

Travel Facts



Bonaire's motorcycle club members watch the sunset at White Slave on their Sunday ride

GETTING THERE

Many international airlines service Bonaire on a daily basis. There is one-stop service (via San Juan, Montego Bay, Aruba, or Curaçao) from the United States and non-stop service from Europe (Amsterdam) as well as from Ecuador and Peru. The hot pink Flamingo Airport has a runway of more than 1.5 miles (2.9km) in length, long enough to accommodate 747 Jumbo Jets. The airport's designation is BON.

American Eagle has five nonstop flights from San Juan, Puerto Rico, to and from Bonaire each week connected via Boston, New York, Newark, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, Atlanta, Ft Lauderdale, Miami and Los Angeles. Divers have had problems with theft of expensive camera and dive equipment going through San Juan and complaints to the airport management don't seem to be heeded. Anything of

value should be hand carried if going through San Juan until the blatant theft is addressed. Luggage sometimes gets delayed here as well.

Air Jamaica flies to Bonaire via Montego Bay on Saturdays.

One great new US option, which we took when researching this book, is the Continental Airlines weekly nonstop round trip flight between its Houston hub and Bonaire. Flight 1898 departs Houston on Friday at 11:30pm, arriving in Bonaire on Saturday at 6:15am. The return flight, 1899, departs Bonaire on Saturdays at 8am, arriving in Houston at 10:50am. Continental Airlines uses a Boeing 737 airplane with 124 (tightly packed) seats including 12 (more spacious) first class seats. The flight is a direct shot, avoiding the less dependable and theft-ridden stops. Continental Airlines is the world's sixth largest airline, so it connects in Houston to flights from all over the US and the world.

American Airlines flies direct, nonstop to Curaçao from Miami, and Delta flies there from Atlanta. Passengers then use either Dutch Antilles Express to connect to Bonaire. Flying time between Curaçao and Bonaire is approximately 15 to 30 minutes. Again, reports of delayed luggage come from this connection.

Another routing option is to fly on any of a number of major US and South American carriers to Aruba, and then take Dutch Antilles Express to Bonaire.

From Europe, KLM flies direct from Amsterdam to Bonaire up to twice daily. One flight continues on to Quito, Ecuador, and the other to Lima, Peru.

From South America, via Ecuador and Peru, the same KLM flights return to Bonaire with nonstop flights.

From Venezuela, nonstop charter flights from either Caracas or Valencia to Bonaire are available with PAS (Progressive Air Service). Additional service from Adventure Travel & Tours is available with nonstop flights between Caracas and Bonaire.

From Brazil, Varig and Avianca, fly from Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro to Aruba, which connect with Dutch Antilles Express.

From Colombia, Avianca has flights from Bogota to Aruba, which connect with Dutch Antilles Express.

If you are coming by sailboat, there is no anchoring allowed on the reef and moorings for visiting yachts are available on a first-come basis.

GETTING AROUND

An intricate network of good roads makes it easy to get around the island. Bonaire is not the most overbuilt island, which is part of its charm. The main roads are paved but don't always have centerlines. For the most part, Bonaire drivers are courteous and drive within the posted speed limits.

In some parts of the island, the road narrows to a single lane, like along the

far southern beaches and also near some of the northern dive sites where the road runs along a cliff line. Here you must slow down and yield where appropriate. There are places to pull over. There are also some earthen roads.

The entire northern fifth of the island is national park and it is just about as natural as it can be. It is laced with one-way dirt roads that run along the shore lines and into the heart of the park. Although there are paving plans, a truck with high undercarriage clearance or 4WD vehicle is required here. You will not be allowed access with a conventional car.

Finally, many of the more central parts of the island, especially those east of Kralendijk and north of Rincon, are also unpaved. Rainy season is rarely wet enough to make roads impassable, but they can become muddy. The road near the mangrove at the Lac is one such road.

Bonaire has a good variety of rental options, including twin cab trucks from known names like Budget Rent-a-car, to small scooters, which can transport one person and snorkel gear. Many folks continue the Dutch tradition of bike riding as most of Bonaire is flat and easy to pedal around. If you're not used to the tropics, though, be sure to bring plenty of water.

