



## South Bonaire Dive Sites

Once you get to this point of the western coast of the island, the reefs are considered to be south dives. The shoreline and terrain here goes from flat to flatter, with the coastal road running down past the vast salt fields and the flamingo-breeding sanctuary.

This is not a very developed region. There are some homes and a few hotels down to the **Hilma Hooker** shipwreck area, and then it is pretty much open beach.

The coastal road gets narrower and becomes one lane as you drive further south. At some of the places it is very

close to the actual shore break. These beaches are popular with kitesurfers, and history buffs also come here to see replicas of the old slave huts. There are many popular spots in this region and it is not unusual to drive down the road in the morning and see at least one dive truck parked in front of the coastal sites. This area ends at the southern tip of the island, where the wind and the wild seas make a scenic venue to watch the western sun sink into the sea.

If you're lucky, a 'V' of flamingoes will be winging south at dusk towards Venezuela.

South Bonaire Dive Sites		GOOD SNORKELING	NOVICE	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
36	WINDSOCK	•	•		
37	CORP. MEISS / NORTH BELNEM	•	•		
38	BACHELOR'S BEACH	•	•		
39	CHEZ HINES			•	
40	LIGHTHOUSE POINT				•
41	PUNT VIERKANT			•	
42	THE LAKE	•	•		
43	HILMA HOOKER	•	•		
44	ANGEL CITY	•	•		
45	ALICE IN WONDERLAND	•		•	
46	AQUARIUS	•	•		
47	LARRY'S LAIR			•	
48	JEANNIE'S GLORY			•	
49	SALT PIER	•	•		
50	SALT CITY	•	•		
51	INVISIBLES	•	•		
52	TORI'S REEF	•	•		
53	PINK BEACH	•	•		
54	WHITE SLAVE	•		•	
55	MARGATE BAY	•	•		
56	RED BERYL	•	•		
57	ATLANTIS	•	•		
58	VISTA BLUE	•		•	
59	SWEET DREAMS			•	
60	RED SLAVE	•		•	

### 36 WINDSOCK

**Location:** Flamingo Airport  
**Depth:** 12-100ft (3-32m)  
**Access:** Shore & boat  
**Expertise Rating:** Novice



Since it's just past the airport, near the start of the runway, this site got its name from the telltale windsocks that are used to determine wind direction at airports. You can watch the planes land while you gear up at this coastal park, which is an easy walk-in at most of the park bench areas.

The site here is at the yellow painted rocks at the north end of the beach. Further down there's a small reef ledge that you must step down. The mooring for your dive boat sits in 29ft of water and is actually over the reef drop-off.

Divers have sighted blue spotted cornetfish in the shallows here; a sighting not all that common on other reefs.

The best snorkeling is reached by entering at the north end of the beach and heading towards Plaza Resort. For divers, head down the reef to the deeper



A stoplight parrotfish munches some coral

reaches and look for sea turtles and rays in the sand at 90ft. Work your way back up, checking the coral heads for blue-striped grunts, mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper as well as red hinds.

### 37 CORP. MEISS / NORTH BELNEM

**Location:** Flamingo Airport  
**Depth:** 10-100ft (3-32m)  
**Access:** Boat  
**Expertise Rating:** Novice



This is basically just the other end of **Windsock** where you can suit up at the park benches and step down over a ledge onto sandy and rubbly beach, then walk in over reef flats. The buoy here is in shallow water and the drop-off starts about 25ft and falls to 100ft.

The elkhorn coral is mostly skeletal but still holds protection and habitat for many small fish like damsels and juveniles. Going deeper, you will see some

surgeonfish, different kinds of parrotfish and fairy basslets hiding in the cover of large, orange elephant ear sponges.

There are lots of morays in the various coral heads and French angels, barracuda and hamlets. Divers also report seeing basket stars unfolded and feeding atop the coral heads at night at this site. The sand is fine, so if the surf is coming this way, visibility can be lower and the exit a little cloudy.

### 38 BACHELOR'S BEACH

**Location:** Past Flamingo Airport south  
**Depth:** 20-120ft (6-36m)  
**Access:** Boat  
**Expertise Rating:** Novice



The entry from the beach can be quite tricky, as the stair set leading to the beach has a pretty long last step. But once you clamber down the steps or make your way to the left on the rocks

down to the shore, the rest of the entry is easy and the swim is not far to the drop-off in about 25ft. The mooring buoy is in 13ft of water and an easier choice.

The upper reef has lots of flowing corals and small school of grunts and snapper. Peacock flounder also like the camouflage of this sandy bottom. The hard corals are also good and the reef is a mixture over the edge into the 30ft to 60ft range. Don't be surprised to see turtles here.

Tiger groupers, whitespotted filefish, smooth trunkfish, morays and queen angels are among the fish, so there is good diversity. The blue spot cornetfish has also been seen in these waters. This is another site that can be affected by the swell due to the fine sand here at the reef top. When the waves wash in, visibility decreases.

