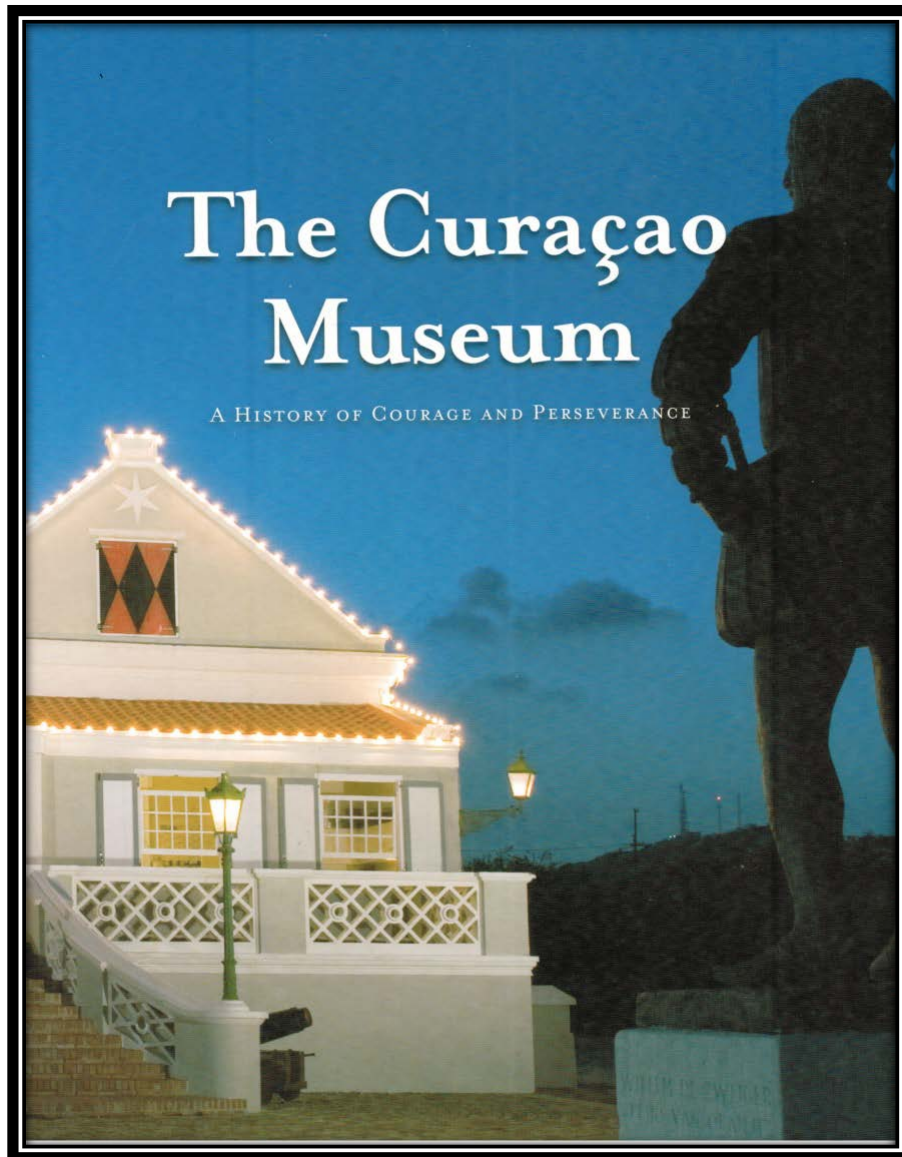
BARS AND COFFEE SHOP ABOUND



MIKVÉ ISRAEL-EMANUEL SYNAGOGUE



The Mikvé Israel-Emanuel Synagogue is one of the oldest in the Americas, built in 1651. You can enter the lobby but must pay a small fee to gain access to the small museum and gift shop. If you plan to visit, please dress appropriately.



If you like history, the Curaçao Museum exhibits antique furniture, international and local art. The Snip Gallery displays remains of the first KLM airliner “De Snip” that crossed the Atlantic Ocean (1934). The garden has sculptures and an historical-cultural children’s village. The museum curator is the type of person who will take the time to answer your questions and make your time at the gallery a wonderful experience:

Dear Mr. Virgintino,

I hope you are fine.

I want to thank you for your recent visit and the great opportunity to promote our museum in the ABC Cruising Guide.

The Museum hours are included and we look forward to those who would choose to visit us at our facility to learn more about the history of Curaçao.

If there is anything that I can do more please feel free to contact me.

With kind regards, Met vriendelijke groet,

Thamara Vervuurt

*The Curaçao Museum*

van leeuwenhoekstraat z/n

Office : +5999 4626051

hours : Tuesday - Friday 10.00 - 17.00

Museum: + 5999 4623873

hours : Tuesday - Friday 08.30 - 16.30

Saturday & Sunday 10.00 - 16.00

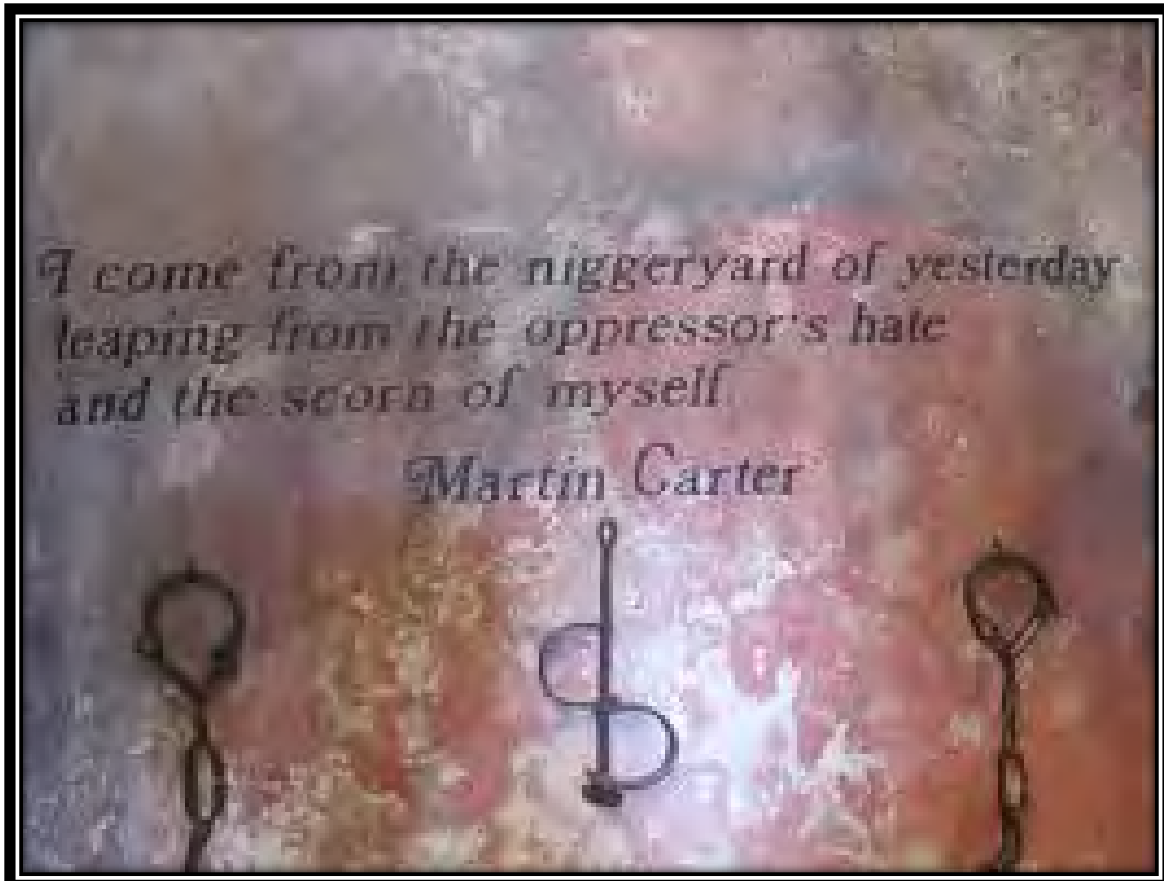
## ***Kura Hulanda***

The island also has a sad history as it was one of the principal Caribbean slave markets where slaves were bought, sold and traded. **Kura Hulanda** (Dutch Yard), one of the finest museums that I have ever seen, was itself once a slave 'vendue'.

Thanks to the work of Jacob Gelt Dekker, an extraordinary man who invested his time and a great deal of money, the facility is what it is today. He purchased Dutch Yard in the 1990s and restored it and the surrounding area as well. Today it encompasses the Hotel Kura Hulanda as well as the Kura Hulanda Slave Museum. The museum is dedicated to the history of the African Holocaust precipitated by the Triangle Trade. Dekker himself was born to a well educated Jewish father whose first wife and children were killed during the Nazi Holocaust. Perhaps from this sentiment and his world wide travels, this self made millionaire created a museum that not only tells the story but tells it in such a way that as you go through it, you feel the pain and the suffering of those who were mistreated as less than being human.







*"I come from the niggeryard of yesterday,  
leaping from the oppressor's hate  
and the scorn of myself"*

Martin Wylde Carter was a Guyanese poet and political activist. Widely regarded as the greatest Guyanese poet, and one of the most important poets of the Caribbean region, Carter is best known for his poems of protest, resistance and revolution.

Most of the slaves sold here were brought from West Africa and the collection of sculptures on display will give you a sense of the people. Most estimates indicate that about 12,000,000 Africans were taken from their homeland and brought to the Americas, of whom approximately 10,000,000 survived. Of that number, fewer than 1,000,000 went to the United States while about 5,000,000 ended up in Brazil. The remainder, about 4,000,000 people, was spread throughout the Caribbean.

The horrors of slavery and the impact of such an evil institution are revealed in the exhibits at the museum.

**DO NOT MISS A VISIT TO THE MUSEUM**



COURTYARD AT KURA HULANDA MUSEUM



SCULPTURES IN THE COURTYARD~EXTRAORDINARY



The outdoor restaurant at the Kura Hulanda compound is a very pleasant place, made more so by this exquisite mural on the wall. ENJOY LUNCH!

## Seú

If you happen to be in Willemstad at the time of Seú, the harvest festival of Curacao, especially the last procession or parade held the day after Easter, you will encounter a cultural event rooted in the time of slavery.

Everything about Seú is traditional: The clothing, music and musical instruments, dance. In terms of clothing, look for the variations on women's headscarves or *Lensu di Kabes*, an African tradition that is enjoying a revival. Styles range from the simple and practical to festive

and artful. Originally there were *Lensu* for everyday, Sunday, and special occasions. Today they are worn as an everyday convenience or in folkloric groups. In the "old" days, any woman who strolled about in Punta/ Otrabanda without her *Lensu* and stockings was considered a street walker.





## ART



If you like art there are a number of small galleries in town. However, if you want to see something really special, you can visit the plantation house, Jan Kock, where more than 100 slaves once worked. It was restored in 1961 and is now the Art Gallery and Studio of Nena Sanchez. She was born in Curaçao in 1945 and is well known for the bright Caribbean colors in her work. The gallery/studio is located in Westpunt on the way to the Airport.