Taxis are available but certainly not ubiquitous. Many hotels can arrange drop off in town and later pick-up for those wanting to remain unencumbered.

Some hotel packages even come with room, meals, diving and truck as part of the package. As shore diving is a lifestyle here, a good truck is a requisite for those who want pick their own favorite sites and not be part of the boat crowd.

Taxi drivers get a 10% tip as the norm. In dive shops and that sort of service, 10% is also the norm if your guides were attentive and helpful.

Catching some rays and wind at Lac Cai Channel



ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Canadian and US citizens must have a valid passport and a return or ongoing ticket. A birth certificate with a picture ID is also acceptable for entry into Bonaire. Citizens of the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg – along with any other countries with whom the Netherlands has reached an agreement on visa requirements – are allowed to stay up to 90 days (3 months) without having to apply for a visit extension.

Citizens of most countries in the world do not need a visa for their entry to Bonaire. Effective January 1, 2005, visitors from certain countries were required to have a visa for stays of up to three months (90 days) in the Netherlands Antilles. If you are not certain, call the Immigration Office of Bonaire (☎ +599-717-6880).

When you do come in you can bring articles for personal use. Visitors over 15-years-old are allowed 400 cigarettes, 50 cigars, 250g of tobacco, 2L of distilled beverages, 2L of wine.

The Netherlands Antilles has its own drug laws that are not the same as Holland's. Bonaire's drug laws are not at all lenient.

TIME

Bonaire is Atlantic Standard Time, which is the same as the US east coast during daylight-saving time (mid-spring to mid-fall).

Bonaire does not change time for daylight saving, as is the custom in the US and Europe. When it's noon in Bonaire it is 3pm (next day) in Sydney, Australia, 9pm in San Francisco, California, and 5am in London, England.

MONEY

The Netherlands Antilles guilder (NAFI) is the official currency. It is sometimes referred to as the floren. There are so many American tourists that the dollar is widely accepted. But expect your change normally to be in guilders. Oddly, the Euro has not become the major currency here, but can be exchanged at banks for local cash and dollars.

The guilder is fixed at the exchange rate of 1.77 to the dollar for cash and 1.78 for traveler's checks. Most stores and businesses exchange it at 1.75. You can spend dollars everywhere, but will likely receive your change in guilders. At the time of this book, the guilder is fixed on the dollar at a rate of FL\$35 to USD\$20 for retail transactions.

There are ATMs available all over the touristy part of Kralendijk and banking hours are 10am to 3pm, Monday through Friday. Traveler's checks are widely accepted. Be sure to have your passport or positive ID when changing traveler's checks at banks.

All of the major credits cards are widely accepted at hotels, restaurants, taverns and auto rental agencies.

TAX

Save some money, as when you are ready to leave there is a US\$20 (35 guilders) departure tax at the Flamingo Airport for international departures and US\$5.75 for flights to the other Antilles isles. But that's not all. There is a 5% tax on most goods and services (NAOB tax). Hotel room tax is US\$5.50 to \$6.50 per person per day. Car rental tax is US\$3.50 per day. You'll see it on your bill or invoice.

ELECTRICITY

All electricity in Bonaire is 127 Volts AC at 50 Cycles (or Hertz/Hz). This doesn't really match either the power requirements of



Colorful home louvered window



The church at Rincon

Palms at a Bonaire condo complex



most European appliances (220V, 50Hz) or American appliances (110V, 60Hz).

A two-pronged wall socket similar to the US plug is used. Recent upgrades to the power grid make charging strobes, batteries and dive lights no problem. But it's not always clear what voltage the outlet is running at, so it's important to check this with your accommodation manager.

Many sockets do not have a third ground hole, so it is advisable to bring an adapter to make your cord plug two-pronged.

Many chargers, like the Ikelite super charger, come equipped to handle 100/240 volts and are fine. Most laptop computer power sources, like the Mac iBook, also have these. These are the handiest way to get your equipment charged up.