### 39 CHEZ HINES

**Location:** Southwest coast  
**Depth:** 17-100ft (5-32m)  
**Access:** Boat  
**Expertise Rating:** Intermediate



This is best done as a boat dive. At the time of writing, construction was being done at the beach entry with access difficult, but this may change. The mooring is fairly shallow at 17ft, and then the reef rolls down a gentle slope to the 100ft range where it is sandy again.

For the advanced divers, there is a deep reef area off in the sand at 110ft to 120ft, so watch your air going out. This again starts to drop off gently into the blue. This isn't a packed reef but has interspersed corals and coral head and some sandy patches. The ever-present garden eels can be found in the sand here, and also look for the possibility of a sleeping nurse shark, southern stingray,

a white margate hunting in the sand, or – on the smaller end of the spectrum – sand tilefish.

This is a good area for all kinds of soft corals including the black sea rods and some sea plumes. Schoolmasters hang around these corals and French angelfish hunt around the area. While up shallow decompressing, look around for goldspot gobies.

This site is close to a point, so currents can be strong here, or they can pick up during a dive, so be aware of what is going on underwater.

### Bonaire's Dolphins



There are two types of dolphins commonly seen around Bonaire and Klein Bonaire; spinner dolphins (*Stinella longirostris*) and bottlenose (*Tursiops truncatus*). They can normally be seen on boat dives going to and from the dive sites. Often they will try to ride the bow wave of a boat or play in large wake waves. Lucky divers have seen them around Klein Bonaire, where pairs of bottlenose sometimes come in to birth young. Dolphins are also seen at the south end of the island where currents converge and they follow fish schools and look for food. If you encounter a dolphin underwater, especially on scuba, it is a special event.

## 40 LIGHTHOUSE POINT

**Location:** Lighthouse Beach Resort, southwest coast

**Depth:** 16-115ft (5-32m)

**Access:** Boat

**Expertise Rating:** Intermediate to advanced



There is shore entry at the tiny beach next to the Lighthouse Beach Resort. Please call in advance to see if there are any restrictions to entering here. This is also better done by boat, as the currents can be stronger on the point. Getting in and out can also be a chore, and it is wise to have a local guide show you the ropes at first.

This sandy slope drops down gradually, similar to **Chez Hines** with a bottom of sand at 115ft. Look for garden eels here as well. The currents feed the sponges and you can expect to find large barrel sponges and some candelabra vase sponges.

This is a good place for soft corals with nice sea plumes and others providing cover for young trumpetfish. Again, be aware of the currents, as they can change in strength during the course of the dive.

## 41 PUNT VIERKANT

**Location:** Port Elizabeth

**Depth:** 22-95ft (7-29m)

**Access:** Boat

**Expertise Rating:** Intermediate



Bonaire's southern end has a famed double reef system. That is, there is the usual reef area growing along the shoreline drop-off that slopes down into deep sand, and another reef that

runs south down the coast all the way to **Invisibles**. In some places this second reef, part of about 20 sites, is very close to the reef slope, and even joins it in some areas. At other points it is a very far and deep swim out from the slopes and runs deep, with some strong currents. Before heading out to look for a part of the deep double reef on any specific site, it is wise to dive the site with a local guide to get some bearings and knowledge. This site is at the start of the northern end of the double reef system.

For shore divers, the entry site is marked by the yellow park stones, but a construction project – moving very slowly at the time of writing – made access inconsistent. Sometimes the fence is open and sometimes closed, meaning this site is best done by boat. Currents here can also be tricky and stronger than most places on Bonaire.

The mooring sits in 22ft and the drop-off is nearby at 30ft. This site also has a gentle slope with soft corals and sponges. In the sand channel at 90ft are garden eels, and this is also a good place for stingrays, and perhaps some marauding pompano.

The double reef is deep at 90ft and seems to rise up if you are heading south. If you swim or drift this way for a while, you will find the reef actually curves in to meet the slope reef at 65ft to 70ft. This reef has lots of sponge life. Look for reef fish like yellowtail snapper, margate and bar jacks. The shallows have squid and peacock flounder.



A marine park ranger paints new dive site markers

Sponges and tube corals encrust the prop area of the Hilma Hooker



## 42 THE LAKE

**Location:** Southwest Coast  
**Depth:** 13-130ft (20-40m)  
**Access:** Shore & boat  
**Expertise Rating:** Novice



Most divers go here for a good double reef experience. Currents tend to be less than at **Punt**, and shore diving is simpler. The reef also comes in closer and is shallower, so divers can spend more time exploring. The shore entry is fairly easy through a sandy channel, although it is a long swim out. Divers used to have to enter here by driving their trucks

down from the **Hilma Hooker** entrance, but a new entrance from the main road marked by the yellow park rocks now makes this an easy site to get to with good parking at shore's edge.

