

Trip Styler | GSA Publishing – Travel Magazine



by **Trish Friesen**

The ABCs :: An Intro

The ABCs: the first three letters in the alphabet, as well as a collection of the Caribbean's southernmost islands lucky enough to grow up in the right part of town, outside the hurricane belt. Hint, hint: warm up in the ABC islands all winter, or plan ahead for fall 2012 when everyone stays away from the Caribbean and ABC-goers get a great low-season deal.

Formerly known as the Netherlands Antilles, Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao are BFFs, sitting less than 46 miles apart at the longest distance and only 15 miles above the Northern tip of Venezuela. This week, we'll visit Aruba...

As a quick intro, Aruba is the largest and most populated island with a hefty handful of hotels and resorts dotting the sandy shoreline. Bonaire is the smallest of the three islands, primarily known for its diving and low-key accommodations. Curacao is where city and country life mingle. Visitors can spend part of their time suiting up like a seal and diving right off the beach or just off-shore on the island's outer reaches, or eating well and exploring the shops in the Dutch colonial town of Willemstad.



Over the coming weeks I'm going to profile each of the ABC islands individually, but for now I wanted to give an overview since the ABCs seem to lose some much-deserved Caribbean clout in the shadow of the Bahamas, Jamaica and Dominican Republic!

{Trip Styler Tip :: you can drink the water on every ABC island and USD are accepted everywhere, especially in Bonaire where it's now the official currency.}

Getting There & Inter-Island

Major carriers like Air Canada {seasonal service from Toronto} and American Airlines fly to Aruba and Curacao. To get between the islands you'd think there'd be a ferry, but you can only fly. Carriers like Insel Air and Dutch Antilles Express do the short island hops. Despite the less than 30-minute flights you'll still have to be at the airport up to two hours in advance!

[photos via trip advisor, sorobon beach resort & trip styler]

[trip style = sun + beach]

"Aruba, Jamaica, oooo I wanna take yah" – The Beach Boys

Even since Kokomo raced up the charts in 1988, I knew I had to visit Aruba. The Beach Boys said it was the

epitome of tropical, right?

Aruba is a good intro to the tropics. White sand beaches, check; water sports, check; sand-in-your-toes dining, check; over-water bars; check. Checklist aside, it's safe, you can drink the water and USD are accepted everywhere. Easy-breezy.

Think of it as a larger-scale and more commercialized Ka'anapali {in Maui} beckoning boat loads of cruise ship passengers and a heaping sand-full of East Coast Americans and Venezuelan resortists. And for good reason...

It's not an odd occurrence to spot locals breaking out into song and dance for no apparent reason, or quoting the island's tag line "One Happy Island" at every opportunity. It really is a happy place filled with 100,000+ residents who maintain the island's mojo with their spirit and heart. You can't help but smile in response.

Stay

First decide if you want high-rise or low-rise, high energy or anonymity. Palm Beach hosts multiplex resorts, US chain restaurants, hip beach bars and pier-side dining. Eagle Beach is less crowded with fewer mainland outposts. I stayed at two hotels on the bookends of Palm Beach, the multi-wing Marriott and the 70's-contemporary-casual Westin {see my review here}.



Eat

On a Pier: The Pelican Nest's service and cuisine are approachable with vintage scuba helmets and fishing nets hanging from the rafters above. Drink at Bugaloe Pier where surprisingly stiff mojitos are served at happy hour from 5-6pm.

On the Beach: Moomba Beach Bar & Restaurant is one of the best beach bars in the world according to CNN, or try Flying Fishbone just outside of town.

With Locals: The Aruban Chef serves up island fare like calco stoba {conch stew} and fresh fish.

Behind Palm Beach: The Italian-owned Amore Mio {no website} kneads, spins and bakes melt-in-your-mouth, thin-crust pizzas in a modern, lively setting.

Do

Walk along the non-resort stretch of Palm Beach beside fishing huts, surfers and a shipwreck, learn to kiteboard at the Aruba Kitesurfing School or take in a game of beach tennis—one of the country's most popular sports—behind Moomba bar!

Getting There

Hum Kokomo to your heart's content with direct service from Toronto, Miami, NY and Boston.

About [Trish Friesen](#)

Trish Friesen is the definition of a jetsetter; she eats, sleeps and breathes travel, packing her bag every two weeks for a wild adventure or sun-drenched hotspot. Aruba, Curacao, Bonaire, New York, Palm Springs, Seattle, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Dallas and Whistler—and that's just this fall! In addition to her writing being published in [The Daily Meal](#) and The



Vancouver Sun, Trish is also the editor-in-chief of TripStyler.com, a Vancouver-based travel lifestyle website. Along with stable of globetrotting writers, Trip Styler dishes daily tips, tricks and technology that make traveling easier, faster, more fun and lighter on the wallet. Follow Trish on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

