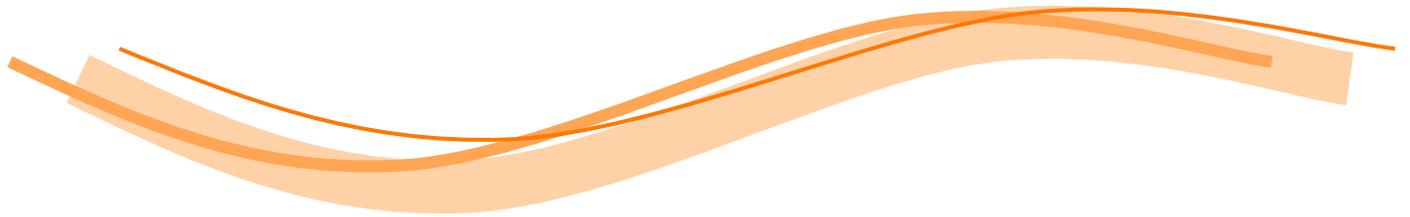




**ARUBA**





<b>Aruba</b>	<b>“Bonbini”</b> . It means welcome. And here, you truly are.
<b>Location</b>	Aruba is located in the heart of the southern Caribbean, 20 kilometers off the coast of Venezuela. It is 30 kilometers long and 9 kilometers across, at its widest point, with an area of approximately 184 square kilometers.
<b>Geography</b>	Aruba is a generally flat, river-less island in the Leeward Antilles island arc of the Lesser Antilles. Aruba is renowned for its white, sandy beaches on the western and southern coasts of the island, relatively sheltered from fierce ocean currents. The northern and eastern coasts, lacking this protection, are considerably more battered by the sea and have been left largely untouched by humans. The interior of the island features some rolling hills, the better two of which are called Hooiberg at 165 meters and Mount Jamanota, the highest on the island at 188 metres above sea level.
<b>Name</b>	From “shell island”: ora oubao...Or “gold was found here” : ora uba
<b>Population</b>	There are approximately 100,000 Arubans on the island estimated to be about 80% Arawak Amerindian and 20% white and other. They are “more gracious about the invasion of tourists than any other Caribbean island”
<b>Language</b>	The cultural mixture has given rise to a linguistic mixture known as <b>Papiamento</b> , the predominant language on Aruba. The two official languages are the Dutch language and Papiamento. Papiamento is a language that has been evolving through the centuries and absorbed many words from other languages like Spanish, Dutch, English, African dialects, and Portuguese. However, like many islands in the region, Spanish is also often spoken. English has historical connections (with the British Empire) and is known by many; English usage has also grown due to tourism “Mi dushi” is Papiamento for “my sweetheart”
<b>Currency</b>	Aruba Florin, and the US \$ is also widely accepted. 1.40 Aruba Guilders to \$CDN (as at 6 Dec 2008)
<b>Tipping</b>	Most, but not all, restaurants charge 10% to 15% for service, but not all of this goes to the service staff. Some restaurants keep a percentage for overhead, while the rest is distributed among all restaurant personnel, so in general, you are expected to leave a little cash on the table, too. If no charge is included in your tab, leave 15% to 20%. Taxi drivers expect 15%, and porters should get about \$2 per bag. Some of the hotel service charge should trickle down to the chambermaids, but if you're staying in a nice place, leave \$2 per day for the housekeeper anyway. For spa treatments and such, see if a service charge is included. If it's not, leave 15%.
<b>Government</b>	As a Constituent Country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Aruba's politics take place within a framework of a 21-member Parliament and

