

Tasty Aruba:

Where Sand is Secondary and Food is the Focus

Article and photographs by Jenny Block



Paradise you say?
Indeed.

The beach is the beach is the beach you protest? Not at all. Watercolor, sand variety, location, weather, and so much more can make one beach heaven and another, well, not so much. There is one island that makes the mark and yet staying there won't break the bank. Aruba, a tiny, but beautiful island in the Caribbean Sea, sits outside of the hurricane belt and boasts temperatures in the low eighties all year long. Paradise you say? Indeed.

The island offers a number of beautiful properties. Aruba Marriott Resort is a gorgeous resort that recently underwent a transformation in modernity and luxury and served as the perfect setting for my recent visit. From family trips to destination weddings to romantic getaways, the Marriott is well equipped for serving the varying needs of their wide variety of vacationers from all around the world.

One of the hotel's highlights is its Mandara Spa. The spa offers a variety of traditional services as well as a few inventive, island inspired ones like the Balinese Boreh Scrub and Aloe Cucumber wrap and the Neo-Marine Spa Treatment. **YOU CAN BE SCRUBBED, PUMMELED, WRAPPED, AND RUBBED WITH A WEALTH OF SCRUBS AND LOTIONS WHOSE SMELLS WILL RELAX AND INSPIRE YOU AS MUCH AS THE TREATMENTS THEMSELVES.**

Aruba is only twenty miles long and seventy-five square miles, which means you can see the whole island in less than a day. One great way to do that is on an Aruba Safari Jeep Adventure. You can, of course, see the island in a number of other ways including bike, ATV, horseback, or bus. But the Jeep tour was a fun way to spend time with friends and learn about and see the island at the same time.

Aruba is a gorgeous island from the volcanic rock beds to the inspiring labyrinth to the blue, blue water crashing against the shoreline. We were covered in dirt and giddy with the beauty of the island after we returned from our four-hour tour. So, although you should definitely take the time to check out the capitol of Aruba, Oranjestad, you'll want to separate that from your Jeep tour. You want to be refreshed and ready to go before admiring the brightly colored buildings and shopping along the streets and in the markets on this Caribbean town.

As for other activities, the island offers plenty of them. The newest of which is beach tennis. Saying that I'm not an athletic girl would be like saying that sand is dry. So, I was more than a little leery about the prospect of it. Quite popular in Aruba and gaining popularity all around the world, the sport is a combination of tennis and beach volleyball and Aruba's tournaments are gaining popularity at the surprising speed. But even more surprising is how fun and easy it is. Something about it makes it possible for anyone to play and play well. I would go back to Aruba just to get further instruction in what might be the one sport that makes even a person like me looks good.

Parasailing, as you can imagine, is also a big draw on Aruba, as is sailing, jet skiing, tube riding, scuba diving, and snorkeling. I was really nervous as I drifted up into the sky. But I was treated to an amazing view of the island as I floated behind the powerboat that cruised along the Aruba shore. Once you're aloft, there's not a thing in the world to be scared of. You can sit back and relax as you float along taking in the view of a lifetime.

