

AW Aruba Cruise Port Guide

Your Complete Guide to One Happy Island, Beaches, Desert Landscapes & Dutch Caribbean Charm



Known as "**One Happy Island**," Aruba is one of the most popular destinations in the Southern Caribbean—and it's easy to see why. Unlike many Caribbean islands covered in lush rainforests, Aruba offers a unique landscape of desert terrain, towering cacti, dramatic coastlines, and some of the most beautiful white-sand beaches in the world.

Located just 15 miles off the coast of Venezuela, Aruba lies **outside the traditional hurricane belt**, making it a favorite destination year-round. The island blends Dutch heritage with Caribbean hospitality, creating a welcoming atmosphere that keeps visitors coming back again and again.

Whether you're relaxing on Eagle Beach, exploring rugged Arikok National Park, snorkeling in crystal-clear waters, or strolling the colorful streets of Oranjestad, Aruba truly offers something for every traveler.

Where Do Cruise Ships Dock?



Cruise ships dock in the heart of **Oranjestad**, Aruba's colorful capital city.

One of Aruba's biggest advantages is how close everything is to the port.

Within walking distance you'll find:

- Downtown shopping
- Restaurants
- Cafés
- Casinos
- Museums
- Beaches (short taxi ride)
- Excursion meeting points
- Trolley stop
- Taxi stand

Many visitors spend part of their day simply exploring Oranjestad before heading to the beach.



Explore Oranjestad



Oranjestad is one of the Caribbean's most picturesque cruise towns, known for its colorful Dutch colonial architecture and relaxed atmosphere.

Highlights include:

- Royal Plaza Mall
- Renaissance Marketplace
- Wilhelmina Park
- Fort Zoutman
- Aruba Historical Museum
- Street art
- Waterfront promenade

Don't miss the **free Aruba Streetcar (Trolley)**, which makes it easy to explore downtown.

★ Top Shore Excursions

🏖️ Eagle Beach



Consistently ranked among the **best beaches in the world**.

Famous for:

- Powder-soft white sand
- Crystal-clear turquoise water
- Iconic Divi Divi trees
- Calm swimming
- Wide-open shoreline

Perfect for families, couples, and photographers alike.

🌴 Palm Beach



Aruba's most lively beach.

Features:

- Resorts
- Restaurants
- Beach bars
- Parasailing
- Jet skiing
- Snorkeling
- Shopping

Ideal if you enjoy an active beach atmosphere.

Arikok National Park



Covering nearly **20% of Aruba**, this protected park showcases a completely different side of the island.

Highlights include:

- Desert landscapes
- Giant cacti
- Hidden beaches
- Wildlife
- Ancient caves
- Natural Pool (Conchi)

Many visitors choose a guided Jeep or UTV excursion to explore the park's rugged terrain.

California Lighthouse

One of Aruba's most recognizable landmarks.

Visitors enjoy:

- Panoramic island views
- Scenic coastline
- Beautiful photo opportunities
- Nearby sand dunes

A favorite stop on island tours.

Catamaran Snorkeling Cruise



One of Aruba's signature experiences.

Many tours include snorkeling at:

- **SS Antilla Shipwreck** (one of the largest wrecks in the Caribbean)
- Boca Catalina
- Malmok Beach

Expect colorful fish, coral, and crystal-clear water.

UTV & ATV Adventure

Explore Aruba's rugged north coast while visiting:

- Natural Bridge ruins
- Bushiribana Gold Mill
- Hidden beaches
- Desert trails

Best Beaches

Eagle Beach

Aruba's most famous beach and one of the Caribbean's finest.

Ideal for:

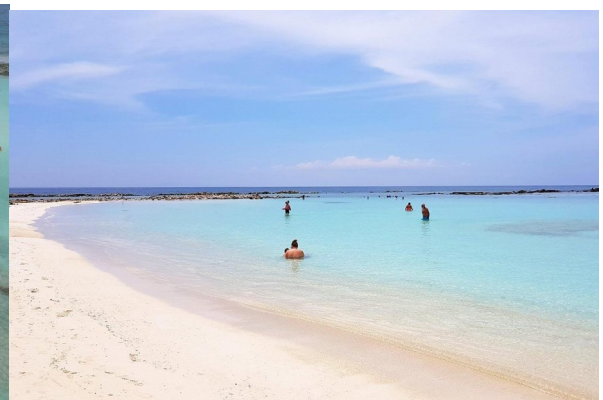
- Swimming
- Relaxing
- Families
- Photography

Palm Beach

Best for:

- Water sports
- Beach bars
- Restaurants
- Resort atmosphere

Baby Beach



Located on Aruba's southern tip.

Known for:

- Shallow lagoon
- Calm water
- Excellent snorkeling

- Family-friendly atmosphere
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Arashi Beach

A favorite among snorkelers thanks to its clear water and abundant marine life.

Shopping

Aruba offers some of the best shopping in the Southern Caribbean.