The upper reef is full of soft corals, with stands of sea rods and some sea plumes. There are also some flowing gorgonian sea fans. Look for flamingo tongues here. But the best game plan is to head to the double reef first. This can be done by swimming directly in blue water, or by going down the slope to the sand in 80ft, swimming over the garden eels and up to the outer reef. It rises to 65ft and has lots of old growth hard coral. There are some big barrel sponges at the top of the reef, and large orange elephant ear sponges also grow here in

many spots. Look for sea turtles, plus blue water fish like silvery rainbow runners and even an occasional eagle ray.

The outer reef falls off into the blue well past 130ft. This reef has densely packed corals of all kinds. Look for sprawling brain corals, spiny flower corals and maze corals.

There are some coral patches that connect the two reefs. On the way back, look at the nice growth along the inner reef. There are some tube sponges and rope sponges. Bar jacks move up and down the reef. A few stands of staghorn coral provide good habitat for juveniles. Close to the mooring at 30ft there is a large coral head full of chromis that has a busy cleaning station. This is also a good night dive.

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## HILMA HOOKER

**Location:** Southwest coast, north of TWR facility  
**Depth:** 20-100ft (6-32m), 62-100ft (19-32m) for 2 buoys on ship  
**Access:** Boat  
**Expertise Rating:** Novice (Deep: Intermediate)



This site is so popular there are three buoys here. One on the reef at 20ft, one is on the bow at 80ft, and the other on the stern at 66ft. The parking area is large and you can see the trucks and some coral piles to gauge an exit. The only thing tricky is a reef flat lip right at the shoreline that can be a pain to step up and over with any kind of surf. Buddies may have to help one another a bit. To avoid the day boat crowds you may want to go here early in the morning or later in the afternoon. This is a popular night dive as well.

In its past, the *Hilma Hooker* was – among other things – a drug running ship, and at one stage 25,000lb of marijuana was found on board by authorities. It was purposely sunk and sacrificed to King Neptune for diving purposes in 1984. It is a 236ft (72m) long cargo freighter that has been pretty well stripped and has little to hang up divers. It lies on its starboard side, with the stern touching the reef and the bow slightly out into the deeper sand. The freight-hold faces out toward the double reef. Still, the wreck is deep and dark. A wreck penetration class should be taken before venturing inside. For the most part, the ship and holds are open and it is a pleasant dive to explore, with not much danger involved, if you keep an eye on your computer.

Doing this as a boat dive is much easier, as you're right there, and it's just a matter of descending the mooring line.

A young smooth trunkfish



The shore dive however, allows you to explore the inner reef on the way back, making your deco stop much more interesting.

Start at the deepest part of the ship and work into the shallower part. The bow is in about 100ft in the sand. Look underneath the bow for colorful tubastrea corals. At night these are as pretty as the ones at **Town Pier**. The hull is fairly clean but the forward bridge area has abundant sponge growth. Yellow encrusting octopus sponge and big, purple tube sponges grow all around the bridge.

There are usually a few big tarpon cruising and hovering around the wreck. On the reef side, lots of chromis and other small fish swim in the water column by the bow. A mast sits out in the sand.

The center holds are open and adorned in sponges. The aft area has some davits and railings with small coral growth. But the best part of the aft is the prop and the big rudder. On top, sponge clusters grow on the prop shaft and blades. Underneath, big purple tube sponges, red and yellow encrusting sponges and tubastrea corals adorn the hull and are worth seeing, day or night.

From this area, at about 70ft, head up the reef if you are shore diving and enjoy the upper reef. Plate corals and schools of smallmouth grunts are in the 30ft to 40ft area. Soft corals with schoolmasters and hiding stoplight parrotfish can be seen up top.

Some divers also go over to the double reef after seeing the shipwreck. This is easier done for boat divers. The double reef is in the 70ft to 80ft area.

#### 44 ANGEL CITY

**Location:** Next to Hilma Hooker, southwest coast

**Depth:** 28-80ft (8-24m)

**Access:** Shore & boat

**Expertise Rating:** Novice



Yes, there are angelfish at Angel City, but there's a lot more as well. An easy beach entry and a mooring that drops you right over the drop-off make this a snap to get to. This and adjoining **Alice in Wonderland** may be one of the best places on Bonaire to get a good look at the double reef in moderately shallow water. If shore diving, there is usually a big coral stone beach marker, and it is a long swim out, but you start seeing coral about halfway out to the drop-off, so there is something to check out as you come and go.

Head down the reef where the sand appears at only 60ft. This sand area is quite interesting, with queen conchs, southern stingrays and lots of small coral gardens waiting to be found. The double reef is just a short swim across and rises to 60ft to 65ft, with lots of hard corals and nooks and crannies that hold



A BNMP yellow rock marker shows the way to each beach dive site

all kinds of marine life. Look for the roaming tarpon, porgies and eels in the many holes. Mating porcupine puffers have also been seen playing their odd game here. At many places, the double reef merges with the slope reef.

