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## **ADVENTURE**

For many, spending tranquil days basking and relaxing in the unending sunshine is the highlight of their Aruba vacation. But beyond the beaches, adventure-seekers will discover One happy island full of invigorating land and sea activities. From underwater exploration to rugged and wild excursions through Arikok National Park, there is no shortage of action.

### **Water Activities**

#### **Catamaran Sailing, Snorkeling and SCUBA Diving**

Good visibility, several shallow reefs and captivating shipwrecks give snorkelers an array of options. Most sites are on the southern or leeward coast. Slightly north of Palm Beach, Catalina Bay and Arashi Reef feature brain and star coral, sea fans, parrotfish, angelfish, eels, barracudas and an occasional octopus.

The island boasts more than 20 dive spots ranging from 20 to 100 feet, including the Shipwreck of the Antilla, one of the most popular spots for snorkelers and divers alike; at 400 feet, it is the largest shipwreck dive in the Caribbean. A well-kept-secret dive spot, the SS Pedernales was a World War II lake tanker that was torpedoed and sunk by a German U-boat en route to a refinery in Aruba; the center portion of the vessel still remains submerged off the shore of Palm Beach, approximately 25 feet below sea level. Aruba's many dive operators welcome seasoned PADI-certified divers to first-timers who are invited to take a resort course and follow-up shallow dive or become fully-certified on-island.

An array of sailing charters – including De Palm Tours, Red Sail Sports, Pelican Adventures, Mi Dushi, Tranquilo and Jolly Pirates – offers catamaran sail & snorkel excursions, including lively music, open bars and snacks or light lunches.

### **SNUBA**

Emerging as a popular alternative to snorkeling and SCUBA diving, SNUBA is the perfect option for both beginner and advanced non-certified divers. First-timers enjoy the extra underwater time without the restrictive gear or extensive lessons. Geared up with a regulator and hose that attaches from the swimmer to the boat, SNUBA divers can explore a plethora of colorful marine life and reefs for upwards of 30 minutes. SNUBA is offered on the all-inclusive De Palm Island, as well as through the De Palm Tours catamaran excursions.

## **Standup Paddle Boarding**

One of the island's newer activities is standup paddle boarding (SUP), or better known in the states as "YOLO." Adjusting to balancing on water is the hardest part, but once paddlers get the hang of it, it's like walking on water. The serene coastal waters of Palm Beach and Mangel Halto provide the ideal venue for this sport, giving paddlers a unique perspective of the island while getting a full body workout against the northeast trade winds.

## **Submarine & Semi Submarine**

Marine lovers discover Aruba's colorful underwater realm without getting wet on air-conditioned submarines, the Atlantis Submarine Tour and Seaworld Explorer. The Atlantis Submarine descends to a depth of 130-feet below the Caribbean Sea, where a knowledgeable co-pilot guides guests through a tour of Aruba's underwater world and its brilliantly colored coral reefs.

Voyagers who wish to get the best of both worlds board the Seaworld Explorer. The ship remains above sea level at all times, while its hull, which sits five feet below the surface, provides spectacular views of the Arashi coral reef, abundant sea life and the largest shipwreck dive in the Caribbean, the World War II German freight Antilla.

## **Windsurfing & Kite Surfing**

Thanks to highly favorable wind and water conditions and year-round pleasant weather, Aruba is the windsurfing capital of the world. Year-round, avid windsurfers slice the water and kite surfers play with the trade winds on this piece of paradise. Host to dozens of international sporting events and tournaments throughout the year, Hadicurari Beach (also known as Fisherman's Huts), located just a few minutes from the high-rise district of Palm Beach, is known as the place to put athletic skills to the test.

The beach's shallow, iridescent water also provides ideal snorkeling conditions and features colorful Fisherman's Huts that dot the pebbly coastline.

Watersport operators and instructors are plentiful, with one of the most famous being Aruba Active Vacations. Located right on Hadicurari Beach, the company provides equipment rentals and lessons to everyone from beginners to advanced surfers. Local windsurfing and kite surfing expert Wim Eelens is not only the owner of Aruba Active Vacations – he's an excellent teacher and the organizer of the popular, annual Hi-Winds Aruba water sport tournament. The island is also home to Sarah-Quita Offringa, a world champion windsurfer.

## **Land Activities**

### **Arikok National Park**

Sprawling across nearly 20 percent of the island's landmass, government-protected Arikok National Park is an exciting playground for visitors seeking something more than a traditional day on the beach. Adventurers rejoice as they explore the 20 miles of rugged and wild, desert-like terrain via ATV, UTV, Jeep Safari, horseback or foot. Tucked along the cactus speckled northern shore, Arikok National Park is home to many hidden beaches, cacti, natural bridges and pools, historical cave paintings and indigenous flora and fauna including the Aruba rattlesnakes, burrowing owls and blue

whiptail lizards. The park's visitor center provides an enriching overview of the land's culture, history and conservation efforts, and experts Julio Beaujon or Jimmy Mijer are eager to share Arikok's secrets and stories. Admission is ten dollars for adults and free for children, as the park is invested in future generations, who will be the ones to take carry on conservation efforts.

