

# Perspective

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**THIS ISSUE** Luxury Business Travel With EOS Airlines - Planning A PR Strategy  
Four Seasons Ocean Residences - Island Of Bonaire and much more...

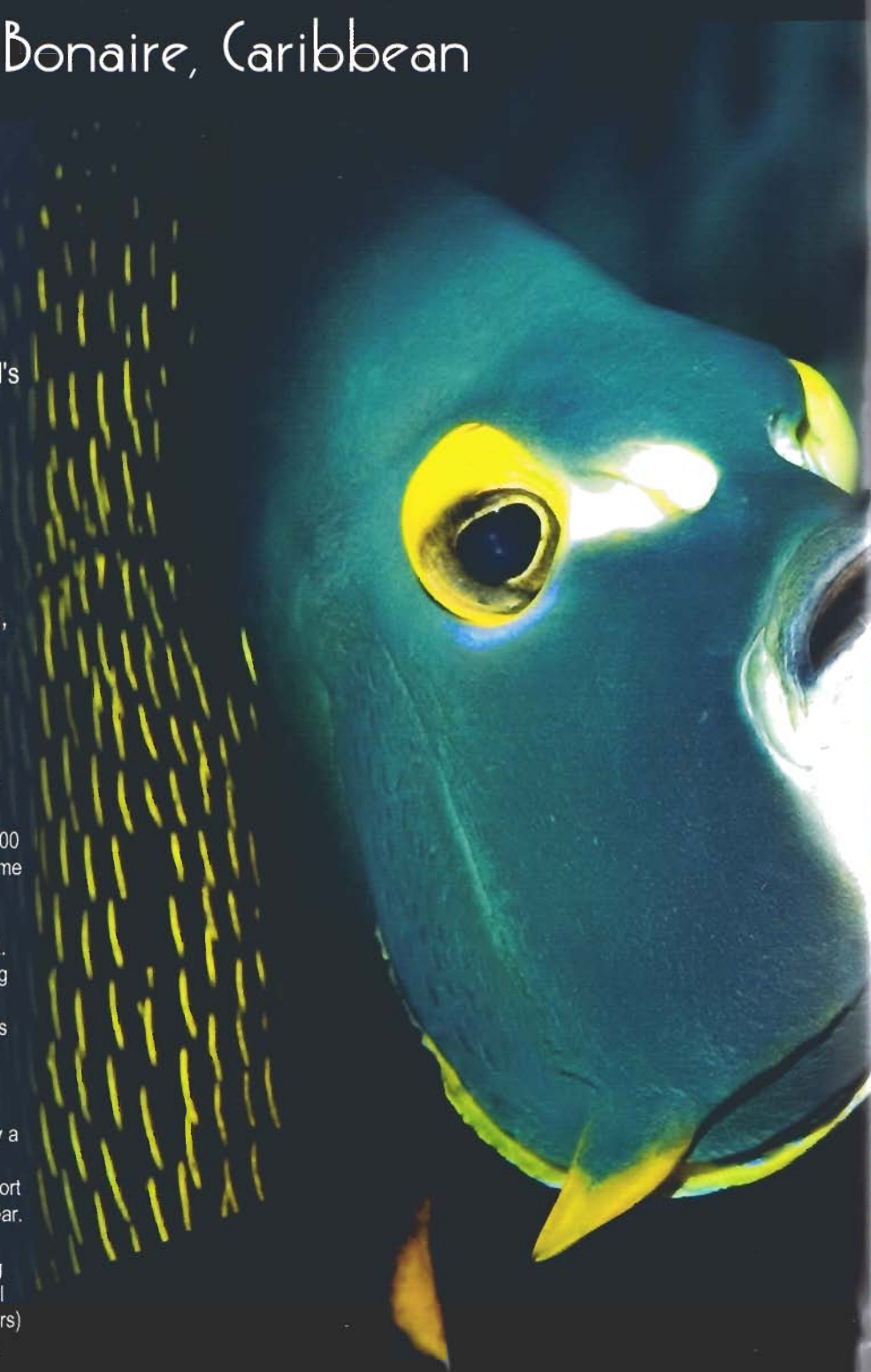
# Destination Guide – Bonaire, Caribbean

The automobile license plates on the Dutch Caribbean island of Bonaire read "A Diver's Paradise," and there's no disputing the accuracy of this slogan. The highly accessible reefs that surround Bonaire have never suffered from exploitation and the island's environmentally conscious dive industry is ensuring they never do. For the first-time snorkeler or the certified diver to the experienced eco-adventurer, Bonaire is home to one of the world's top underwater environments and offers a number of eco-adventure activities including sport fishing, kayaking and mountain biking.

With a far-sighted dedication to protecting their assets both under and above the water, the government of Bonaire was environmentally aware long before it became fashionable. In 1969 Washington-Slagbaai National Park, the first nature sanctuary in the Netherlands Antilles, was established. Covering the northwest corner of the Island, an area of 13,500 acres, the park is an explorers and bird watchers haven, home to approximately 189 species of birds, and endless cliffs, valleys, beaches and cacti-lined pathways. Then, in 1979 Bonaire designated all surrounding waters as a Marine Park. The park instituted a ban on spearfishing and coral collecting within the park, and later a permanent mooring system to minimize anchor damage. As a result of these efforts, divers and snorkelers find the reefs virtually untouched, with lush coral growth and an abundant fish population.

