



Curaçao

Where the Water, Music and Liqueur Are All Blue

Story by Mira Temkin

Photos courtesy of the Curaçao Tourist Board

Swim, snorkel or walk along one of Curaçao's 35 beautiful beaches.

Way down in the Southern Caribbean lie three magnificent islands named the A-B-C's – Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao. These three beautiful Dutch islands share a colonial history, gorgeous beaches and perfect weather outside the hurricane path.

The largest of the three islands is Curaçao, internationally-recognized for its enclaves of private beaches and peaceful inlets with a relaxing, laid-back vibe. Sparkling blue waters, blues music and traditional blue Curaçao liqueur were all awaiting our discovery.

Independent from the Netherlands since 2010, the Dutch influence is still prevalent in the historic Old Town's colorful waterfront buildings. The capital city of Willemstad, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, features facades of pink, blue, yellow and gold (which indicate a government building or monument).



Queen Emma Swing Bridge in historic downtown Willemstad.

Historic Downtown

The Dutch Influence Remains

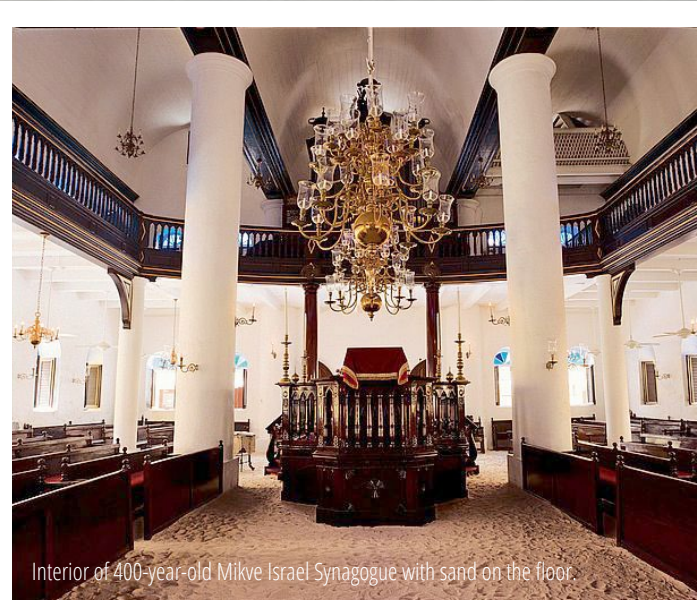
We stopped for a moment at the iconic floating Queen Emma Bridge that swings open to let the boats through. Then, we proceeded along the waterfront to the colorful and lively floating market, where fishing vessels make the 35-mile sail from Venezuela to sell their fish, fruits and vegetables. I tried the papaya, which was sweet and delicious. There's also yucca, passion fruit, plantains and key limes to tempt your palate.

I was curious about the 400-year old Mikve Israel Synagogue, the oldest active synagogue in the Western Hemisphere. Yes, that's actual sand on the floor to remind the Jewish people of wandering in the desert.

We had also heard about the Chobolobo Factory, a 19th-century historic mansion and discovered how the famous Blue Curaçao liquor was made. You can taste the blue waters in every sip. Fortunately, a few bottles of the island's most famous drink made their way home.

Enjoy the Luxury and Attention to Detail

Located within easy walking distance of downtown is the Avila Beach Hotel, the longest operating hotel on the island, serving guests for more than six decades. With two private beaches and infinity pool, the hotel creates an ambiance of understated elegance and refined moments. At night, we dined in the Avila



Interior of 400-year-old Mikve Israel Synagogue with sand on the floor.

Blues Bar & Restaurant and enjoyed their delicious grilled specialties and fresh fish while listening to live jazz. Their signature Blue Margarita, made with (you guessed it) famous Blue Curaçao, is as beautiful to your gaze as to your palate. The best part is that the blues play into the wee hours.

The Renaissance Curaçao Resort & Casino in downtown features a sprawling complex on a beautiful private beach, moments away from Christoffel National Park, the Sea Aquarium and the Curaçao Museum. Dine in one of the five on-site restaurants, swim in the infinity pool or run on their on-site jogging trail. At night, try your luck in the casino.

Papagayo Beach Resort is an exclusive resort on Jan Thiel Bay with striking white-washed buildings set against the deep blue waters. There was so much to do at this hip, trendy beach club that I didn't want to leave. The resort features a contemporary spa, state-of-

Colorful buildings in the Pietermaai neighborhood.



the-art fitness center, bustling casino and various shops. Start your day with their sumptuous buffet and relax from 5:00-6:00 p.m. with Happy Hour Wine.

A Culinary Feast

Traditional Caribbean cooking is enhanced with fresh fruits and vegetables brought in from Venezuela every day, allowing chefs to create dishes that showcase many culinary influences. Curaçao is emerging as an ultra-hip foodie town as chefs experiment with new fusion ideas. A new farm-to-table café has even made its debut. Here are a few places to consider:

27 Bar and Restaurant is a cool place to hang out and the island's first rock 'n roll bar overlooking the water. Live music, great food and a guaranteed good time keep a stream of people pouring out into the streets.

Be sure to try a traditional Batido at food trucks everywhere. It's made of ice, milk and real fruit – the perfect refreshing drink on a hot day. My favorite was pineapple, with coffee-flavored coming in a close second.

Enjoy a taste of fabulous Mediterranean cuisine at the Zest Mediterranean restaurant, just steps away from Papagayo with fresh fish and chef-inspired cuisine. And for something completely different and delicious, try a goat burger and sweet potato fries at Williwood.

Enjoy a great start to the day at Beyglz (sounds like bagels), one of Curaçao's newest eateries with lots of tasty, healthy selections.

Dining at Mosa is like having dinner at your family's house. It's warm, inviting and fabulous. This shared dining experience features excellent cuisine and wine in the heart of Curaçao's up-and-coming neighborhood, Pietermaai, which is now home to trendy bars, restaurants and colorful street murals. Also check out Hofi Cas Cora, a new farm-to-table concept where you watch the staff pick the fresh vegetables out of the garden and serve them to you for brunch/lunch.

IF YOU GO

Jet Blue offers non-stop service from New York City to Curaçao. Make plans to visit now and see why the Curaçao "blues" are destined to become your favorite island escape!

avilabeachhotel.com
renaissancecuraçao.com
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The author would like to thank The Curacao Tourist Board and Diamond PR for hosting this trip.