Popular purchases include:

- Aloe products
- Dutch chocolates
- Caribbean jewelry
- Blue Delft pottery
- Local artwork
- Rum
- Aruba hot sauces
- Designer brands (duty-free)

Royal Plaza Mall and Renaissance Marketplace are both within walking distance of the cruise terminal.

What to Eat

Don't leave Aruba without trying:

- Keshi Yena
- Fresh seafood
- Pastechi
- Pan bati
- Dutch pancakes
- Croquettes
- Fresh grouper
- Coconut desserts
- Balashi Beer

Popular restaurants include:

- The Flying Fishbone
- Zeerovers

- Papiamento
 - Barefoot
 - Yemanja Woodfired Grill
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Hidden Gems

If you've visited Aruba before, consider exploring:

- Mangel Halto Beach
- Alto Vista Chapel
- Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins
- Casibari Rock Formations
- Ayo Rock Formations
- Donkey Sanctuary Aruba

These attractions showcase Aruba's unique desert beauty beyond the resort areas.

Weather Throughout the Year

One of Aruba's biggest advantages is its consistently warm, sunny weather.

Winter (December – February)

- Highs: **82–86°F (28–30°C)**
- Low humidity
- Cooling trade winds

Spring (March – May)

- Highs: **84–88°F (29–31°C)**
- Dry and sunny

Summer (June – August)

- Highs: **87–91°F (31–33°C)**
- Warm with refreshing trade winds

Fall (September – November)

- Highs: **86–90°F (30–32°C)**
- Plenty of sunshine
- Very little rainfall

Aruba averages **more than 300 sunny days each year**, making it one of the most reliable warm-weather destinations in the Caribbean.

Hurricane Season

The Atlantic hurricane season officially runs from:

June 1 – November 30

However, Aruba sits **well outside the traditional hurricane belt**, making direct hurricane impacts extremely rare.

This makes Aruba one of the most dependable cruise destinations throughout the year, even during hurricane season.

Getting Around

Transportation options include:

- Licensed taxis (no rideshare services)
- Public buses
- Cruise excursions
- Rental cars
- UTV and Jeep rentals

Approximate travel times:

- Eagle Beach – **10 minutes**
- Palm Beach – **15 minutes**
- California Lighthouse – **25 minutes**
- Baby Beach – **35 minutes**
- Arikok National Park – **30–40 minutes**

Taxi fares are government regulated, and drivers typically carry fare charts for popular destinations.

What to Pack

Bring:

- ✓ Swimsuit
- ✓ Reef-safe sunscreen

- ✓ Sunglasses
- ✓ Wide-brim hat
- ✓ Comfortable sandals
- ✓ Water shoes (for rocky snorkeling areas)
- ✓ Lightweight clothing
- ✓ Waterproof phone pouch
- ✓ Reusable water bottle

The sun in Aruba can be intense year-round, so staying hydrated and reapplying sunscreen often is essential.

Premium Travel Group Tip

If this is your first visit to Aruba, spend part of your day exploring the island—not just the beach. A tour of **Arikok National Park**, the **California Lighthouse**, and Aruba's rugged northern coastline gives you a completely different perspective than the resort areas.

Then finish your day relaxing at **Eagle Beach**, one of the most beautiful beaches anywhere in the Caribbean.

If you've been to Aruba before, consider a snorkeling excursion to the **SS Antilla Shipwreck** or venture to **Baby Beach**, where calm, crystal-clear water makes for an unforgettable afternoon.

Continue Exploring the Southern Caribbean

Continue planning your Caribbean adventure with our other guides:

- Curaçao Cruise Port Guide
 - Barbados Cruise Port Guide (*coming soon*)
 - Bonaire Cruise Port Guide (*coming soon*)
 - Grenada Cruise Port Guide (*coming soon*)
 - St. Vincent Cruise Port Guide
 - Martinique Cruise Port Guide
 - Guadeloupe Cruise Port Guide
 - Southern Caribbean Vacation Guide
 - Caribbean Vacation Planning Guide
 - Vacation Packing Guide
 - When to Visit the Caribbean
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Why Visit Aruba?

Aruba stands apart from many Caribbean islands thanks to its sunshine, stunning beaches, dramatic desert scenery, and welcoming atmosphere. Whether you're snorkeling above colorful reefs, exploring rugged national parks, enjoying Dutch-Caribbean cuisine, or simply relaxing beneath the iconic Divi Divi trees on Eagle Beach, Aruba offers an unforgettable blend of adventure and relaxation. It's easy to understand why so many travelers return to the island again and again—and why it proudly calls itself "**One Happy Island.**"

Joe's Logbook

Aruba has always been one of those islands that feels different the moment you arrive. Instead of lush jungles and towering waterfalls, you're greeted by sunshine, trade winds, colorful Dutch architecture, and some of the most beautiful beaches anywhere in the Caribbean. One of the things I appreciate most is how easy Aruba is to explore. You can spend the morning discovering the island's rugged desert landscape and still have plenty of time to relax on Eagle Beach before heading back to the ship. It's one of those ports that seems to leave everyone smiling—and after a visit, it's easy to understand why Aruba is known as **One Happy Island.**