NOTES	
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# PORT EXPLORER SHOPPING GUIDE

# Oranjestad A R U B A

GENERAL INFORMATION The beautiful city of Oranjestad is the capital, business and cultural center of Aruba. The name is derived from the "House of Orange-Nassau", the ancient and royal family of The Kingdom of the Netherlands. In the early days the settlement actually had no given name. It was simply referred to as the Bay of Horses ("Paardenbaai" in Dutch). Fort Zoutman was eventually built to protect the settlement from attack. Upon its completion in 1796 Oranjestad began to grow.

Aruba is a relatively small island located 17 miles off the northern coast of Venezuela. Aruba, with nearby Bonaire and Curação to the east, make up the "ABC" Islands of the Lesser Antilles. Amerindians from South America have been living on Aruba for the last 5,000 years. Sailing under the banner of the Spanish Crown, Italian navigator Amerigo Vespucci and the Spanish conquistador Alonso de Ojeda are given credit for discovering Aruba in 1499. In 1636 the Dutch West India Company took control of Aruba. Poor soil and weather patterns made commercial agriculture impractical. Over the years the economic engine of the island was driven by gold and phosphate mining, growing aloe and oil refining.

An independent country since 1986, today tourism is the backbone of the economy as visitors from around the world come to enjoy the beautiful beaches, wonderful shopping, warm weather and sincere hospitality of the people of Aruba.

On May 19, 1944, just three weeks prior to the D-Day invasion of Hitler's "Festung Europa" (Fortress Europe), young Lieutenant Dietrich von dem Borne was part of a prisoner exchange in neutral Barcelona, Spain. Von dem Borne was an officer, an elite submariner in the German Kriegsmarine (Navy). Recuperating from terrible wounds, he had spent much of the past two years in a Vichy French Naval Hospital on the Caribbean island of Martinique. The Lieutenant had been the gunnery officer aboard his submarine. On the night he was wounded, having just surfaced, it had been von dem Borne's job to command his deck-gun crew as they aimed their powerful 105mm cannon and prepared to fire. Lieutenant von dem Borne had been about to destroy the largest oil refinery in the world and turn the night sky over the small town of San Nicolas, Aruba into a gas fueled fireball as bright as the sun. His actions that fateful night, less than a mile off the coast of Aruba, altered the events of WWII ... and changed or maintained ... who can know ... the very course of history.

Amerindians lived peacefully on Aruba for thousands of years before the arrival of the Spanish in 1499. The Dutch took control of Aruba in 1636 but the island remained relatively quiet for the next 300 years...until 1:30am, February 16, 1942.

If ever there was one instant or incident which set or altered the course of history it may very well have taken place during those dark and desperate days of World War II, less than a mile off the shore of Aruba. At the time the U.S. had just been awakened to war by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The British 8th Army was in the fight of its life against Field Marshall Erwin Rommel's mighty Afrikakorp in the deserts of North Africa. England's few RAF fighters and bombers, her Royal Navy, her antiquated tanks, trucks and factories, the Empire's entire war effort, was in desperate need of fuel. England's gas lifeline









came by tanker ships from the rich oil fields of Venezuela straight to the largest refinery in the world, the massive complex in the coastal town of San Nicolas, on the Dutch island of Aruba.

On that night in February, 1942, Commander Hartenstein ordered his U-boat-156 to the surface. To his astonishment and that of his crew. there before them was the giant refinery, oblivious to "blackout" precautions, fully lit up against a dark sky. Many large tankers, filled to overflowing with gasoline bound for the British war machine, were tied to the pier and perfectly silhouetted by the bright lights of the refinery. This wasn't shooting fish in a barrel...this was simply shooting the barrel. Commander Hartenstein gave the order to fire torpedoes. Within minutes several oil tankers were ablaze and sinking. Then it was the turn of Lieutenant von dem Borne and his deck-cannon crew. With the enormous oil tanks of the refinery now brilliantly lit by burning ships, directly in front of his cannon, million of gallons of precious fuel for the British war effort were about to go up in flame. Lieutenant von dem Borne gave the order ... "Fire!"

Over a year later and having by then sent many Allied ships and sailors to the bottom of the sea, Lieutenant von dem Borne's submarine had come to the surface east of Barbados. Many of the crew were sunning and relaxing on deck when an American PBY Catalina suddenly ap-

peared from out of the clouds and successfully attacked U-156 before she could clear her decks and dive. When U.S. Navy ships arrived on the scene no one was found. All aboard U-156 were lost at sea...except for Lieutenant von dem Borne, by then a POW ashore in the French hospital on Martinique, still recuperating from the loss of his foot.

You see, Lieutenant von dem Borne and his deck gun crew had not destroyed the giant oil refinery on Aruba that night in early 1942. In fact countless millions of gallons of gas from Aruba fueled the Allies on land, sea and in the air throughout the entire war. If Aruba's oil refinery had been destroyed that night the history of WWII...the history of the world may have been quite different. Lieutenant von dem Borne was wounded when he ordered his men to "Fire!" But it was his 105mm cannon which exploded ... not the giant oil storage tanks. The sub quickly cleared its decks and dove for cover. Soon hospitalized, later taken prisoner and eventually exchanged, the Lieutenant was the only member of U-156 to attack the Allies' vital oil refinery in Aruba and survive the war...only because of the fact that he was hospitalized due to his haste and excitement to destroy the huge target. Lieutenant Dietrich von dem Borne neglected to order his gun crew to remove from the end of the cannon its protective, watertight "muzzle plug" before he gave the fateful command... "Fire!"