The coral growth is very competitive here. You will see finger coral growing into large brain corals. The upper reef has appealing soft coral. It is a long swim back but there's lots of coral to see during about half of that swim. There are many small hard corals through here, and the fish and corals are as diverse as any place on Bonaire. This is a great place to hunt for juveniles, gobies and blennies. Nudibranchs are in here too. Divers have been known to repeat this dive more than once during a trip.

#### 45 ALICE IN WONDERLAND

**Location:** North of Salt Pier, southwest coast

**Depth:** 16-100ft (4.5-30m)

**Access:** Shore & boat

**Expertise Rating:** Intermediate



Although the site is close to **Angel City**, this is a decidedly deeper dive and also much different. Entry from the shore is easy and the park buoy is up on the reef flat before the drop-off. There is a lot of coral at the drop-off, both hard and soft, and a multitude of cleaning stations and small fish schools. It is a good place to snorkel with a sand path right to the entry.

The slope goes down to sand at about 80ft and there's a long crossing to the outer reef, which tends to run deeper as you go south. So watch your computer if this is the way you go. The outer reef has the thick coral growth and lots of cover, and sometimes sea turtles come into the area. There can be a current. Most local dive masters swim

in a square here, moving across sand, then going along the outer reef, then crossing again about halfway through the dive and coming back along the reef slope with the current at a shallower depth.

If you're just into poking around, there are some nice coral clusters in the middle of this sand channel. They look like sculpted gardens in the white sand. Big green morays and graybys can be found.

Up on the slope, you may see more eels. The sponge life is good, with barrel sponges, tube sponges and elephant ears all present.

Higher up, schoolmasters live around the hard corals. Lobed star coral, finger coral, plate coral and sheet coral can all be found as well. There are some big coral rock mounds on the beach to help you find your way back in.

#### 46 AQUARIUS

**Location:** North of Salt Pier, southwest coast

**Depth:** 15-100ft (6-16m)

**Access:** Shore

**Expertise Rating:** Novice (first reef), advanced (second reef)



This is a shore-only dive and an easy entry with a nice, sandy beach. There is a long, sandy reef flat and it is a rather long swim out. The slope starts to go down at 25ft and hits the sand at 100ft. For most divers, this slope is where you will spend most of the dive. Look in the sand for hovering cornetfish.

The slope is full of various hard corals and there is an interesting variety of smaller fish, angels and grunts. Sponge life is also healthy. Look for lavender tube and orange elephant ear sponges. There are some large brain corals here and sheet corals.

For divers trained in compass navigation, or those with an experienced guide, the second reef is one that must be navigated. It is far out and deep, with the top in the 90ft to 100ft range. Big jacks, eagle rays and sea turtles can be seen here. This reef also has good hard coral density and sponge life. Take note of the current, as you are really out far and deep. If you're not absolutely sure what you're doing, stay at the inner reef as there is plenty there to keep you occupied.

#### 47 LARRY'S LAIR

**Location:** North of Salt Pier, southwest coast

**Depth:** 15-100ft (4.5-30m)

**Access:** Shore

**Expertise Rating:** Novice



You're getting close to the **Salt Pier** now, and the reef flat is broader and sandier. There isn't a big parking area and the beach can be rather rocky except for one sandy spot that leads onto the reef flat. The swim out also has some corals to go around.

This dive is similar to the one next door, with the double reef being pretty far out and deep, and also hard to find at times because the sand is fine and visibility can be lower than at some other spots. But on Bonaire, that's still very good. Dive the second reef at this site with an experienced guide and make sure you have a lot of experience as well. The reef starts down at 30ft to 35ft and bottoms out at 100ft. The sponges are again prevalent and diverse. Frogfish have been reported around some of the sponges, and eagle rays have been seen too. Look for schools of grunts and goatfish, sometimes together, swimming along the reef or hovering near a coral cluster.



## 48 JEANNIE'S GLORY

**Location:** Close to Salt Pier, southwest coast

**Depth:** 30-100ft (9-32m)

**Access:** Boat & shore

**Expertise Rating:** Novice (first reef only)



This dive is similar to **Larry's Lair** except the double reef starts even deeper at the 130ft mark, which is the sport diving safe limit. So we suggest the dive be made on the reef slope. This site is also a boat dive, with the mooring at 20ft over the reef flat leading to the drop-off.

Getting in isn't so bad, but there's a shelf past the entry so inflate your BC or you'll find yourself up to your chest quickly. It is a long swim out to the drop-off at 35ft, and this is also a place where the sand is fine. Look for peacock flounder in the shallows and a few wrasse and hogfish. You'll first see a lot

of soft coral growth that is good cover for juvenile fish and perhaps a juvenile filefish.

The sand is at 105ft to 110ft. There is attractive sponge growth, soft corals and various hard coral clusters with cleaning stations and chromis up in the water column. This reef also has collections of the purple-tipped giant anemone and some corkscrew anemones. Check each for glass, bobtail and Pederson shrimp.