### **Beach Tennis**

Known as the birthplace of beach tennis, Aruba beckons world-renown pros and amateurs alike to explore this competitive yet recreational sport. Simple to play and similar to traditional tennis with a bit of beach volleyball and badminton, two players on each team volley a depressurized tennis ball back and forth, directly over the net without letting it hit the sand. For just five dollars, participants of all ages and levels can reserve a court and paddle at popular beach tennis spot MooMba Beach Bar & Grill, or take it a step further by signing up for lessons with a local pro from Beach Tennis Aruba. Awareness for the sport has grown considerably through the national and international championship tournaments that take place in Aruba in June and November respectively.

### **Beach Yoga**

For Yogis who enjoy morning meditations on the beach, Aruba offers the ideal backdrop for sun salutations. With the island's year-round warm temperatures, fans of hot yoga find dynamic yet comfortable breezes on Aruba's pristine sun-kissed beaches. Manchebo Beach Resort Resort & Spa extends twice-a-day yoga sessions on world-famous Eagle Beach in its open-air, wooden Pavilion, which greets participants with a soulful embrace and wave of ease and tranquility. Lessons and classes are also offered by a handful of companies and hotels on-island, while Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa even hosts yoga retreats from the United States each year.

### **Cycling**

Cyclists find unparalleled riding experiences along Aruba's seemingly flat, exotic terrain. Bikers can head north where they'll be greeted by the strong whipping winds of the northern shore and challenged by an unpaved, uphill rocky climb. Known as one of the toughest workouts on the island, Mother Nature gives its sweet reward with its scenic, picturesque landscapes that stretch out as far as the eye can see. Cyclists who opt for the "locals choice" will bike down to Conchi (Natural Pool) to take a dip in this shell-shaped pool as the Caribbean Sea waves crash over and cascade into the body of water. Bike rentals are available throughout the island and rentals start as low as \$15 for a half-day.

### **Hiking / Aruba Nature Sensitive Tours**

Arikok National Park offers 29 miles of rocky hiking trails with three different hiking levels: average, intermediate and difficult. The most difficult hike requires fierce stamina given the jagged, rocky terrain throughout the five-hour hike. Those looking to take it easy opt for the hour-and-a-half hike up to Cudo Arikok. Along the way, adventurers embrace the spirits of the young and old, soaking up the richness of the park's landscapes of otherworldly rock formations, bizarre cactus groves, fluorescent parakeets and lizards. The hike includes a visit to the old Aruban Adobe house, vivid bird watching and cave explorations of indigenous Indian paintings.

Offering a birds-eye view at 620 feet, hikers discover sheer serenity atop Yamanota, the island's highest elevation point granting panoramic views worth remembering. Picturesque contours of the northern and southern shores are captured from a single vantage point, offering picture-perfect moments.

As a former Arikok National Park nature guide, Eddie Croes knows the park's intricacies like the lines on the back of his hands. Now running his own hiking and jeep tour company, Aruba Nature Sensitive Tours, Eddie unfolds the park's bounty of geological and historical treasures and explores wildlife found in the island's most untouched locations. Every month when there is a full moon, Eddie leads Moonlight Walk tours with a trip through the cunucu, where curious shapes are formed by the shadows of cacti and rocks as the moon's light shines down from above. If the timing is right, the Shoco – a species of burrowing owl found only in Aruba – may be heard hooting.

### **Safari, UTV & ATV Tours**

Adrenaline junkies take a walk on the wild side as they trek through the rugged and wild Arikok National Park on a 4x4 Jeep safari or ATV tour. These action-packed excursions take adventure-seekers over canyons and jagged rocks, dodging cacti while exploring the rugged beauty of the island's northern shore. Tour highlights include stops at the California Lighthouse, the Gold Mill Ruins, the Alto Vista Chapel as well as the island's most stunning sights – Conchi (Natural Pool), Baby Beach and the Guadirikiri Caves. Discover the wild beauty of Aruba's outback along the Andicuri Trail behind the wheel of De Palm Tours' UTV, a two passenger off-road vehicle.

### **Skydiving**

Daredevils wanting a true birds-eye view of the island choose to embark on thrilling Tandem Skydiving experience. The adventure begins with Skydive Aruba Air Adventures transportation to the airport for the 10,000-altitude flight. For roughly 40 seconds the entire island is on display to savor its beauty. Skydive Aruba Air Adventures has fully licensed and insured Tandem Skydiving instructors who have accumulated an excess of 10,000+ jumps.

### **Horseback Riding**

Take a guided Horseback tour through Aruba's Natural wonders and enjoy rides through the National Park Arikok, the Sand Dunes, Natural Pool and Natural Bridge along the ever-changing North coastline. Horse lovers of all experience levels are welcome Rancho La Ponderosa, The Gold Mine Ranch, Rancho Nororious or Rancho Daimari where they have well trained horses and knowledgeable tour guides.