THE ARTIST SHOWS OFF HER TRUE COLORS



NENA SANCHEZ,  
THE ARTIST,  
HARD AT WORK

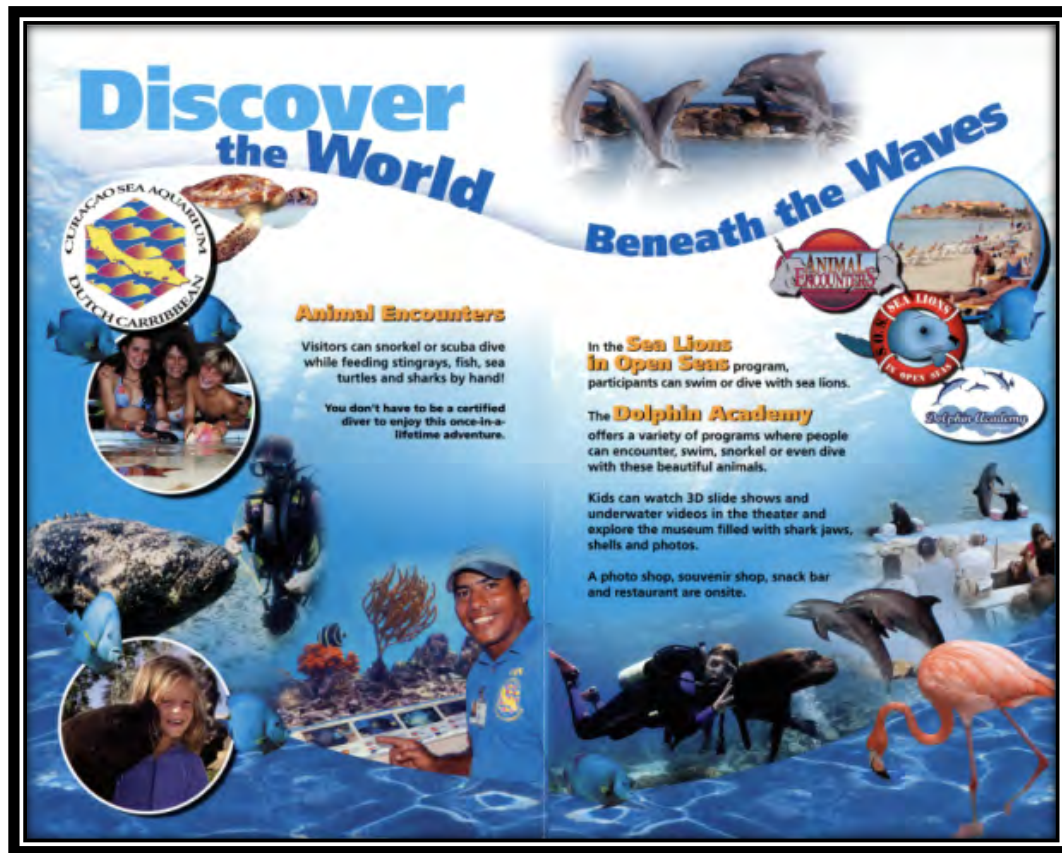
WHIMSY ON A WALL  
IN WILLEMSTAD





## OTHER ATTRACTIONS

### *AQUARIUM*



ABOUT MIDWAY BETWEEN WILLEMSTAD AND SPANISH WATER

If you want to spend a great family day; this is the place to do it.





## CHRISTOFFELPARK

Forty minutes from Willemstad, Christoffelpark, Curacao's largest national park, embodies the richness of Curacao's native flora and fauna. One can tour by car along two scenic routes, but, time permitting, a variety of hiking trails ranging from the easy 20 minute White Tail Deer Trail to the challenging 2-3 hour Mountain Trail (it is not permitted to start this hike after 11 am) are more likely to bring you up close and personal with species not easily found anywhere else on the island. The main entrance to Christoffel Park is on the grounds of the historic (1640) Savonet Plantation, whose plantation house is a museum worth visiting as well. ([www.christoffelpark.org](http://www.christoffelpark.org))

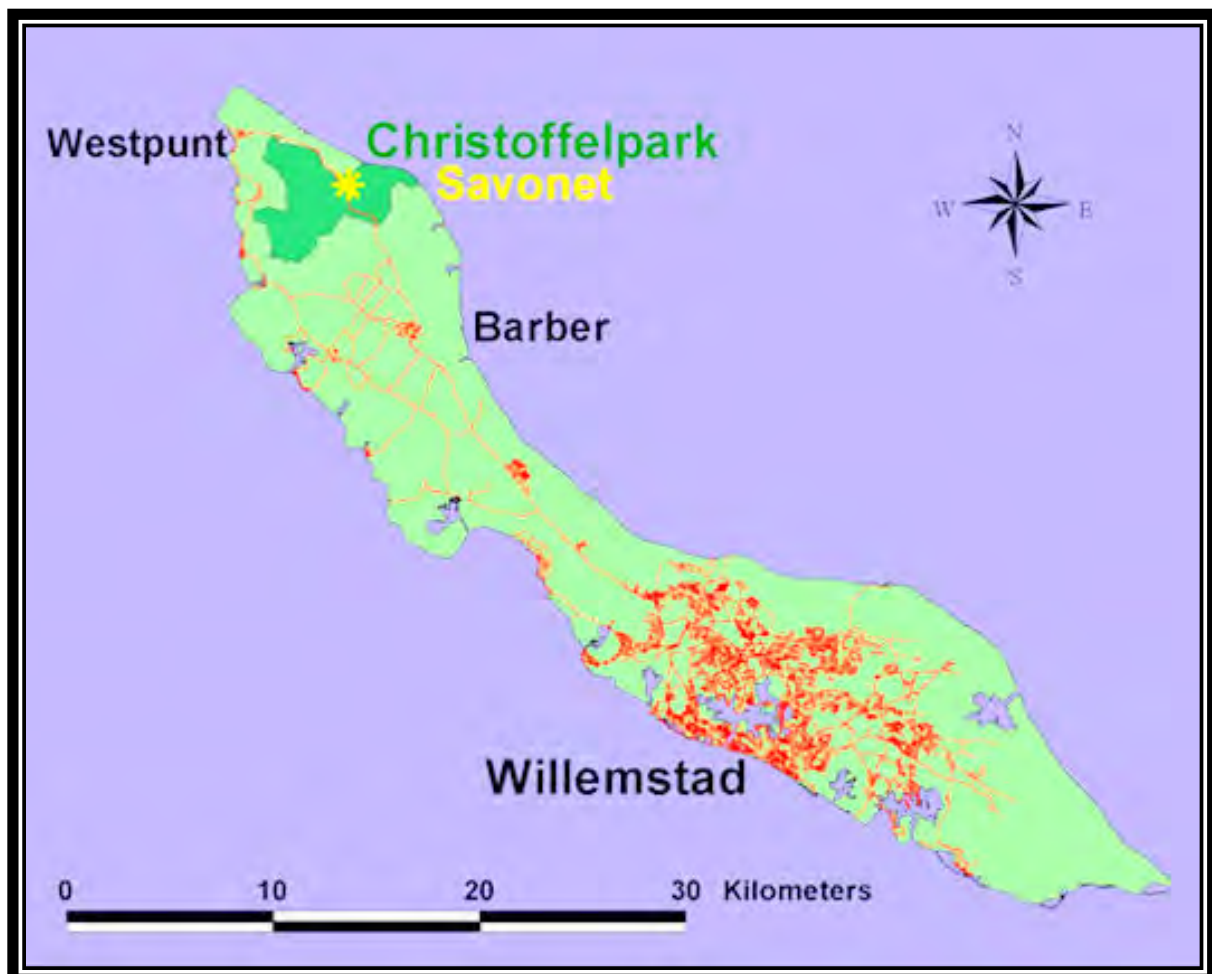


Figure 20. FORTY MINUTES FROM WILLEMSTAD TO CHRISTOFFELPARK

## APPROVED ANCHORAGES

**FROM THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF CURAÇAO TO THE NORTHWEST CORNER, THE FOLLOWING ARE THE ANCHORAGES APPROVED BY THE PORT AUTHORITY WHERE ONE IS PERMITTED TO ANCHOR (ASSUMING YOU HAVE YOUR ANCHOR PERMIT).**

### ***FUIK BAAI***

**12° 02.75N 68° 50.00W**

**At entrance to bay**



**IF YOU WANT AN UNCROWDED ANCHORAGE; THIS IS IT!  
(BUT ON NEW YEAR'S EVE -- LOCAL BOATERS BLAST)**

Fuik Bay is the very first bay that you will pass as you turn the southwest corner of Curaçao. It is a sheltered lagoon that is sometimes used as a staging point for those that want to get an early start to head east in the morning. Anchoring is in the northeast corner in 10-15ft of water with a mud bottom.

Given its proximity to Spanish Water it is not very often overly utilized by cruising boats.



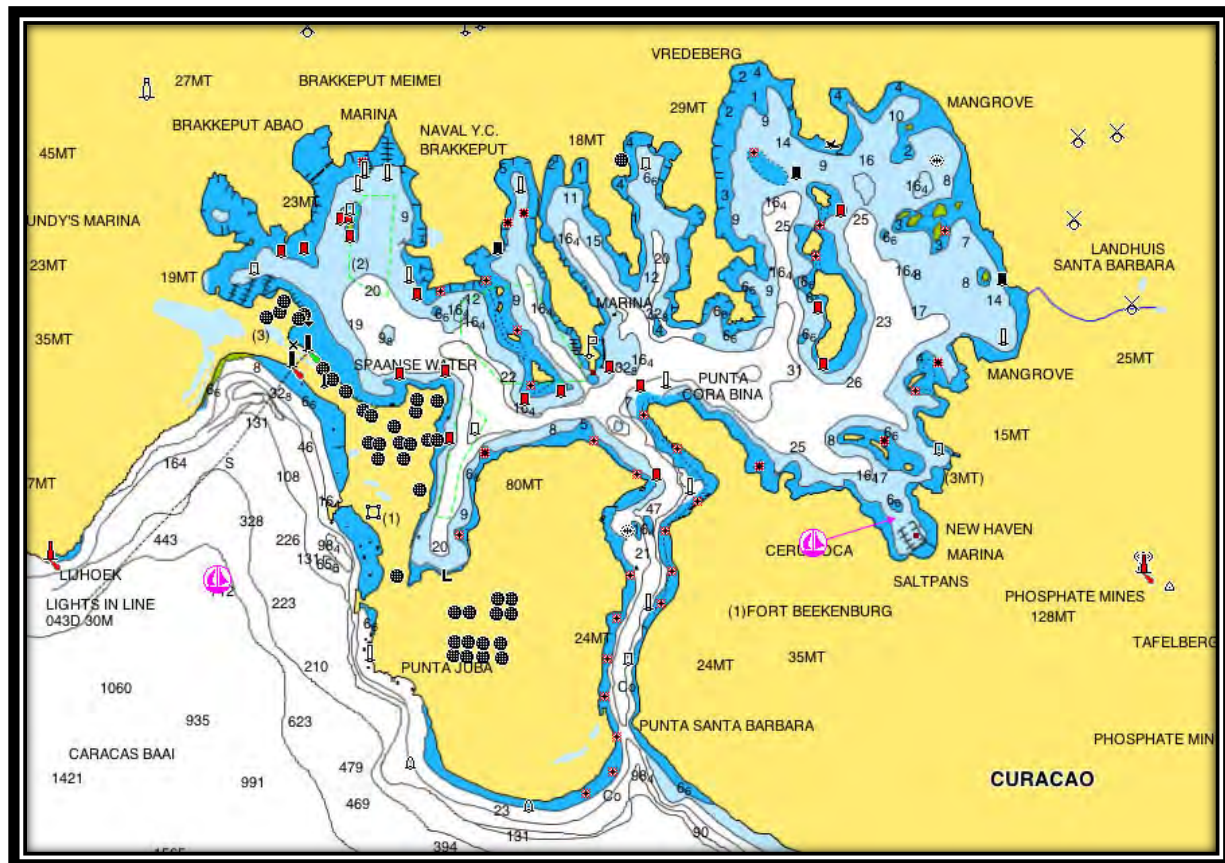
**Figure 21. FUIK BAY IS VERY SHELTERED AND IS OFTEN WITHOUT BOATS  
(SPANISH WATER CAN BE SEEN TO THE LEFT IN THE PHOTO)**



## ***SPAANSE WATER (SPANISH WATER)***

**12° 03.72N 68° 51.18**

**At entrance to bay**



**Figure 22. SPANISH WATER**

Spanish Water is the main anchorage on the island because it is very ample and offers good shelter in any weather. It is close to all the facilities you may need and there are cruising neighbors all around you.

Some cruisers have even left their boats anchored and flown home. This is not something that most should consider doing unless you are certain that someone reliable is looking after it. Aside from the possibility of breaking anchor, there have been reported thefts from time to time in this anchorage. The concentration of boats and the value of dinghy engines and other onboard gear is of great interest to local thieves.