## 49 SALT PIER

**Location:** Under the Salt Pier, southwest coast

**Depth:** 14-60ft (4-18m)

**Access:** Shore

**Expertise Rating:** Novice



The same rules apply here as they do at **Town Pier**. You must have a certified dive master apply for permission to lead you here. So if you want to go, con-



Flowing sea fans at reef top



Diving between the pillars at Salt Pier

tact your favorite guide and give him a few days to get it done. The going rate for both dives is between \$25 to \$30, depending on who you talk to. The usual entry/exit is on the north and is smooth going. There is a broad sand plain that slopes gradually. It's okay to start the dive early, as you may see small sand critters in this area. Also, be aware that scorpionfish like this habitat, so watch where you step. Good buoyancy is the key.

This maze of pillars can be confusing, especially at night, so just enjoy the dive and let the guide do the work. This is a good mid to late afternoon dive with the sun starting to head lower in the west. Anytime after 2pm gives wide-angle photographers the opportunity to get the sun's rays filtering through the support pillars. Some nice close focus wide-angle work can be done with candelabra, rope and tube sponges growing from the supports. This is really a fun place to compose and try various exposures.

The sea floor also has a nice assortment of fish and invertebrate life. Great

barracuda hover and follow divers. Goatfish school under the pilings, as do French grunts and schoolmasters. Soapfish laze on the coral and trumpetfish try to blend in with rope sponges. There are also eels and octopuses to be seen. The bottom has some junk that is a great habitat for crabs and juvenile fish. People love this dive day and night and it is shallow, so a nice, long dive can be made. Try one dive with wide-angle and another with macro to bring back memories of the best of both worlds.

## 50 SALT CITY

**Location:** Directly south of Salt Pier

**Depth:** 21-60ft

**Access:** Shore & boat

**Expertise Rating:** Novice



This is one of those long swims out if you're not making a boat dive, and the entry is pretty rocky. If you're boat diving, the mooring is near the drop-off at 21ft. Just head down the slope from the mooring and you'll see the double reef. Like the dive at **Angel City**, this is a good place to explore the various facets of the double reef system and get a look out into blue water at the second open ocean drop-off for big jacks, rainbow runner or a sea turtle.

The reef top for the second reef is only about 60ft and actually gets shallower as you swim to the south. Going north, it starts to get deeper.

This shoreline reef slope is again pocked with corals, sponges and soft corals, with a good amount of fish life hanging around. Even right at the drop-off, it is a pretty interesting section of reef to explore. This can be a rewarding, long exploration. Don't forget to check out the garden eels in the sand at 75ft. Divers also report seeing one or more eagle rays here on occasion.

## 51 INVISIBLES

**Location:** South of Salt Pier, southwest coast

**Depth:** 19-130ft+ (6-40m+)

**Access:** Shore & boat

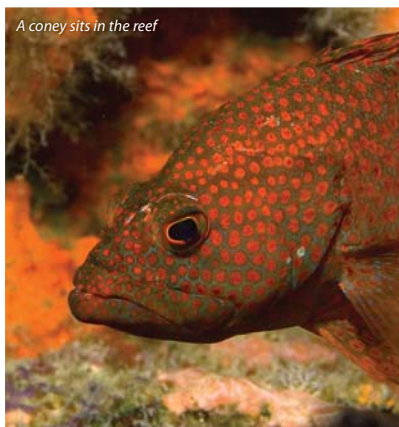
**Expertise Rating:** Novice



Hey snorkelers! Garden eels in only 20ft of water! This site is good for all levels of divers and is one of the island's most diverse. If the swell is down, snorkeling can be very clear. Swell stirs up the sand a bit and makes entry and snorkeling a bit harder.

Sitting at the south end of the double reef system, you can visit both reefs here, plus some pretty coral oases in the middle of the sandy channel between the two reefs. There is a sand chute that you can follow down to about 80ft and proceed from there to the coral islands or the double reef. The double reef top is at about 80ft and slopes quickly to 130ft, and more on the outside of the reef, so this can quickly become a deeper dive than planned on. Watch your computer.

The reef slope and hard and soft corals hold everything from seahorses to



A coney sits in the reef

frogfish and many of the usual suspects as well. Look for various groupers and horse-eye jacks cruising for a meal and occasionally going after some smaller fish. This whole reef going up the slope has lots of surprises, so this site may warrant a deep dive and also another shallow dive to see everything the site has to offer.

## 52 TORI'S REEF

**Location:** Right of Intake Channel, southwest coast

**Depth:** 22-95ft (6-30m)

**Access:** Shore & boat

**Expertise Rating:** Novice



Be prepared for a long swim out. People shore diving enter two ways here. Some go over the reef flat next to the channel that is an intake for the salt fields. Others just go into the intake channel (when it's not intaking) and swim out. There is a long swim out that divers may enjoy and snorkelers can spend a lot of time at as well. Look for reef squid in the shallower water.