Most US appliances, like electric toothbrushes, will work but may just run a bit hotter. Some of the dive shops and resorts have stations for guest use for charging camera batteries and strobes. This may be a viable way to prevent problems with charging.

Most resorts are used to this problem and have transformers available for rent for your more sensitive items.

Transformers can also be bought in local stores such as Benzers, Inpo, and Playa Trading for \$50 to \$100.

Gadgets may be plugged into a 127V socket directly without a transformer, as long as you understand that some US voltage-specific devices may run warm, and may burn out if left plugged in for a long time. The best bet is to charge and then unplug. The author carried a power strip and if everything was charged, the strip was just unplugged.

Keep an eye on your room lights. If they start to go dim, unplug your stuff. Bonaire does occasionally have surges and brown-outs. If you plug anything electronically delicate into a wall outlet, it might not be a bad idea to have a small surge protector in between. You can bring these with you and they usually cost under \$10. They are available at most consumer electronics stores, such as Radio Shack.

WEIGHTS & MEASURES

The system of metric weights and measures is used. Depths are registered in meters and weights in kilos. All sale and rental dive gear is oriented this way. See our quick conversion scale on the back inside cover.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Email outlets and Internet cafes are becoming more prevalent in Kralendijk Town. Many of the hotels have computers centers/business centers and a few even have wireless week-long packages. Email and Internet providers recently upgraded servers and service on Bonaire is now reasonably fast and reliable.

Some public places that offer you a web fix are BonaireAccess at the Harbourside Mall, Chat N Browse (a few blocks north of the mall) and Cyber City Webcafé (in City Café). Others are popping up.



The night scene in Kralendyk can be fun and lively

Captain Don's has a cyber café in the lobby as well and also wireless access for its guests with laptops.

If you are a subscriber to AT&T World-Net service, there is a Bonaire access number you can use. You pay the out-of-region access surcharge for the plan you are on.

TELEPHONE

Calls from Bonaire to the US are downright expensive. While not a bargain, the Internet is certainly a much cheaper option. But if you do need to call to tell your jealous friends how good the diving is, a phone call from the hotel or resort directly is going to cost you between \$3 and \$4 per minute. Similarly, calls to various European countries are quite expensive too.

According to the folks at the tourism bureau there are four ways to get around this:

- 1 Go to the Telbo building in downtown Kralendijk, and call using phone booths (you pay at a nearby counter). This costs about half what the charge is at a resort.

- 2 Get a calling card from a long distance company which allows you to place credit card calls from Bonaire (check this with them first – it can be costly) Rates on calling card calls from Bonaire to other parts of the world vary depending on the card. If you plan on being on Bonaire for more than a few weeks and have your own number, you can use a callback service, such as that from TeleGroup.
- 3 Use an international calling public phone. There are 50 located around the island. Be forewarned these can also be very expensive.
- 4 Rent a local cell phone to use to make your overseas calls.

Telephone equipment on Bonaire is US standard, including the modular RJ-11 connectors. Telbo is accessible at ☎ 7000. Cellular phone service is offered by rentals from Cellular One as well as local service for your TDMA phone. It can be emailed (cs.cellularone@bonairelive.com) or via ☎ +599-717-8787. GSM is supported on Bonaire at European frequencies. Roaming with some carriers is possible as well.

If someone needs to get hold of you (or to make a direct hotel reservation) you can call Bonaire from the US or Canada by dialing 011-599-7XX-XXXX, where 011 is the international access code, 599 is the country code for the Netherlands Antilles, 7 is the city code for Bonaire, and XX-XXXX is the local Bonairean number you want to reach. If you were calling Bonaire from Europe or most of the rest of the world, you would dial 00-599-7XX-XXXX using 00 for the international access code. Recently Bonaire cellular numbers have been added and would be dialed as a normal Bonaire number.

Calling Bonaire from the US is about \$1.50 per minute with no special rate plan. However, for a small monthly fee, most of the long distance carriers can set you up with an international calling plan that lets you call Bonaire for less than 45 cents a minute.