The entrance to the bay is doable but not simple and it should NOT be attempted at night under any circumstances. As you enter there is a REEF TO PORT AND A SANDBAR TO STARBOARD. Stay in the MIDDLE OF THE CHANNEL and you will carry 15' to 30' of water.

The anchorage areas are as follows:

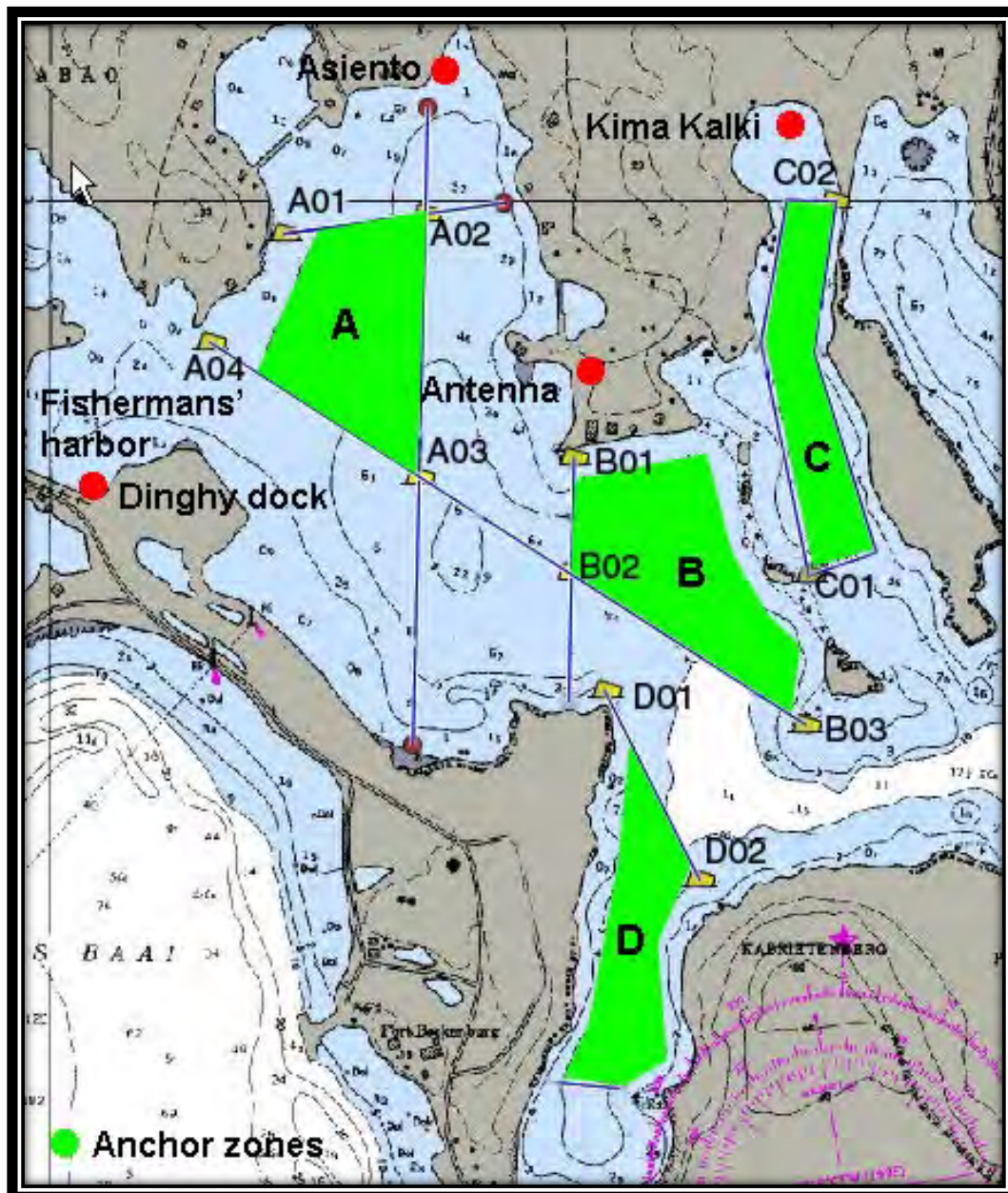


Figure 23. GREEN AREAS ARE PERMITTED ANCHORAGES

Anchoring outside the green anchorage areas is not permitted. The letters in the following list conform to the chart of permitted anchorages above.

A01 -- 12° 04.974 N 68° 51.810 W

A02 -- 12° 04.989 N 68° 51.695 W

A03 -- 12° 04.777 N 68° 51.688 W

A04 -- 12° 04.890 N 68° 51.870 W

B01 -- 12° 04.800 N 68° 51.574 W

B02 -- 12° 04.716 N 68° 51.584 W

B03 -- 12° 04.594 N 68° 51.386 W

C01 -- 12° 04.709 N 68° 51.383 W

C02 -- 12° 05.000 N 68° 51.362 W

D01 -- 12° 04.620 N 68° 51.549 W

D02 -- 12° 04.474 N 68° 51.472 W

It is VERY important that when you arrive you take your time to find a spot. As the area is crowded, there are boats that have been “in their favored spots” for some time and if they think you are too close, or anchoring over their chain, or encroaching, tempers will flare.

Everyone has an opinion on their favorite spot because it is closer to this or closer to that or at night the wind does not veer as much. When all is said and done, get your anchor set really well and everything else will fall into place; starting with your anchor, of course!

The holding is good in mud but be sure you do not catch on weeds as there are weedy areas as well. During the Trade Wind season, very strong gusts of wind come through here. It is a good idea to dive and check your anchor but be careful doing so as there is a great deal of traffic and getting run over by an outboard engine or banged in the head by the hard bottom of someone’s dinghy is no fun. Most agree that the area which offers the best shelter from the wind is the C area near KIMA KALKI MARINA.

Zone D is sheltered from the Trade Wind but gets strong wind shifts from the hills.

## DINGHY DOCK

See Figure 23 for Red Dot areas



There are two alternatives for your dinghy. The first is at Fisherman's Harbor and the other is S.O.V. Asiento. Fisherman's Harbor dock is free and has 24 hour security. Leave the holding line long because it is very crowded and it is impolite to snug up. The dock is near the roundabout where the shuttle bus to Vreugdenhil Supermarket and the regular buses to Willemstad stop.

S.O.V. Asiento is the local sailing club. They welcome sailors from Spanish Water in their clubhouse. Asiento is on the north of anchorage A; you can spot it easily by the long red stairs on the front (they had been blue until recently). They charge a monthly fee for the use of their dock which can only be used by members or at happy hour. In their own words:

*Dear Boaters,*

*The board of S.O.V. Asiento would like to welcome you to the beautiful Island of Curaçao. To make your stay in the Spanish Water a pleasant one, we would like to offer you the following services:*

◆ *Temporary Membership, This membership will include dingy mooring and garbage disposal. The fee will be 35,- guilders per month per boat and should be paid in front for the period of stay.*

◆ *Temporary Membership Plus, This membership will include dingy mooring, garbage disposal and overnight parking. The fee will be 55,- guilders per month per boat and should be paid in front for the period of stay.*

*You will be an Asiento member and can make use of all facilities and services Asiento offers. Please refer to the member's services booklet. These fees will be effective September 1, 2009 for a trial period of 6 months.*

*Please download the application form in PDF format Asiento Registration Form as a PDF File.*

*To be followed procedure: the request for membership should be done at the Asiento office at Brakkeput during normal office hours. The request and payment will be processed at the main office and the membership card delivered at the bar on Tuesdays and Thursdays during Happy Hour. A sticker with the period of validation of the membership will be placed on both dingy as the car. Please be informed that it is not allowed to padlock the dingy at the pier.*

*We appreciate you business. For any additional services we can offer please feel free to contact us.*

*Rust en Burghlaan z/n  
Emmastad, Curaçao N.A.  
P.O.B. 3981*

*Phone: (599-9) 466-3888 / 737-5560 / 7673280 Fax: (599-9) 736-9847*

*E-mail: [info@sovasiento.com](mailto:info@sovasiento.com) Website: [www.sovasiento.com](http://www.sovasiento.com)*





KIMA KALKI MARINA

### Seru Boca Marina

[rvandenheuvel@santabarbaraplantation.com](mailto:rvandenheuvel@santabarbaraplantation.com) [www.santabarbaraplantation.com](http://www.santabarbaraplantation.com)

(599 9) 840 0080 (office). Cell: (599 9) 560 2599.

Marina Manager: Robert van den Heuvel, Porta Blancu

PO Box 4816, Niuewpoort, Curaçao

VHF channel 67

Seru Boca is part of the Santa Barbara Plantation resort. As you approach and you emerge from the channel into the lagoon you will see Curaçao Yacht Club just ahead of you. Turn east to your starboard and follow the coastline in 30-40ft of water until you see the signpost showing the way to the marina.

The entrance is in 12ft of water which is the average depth in the marina. They can accommodate 68 yachts up to 150ft. You will find electricity and water, cable TV, free WiFi, 24 hour security, laundry, basic shower and toilet facilities. There are hourly buses to Willemstad from the main gate.

### **FUEL, WATER, AND WiFi AT ANCHORAGE**

Fuel is available at the Curaçao Yacht Club and they sell to transients. There is WiFi available at the anchorage for a monthly charge. It is managed by Dick from the yacht Isis.





SERU BOCA MARINA

Water can be carried back from the marinas in Jerry jugs or you can call the Water Boat on VHF channel 72.

## **PROPANE, GARBAGE AND LAUNDRY**

**Propane/camping gas:** “Propane Paul” Thyssen (tel. 666-0193, 767-5272) picks up tanks and delivers on Tuesdays at Asiento happy hour & Fridays on board the catamaran Isis. He can also drop it on your boat at the end of the day. This is not a fast process, so anticipate your needs more than a week in advance!

You can also leave the empty bottles at the Fisherman’s Harbor bar with owner Norman. You leave them on Fridays and can pick them back up on Mondays. NO gas bottles without security valves will be refilled in Curaçao.

**Garbage:** Garbage can be disposed of in the trash bin on the other side of the road, just in front of the gates to Fisherman’s Harbor.

If you have become a temporary member of the club, you can leave your trash bags in the Kliko's at Asiento. Minimize your garbage. Don't put boxes and bags with mostly air into the containers; flatten them first. You can also take your glass bottles to Vreugdenhil; there is a glass container on the parking-lot, close to the bus stop.

**Laundry:** You can use the machine at the Fisherman's Harbor bar but you need to carry your own detergent and additives.

Drop-off service is available at Kima Kalki Marina: In by 10:00 on Monday, back by 17:00 on Tuesday.

"Het Washok" is a laundry shop near Vreugdenhil Supermarket where you can drop your laundry and collect it the next day.

Spanish Water is a wonderful bay albeit somewhat crowded. Be very careful about security and be sure that your boat locks up completely if you plan to leave without someone being left on board. Theft is not rampant but it does happen.

Get to know your immediate neighbors so that you can look out for them and vice versa.



Figure 25. PUNDA TO SPANISH WATER

The above chartlet orients you to the distance from Punda to Spanish Water as well as to the lay of the roads. It also indicates the location of the supermarket and other services along the way.

## ***PISCADERA BAAI***

**12° 07.31N 68° 58.30W**

### **Entrance to bay**

The entrance is not marked but it is 16ft deep and 70ft wide. The Hilton Hotel dock and beach on the east shore are a good landmark. Just enter in the middle of the channel and follow the shoreline on your starboard in 12ft of water until you get near Royal Marine. Water shelves to 8ft in the area. It is a good anchoring spot in good holding mud and the marina security can keep an eye on your boat if you ask them and perhaps show your appreciation.



**Figure 26. PISCADERA BAAI**

I spoke with the owner/manager. Very nice fellow whose primary language is Spanish. He is friendly and tries hard. His rates are modest. They have a “travelift” and nice concrete ways. The yard has a small stone base and the rules seem to be casual for those that like to “do it themselves”.



