Dutch courage for a dive in Aruba by Anne Mary

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The tiny island of Aruba is very often referred to as one of the few places that can genuinely be regarded as something approaching paradise. This beautiful place has been under Dutch control since 1636, apart from a brief spell of British rule during the Napoleonic Wars of the early 1800's. Sitting in the southern Caribbean waters just 18 miles from mainland Venezuela, it is a mere 6 miles wide by 20 miles long yet has so many fabulous activities to offer the half a million plus tourists who visit annually.

It has to be said that Aruba certainly caters for the wealthy visitor with some incredibly luxurious hotels lining the ocean front. Anybody traveling on a budget might struggle, but that is not to say there are no low cost accommodation opportunities, they just tend to be tucked away. There are some magnificent restaurants serving top quality cuisine including freshly caught seafood, all presented in a spectacularly tropical environment. There is around the clock sunshine, unspoilt landscapes, brilliant white sandy beaches, and a whole host of terrific water based activities such as swimming, windsurfing, sailing, snorkeling and scuba diving.

In addition, Aruba has a couple of intriguing farms that prove a great hit with tourists. These are not the conventional farms with cattle, sheep, goats and chickens, these offer two completely different experiences, but both equally fascinating. The Aruba Ostrich farm gives an intriguing insight into the behavioral patterns of these remarkable birds, with nearly 100 of the species perfectly at home on the rugged terrain. The Butterfly farm is as far removed as you can get, yet is just as captivating. A tropical garden of delightful colors awaits visitors who will be treated to a tour that gives any keen photographer some of their most stunning pictures.

However, it is the scuba diving that is the real pull to the area and you will find an Aruba dive center lurking on practically every corner around the coastal roads. The shipwrecks lying just off shore are world famous and attract divers from all over planet. There is also some of the finest reefs to be explored in the Caribbean, with some truly spectacular coral formations to be seen. There is also a rich helping of exotic marine life that will pay a visit whilst investigating the underwater charms of this wonderful place, with creatures such as stingrays, manta rays and barracudas very much in evidence. The vast majority of the dive sites are scattered along the protected coasts in the south and west of the island.

Aruba is presently undertaking a program to preserve the ecological health of its reefs and have set up educational courses which visiting divers are encouraged to take an active part in. With little more than 3 degrees of difference in temperatures in the winter and summer months and hardly any rainfall, the only thing that affects scuba diving in the area is wind. The trade winds blow through all year around, but are at their strongest between January and April, so they are possibly the months to avoid if you are after perfect conditions, but even in that period the experiences underwater are amazing.

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Scuba diving off the tiny Caribbean island of Aruba continues to thrive and a browse around a www.arubaprivatediving.com will certainly put an interested party in the mood. The first port of call on arrival will have to be an a Aruba dive center to check out the best sites and get kitted out.

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