POSTAL

Local word is that the postal service is not overly reliable. Rely on FedEx or DHL if you are sending anything valuable or something requiring a timely delivery. For postcards, the local post office is probably fine and is located near the pier in downtown Kralendijk.

ACCOMMODATION

There are hotels for every budget and desire in Bonaire, but since most divers have equipment and expensive photographic gear, it is best to seek out the more upscale hotels to avoid any problems.

The most convenient dive hotels in Bonaire are right on the western shoreline. Many have 'dive and drive' packages that provide a certain amount of boat dives as well as vehicle for the popular beach diving. All have instruction and most have photo pros on the premises.

There are also many other options. Apartments, time-shares, villas, condos and even personal homes can be rented for those staying for a while or who want the comforts these provide.

Bonaire has a very active tourism association and is networked around the world. Places and packages can be perused on the Internet and reservations can be made online. Links can be found at www.infobonaire.com, which is the official site of the Tourism Corporation Bonaire.

There is a listing of diving centers at the back of this book. Many are affiliated with a hotel or have packages with hotels.

Lazing at the Plaza Hotel pool



DINING & FOOD

This is one of the few destinations in the world that gets a lot of tourists but doesn't have the fast food joints to match. There is a small KFC and a Subway, but that's about it.

There is no shortage of restaurants on this island and the food variety is also excellent, as is the quality of meals. There are Argentinean, Italian, Dutch, American, Bonairean, Mexican, Indonesian, seafood, vegetarian and international mix cuisines, just to name a few. They say there are over 70 cultures or cuisines represented on Bonaire. The majority of these eateries are found in Kralendijk or along the roads leading north and south to the various beachfront hotels.

A good number of the hotels also have their own bars and eateries and many are also varied in cuisine and quite good. Bonaire is arid and so most of the food is shipped in. This adds to the menu variety for a night out on the town.

For sure, one should sample local food. *Baka stoba*, a kind of beef stew, is delicious. It is also made with goat, chicken, fish and conch. The sign *Aki ta Bende Kuminda Krioyo* (local food sold here) is a good sign. The menu will have *sopi* (soups), *stoba* (stews) or food that is *hasa* (fried), and portions are generous and usually quite affordable. Some are pretty wild too. *Kabes ku higrá* is goat brains and liver and *sanger* is fried blood.

Visitors may like *funchi* better. It is a starchy polenta mix that is quite tasty fried. Local food is served *pa bai kun'e* (to go) and to stay.

Tipping is much the same as in the States. Some restaurants add a 10 to 15% service charge automatically, so if in doubt, ask. The legal drinking age on Bonaire is 18 for both beer and other alcohol. The legal age for gambling in a casino is 21.

SHOPPING

The gift shops around Kralendijk and hotel dive shops have a colorful selection of goods ranging from the usual Caribbean fare of iguana T-shirts and wild do-rags to some very nice local art, mostly in the form of paintings. Landscapes, flamingoes, donkeys, tropical flora, seascapes, reefs, reefs...artists here tackle most every unique and colorful aspect of Bonaire. Some galleries and photo shops also offer a nice array of underwater photos and postcards.

There are some galleries as well. JanArT Gallery offers a weekly wine tasting every Friday where you can sip some fruit of the grape from 5pm to 7pm and meet some local characters, as well as see some of Janice Huckaby's Bonaire-inspired art. Galleries are small but interesting on Bonaire and most art pieces are originals, not prints or copies.

There are also some gold and silver stores that have nice pieces with an ocean and diving flair.

About once a week, a major cruise ship docks at Town Pier or the industrial wharf. Passengers disembark from 5pm to 7pm and the waterfront jumps with activity. Virtually all shops are open and the park across from Town Pier fill with vendors selling all kinds of artsy stuff. Beautiful photos, handmade bracelets and necklaces, drawings and paintings and lots of creative little knick-knacks can be found at these stands. It is worth heading into town after your morning dives to check out who has what for sale when the big ships come to town.