## PLACES OF INTEREST

#### ORANJESTAD PLACES OF INTEREST

The Access Art Gallery holds a beautiful collection of modern works created by international, regional and local artists.

The Schooner Market is located along the city's bustling waterfront. Colorful fishing boats and inter-island traders offer locals and visitors a wide variety of products and produce.

Fort **Zoutman** was built in the late 1700s. The fort's lighthouse is known as King Willem III Tower. It was constructed in the mid 1800s and named in honor of Holland's reigning monarch. The tower is now home to Aruba's Historical Museum.

Wilhelmina Park graces the waterfront of Oranjestad. The park is named in honor of the much loved and highly respected Queen of The Netherlands who reigned from 1890 to 1948.

### **Beyond Oranjestad**

**5** Arikok National Park covers nearly 20% of Aruba. Visitors can tour the park on foot or on horseback. A protected sanctuary, the park is home to many natural wonders and historic sites which chronicle Aruba's cultural identity.

The California Lighthouse is located on the northern tip of the island. Though not open to the public, the area and water surrounding the lighthouse are dramatically beautiful and well worth the visit.

Palm Beach and Eagle Beach are among the most popular and beautiful locations on an island which has many wonderful beaches.

• The Casibari Rock Formations have been shaped and carved by nature's tools of wind and time. Visitors can hike among the rocks and make their way to an elevated lookout point.

■ Baby Bridge is the 2nd largest natural bridge on Aruba. Wind, water and time have come together to carve this dramatic rock sculpture.

The Quadiriki Caves are carved into limestone cliffs and have petroglyphs created by ancient Amerindians known as the Arawak.

SHORE EXCURSIONS To make the most of your visit to Oranjestad and the surrounding area we suggest you take one of our organized Shore Excursions. For information concerning tour content and pricing, consult your Shore Excursion Brochure or contact the Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, be advised to take with you only necessary items and secure any valuables onboard.

LOCAL CUSTOMS Bargaining: Prices are generally fixed. Local vendors, many with their colorful boats tied up along the waterfront, may

Tipping: Many restaurants add a 10-15% service charge. For taxis a 15% tip is appropriate.

LOCAL CUISINE AND DRINK SPECIALTIES As you might imagine, the seafood in Aruba is fresh and delicious. Snapper, grouper and mahi mahi are among the most popular fish. Here are some other favorite local dishes you might wish to try: Stoba di Cabrito combines potatoes, tomatoes, onions, green peppers and garlic with cubed goat meat then

simmered into a thick stew. Promenton Yenas are green Bell Peppers stuffed with macaroni, cheese and shrimp then baked. Funchi is a rich cornmeal polenta. Giambo is an okra and fresh fish gumbo.

Coecoei is local liquor distilled from the agave plant. It follows a recipe dating back centuries to the Amerindians. Coecoei seems to be nearly impossible to find anywhere other than Aruba. The liquor is used in many of the island's most popular cocktails. Balashi Beer is locally brewed and has a fine reputation and loyal following.

SHOPPING FACILITIES The main shopping area is downtown, close to the pier, along the waterfront.

Many of the vendors along the dock offer a variety of locally made crafts and souvenirs. The upscale shops and boutiques in Oranjestad have an international flavor and offer clothes from top designers, fine jewelry, Dutch china, perfumes and hand-made lace. Seaport Village, Seaport Marketplace and the Royal Plaza Mall are within easy walking distance of the pier. They have a wide variety of interesting shops catering to visitors. Many of the shops in Oranjestad are "Duty Free" and merchants are always helpful in answering questions about policy and procedure.

LOCAL CURRENCY Aruba's official currency is the Aruban florin (AWG). Major credit cards and traveler's checks are widely accepted. Many vendors will accept U.S. dollars in small denominations.

POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE The main Post Office in Oranjestad is located at #9 J.E. Irausquinplein. There is a branch office inside the Royal Plaza Mall on L.G. Smith Blvd., on the waterfront near the cruise ship terminal.

Dial the following access number to use a personal calling card:

MCI: 800.888.8

TOURIST INFORMATION The Visitors Information Office in Oranjestad is located at 72 L.G. Smith Blvd.

TRANSPORTATION Taxis are widely available. They are licensed and regulated with reasonable rates. All taxis have (TX) on their license plates. Cars, scooters and bicycles are all available for rent. There is a dependable and inexpensive Public Bus system on the island. The main terminal in Oranjestad is downtown, near the waterfront. Privately owned Mini Buses travel throughout much of Aruba.

LANGUAGE The official language of Aruba is Dutch. English and Spanish are widely spoken. A local language known as Papiamento is common. Linguists and historians continue to debate over its origin but it seems to have developed in the 1600s as a Creole/pidgin language which combines Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, West African, Arawak (Amerindian) and Ladino (a Judaeo-Spanish language spoken by Sephardic Jews who fled to nearby Curação to escape the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisi-

English - Papiamento - Dutch

Good morning - Bon dia - Goedemorgen Good afternoon - Bon tardi - Goedenavond How are you? - Kon ta bai? - Hoe gaat het? I am fine. - Mi ta bon - Met mij gaat het goed Please - Por fabor - Alsjeblieft Thank you - Danki - Dank u

Good Bye - Ajo - Tot ziens