## Royal Marine Services

Piscadera Bay Z/N, Willemstad, Cuaracao

Phone: off. 00599 9-461 2028/cell. 00599 9-697 0279 [royalmsc@gmail.com](mailto:royalmsc@gmail.com)

Mon - Fri: 8:00 am - 6:30 am. Sat - Sun: 8:00 am - 12:00 pm

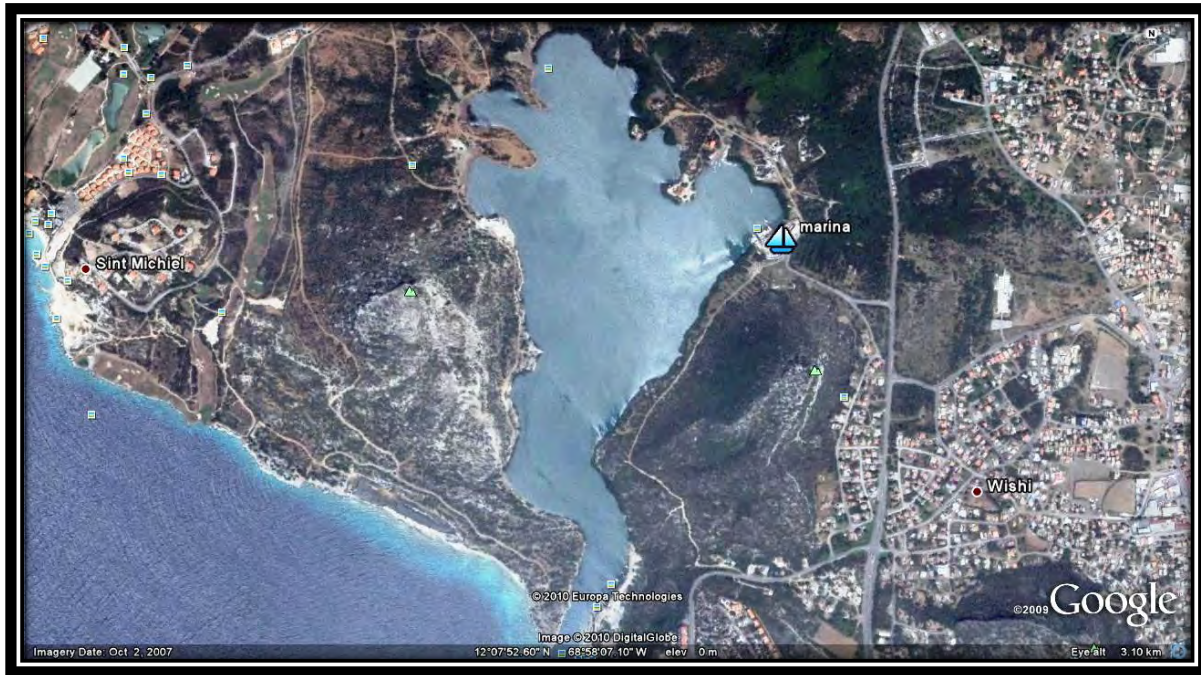


Figure 27. PISCADERA BAAI – BIRD'S EYE VIEW



MARINE LIFT AT THE YARD





THE WAYS AND THE YARD AT ROYAL



## ***SANTA MARTHA LAGOON***

**12° 15.99N 69° 07.83W**

**At entrance to bay**



**Figure 28. ENTRANCE TO SANTA MARTHA LAGOON**

You will see the resort on the south side of the entrance as you approach. The entrance to the lagoon is narrow and there can be a strong current running across the mouth which can raise a chop. The controlling depth is 12-15ft. Anchor as soon as you pass in through the mouth on the north side. As you go further in, the water becomes less clear and it becomes very buggy due to the mangroves. Unless you are simply looking for something to do, there is nothing compelling to bring you here.



## ***SANTA CRUZ BAY***

**12° 18.36N 69° 09.02W**

**At entrance to bay**



**Figure 29. SANTA CRUZ BAY**

Santa Cruz has a nice beach to offer and access is straightforward. The bay is a local craft hangout on the weekends and there are a few small food stands. Anchor in the center of the bay in 10-12ft of water with a sandy bottom. If you are anchored here, keep an eye on the wind. If it reverses and goes to the west, you will find yourself very exposed. The snorkeling along the cliffs is interesting and worth your time if you are anchored here.

Otherwise, the real value of this small bay is that it makes for a very uncomplicated predawn departure point if you are headed west.



WILLEMSTAD BY NIGHT

# ARUBA

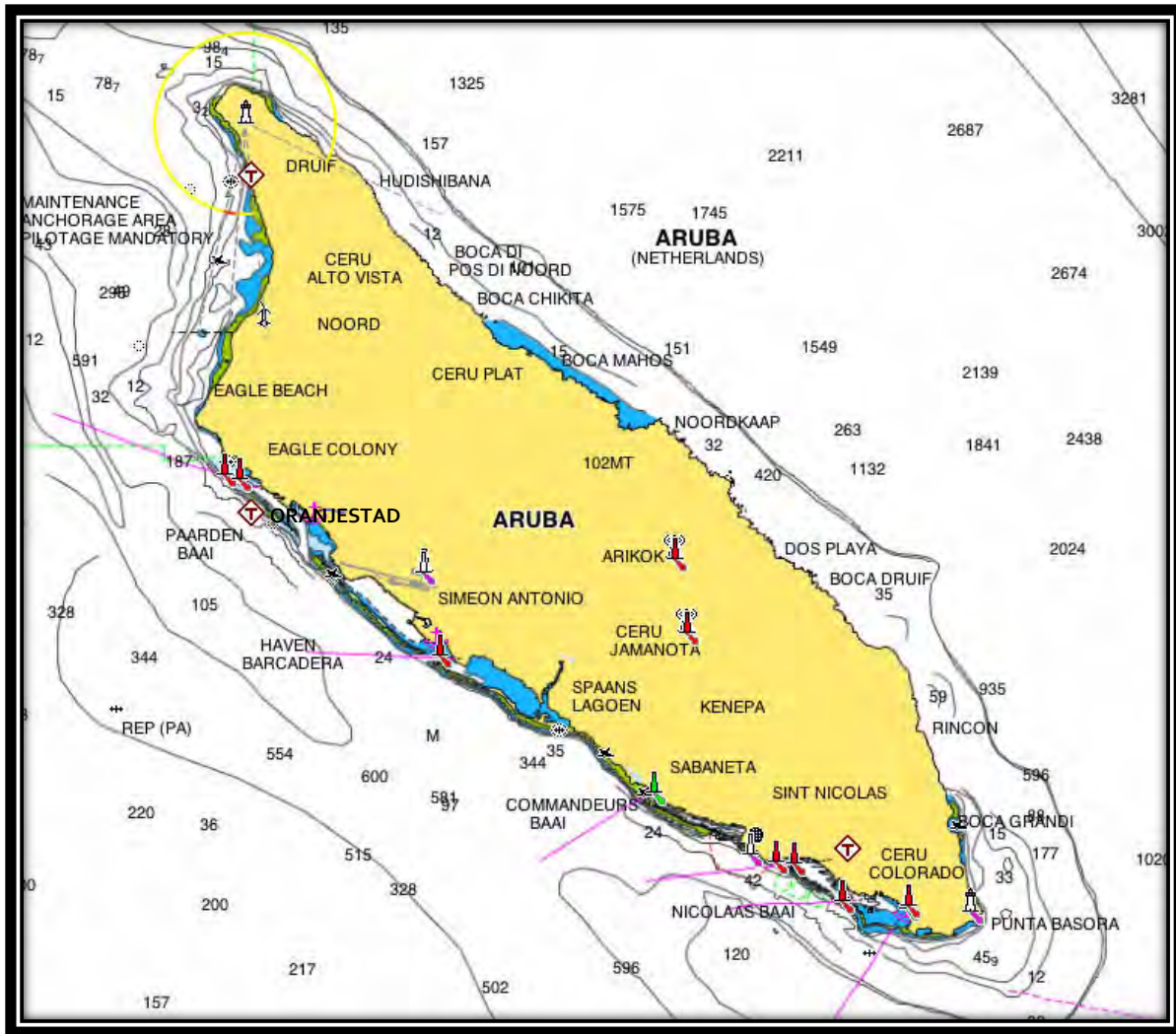


Figure 30. ARUBA

Aruba packs a big punch for a small island. There is a great deal going on. Shopping and nightlife are among the biggest attractions. It would be unfair to say that the island is not “cruiser friendly”. In fact the people on the island are very friendly. However, the island is small and the number of good anchorages limited.

The primary clientele of Aruba are those that seek hotel rooms for a vacation and those that come on the many large cruise ships that visit this island so frequently. Aruba is not geared for cruising boats; they represent more of a nuisance for the authorities than a help to the economy.



Nonetheless, there are a few nice facilities and a great deal to see and do.

# WATCH YOUR BUOYS !

*The buoys in Aruba (and other parts of the ABC islands) are European system and thus the green is to the right on entering. However, there are exceptions and the entrance to the channel south of Oranjestad is one of them. There the buoys are red right returning.*

