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Extraordinary sights at Aruba dive sites by Anne Mary

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Despite its close proximity of just 18 miles from Venezuela, the 6 miles wide and 20 miles long island of Aruba is an idyllic location and is renowned throughout the Caribbean for its wonderful beaches, turquoise waters and magnificent water sport opportunities. Under the control of the Dutch for nearly 400 years, tourism now plays a huge part in its economy and whilst sailing and snorkeling are very popular, without doubt when it comes to water based activities in Aruba diving is by far the biggest draw, and brings people from all corners of the world to explore the incredible waters that lie off shore.

There are actually 42 separate Aruba dive sites, with the vast majority on the sheltered west of the island, away from the rough waters that can be found nearby, due to it being very close to the hurricane belt. The many shipwrecks attract their fair share of specialist divers, but for the more recreational diver the place has an abundance of stunning coral reef sites that have to be seen to fully appreciate their splendor.

One of the best of these sites is that at Mas Bango reef, which starts almost as soon as you enter the water, indeed within 5 feet you will be greeted by corals and slopes going right down to a depth of approximately 130 feet. There it is possible to swim amongst tuna, seahorses, turtles and barracudas in an extraordinary reef of breathtaking beauty. Of a similar stunning appearance is Skalahein reef, with a gradual slope making it a top quality shallow dive.

Other excellent locations for Aruba diving include: Dantchi's Delight with an array of damsel fish guaranteed to accompany a diver each and every time, the 80 foot Barcadera Reef which has massively dense coral allowing some quite extraordinary photographic opportunities, Plonco reef with brilliantly colored marine creatures such as parrot fish, yellow tails and moray eels in permanent residence, and De Palm Slope which drops exceptionally deep and gives great views of weird and wonderful coral formations.

The reefs can play tricks with your eyes when under the water, even in clear visibility, and some of the shapes that are formed only serve to confuse the issue further. For example, a reef referred to as the Finger nearly always causes a double take amongst first time divers, due to its remarkable resemblance to several pointing digits, aiming in the direction of the deep water below. Fantastic coral arrangements shape themselves into the surroundings to add to the remarkable visual effect, with gorgeous marine creatures thrown in for good measure.

It is not necessary to be an expert scuba diver to be able to gain full enjoyment from this marvelous activity, as there are plenty of dive operators, professionally running outlets, which offer tuition to the required standard, meaning even the most inexperienced can more or less be under the water, straight away. There are some wondrous sights to behold, just a few feet from the surface, and consequently, allowing a visit to the island to pass without exploring these optical treats beneath the sea, would be a terrible shame.

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