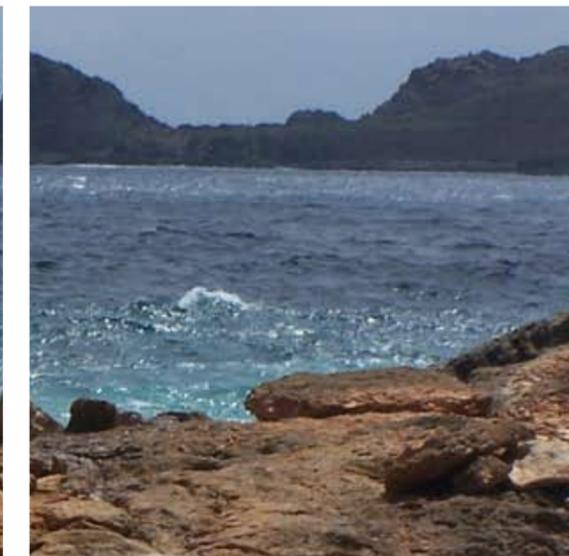
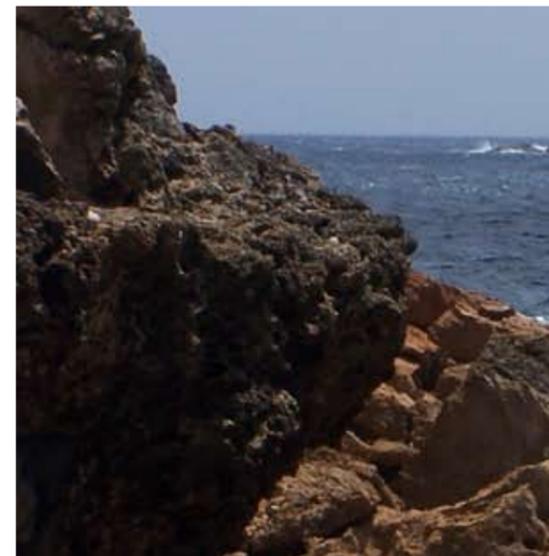
The most surprising aspect of Aruba was the marvelous dining it offered. Three restaurants in particular truly left me reeling. Arriving at Papiamento feels more like entering a friend's exquisitely catered garden party then going to a restaurant. The dining is al fresco and the tables and chairs surround a gorgeous pool. The music is an



eclectic mix with a strong French influence. The romantic mood of the restaurant is the perfect setting for the well-rounded menu that includes traditional island dishes and fresh seafood and steak brought to the table still cooking on a hot stone. Papiamento is the kind of place that invites lingering, which guests are welcome to do as they enjoy multi-course meals, a full wine list, and a hard-to-resist offering of sweets.

Pinchos is a place that can't possibly exist. How could it? It consists of nothing more than a round dock with a wooden roof, which sits just a few feet off the shore. There is no kitchen, no stock room, and no bevy of staff. Yet there it is, serving up the most delicious food in an unsurpassable setting. Owner Anabela Peterson deSousa knew she wanted to put a restaurant on that dock. People telling her she couldn't do it only made her want it more. The center of the restaurant is a bar that also serves as a kitchen of sorts. However, the real secret behind Pinchos is at deSousa's home. That's where, every morning, all of the extensive prep work is done for the day.

Everything is then cooked on the small grill at the restaurant and served up to guests with a wonderful array of sauces. Pinchos is fresh, simple cuisine at its best, and deSousa is as delightful as her food and is always on hand to greet guests, as she welcomes them to the home of her culinary vision. Pinchos is also made for lingering, especially on nights when the moon is bright and can be seen dancing over the water surrounding this Aruba treasure. I would fly to this island anytime just to enjoy a meal at this stellar restaurant.





Simply Fish is no average hotel restaurant. The food there is divine. However as delectable as it is, it's the setting that will knock the breath right out of you. Directly on the beach at the Aruba Marriott, Simply Fish is simply wonderful. The food is well-prepared and creative. The staff is genuine, and **BEING ABLE TO SIT JUST FEET FROM THE OCEAN'S WAVES MAKES YOU WONDER WHY YOU DON'T EAT THIS WAY EVERY DAY.** I was amazed at how long we stayed at the table as time just washed away.

On a final note, I would be remiss if I didn't mention Aruba's colorful nightlife, including a surprising little spot called Soprano's. Once you walk in, it won't be long before you forget you're in Aruba. Themed after the popular HBO show, Soprano's is an old school piano bar complete with a rambunctious singer and piano player that takes requests and plays the gamut from Eminem to Frank Sinatra. Crowds fill every seat at the bar and crowd around the chairs and tables. They sing at the top of their lungs until all hours of the morning, leaving the bartender with his hands full when the last call comes around.

ARUBA IS NOT JUST ANOTHER BEACH. THE TASTES AND SIGHTS AND EXPERIENCES MAKE IT A UNIQUE ISLAND WORTHY OF VISITING WHATEVER YOUR DEFINITION OF PARADISE IS FROM ROMANCE TO REVELRY—FROM REUNITING TO RELAXATION. *Aruba's got you covered.* *

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