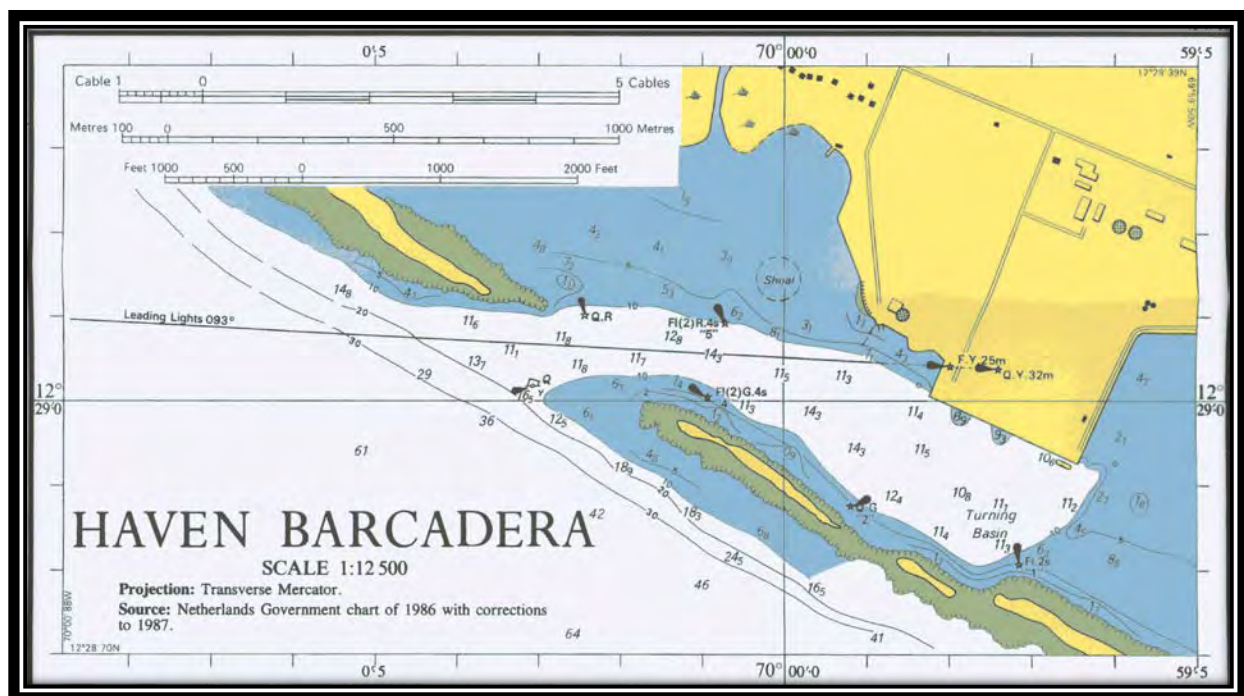
# CLEARING IN

# BARCADERA

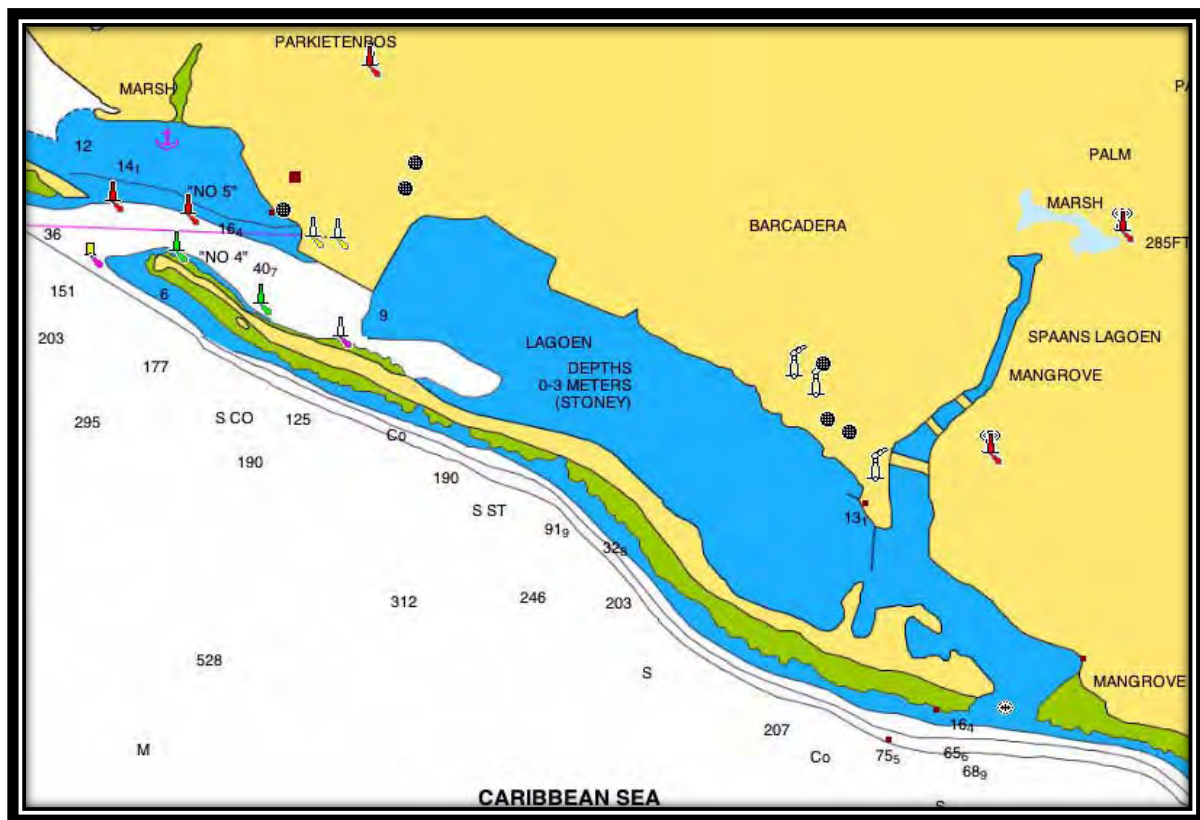
**12° 28.84N 70° 00.62W**

### At entrance to channel

Call Aruba Port Control on VHF channel 16 to notify them that you will be tying up for clearance. In order to clear in you **MUST** go to Barcadera Harbor.



### Figure 31. BARCADERA



### Figure 32. LAGOON AT BARCADERA



## FISHING BOATS AND OIL TANKS SHARE THE HARBOR AT BARCADERA



MAKING THE ROUNDS TO CLEAR IN

Barcadera is an unattractive commercial harbor but for clearing in it is a necessity.

As you enter the channel and turn to starboard you will see a number of wharfs about where the tanks on land are located. The wharf in front of the tanks has about 8ft of draft and the wharf to the southeast has about 12ft. There is another dock to the port of the center dock but it allows for 6ft or less of draft.

## ***IMMIGRATION***

Go to Immigration first, and after you have cleared in, you go to Customs. You **MUST** go to customs within 24 hours of clearing in.

Everyone asks Immigration for longer than they plan to stay to avoid having to get an extension. However, if you ask for 90 days, they may ask you why. Do you plan to stay with the boat? *Know your facts before you enter and discuss it with the Immigration officer.*





THE ULTIMATE COMMERCIAL HARBOR

## ***HARBOR FEES***

When you tie up to the docks you will be a client of Aruba Ports Authorities. They charge a port fee for yachts on their docks of \$10 US per hour from 8AM to 4PM. It is \$15 US per hour from 4PM to 8AM (Good idea to time your entry). The cost is \$20 US per hour for holidays and weekends.

## ***CUSTOMS***

Clearing customs is not difficult.

Based on a new law, you may need to 'import' the boat. There is no charge if the boat stays for 180 days or less, and no deposit is required. If the boat will stay for more than 180 days, you will need to leave a guarantee or temporary deposit which will be refunded or cancelled provided you leave prior to one year. If the boat stays more than one year, import duty must be paid.

To process the application requires a customs broker even if the boat will stay less than 6 months. He will charge for the service and you should figure a total cost of about \$100.00 US.

## APPROACHES TO ARUBA

### ***FROM THE EAST***

If you are approaching from the **east**, set a course just south of Punta Basora; the southeastern tip of the island. From there it is clear sailing up to Barcadera after you round the point. However, keep in mind that the windward coast of Aruba is a rough coast and that there can be considerable current as you approach the island. While the current going west in the Caribbean averages one knot, as you approach Aruba and in particular the southeast point, the speed of the current will increase.

It is not recommended that you attempt a night entry to *any* of the harbors on the west coast. There are many reefs and with currents you could be set out of the channels onto a reef. Making this harbor in 2002, I grazed the reef going into the Renaissance Marina at the outer channel. We were proceeding slow ahead with the engine running and the current set us down more than I had realized. It is always best to stand off and make your entry during the day. The channels are well marked.

### ***FROM THE NORTH***

Approaching from the **north**, it all depends on where you departed from and where the wind is blowing from. If you can make it to the southeast point on the east side, that is the best approach. If you miss that and must come down the windward side of the island, you will have both current and wind against you once you pass Westpunt. The distance from Westpunt to Barcadera is only 5.0 Nm but they will be a very long five miles if the wind is blowing strong from the southeast.

### ***FROM THE WEST***

If you are coming from the **west**, you will have the current and the wind against you and you need to plan your trip carefully so that you are not headed by strong easterlies.

Moreover, if you look at the chart of the area you will note that east of Aruba there is not a very large shoal. The depths east of Aruba range from 3,000' to 5,000'.

On the west side of Aruba there is a shoal that averages less than 300' all the way to Cabo Falso, Colombia. Strong currents and strong winds coupled with a very large shoal make for rough conditions. It is best to stay north of Aruba if you are coming from the west.

In fact, as crazy as it seems, if you are coming from the west it is much better to cross the Caribbean to get under Hispaniola and perhaps make a port of call there before heading back across to Aruba. In other words, to make your easting you go north if you are coming from the west. Get underneath Hispaniola and use the light winds at night to make your easting. Then if your plan is to visit the ABC islands or in particular Aruba, you can set off from a course far enough east to make for a good sail.

## ANCHORAGES

There are a number of anchorages that you can use in Aruba. However, the great majority of cruising boats use the anchorage just north of the airport. This is because it is closest to town and affords reasonable protection.

In addition there is always the Renaissance Marina if you are looking for an upscale marina right in the midst of town. There are also the Bucuti Yacht Club and Varadero Caribe which are right next to each other in front of the airport. Not as convenient as the marina in town, but the prices and camaraderie are a cruising sailor's delight.

## *ORANJESTAD*

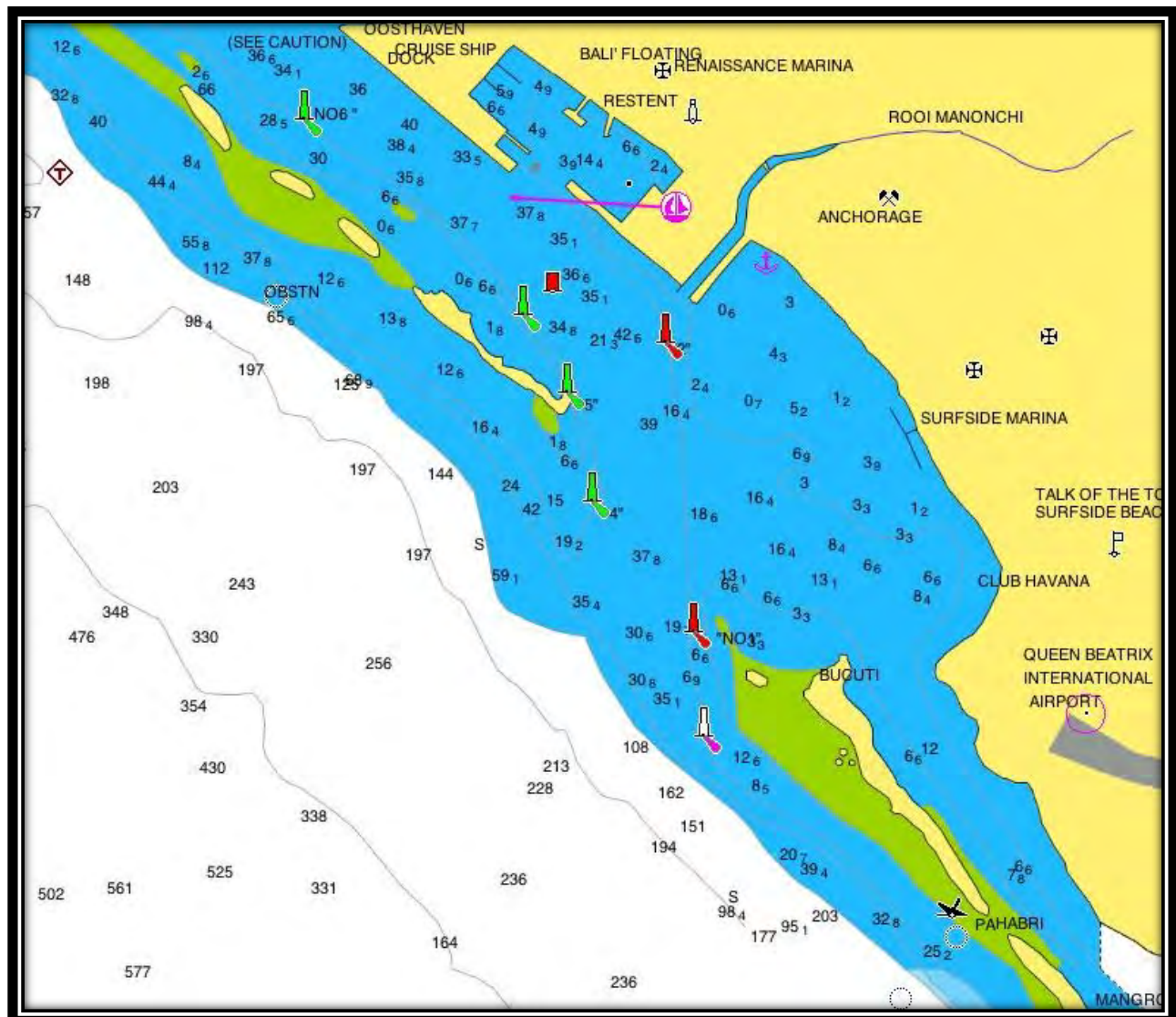
**12° 30.48N 70° 02.28W**

**At southern entrance to Oranjestad harbor**

**NOTE:** You **MUST** call on VHF channel 16 to ask Aruba Port Control to enter this harbor. They also strongly prefer that you call when you plan to move out of the harbor as they do not want you to get in the way of large cruise ships.



The capital of Aruba is Oranjestad. It is a beautiful town filled to the brim with shoppers, most of whom come off passenger cruise ships. The streets are colorful and celebratory. They say if you can't find it here, it is not for sale.