Past the buoy the reef slopes at 30ft to 35ft and bottoms out at 95ft. The reef slope is gradual.

There are nice sea anemones here and other invertebrate life. Look for some lobsters and also barber pole shrimp at the cleaning stations. Goldentail morays and spotted morays like the cracks and cover here as well.

This is a fishy reef with saucereye pogies, fish like schoolmasters and small-mouth. Rock beauties, French angels and queen angles have all been seen here.

The Creole wrasse schools move up and down the reef and stop at the cleaning stations. Look also for juveniles like spotted rums. There are also a few scorpionfish on this reef.





Historic white slave huts sit right on the beach



### 53 PINK BEACH

**Location:** Beach Park with palms, southwest coast  
**Depth:** 15-100ft (4.5-30m)  
**Access:** Shore & boat  
**Expertise Rating:** Novice



The Cargil Salt Company donated this stretch of beach, and it is a fantastic place to watch the sunset and pelicans while enjoying a sundowner. The coconut trees are permanently bent facing west due to the wind. There aren't a lot of palms on Bonaire (mostly cactus), so this site has a tropical feel. The entry marker is at the north end of the beach, and the entry is fairly easy. The

exit could be complicated by the reef lip at the beach, as it's a little tough to negotiate if there is any surf.

The park mooring is in 15ft of water and the reef flat is a long swim to the drop-off at 30ft. It runs down to 100ft and a sandy plain. It goes from soft corals and sea fans to hard corals down deep.

Look for the elusive sand tilefish out in the sand and – you guessed it again – garden eels! Southern stingrays are also found in the sandy channel.

Like **Tori's**, this is a good place for fish, with jolthead porgies, trumpetfish, schooling blue tangs looking for algae patches, the occasional cornetfish and seemingly a lot of porcupine puffers.

It is a good afternoon dive or snorkel before enjoying the sunset and possibility of flamingoes flying in.

### 54 WHITE SLAVE

**Location:** Slave huts, southwest coast  
**Depth:** 10-120ft (3-36m)  
**Access:** Shore  
**Expertise Rating:** Intermediate to advanced



This is a historic site and can't be missed as you drive along the road. There are a number of small, white cement huts with black roofs right on the beach. It is hard to imagine people living in these tiny quarters. At least they had a breeze.

This is a shore dive only, so there is no offshore buoy placed here by the park. The yellow stones marking entry are on

the south side of the huts and this site is getting closer to the tip, so expect some surf. The beach is largely comprised of coral rubble, and the reef flat is pocked, so entry and exit can be tricky. It is also a long swim to the drop-off. This sits on its own little unprotected point with currents being rather tricky, thus the upper level of training required to dive here. Plan this one well and give yourself extra air to get back, as both sea and wind driven currents can be a problem.

Sea turtles are known to be here so there is a good chance of seeing a hawksbill on this dive. The long swim to the drop-off ends when you get to the 30ft to 35ft mark, and the slope runs down deep to 115ft. Sponge life is good, with barrel and elephant ear sponges. Look for triggers, butterflyfish and angelfish as there are many sea rods and other soft corals along with round, hard corals.

Schooling grunts move along the reef top



## 55 MARGATE BAY

**Location:** Southwest coast**Depth:** 24-120ft (7m-37m)**Access:** Boat**Expertise Rating:** Intermediate

Currents here are generally less than up at **White Slave** and boat and beach dives can be made here. There is a little *saliña* type of pool between the road and the beach that can be full of water after rains or even when the tide comes up. Once across this, there's a nice sandy area to park. A somewhat tricky entry and a chance of current makes this intermediate, but all levels can do this with a guide.

The mooring buoy sits in 24ft of water and the drop-off starts in about 30ft of

*Endangered conchs can sometimes be found in the sandy areas between the reefs*



water. There is some healthy staghorn coral, which is home to lots of juveniles, and the reef has longsnout butterfly-fish, honeycomb cowfish and damsels. And, yes, there are a lot of black margate as well.

The slope goes deep to 130ft. Look for tarpon in the blue and sea turtles along the reef. This site also has healthy sponge life and sea fans and many gorgonian soft corals. Most divers like to dive in the 30ft to 60ft region as the fish life is best up shallow.

## 56 RED BERYL

**Location:** Southwest coast**Depth:** 15-130ft (4.5-40m)**Access:** Shore**Expertise Rating:** Novice

Red Beryl is somewhat protected, and snorkelers and divers can enjoy this site. The next site down, **Atlantis**, is the hangout of kitesurfers, and they sometimes come in close to shore. They usually go south, though if one is having a good ride they may come up here as well. If snorkeling, watch yourself – divers surfacing may want to pop a safety sausage.

Coral growth is good and starts as you swim out to the drop-off. Currents can be stronger here but are not normally a problem.