In order to access the Bonaire Marine Park, divers must pay a fee of \$25 per year. All others who use the waters of the Marine Park including snorkelers, windsurfers, kayakers, sport fishermen, kiteboarders, etc., pay a nature fee of \$10 per year. Once the fee is paid, users receive a tag to clip onto their equipment to show they've paid the fee. In addition to being allowed to enjoy the Marine Park for a period of one year, all persons who pay the Nature Fee (both divers and other users) and show their tag long with their printed receipt will receive complimentary admission to Washington-Slagbaai National Park throughout the year their tag is valid. STINAPA Bonaire, the non-governmental, not-for-profit organization that oversees the Bonaire National Marine Park (BNMP) and Washington-Slagbaai National Park, uses the funds collected for research, monitoring, education, law enforcement, information distribution and maintenance of the areas STINAPA Bonaire oversees.

Created through volcanic eruptions millions of years ago, Bonaire is an underwater mountain with fringe reefs. Extremely accessible from shore, Bonaire's reef is considered one of the best in the world. Underwater visibility is over 100



**BONAIRE:**  
IT'S MORE THAN A PRETTY FISH  
- JOIN THE ADVENTURE

feet year-round and most of the Bonaire's 86 marked dive sites can either be accessed from shore or are a 15 minute boat trip away.

Well out of the hurricane belt and therefore protected from reef damage, Bonaire is able to offer world-class diving and snorkeling 365 days a year. Less than a mile off the coast lays the uninhabited Klein Bonaire (Little Bonaire), which acts like a barrier reef, creating calm, leeward waters and the ideal diving conditions Bonaire is so well known for. The best sites can be found within this protected leeward side of the island. Some of the most popular include Thousand Steps, Alice in Wonderland and the Hilma Hooker shipwreck. And because the sites are close to shore and the water is so calm, visitors can dive anytime, day or night.

All of the attributes that make Bonaire a haven for diving apply to snorkeling. Right from their hotels, snorkelers can wade from the shore to the reefs and view an array of coral, including Elkhorn Barrier and Orange Cup corals, and a range of colorful fish, such as Jewelfish and Parrot Fish.

Bonaire's hotels cater to divers and snorkelers of all levels with most offering on-site dive shops that provide a full range of equipment and training.

Beyond diving and snorkeling Bonaire offers a range of eco-adventure activities ranging from sport fishing to windsurfing. Accessibility, calm waters and abundant fish - the same features that attract divers - are what make sport fishing on Bonaire so special. The catch in Bonaire varies by season, November through February is best for bill fish, including Marlin and Sailfish; February, March and April is Dorado; March to late June is Wahoo and Amber Jack; June through September is Yellowfin and Bonito. A number of charter boat operations are available and bonefishing is available as well.

The calm waters surrounding much of Bonaire make kayaking a relaxing and fun activity. On the windward side of the island, kayaks are available to explore Lac Bay, a protected mangrove which is a nursery for fish life.

Creating a wonderful set of natural waterways which can be navigated and through which beautiful wildlife can be seen, the mangroves are a must see. On the leeward side of the island, sea kayaks can be used as a means to peacefully view the coast or to visit Klein Bonaire. Guided mangrove tours and kayaking lessons are available.

The peaceful, protected lagoon at Lac Bay provides the perfect spot for windsurfing with extraordinarily clear, waist-deep water with constant crosswinds. Here, windsurfing operations feature top-of-the-line equipment and classes for beginners to advanced board sailors.

For those who prefer to see Bonaire above water, the island offers over 300 kilometers of mountain biking trails. Consisting of goat paths and paved and unpaved roads, visitors can easily explore the island on bike. A number of hotels and local bike shops offer rentals and guided mountain biking tours.

One of the first national parks in the Caribbean, Washington-Slagbaai National Park is home to thousands of birds, towering Candle cacti, herds of goats, stray donkeys, and lizards. The park terrain is varied and those who are ambitious enough to climb some of the steep hills are rewarded with majestically sweeping views. The park offers two driving trails and a number of hiking trails, a museum and visitor center as well as opportunities for diving, snorkeling and picnicking.

Ideal for divers, snorkelers and adventurers, Bonaire's relaxed atmosphere and diversified activities for all skill levels make it a perfect destination for families. In addition to learning programs, guided group tours and sporting activities, throughout the year, some of Bonaire's resorts, restaurants and tour operators offer special packages and amenities for family travel.

### Fast Facts

The most eastern of the Leeward Islands, Bonaire is located 50 miles north of Venezuela and 38 miles east of Curacao. Bonaire's year-round average air and water temperature is 82 degrees, and rainfall averages 22 inches. Bonaire is located outside of the Caribbean hurricane belt, allowing for good weather year-round.

The official currency of Bonaire is the Netherlands Antilles Florin or Guilder. U.S. \$1.00 = NAfl. 1.77. U.S. dollars are widely accepted as are credit cards and ATM machines are available.

The U.S. State Department and the Department Homeland Security now requires all U.S. citizens and foreign nationals to carry a passport or other accepted secure documents to enter or re-enter the U.S. from vacations or business travel (by air or sea) anywhere in the Caribbean, including Bonaire.

### How to Get to Bonaire

American Airlines/American Eagle offers five round-trip flights per week between San Juan, Puerto Rico and Bonaire.

Continental Airlines operates two weekly round-trip non-stop flights to Bonaire from Houston, TX and Newark, NJ. The Houston flight departs on Friday nights, arriving into Bonaire on Saturday mornings. The return flight departs on Saturday mornings arriving into Houston later the same day. The Newark flight departs Saturday nights, arriving into Bonaire on Sunday mornings. The return flight departs on Sunday mornings arriving into Newark later the same day.

Air Jamaica offers one weekly direct roundtrip flight via Montego Bay from select U.S. on Saturdays.

Other flights from North America generally arrive in Aruba or Curacao. Flights between Bonaire, Aruba and Curacao are available on Dutch Antilles Express (DAE). Divi Divi Air flies between Bonaire and Curacao. Tiara Air flies between Aruba and Bonaire.

For more information contact the Tourism Corporation Bonaire at 1-800-BONAIRE.