**Figure 33. CRUISER'S EYE VIEW OF ORANJESTAD**

**NOTE: Be very careful on entering. Stay north of the southern entrance markers. With the current, it is easy to think you are in the channel and end up touching the reef on the starboard side of the entry. Please be sure you are in the center of the channel coming from the south BEFORE you turn to starboard.**



Figure 34. ENTRANCE AND DESTINATIONS IN ORANJESTAD



ORANJESTAD -- CLEAN AND COLORFUL



The place to stay in the harbor is Renaissance Marina. It is THE upscale marina on the island and even sports a casino. The marina has recently been upgraded and has all the amenities you could ask for and then some. Call the marina office PRIOR to entering the marina area so that they can direct you to a slip.

## RENAISSANCE MARINA ARUBA

Sander Vellinga, Marina Manager

Renaissance Marketplace, LG Smith Blvd 9

Oranjestad, ARUBA

+297-588-0260

<http://www.renaissancemarina.com>

VHF channel 16



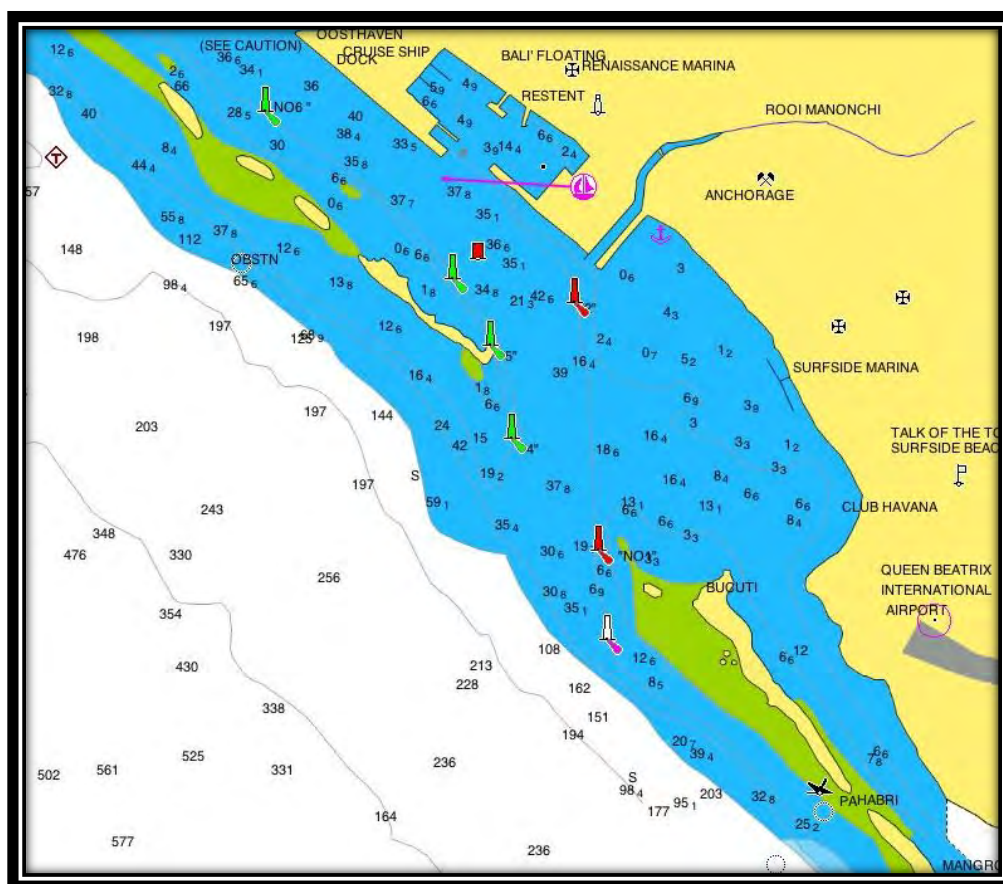
Figure 35. RENAISSANCE MARINA



## AIRPORT ANCHORAGE

**Located just north of the airport and just south of the marina.**

Aside from the marina there is no anchorage in Oranjestad Bay except one, just south of the marina. This anchorage is referred to as the “Airport Anchorage.” It is located at Surfside Beach.

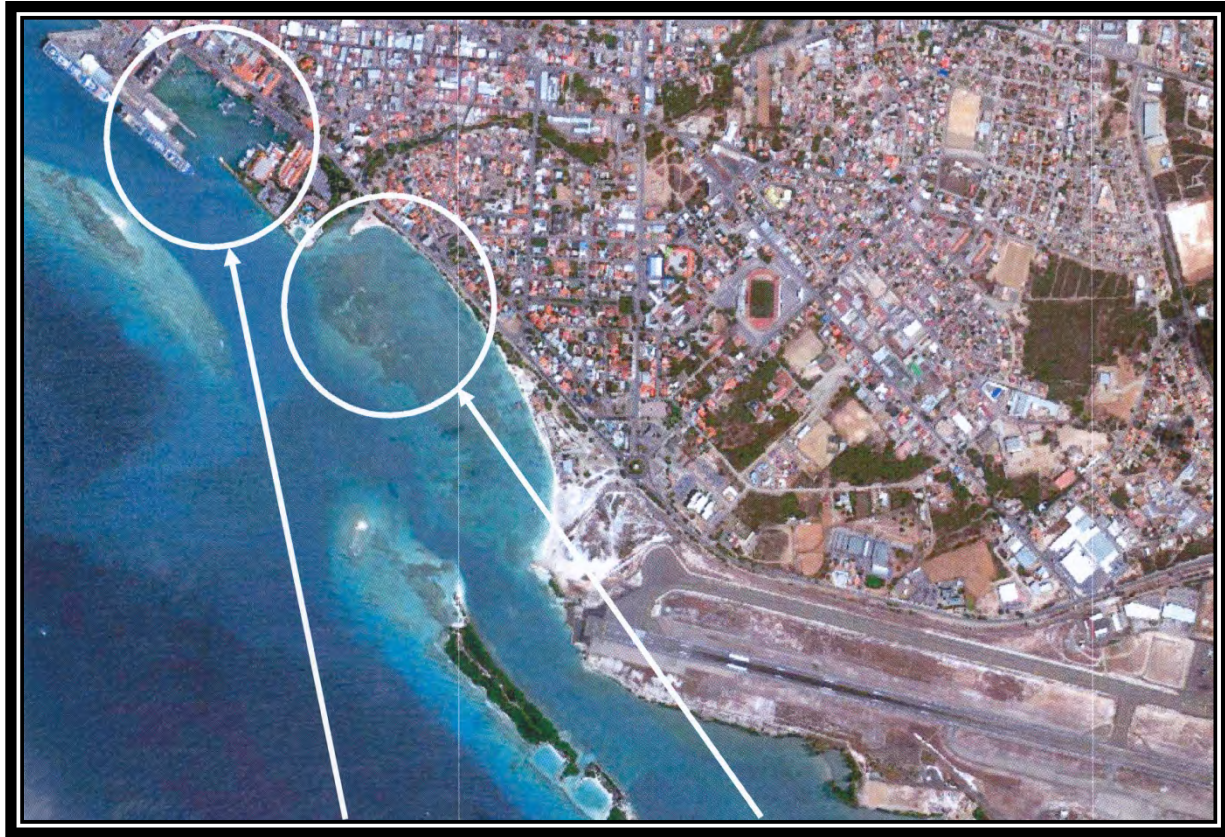


**Figure 36. SOUTH ENTRANCE TO ORANJESTAD; RENAISSANCE MARINA AND AIRPORT ANCHORAGE**

If approaching from Barcadera Haven, you have two choices to find your way there. The first is to sail in open seas alongside the reef and enter the channel from Oranjestad's south entrance (See Figs. 34 and 36). The other is to work your way up the channel northward. It does not make a big difference in terms of distance, but it is much calmer in the channel in big swells or bad weather. If you choose the channel, stay always 1/3 of its width to the outer reef. Minimum depth is along Renaissance Island on the north side; about 10'.

I prefer to go outside as the distance is only 2.5 nm.

If you come from the “outside route”, then as you enter, after the second marker go to starboard. Many charts will show that there is not sufficient water but the area has been dredged.



**Figure 37. RENAISSANCE MARINA AND AIRPORT ANCHORAGE**

You can anchor in 7-9ft of water in sand and grass. Holding is good provided you dig into sand. Some of the dredged areas are tablerock and you will not grab. This anchorage is also susceptible to strong wind gusts. The entrance to the anchorage allows some sea to enter depending on the wind and with local traffic such as ferries, it can be rolly.

The town is within walking distance and you may be able to tie your dinghy to the dinghy dock at Renaissance Marina or at the restaurant dock at the pier in the anchorage. The access to the restaurant dock is protected by a gate which is open during the restaurant's opening hours (1600-2300). WiFi signal from the island hotspot reaches the anchorage but it is weak. Talk of the Town Hotel on the opposite side of the road bordering the anchorage has WiFi that is accessible. They have a happy hour from 1700 to 2100 hours at their bar.



## BUCUTI LAGOON

12° 28.83N 70° 00.48W

At southern entrance to Lagoon

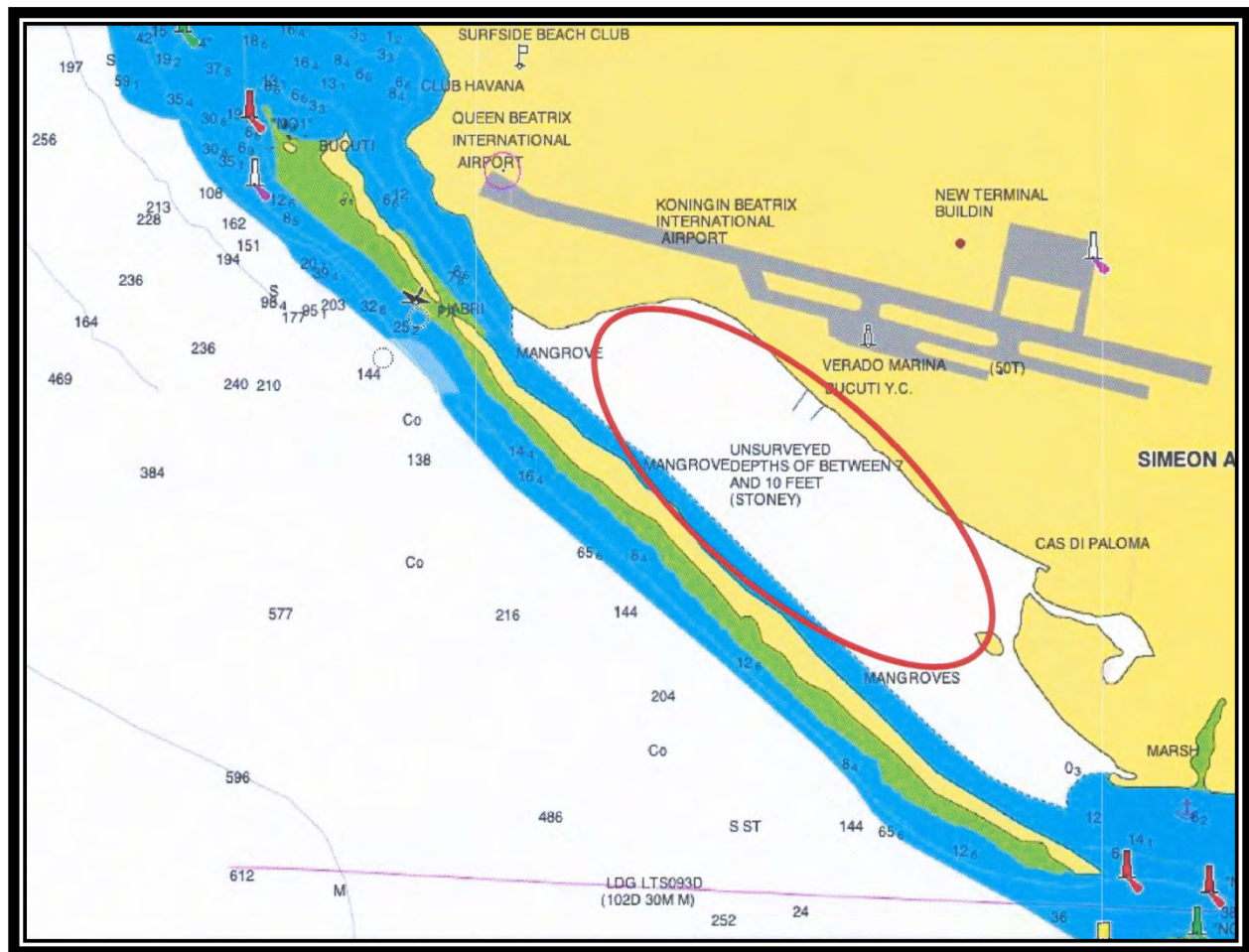


Figure 38. BUCUTI LAGOON

This lagoon has two boatyard/marina facilities as well as an anchorage. The anchorage, which is to the south of the two marina/boatyard facilities, is the most protected anchorage on the island.

