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THE TRAVEL ISSUE

SARAH RAFFERTY



Carved by millennia of wind, water, and earth movements, the unspoiled and beautiful island of Bonaire is often referred to as the best kept secret of the Caribbean. Refreshingly less developed from its neighboring islands, Aruba and Curaçao, Bonaire offers a magical simplicity and purity which is unrivaled.

Collectively known as the ABC islands, they are the three western-most islands in the South Caribbean, off the coast of Venezuela with a fascinating Dutch colonial history and West Indian heritage. Located just outside the tropical hurricane belt, constant sunshine and a tropical climate moderated by trade winds from the Atlantic, invite di-

vers and vacationers to experience paradise year round. As the least populated and most authentic of this group of islands, Bonaire is a haven of natural beauty with its amazing reef-lined coast, designated national park status, sparkling turquoise blue waters, and peaceful laid-back and off-the-beaten-path vibe, it is no wonder many of its guests are loyal repeat visitors.



Here, just a short ride from the airport in the sleepy capital of Kralendijk, located on a four-acre, private peninsula within an exclusive beachfront enclave, Harbour Village Beach Club stands proudly as Bonaire's only luxury resort. It not only offers a secluded tropical paradise to unwind and relax, but also features on-property amenities such as a first-class PADI 5 Star Instructor Development Center, a 64-slip marina with mega-yacht dock, and world-class restaurant to keep you as entertained as you choose to be. Upon arriving at Harbour Village, you immediately feel a sense of understated luxury,



where elegance meets modern simplicity, which is elevated even further by the friendliness and hospitality of the staff. At Harbour Village, your wish is their command, and attention to comfort and detail is a priority.

The 38 Dutch-Caribbean style rooms and suites decorated in European Colonial Plantation style reflect the island's mellow elegance and are inviting and comfortable, the perfect home away from home. Premier suites tout prime beachfront location, private double terrace with lounge chairs, and a fully equipped kitchen. Nestled amid lush tropical gardens with beautiful bright flowers and palm trees, just steps from the only private white-sand beach on the island, walking throughout the resort is a delightful and peaceful experience. This prized stretch of soft sand and azure swimming area provides an ideal spot from which to lounge or take in the beautiful view of the tiny island of Klein right across, a must for snorkeling and diving. Laze on one of the plush lounge chairs while sipping on a cocktail, or sway away on a hammock while taking in the cool Caribbean breeze. While most guests are veteran scuba divers, it is also a great place to learn how to dive, where les-

sons and certifications are possible through Great Adventures Bonaire, the on-site PADI five-star Instructor Development Center, with excursions leaving twice a day. A true diver's paradise and world renowned for its pristine coral, Bonaire offers 86 well-defined dive sites. Equally impressive is the conservation and preservation effort by Harbour Village as well as the entire island of Bonaire in caring for and maintaining their most valuable reefs and marine life. Just recently, Harbour Village announced its partnership with explorer and ocean preservationist Fabien Cousteau, in order

to raise awareness for ocean conservation. With many upcoming exciting plans, including the creation of an Ocean Learning Center on-property and a series of Global Ocean Summits held at Harbour Village, their commitment to researching and exploring the world's oceans is commendable.

Although hard to leave this haven of tranquility, explore outside the resort by heading towards the northern part of the island where you can find a coastal area in its original virgin state with a hilly and rocky terrain, as well as the vast Washington Slagbaai National Park, which is contrasted by the flat geography of the southern part of the island. Here, you can find the mesmerizingly pink Lake Pekel (Dutch for Salty Lake) with its surrounding grand snowy-white salt mountains set against the deep blue of the Caribbean sky, as well as Bonaire's famous pink flamingos. Stop by Sorobon Beach, where the warm shallow water and steady trade winds set the stage for superb windsurfing.

Back at the resort, relax and get pampered at the terrific spa offering soothing treatments either in a treatment room or by the private outdoor cascade pool for a blissful hour of relaxation. Afterwards, head for a sumptuous fine-dining experience at Harbour Village's exquisite La Balandra Restaurant and Bar which was uniquely designed after an antique Spanish ship that extends over the water and serves up fresh creative dishes excellently prepared. It is the ideal place to watch the awe-inspiring vibrant sunsets and also a wonderful outdoor space to feel at one with nature. In the evenings, the surrounding water is lit so you can observe the fish below, as well as pelicans that make for delightful entertainment.

harbourvillage.com ♦