As for groceries, wine, liquor and snacks, there are some well-stocked supermarkets in town that sell fresh Dutch and American goods. They usually have a good selection of cheeses, sliced meats, fresh baked goods and other munchies that you can stash in the room for between-dive snacks and sundowners. Wines come from all over,



Fresh produce can be found at the waterfront market across from City Café

including South America, and are a good bargain. You can also buy Cuban cigars but Americans must enjoy them on-island as they are not importable into the USA.

Most stores are open Monday through Saturday from between 8 or 9am until noon, when they close for one to two hours, then remain open until 6pm. Hours vary widely and some stay open

Shell and Coral Products

The taking of shells and natural artifacts is strictly prohibited in Bonaire. Still, items using shells and marine creatures can be found. These are normally shipped in from places like Indonesia and The Philippines. These can often be seen in the form of products like bracelets and earrings. Divers are encouraged to discourage the creation of these products by not purchasing such items and telling storeowners that they disapprove of seeing these items on the shelves.

If you are offered a wildlife product or natural item for sale, ask questions about the product's origin. If the vendor seems poorly informed, think twice about your actions. Otherwise, your purchase could encourage continued illegal trade in wildlife, and be confiscated either before you leave Bonaire or on your return home.

When in doubt, don't buy and don't take. Leave it. Officials are quick to point out that anyone violating Bonaire's marine environment ordinance is subject to prosecution and heavy fines. The local motto: IF IN DOUBT – LEAVE IT OUT.

There is a real local grapevine that keeps an eye on environmental indiscretions and reports anything objectionable. Visitors are also encouraged to join this citizen watch. Report any infringements to the Marine Park office by telephoning ☎ 8444.

during lunch hour. The larger supermarkets are open from 7:30 or 8am until 7pm. These, too, may close during lunch. The place pretty much shuts down on Sunday but there may be some open for a few hours, like 11am to 2pm.

ACTIVITIES & ATTRACTIONS

There are plenty of things to do in Bonaire besides dive. In fact, tourism proponents are trying to promote Bonaire to not be thought of as 'just a dive destination' or a 'one-sport venue.' The consistent easterly winds have spawned some new sports here. Also, the natural beauty of the Lac Bay area, with its mangroves and dreamy shallow blue waters, is becoming popular. The Washington-Slagbaai National Park offers a lot to do in the form of hiking and biking. And, there are some pursuits that are gaining attention with the extreme adventure crowd.



Kitesurfing

This may be considered one of the more booming activities on Bonaire. The de facto hangout for kitesurfers is the sce-



nic **Margate Bay**, where the wind whips across the salt flats and fills the foils. This is a great place for learning the sport or practicing high jumps if you're good at it. The beach has a rustic old fisherman's hut and it is a good place to watch flamingoes commute as well. Some fishermen launch modest boats from the area too. Divers doing walk-ins at **Red Beryl** or **Margate Bay** should pop up a safety sausage here when coming back in from a dive to avoid being hit by a kiteboarder.

Windsurfing

In Bonaire, the wind is constant most of the year making the large and sandy shallows of the Lac area a favorite for all levels of windsurfer. Although one can traverse 8 sq km here, most of the action is at the southwest tip. Boards and sails can be rented from concessions.

Also, Jibe City, a bar with some nice food, may be the best hangout on Bonaire.

Land Sailing

Don't want to get wet? In Bonaire, no problem. Try land sailing. This is a unique sport just starting up in Bonaire. These wind-powered high-tech go-carts with windsurf sails rip around an oval or figure eight track that is located along the east coast on the way up to Rincon. Lessons and safety equipment are provided for this fast-paced sport, which is a good adrenalin rush. See www.land-sailingbonaire.com.

Kayaking

The Lac Bay area is a wonderland of mangroves and odd sea creatures. Guided kayak tours are held here daily and people get to see endangered conch, sea turtles, small sponges and barnacles clinging to the mangrove roots, sea stars, bird life and lots of other things in this natural netherworld. A guide is recommended for this experience to ensure the fragile environment isn't accidentally damaged.