If the anchorage is your destination, proceed as if going to Bucuti Marina and approach the anchoring area just south of the marina. Anchor in sand and grass in 7ft of water and a good holding. The entire anchorage area is quite shallow. You can use the marina dinghy dock and are welcome to their bar and restaurant. The



Laguna Pier restaurant is also a short dinghy ride from the anchorage. There is a little lagoon to the south of the anchorage with plenty of bird life. It is quite shallow, but it makes for wonderful dinghy exploration.

There is a bus stop close to the marina but the buses do not seem to follow a regular schedule.

Here in the lagoon is where you will find the Bucuti Yacht Club and the Varadero Aruba Marina & Boatyard.

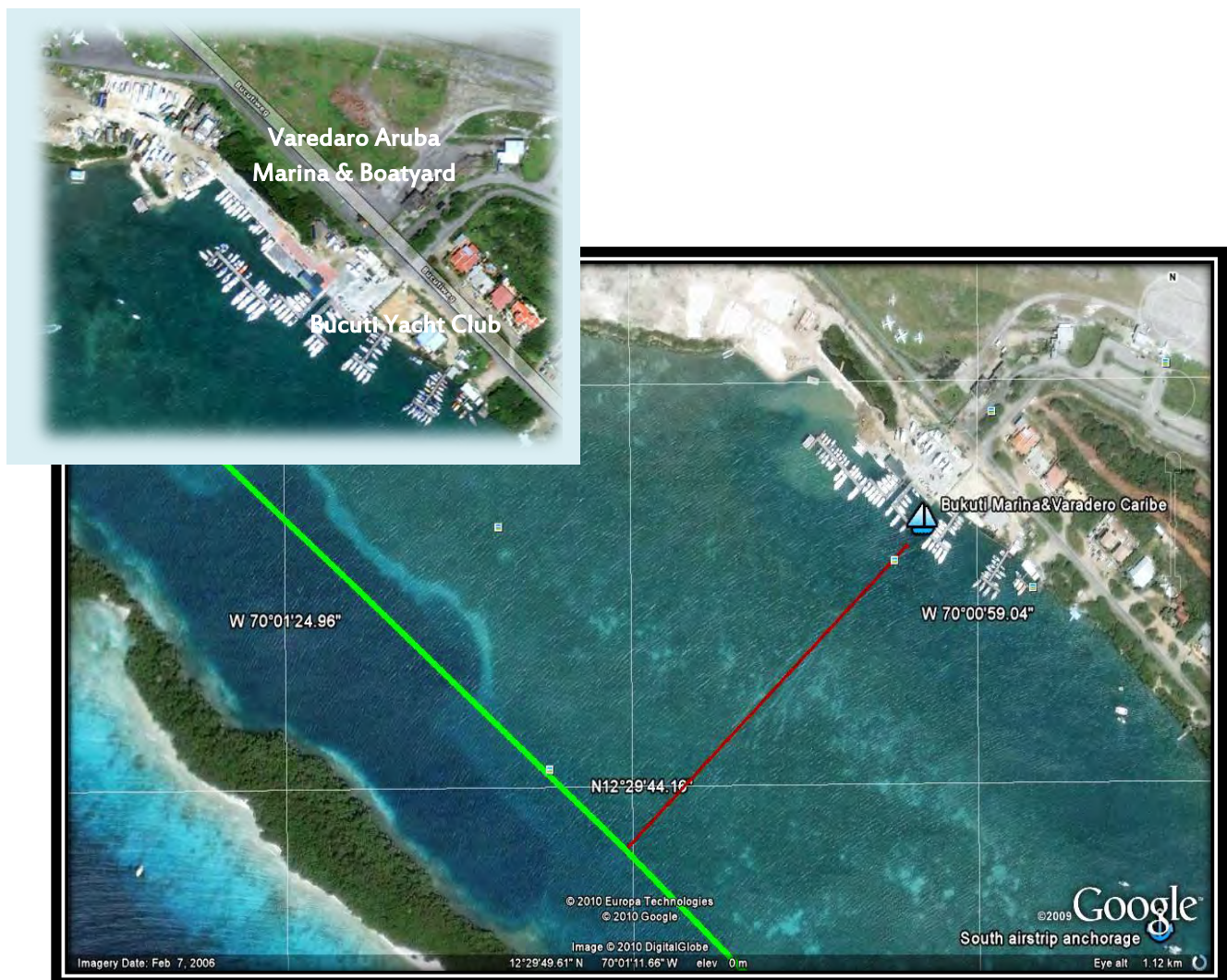


Figure 39. BUCUTI YACHT CLUB AND VARADERO BOATYARD

The Bucuti Yacht Club is private. However, foreign boats are welcome if they have space. Tying is astern between pilings. The club is friendly and priced very reasonably. As you approach stay 1/3 off the reef going north and then turn 90° straight towards it. (See Fig. 39) The average depth in the marina is 6-7ft. They have fuel, and gas refills, as well as water and electric.



VIEW FROM THE RUNWAY

## VARADERO ARUBA MARINA & BOATYARD

Alex Elias Mansur III, Managing Director

Bucutiweg #34, Aruba

+297-588-3850

[alex@varaderocaribe.com](mailto:alex@varaderocaribe.com)



The Varadero Aruba Marina & Boat Yard is right next door to the Bucuti Yacht Club. The average depth in their facility is 8-9ft. Approach the same way as the yacht club.

Varadero has two Roodberg trailers, one of 60 tons and another of 20 tons capable of lifting monohulls and multihulls up to 80ft long and with a maximum 42ft beam. They also have berthing for 65 boats as well as long term storage, in the water or on land. They sell fuel, and have a restaurant as well as WiFi and cable TV.

Varadero Aruba offers a special area, where time spent in the long term storage area will be exempt from the 180 day stay limit.



VARADERO BOAT YARD



## SPANISH LAGOON

(Same entrance as Barcadera)

### ARUBA NAUTICAL CLUB



Figure 40. SPANISH LAGOON (SPAANS LAGOEN)



At the south end of the Barcadera Harbor you will find the Aruba Nautical Club. It is a small club designed for local fishing boats and powerboats that is run quite informally. It is far from town; about a 15 minute ride. I do not recommend if you go here that you use the south entrance. Use the entrance at the north end (See Figure 32) and pass the docks where you cleared in. Head south past the docks staying close to the outer reef as you make your way to the facility. Continue until you see two buoys, white to port and black to starboard. Stay between them to avoid the shoals on both sides. The average depth is 12'. The Club does accept visitors but many times you will not find anyone there. Make yourself at home; someone is sure to show up.

## OTHER ANCHORAGES

### *RODGERS LAGOON*

12° 25.22N 69° 54.09W

At entrance to Lagoon

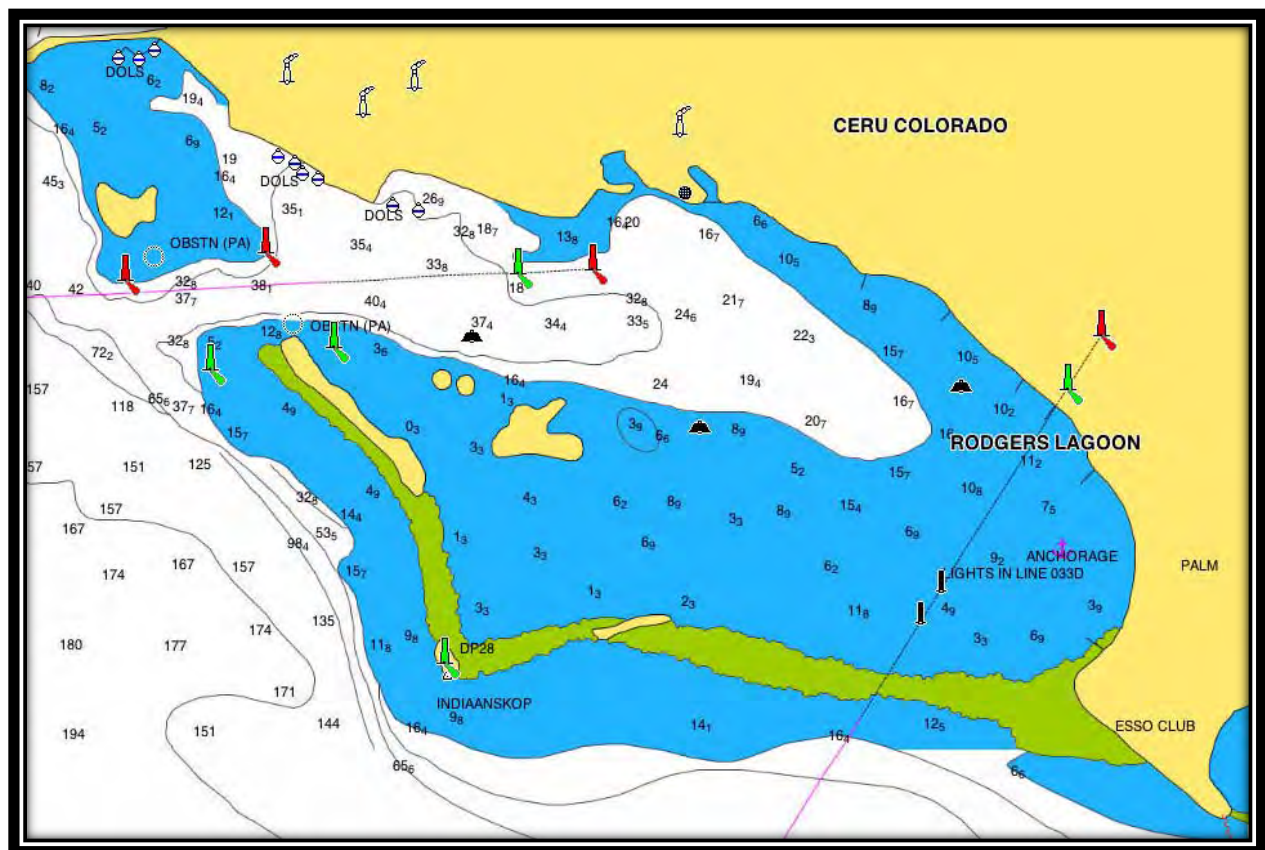


Figure 41. RODGERS LAGOON

The anchorage is isolated and connects to nowhere. It is secure from east winds but southwest winds can work their way along with seas into the area. You cannot dinghy up to the village as the area north of the lagoon is restricted.

If you do choose this anchorage, choose the northeast corner, close by the restaurant in 8' of water. Watch out for the old jetties as there are some **pilings under the surface**.