There are sea fans at the reef top and the whole reef has attractive coral growth all the way down to 130ft. Barrel and tube sponges have small gobies and zoanthid colonies on them.

Divers report good fish diversity with frogfish being seen in the sponges and camouflaging as part of the rocks. Banded coral shrimp, Pederson shrimp in anemones and coral crabs can be found in the reef.

Healthy coral thrive at the reef top



## 57 ATLANTIS

**Location:** *Durban, Bonaire*  
**Depth:** *10-120ft (3-37m)*  
**Access:** *Shore*  
**Expertise Rating:** *Novice*



This is the main hangout for kitesurfers, who get here about 10am and sometimes stay until sunset – so the earlier the better here. The swim out is short and the beach is lovely. Like **Red Beryl**, coral and sea fans start in 20ft of water and the drop is at 30ft to 35ft.

Stingrays and eagle rays are reported here but the sand is deep at 140ft. The reef is sparser here with more open sand

and lots of coral islands. Look for black crinoids here. There are some spots with black coral growth as well.

This site is approaching the island tip as well, so turtles are common. Look also for tarpon, rainbow and blue runners and bar jacks.

These reefs also have good sponge life and a diverse fish population from 70ft upward. Some divers do a drift to the non-park site called Fish Hut. This is the rustic looking structure on the beach that usually has some boats resting next to it on the beach. It is a pretty, sandy beach and you can get out here if the current goes south and walk back, getting warmed by the sun.

Look out for kitesurfers here. Popping up a safety sausage at the 10ft mark is very prudent here.

## 58 VISTA BLUE

**Location:** *Southern southwest coast*  
**Depth:** *20-120ft*  
**Access:** *Shore & boat*  
**Level:** *Intermediate*



The road turns into a single lane road up by **Red Beryl** and by the time you drive down here you get the feeling you're pretty much the only divers on the island. It is set far off the road with good parking and beach access. There is a buoy here for boat divers. You're not quite at the island tip yet, but the diving is starting to get decidedly different. Currents can be stronger and the sandy

beach is nice to look at but stirs up easily, making going out and coming back a challenge if there's any surf at all.

The reef flat has sprawled again and it is a long swim out from shore. The park buoy is in 25ft of water and coral starts in the form of staghorns and some sea fans and sea rods. The steep slope has a beautiful collection of sponges due to the currents and lack of diver pressure. Soft corals also get the benefit of this environment. Look again for green and hawksbill turtles.

There is a deep drop-off at 160ft that techies only can try to get down to. This site promises a look at open ocean fish and rays. There is no real reason to go this deep as this reef is very healthy and provides an excellent dive in the 40ft to 80ft range.

## 59 SWEET DREAMS

**Location:** *Southern southwest coast*  
**Depth:** *10-120ft (3-37m)*  
**Access:** *Shore*  
**Level:** *Intermediate*



There is a big STINAPA turtle protection sign right at the markers for this site. Also a bit off the road, there is a pleasant sandy beach here. Take care not to get stuck.

Although the entrance is sandy, the site is normally a manageable entry. If you look at it from the air, you see that this is on a curve heading right to the island tip, so a south wind can stir up the sandy entrance and exit. Bear this in mind before venturing out.

There is a lot of coral at reef top in 20ft to 30ft of water with some fire coral, staghorn and soft corals. Look for the possibility of seeing a snake eel or scorpionfish in the sandy upper reef. Also, the rays may be seen along this reef in shallow areas less than 130ft.

Look at the sandy parts of the reef carefully to see if any have buried into the sand. Sea turtles are again a big possibility. Remember to be aware of the currents.

## 60 RED SLAVE

**Location:** *Red slave huts, southern southwest coast*

**Depth:** *22-140+ft (7-43+m)*

**Access:** *Shore*

**Level:** *Intermediate to advanced*



This is a good one to do with an experienced guide, as the next stop from here is Venezuela. The site is at the amber-colored slave huts found almost at the island's tip. The sunset is wonderful from this beach. There is a good possibility of a surf exit or entry and it isn't overly difficult but can be tricky. If you are not used to surf entries, consult your guide before you are in the ocean.

The entry bottom is mostly rocky, broken coral and the beach is littered with bits of dead gorgonian fans. Go down and swim out. If diving by boat, head down the mooring to the drop-off, which starts at about 37ft to 40ft. If calm, snorkeling can be good as there is an upper reef area with a lot of life, and the water is generally clear.

The upper reef can be nice with southern stingrays in the shallows and garden eels feeding in the surge and current. Take note of the current and dive accordingly. One interesting fish shoal here is the yellowfin mojarra. This silvery fish is the only mojarra with yellow ventral fins and it does not have any black markings on the dorsal fin.

Black durgons, French grunts, yellow goatfish, midnight parrotfish and lots of other fish like this deep area. Sea turtles and even spotted eagle rays are pretty common here as well.