Kayaking can also be done at sea and people do kayak along the west coast and over to Klein Bonaire. You can snorkel from the kayak. This open ocean kayaking is best left to the experienced kayaker, but can be quite rewarding.

Sailing

Sailing is part of Bonaire's culture and past. Even the flag has a sailor's compass as part of its design. This is to show the navigation prowess of the early Bonairean seafarers. There is also a well-attended annual international sailing regatta every September. Many folks sail into Bonaire. It is a famous port for cruising sailors, and is known for its calm anchorage. But others prefer to be landlubbers and just go for a day sail or sunset cruise. This is certainly possible any day of the week on Bonaire and many cruises combine a morning of snorkeling and some fresh fruit or snacks. In the evenings a tropical rum or virgin punch can be part of a relaxing sail.

One unique ship is *Samur*, a vessel with a decided oriental flair supposedly built by a former CIA agent. The folks on *Samur* hoist the junk-style sails or let the guests give it a try. Full Thai dinners are catered on this ship.

Common but still endangered, the Prikichi is a small Caribbean parakeet



Another, the *Aquaspace*, was actually built as a research vessel for Jacques Cousteau. This futuristic trimaran, with below-deck reef viewing and day snorkeling venues, is a good way to see the reef. An evening wine and cheese cruise is also offered.

There are other more conventional sailing adventures and even a traditional Dutch ship. A fine way to spend a dry day waiting for that plane to come.

Cave Snorkeling

Bonaire has some inland caves that allow a look at some stunning stalactites and stalagmites. Snorkelers edge into the caves and find clear, cool water and underground wonderlands. Bats and blind shrimp reportedly live in these caves. Steps are being taken to limit entry to just a few caves so as not to disturb the bat population or the delicate balance in Bonaire's caves.

Lots to Do

Bonaire's menu of action and casual sports is rapidly expanding. Other activities available on Bonaire include biking and mountain biking, hiking, rappelling, 4x4 driving, fishing charters, historic tours, bird watching, parasailing, water-skiing, body boarding and many combinations of all of these activities.

WILDLIFE

Bonaire may appear to be arid but it has a nice selection of wild creatures, some amazing cactus forests, tropical flora and colorful birdlife. Although the island is small, so is the population and the wild creatures in the national park and the undeveloped parts of the island are worth seeking.

A good pair of binoculars and a telephoto camera lens will enhance the experience. The park and some bookstores and dive shops sell books about the ABC wildlife. And the park's rangers are very knowledgeable.

Flamingoes fly in from Venezuela at sunset



Washington Slaagbai National Park

The closure many years ago of two large ranches, locally called *kunukus*, helped form the Washington Slagbaai National Park in the north end of Bonaire. The park is huge, covering almost 25% of the island. It is mostly natural, with only spits of paving and no overnight stays allowed. The ranches were in the business of raising goats and aloe vera. As partially cultivated lands they quickly reverted to their natural state. You must have a 4WD or car with enough clearance to pass the roads. They will not let you in driving a passenger car. Unpaved dirt roads take you through miles of giant candle cactus, aloe vera, and divi trees. The park is open daily from 8am to 5pm, and no entry is allowed after 3pm.

Flamingoes

The flamingo theme is a big deal on Bonaire, starting with a pink airport that opens your eyes upon arrival. There are only four places in the world where flamingo colonies breed and Bonaire is one of them. There are two good places



A lizard eats a cactus fruit

to see Bonaire's flamingoes, although during the rainy season you can see them just about anywhere with a lot of standing water. One is at the Pekelmeer Sanctuary to the south. The other is at Lake Gotomeer, in Washington Slagbaai National Park in the north.

The best way to get a great photograph is to bring a telephoto lens of 300mm or more. On a good day, they will gather by the hundreds. The population of flamingoes island-wide ranges from 8000 to 15,000, depending on the season. The Flamingo Sanctuary is located within the salt pans on the southern end of Bonaire and it is strictly forbidden to enter there, but people often wait along the shoreline road to watch them come in or head off to Venezuela.