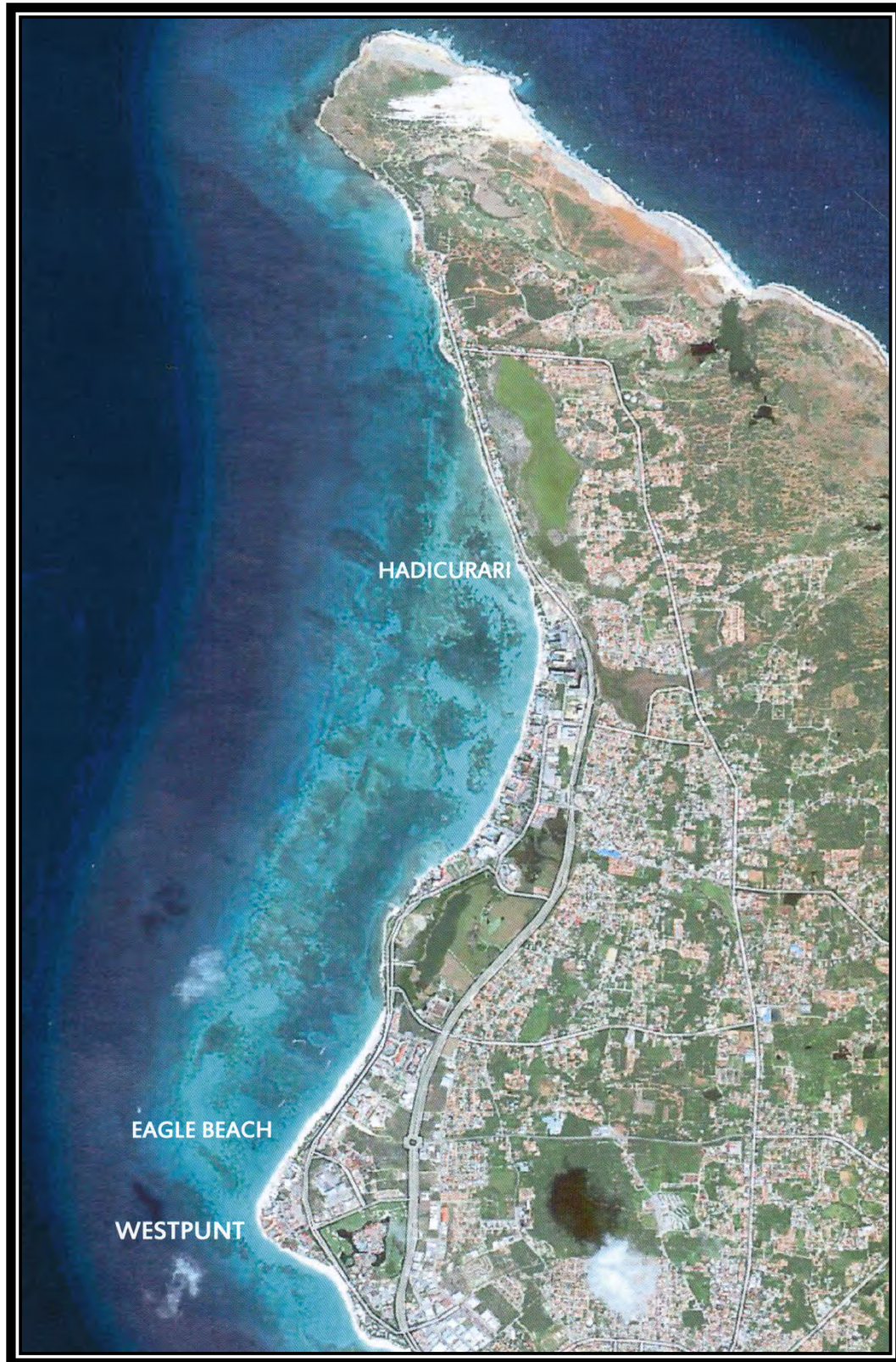


Figure 43. ANOTHER VIEW, WESTPUNT AND NORTH

## ***EAGLE BEACH***

You can head north and at the point anchor anywhere in front of the beach. The anchorage can be rolly and there may well be hotel guests using jet skis. Most boats head farther up to where the Marriott hotels are.

## ***HADICURARI***

As you pass north beyond Eagle Beach it is important to decide which route to use. The reason is that there are some unmarked 4-7ft shoals between the inshore route and the offshore route.

The first route is to stay close to the coast and turn at the point. From there you take a heading to port of the lighthouse that can be seen in the distance. The water depth will average 12-15.

The other approach is to stay about a mile offshore. Once you pass the wreck (obvious...**12° 34.60N 70° 03.50W**) you can turn straight in to shore. You will see Hadicurari, the fishermen's docks, in front of the Marriott Hotels. Water depth will be 7-8ft. You can anchor close to the black pirate boats.

The moorings at the wreck are for charter boats. If you want to dive the wreck, go by dinghy. If you would like to go into the Hadicurari Fishing Center and use the club's restaurant and bar, you may be able to use the dinghy dock. You must ask permission, which is normally granted. It is not possible to dock at this marina facility as the draft is not adequate for keel boats.

# **ARUBA: ATTRACTIONS AND NOTES OF INTEREST**

**SAN NICHOLAS** is the second largest city in Aruba. Many of the city's residents come from the British Caribbean. While many do not work their way "down south" to visit this small town, one of the attractions is its bars and the most famous of them is Charlie's Bar.





IS THERE ANY DOUBT THIS IS CHARLIE'S?

There are a number of bars like this in the Caribbean. They have distinct personalities and each is definitely one of a kind. Charlie's has been famous since the 1940s when scuba divers began hanging their underwater discoveries on the walls. It has become a bit of a museum as a result, but an interesting and certainly unusual one at that.

Depending on how much time you have to spend and what your interests are, there is a donkey sanctuary, as well as the Bubali Bird Sanctuary, an ostrich farm, and a butterfly farm.

The population of Aruba has been predominately Catholic and you will see many Catholic churches as you tour the island. Located in Seroe Preto you will find the Lourdes Grotto, named in commemoration of the famous French religious landmark. A statue of the Virgin Mary, weighing 700 kilos, is on view in the grotto, and every year on February 11 (feast day of Our Lady of Lourdes) a procession leaves from St. Theresita Church in San Nicolas and makes its way to the grotto where a mass is celebrated.





If you are interested in caves, along the island's windward coast you will find a number of them. One of the most famous is Guadirikiri Cave. It has two chambers illuminated by sunlight admitted through holes in the roof. The Fontein Cave is well known for the Arawak drawings on its ceilings.

There are museums to keep you occupied on those rainy days. For sport fans there is a sports museum; Museo Di Deporte. There is also a Bible Museum. Here you will see examples of old historic bibles in Dutch as well as others.

There is a model train museum for those that are so inclined and you can see exhibits that date back prior to 1900.

Many do not know that after the aloe vera plant was introduced in Aruba about 1840 Aruba became the world's largest aloe exporter and continues production of aloe products today.

There is also the Fort Zoutman Historical Museum housed in Aruba's oldest building, constructed in 1798, for those who have a historical interest. The Bon Bini Festival takes place here every Tuesday at 6:30 pm in the outdoor courtyard.

A very engaging emcee introduces traditionally-costumed folkloric dancers and a variety of local musical genres.



GUADIRIKIRI CAVE

The Archaeological Museum is located in the renovated historic Ecury complex in downtown Oranjestad. The complex, transformed from family home to modern museum, preserves Aruba's Amerindian cultural heritage. The oldest part is a Cunucu House built in 1870 by the grandparents of Boy Ecury, a young Aruban hero of World War II who lived in the house from 1922-1937. The newest section is a large mansion built in 1929.

Great care has been taken to preserve the beauty and historic character of the original buildings that house the welcome area, cafeteria, educational center and offices. They are now integrated with a new building housing a state-of-the-art 21<sup>st</sup> century museum especially designed to preserve valuable artifacts.



ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM- OLDEST PART IS THE CUNUCU (FARM) HOUSE

Aruba is not a very large island but it has much more to offer than just shopping on main street.

The Numismatic Museum has a huge collection of coins that date back as far as 400 BC. It is housed in an authentic Cunucu House.

## ***OTHER ACTIVITIES***

If you are in Aruba at Christmas time expect to hear the Gaita groups that are so much a lovely part of the holiday season. While the music is Venezuelan folk music it was adopted by Aruba. The groups perform at public and private activities from the middle of November through December 25<sup>th</sup>.

The New Year's celebration is called DANDE and means to carouse and have a good time. The traditional song is sung door to door and is one of peace,



happiness, and goodwill. This custom started after King Willem III of the Netherlands declared the slaves to be free. As a result the chorus, AI NOBE or New Year, is an African rhythm.

Carnival in Aruba is anything but a one day or one weekend event. It is filled with all types of competition, music, and celebration. If you are in Aruba during February, you will love this event.



LET THE CARNIVAL BEGIN!

## ***ARIKOK NATIONAL PARK***

In 2000 Aruba established the Arikok National Park. It covers 18% of the island's total land area. According to the park website: <http://www.arubanationalpark.org/> :

“There is a great geological variety within the park. The main aspects are the rough hills of the volcanic Aruba lava formation, the mysterious rocks of the batholithic quartz-diorite/tonalite, and the limestone rocks from fossilized coral. The two tallest hills on the island are situated within the park. Jamanota hill 188 meters (617 ft) and Arikok hill 176 meters (577 ft), from which the name of the park is derived.

“The line of the permanently wind-and-wave beaten North Coast is broken by several bays (bocas). Most of them are small yet impressive inlets at the mouths of dry riverbeds. Some of these bays (bocas) are spectacular sights, adorned with white, sandy beaches and sand dunes, as is the case at Boca Prins and Dos Playa.”



NATIONAL BIRD~TROUPIOL



Figure 44. NATIONAL PARK - ALMOST 1/5 OF ARUBA'S LAND MASS





Arikok has a rugged topography of valleys and ravines, and generally challenging terrain. It is home to all of Aruba's animal species as well as a stunning array of cacti of all sizes. The park offers a variety of activities that include hiking as well as geological exploration of rock formations, observation of the flora and fauna and much more for those that like this type of activity.



## PROVISIONING

There are a number of supermarkets in Oranjestad that will allow you to fill out needed items. There is also a Pricesmart for those that want to do major provisioning. Pricesmart is like a Sam's Club which features products in large quantities at lower prices.

Medical facilities are more than sufficient and there are clinics as well as a good hospital. In addition, all the major hotels have doctors on duty. Prescriptions may not be filled unless written by a doctor on the island.

For those that want to get around the island economically, there is a bus service that runs between all the districts and the hotel areas. The main bus station is located in downtown Oranjestad across from the waterfront shops. The buses are clean and safe. There are also mini buses such as the one that runs from San Nicolas to Oranjestad. These buses are privately owned and run more frequently than the public buses. They are also air conditioned. The fare is affordable.



## SPONSOR and ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the time and talent that my close friend **Catherine Hebson** has brought to the formatting of this guide to make its presentation first rate. Her enhancements on the exhibits and work on the Table of Contents and Illustrations make the guides so very usable.

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**Emilio De La Hoz** is the "eye" that captured a number of the photos that enliven this guide. He is a great sailor and a good friend.



## A WORD ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Frank Virgintino is a native New Yorker who has spent over twenty years living and cruising in the Dominican Republic. His sailing background of over forty years covers the Canadian Maritimes, all of the eastern seaboard of the United States and the entire Caribbean, many times over. Aside from cruising, he has spent the better part of his career designing and building marinas. In the process of writing this guide, all of the harbors listed were visited and each and every town noted. All of the information in the guide is a result of personal research and knowledge of the ABCs. None of it was garnered second hand. It is hoped that the guide will make Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao easier to access and rewarding to understand.



**The author believes that the guide should serve as an excellent source of information for these “Leeward Antilles” islands, although it should not be used for navigation at any time. All charts, lat and long positions and inserts exhibited should be used for a frame of reference only. Navigation should be undertaken with the appropriate charts of the area.**

You can make comments, ask questions or suggest changes right on the website or by writing to: [fvirgintino@gmail.com](mailto:fvirgintino@gmail.com)

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## SPECIAL NOTE

Again, bear in mind that cruising guides are NOT intended for navigation. They are *GUIDES* to be used for reference only. All the Latitudes and Longitudes here are given to the best of the author's ability. However, they should never be relied upon and the skipper of the boat should remember that he/she has sole responsibility for proper navigation. Facts and circumstances related to statements made in this guide can change; sometimes facilities and services that existed during the writing of the guide may no longer be available.

## Also by FRANK VIRGINTINO

- ★ A Cruising Guide to Aruba, Bonaire, and Curacao
- ★ Cayman Islands Cruising Guide
- ★ A Cruising Guide to Cuba (with Amaia Agirre)
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- ★ A Thinking Man's Guide to Voyages South: The Many Facets of Caribbean Cruising (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)
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