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	<p>an eight-member Cabinet. The governor of Aruba is appointed for a six-year term by the monarch, and the prime minister and deputy prime minister are elected by the Staten for four-year terms. The Staten is made up of 21 members elected by direct, popular vote to serve a four-year term.</p> <p>Together, the State of the Netherlands, the State of the Netherlands Antilles, and the State of Aruba form a Commonwealth. As they share the same Dutch citizenship, these three countries still also share the Dutch passport as the Kingdom of the Netherlands passport</p>
<b>Documentation</b>	Take your passport, although officially a birth certificate is sufficient
<b>Time zone</b>	Aruba is on Atlantic Standard time year-round. For most of the year, the island is 1 hour ahead of Eastern Standard time
<b>Health</b>	<p>You can relax about water. Aruba's tap water is completely safe to drink and tastes fine.</p> <p>Aruba's sun can be brutal. Wear sunglasses and a hat (with a strap -- remember the wind) and use high SPF sunscreen liberally. Limit your time on the beach the first day or two. If you get burned, stay out of the sun until you recover.</p> <p>The wind is usually strong enough to blow mosquitoes away, but the pests can sometimes be a nuisance anyway. Malaria's not a concern, but bring insect repellent for your own comfort.</p>
<b>Safety tips</b>	Aruba enjoys one of the highest standards of living in the Caribbean region and the lowest crime rate; low poverty and unemployment rates are also positives for Aruba. The disappearance of an Alabama teenager, Natalee Holloway, in the spring of 2005 is an anomaly.

<b>CLIMATE</b>	
<b>General climate</b>	<p>The even temperatures of Aruba's pleasantly tropical marine climate attract tourists to the island all year round. Temperature varies little from 28 °C, moderated by constant trade winds from the Atlantic Ocean. Yearly precipitation barely reaches 500 mm, most of it falling in late autumn.</p> <p>Most tourist hotels are located on the leeward side of the island, providing better weather and enjoyment of beaches and ocean.</p>
<b>Today's weather</b>	31 degrees Centigrade and sunny (6 Dec 2008)
<b>Best time to visit</b>	A year round destination; Aruba lies outside of the hurricane belt

<b>GETTING THERE</b>	
<b>Flying time</b>	Five hours from Montreal and Toronto with Sunquest
<b>Cities</b>	<b>Oranjestad</b> is Aruba's only town of any size or sophistication. If you want an "urban" environment with a variety of restaurants, nightclubs, and casinos, this is the place for you. The whole island has fewer than 90,000 residents, but most seem to live or work around the capital. Its waterfront bustles with cruise ships, yachts, fishing boats, and cargo

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	carriers. Fueled by the boutiques, restaurants, bars, and casinos radiating from the docks, vehicular and pedestrian traffic in town is heavy much of the day and night. Contributing to the congestion, Arubans cruise the main boulevard to see and be seen, giving the strip an American Graffiti flavor. Much of the architecture combines Dutch gables and baroque ornamentation with Caribbean colors like pistachio, ochre, pink, and aqua. The result is a sun-drenched gingerbread confection with a touch of theme-park squeaky cleanliness.
<b>Distances</b>	Aruba is a tiny island. Only 32km long and 9.7km across at its widest point, it's slightly larger than Washington, D.C.
<b>Car Rental</b>	Rent a car or jeep, take your trusty guidebook along, and see the real Aruba. You can pass through teeny hamlets (don't blink), discover a new beach, stop for a roadside snack, and rove the aisles of a Chinese supermarket that carries everything from aloe leaves to Dutch chocolate. Be forewarned, though: Roaming gangs of goats yield to no one. Because directional signs are practically nonexistent, expect to get lost. No sweat. This is one small island, and the divi divi trees always point west.
<b>Buses</b>	Aruba has an excellent public bus system, with regular, reliable service. Buses run roughly every half-hour from 6am to 6pm and every hour from 6pm to midnight, Monday through Saturday. On Sunday and holidays, service is less frequent: every hour between 6am and 6pm, every 2 hours between 6pm and midnight. Same-day round-trip fare between the beach hotels and Oranjestad is \$2; a one-way ride is \$1.10, or 2 florins. It's best to have exact change. Schedules are available at the Arubus office at the central terminal on Zoutmanstraat in Oranjestad, but your hotel's reception desk will know when buses pass by. You'll seldom wait more than 20 minutes for the next coach or mini-bus. The trip into town takes 10 to 20 minutes. There's a stop in front of most hotels.

<b>ACCOMMODATION TYPES</b>	<p>There is a full range of accommodations on the island from high rise, glitzy resorts to small B &amp; B's and condos. The standards tend to be better than elsewhere in the Caribbean.</p> <p>Here's an accommodation update as of December 2008 for Aruba:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Guests staying at the Aruba Marriott Resort &amp; Stellaris Casino will now enjoy a new hotel experience following a \$50 million renovation project over the past year. The Aruba Marriott has completely redesigned all 411 guestrooms, the lobby, lounge and bar, and both main restaurants, La Vista and Ruth's Chris Steak House. La Vista now offers seating for up to 300 guests. In addition, the top floor of the resort was transformed into the new Tradewinds Club, which offers guests special amenities and services including private check-in, plush robes, deluxe</li> </ul>
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bath amenities, unpacking service, a special pillow menu, complimentary internet service and access to a private lounge with complimentary food and beverage services and an evening open bar.