Iguanas

You may see them in the top of candle cactus, you may see them trying to eat your lunch, or you may see them get onboard your boat. Locally called Bonairean squirrels, *yuanas* (Papiamentu) or iguanas are a fact of life on the island. A full-grown male can reach over 7ft from head to tail, and they can move like the wind. Large older animals are a pale green to gray, while younger ones are a stunning lime green. They know how to choose food with the highest nutrition and eat only fruits and greens. Some people think male iguanas have a sexual magic as they have two penises. They are also a favorite ingredient in local soups and stews.

Wild Donkeys

Bonaire's donkeys are descendents of the past when salt and supplies were hauled between Rincon and the salt pans located in the south. Donkeys used to roam wild but have mostly been rounded up. They became frequent car accident victims and also were pretty much inbred. Now, just a few donkeys still roam wild.



Only a few donkeys remain in the wild now on Bonaire

The majority of the donkeys can be found in the non-profit Donkey Sanctuary (☎ +599-9) 560-7607) located just south of the airport. You can see donkeys here or spend a day on safari if you want to get out into their habitat. They still rescue wild donkeys and provide medical care, food, water and shelter for the nearly 300 donkeys on the preserve. They also offer education about and interaction with the donkeys for children of all ages. The donkeys are allowed to run free within the park but may be isolated if they require medical treatments. There is a small gift shop offering T-shirts, mugs and other stuff to support this ranch.

There is a foster-a-donkey program and fostering lasts for one year. Donations pay for food, medicine, worming every six weeks, and all other necessary care. US tax deductible donations can be made to the Donkey Sanctuary Bonaire.

Wild Goats

Goats are just about everywhere on Bonaire. They roam wild and are also farm-raised. They are a favorite food of Bonaireans. Bonaire residents say that virtually every goat on Bonaire is actually owned by someone, even though you see them in the middle of nowhere. They have been hard on the plant life and wild goats are being rounded up through various efforts to give endemic plants a chance to rebound. Try one of the local dishes. They can be very tasty.

SAFETY

While the island is considered generally safe, reports of hotel and condo room break-ins (even at night when people are sleeping) and thefts are on the rise in Bonaire. Even hotels with posted guards and private grounds have had problems. Notices are normally posted



Night-time around City Café



in the rooms and extra door locks and security pins are found at most hotels. But, sadly, some visitors do experience crime.

There is a reported cocaine problem locally that is said to be contributing to the rise in crime. There are far less reports of actual robbery or assault, but commonsense must be used in this regard as well. Try not to travel alone, and try not to stay out too late. Don't flash money around. Don't drink too much and become an obvious target. Use the same common sense and precautions you would in any unfamiliar place. It may seem like paradise, but that image can quickly fade if you let your guard down.

Shore diving is extremely popular here. A great number of divers rent pick-up trucks and just walk in at the many designated beach sites. The prevailing local advice is to bring nothing, absolutely nothing, of value along...just bring what you are going into the water with. Leave the vehicle open. Locking it will only invite the curiosity of thieves that would lead to broken windows. Some rental agencies insist on telling you to lock the vehicle, which goes against local advice. So get it clear with them in writing that if they insist you lock an empty truck, anything damaged or stolen (thieves sometimes open the



Colorful dive trucks sport marine themes on the island



Snorkeling to see guests aboard Aquaspace

hood and take a battery) as a result of criminals breaking into the vehicle is not your fault.

With only 13,000 people on the island, one would think the police would be more effective. This is affecting tourism to a certain extent so, hopefully, the crime issue will soon be addressed as earnestly as Bonaireans address reef protection.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Reef Fish Identification: Florida Caribbean Bahamas by Paul Humann and Ned

DeLoach (New World Publications).

Reef Coral Identification & Reef Creature Identification by Paul Humann and Ned DeLoach (New World Publications).

Bonaire Shore Diving Made Easy Revised, A Practical Guide to the Shore Dives of Bonaire by Susan Porter (frequently updated, ask for the newest edition).