Divers have even reported seeing dolphins in the water here (a rare and special event).

Depending on if you go north or south, the terrain varies and the drop-off flows down quite deep in places. This is best done at 100ft and above. You will also see larger fish here and bigger schools. So, there's no need for a deep dive as most of the action is up.

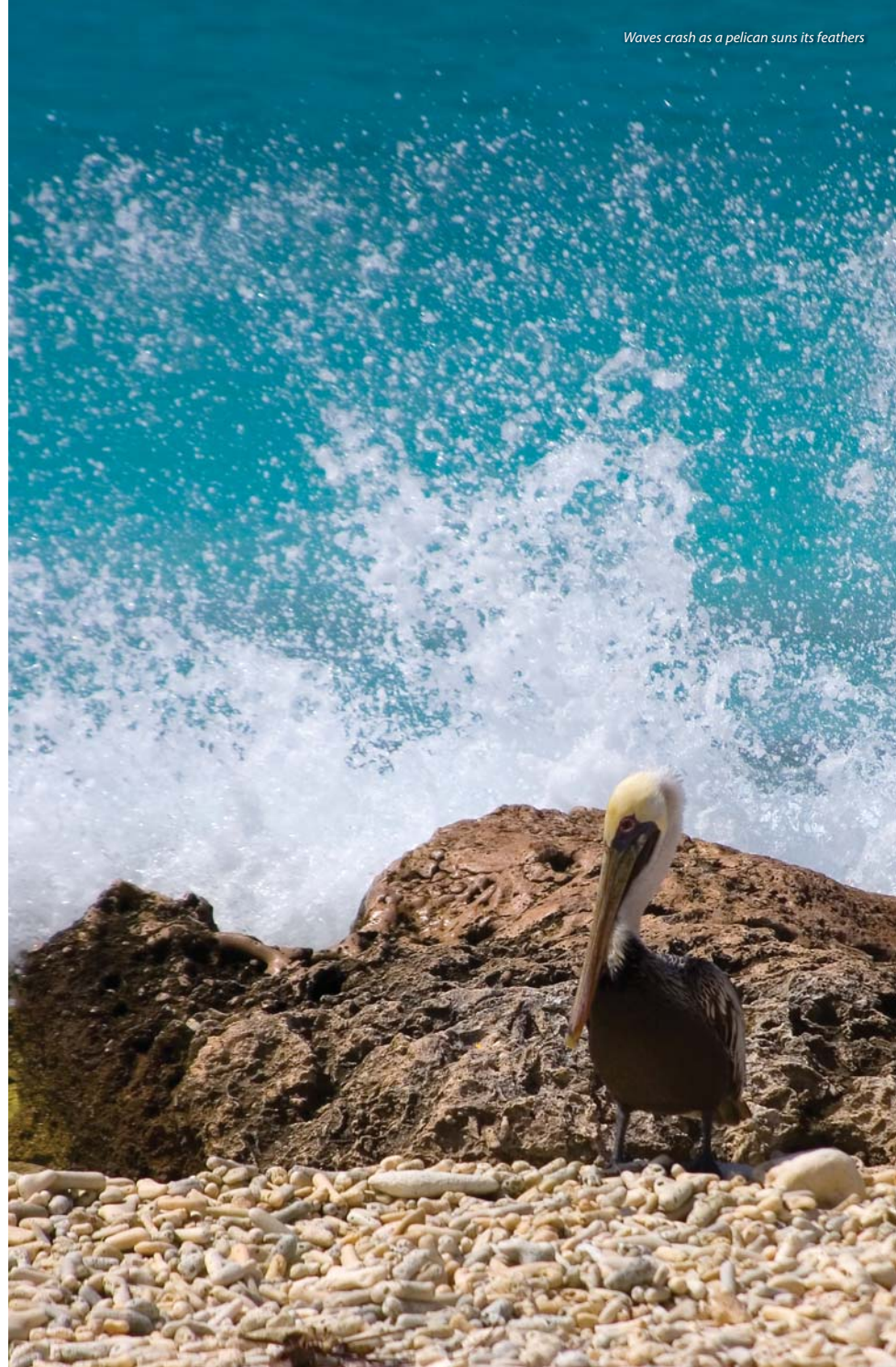
Just like on the beach, there are sea fan skeletons mixed in with live flowing sea fans. Look around at these fans for marine life. Seahorses and other small fish like this detritus as habitat. Flowing sea fans, sea rods and candelabrams all enjoy this unusual environment at the island's tip.

This is also the site of the 1829 wreck of the HMS *Barham*. The northern end of the reef has some ballast stones of the ship but, since it was a wooden ship, the waves and sea worms have pretty much destroyed any other remnants. Look for smoother stones as river rocks were often used as ballast in the 1800s ships.

While the location and seas may seem forbidding, most divers come away from Red Slave enjoying the dive and the effort they made to see it.



*An octopus nestles into its home in the reef*



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