

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.