TOURIST OFFICES

Tourism Corporation Bonaire (☎ 599-717-8322; www.infobonaire.com); Kaya Grandi 2, Kralendijk, Bonaire, Netherlands Antilles)

Listings



BONAIRE DIVE OPERATORS

Selecting a Dive Operator

Question everything when looking for the dive operation with which you're going to spend your hard-earned holiday time and money. Get satisfactory answers about the operation you are planning to dive with, the type of equipment, type of boat and its maintenance, the divemasters, insurance coverage, cost of diving, knowledge of the travel agent you are booking with. Check the Internet as well. Send plenty of emails.

That said, it is comforting to know there are many reputable operators in Bonaire. But Bonaire's recent boom into tourism and the recent popularity of scuba diving means there are also a few shoestring operations where proper training and equipment maintenance is a secondary concern. For your own safety, peace of mind, value for the dollar and quality of holiday, it pays to be a wise consumer in Bonaire and anywhere else in the diving world.

Big Blue FreeDive Bonaire

☎ 9959
www.infobonaire.com/freedive/

Blue Divers

Kaya Norwega 1
☎ 6860
www.bluedivers.com

Black Durgon Scuba Center

Black Durgon Inn
PO Box 200
Email: Bonaire@blackdurgon.com
☎ 5736

Bonaire Dive & Adventure

PO Box 389
Kaya Gobernador N Debrot 77A
☎ 2229
www.bonairediveandadventure.com

Bruce Bowker's Carib Inn

PO Box 68
JA Abraham Blvd 46
☎ 8819
www.caribinn.com

Buddy Beach & Dive Resort

PO Box 231, Kaya Gobernador N Debrot
☎ 5080 (1-866-GO-BUDDY
US reservations office)
www.buddydive.com

Captain Don's Habitat

PO Box 88
☎ 8290 (1-800-327-6709 – US
reservations office)
www.habitatdiveresorts.com/bonaire

Caren Eckrich's Sea & Discover

Kaya Antonio Neuman # 11
☎ /Fax: 5322
www.seandiscover.com

Dee Scarr's Touch the Sea

Kaya Gobernador Debrot 133
☎ /Fax: 8529
www.touchthesea.com

Deep Blue View Divers

Address: Kaya Diamanta #50
☎ /Fax: 8073
www.deepblueview.com

Dive Inn Bonaire

Kaya C.E.B. Hellmund 27
☎ 8761
www.diveinnbonaire.com

Divi Dive Bonaire

Divi Flamingo Beach Resort & Casino
J.A. Abraham Blvd 40
☎ 8285 (1-800-367-3484
US reservations office)
www.diviflamingo.com

Great Adventures Bonaire

Harbour Village Beach Resort
Kaya Gobernador N. Debrot 71
☎ 7500 (305-567-9509
US reservations)
www.harbourvillage.com/html04/div-
ing.html

Larry's Wild Side Diving

www.larryswildsidediving.com
☎ 5246

Ocean Adventures

Kaya Krisolito 10 (Santa Barbara)
☎ /Fax: 2278
www.oceanadventures.com

Photo Tours Divers (a division of Dive Friends)

Kaya Playa Lechi #24
☎ /Fax: 2929
www.bonphototours.com
(www.dive-friends-bonaire.com)

Rec Tek Scuba

☎ 6537
www.rectekscuba.com

Renee Snorkel Trips

☎ 785-0771
www.reneesnorkeltrips.com

Scuba Vision

Kaya Grandi #6
☎ /Fax: 2844
www.scubavision.info

Toucan Diving

Plaza Resort Bonaire
JA Abraham Boulevard 80
☎ 2500 (☎ 1-800-766-6016
US reservations office)
www.toucandiving.com

Wannadive Bonaire

3 Locations: Eden Beach Resort:
Kaya Gob. N. Debrot z/n,
City Café: Kaya Grandi #7,
& the HUT: Kaya Dialma 11
☎ 8884, 3531, 8850
www.wannadive.com

Yellow Submarine

(a division of Dive Friends Bonaire)
Kaya Playa Lechi #24
☎ /Fax: 2929
www.yellowsubmarine.com
(www.dive-friends-bonaire.com)

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