- Cunucu Arubiano, a new adults-only, luxury boutique resort featuring stays in individual "casitas," is now officially open. Located on the Santa Lucia hill and part of the Aruba Donkey Sanctuary. Each casita is designed to reflect the old-Aruban and Dutch-influenced architecture of the early 19th century, but also offers modern amenities like king-sized beds, flat-screen televisions, air conditioning, microwave ovens, mini-refrigerators and WiFi internet access. Rates include complimentary coffee, light breakfast and homemade sandwiches for lunch, and guests also receive a complimentary bottle of wine for every two nights booked.
- The Hyatt Regency Aruba has undergone a \$20 million renovation. Guestrooms all have completely renovated bathrooms, along with new beds and modern interiors, and the four specialty suites offer Italian furnishings and Philippe Starck bathroom elements. The new Palms Restaurant and Bar features a Latin bistro with an exhibition kitchen.
- The Westin Resort, Aruba has finalized the last phase of a \$22 million renovation of the resort's 8,500-square-foot free-form swimming pool. The deck, on which the poolside chaise lounges are located, also received upgrades. Additionally, the resort's 20,000 square-foot meeting and banquet facility received a refreshed look, which includes new carpeting and wall paneling, sleek stone tiles in the foyer and oversized, contemporary artwork.
- The Renaissance Aruba Resort & Casino recently opened the new 3,500 square foot Okeanos Spa, featuring island-based treatments, materials and lighting. The spa offers seven treatment rooms including a dual massage room and a wet room; two manicure and two pedicure stations, a sauna and new locker room facilities. The resort has also expanded its fitness facilities, featuring 3,000 square feet of workout space, 24-hour access for guests, televisions and personal entertainment available on all equipment and a personal trainer available for one-on-one appointments.
- Divi Aruba Phoenix Beach Resort will debut new, oceanfront suites in December 2008. The new development will add 140 luxury suites to the existing 101 units at the resort, which will be housed in four eight-story buildings, each featuring studios, one bedroom suites, and two and three bedroom penthouses. Each suite will feature fully-equipped kitchens, along with king-sized beds and queen-sized sleeper sofas, flat-screen plasma televisions, washer/dryer combinations and Jacuzzi tubs.
- The Holiday Inn Resort Aruba has expanded its award-winning KidSpree Vacation Club with the addition of Kids Disco Night. Held

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	<p>every Tuesday and Saturday from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Pali Coco Lounge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Brickell Bay Beach Club has just recently opened the new Intermezzo Spa, offering two appointed treatment rooms. One room is specifically for rejuvenating and invigorating body treatments including couples, with another room specifically for manicures and pedicures.</li> <li>- La Cabana Beach &amp; Racquet Club timeshares has recently begun a \$27 million renovation project, which is slated for completion in 2011. All guest rooms will be renovated and the wall-to-wall, floor-to-ceiling facelift will be followed by exterior renovations in and around the club. The project will be concluded in 2011.</li> </ul>
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<b>TARGET GROUPS</b>	The American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA) voted Aruba number one most popular Caribbean destination.
<b>Kids</b>	<p>Many of the resorts have excellent Kids Clubs, but here's a couple of non-beach based ideas:</p> <p><b>The Donkey Sanctuary</b> ( <a href="http://www.arubandonkey.org">www.arubandonkey.org</a> ), half a mile from the Ayo Rock Formation, is where dozens of these feral yet gentle animals are corralled, fed, and cared for. The staff will eagerly share their knowledge with you about the history and ecology of Aruba's donkeys, many of which still roam the countryside. A small refreshment stand serves drinks and snacks.</p> <p>Another opportunity for animal encounters can be found at the recently opened <b>Ostrich Farm</b>, on the road between the Natural Bridge and the Bushiribana Gold Mine Ruins. Here you can tour the grounds and meet the resident ostriches. Visitors can feed a hungry harem of females; compare and contrast the ostriches with their close kin, emus; test the incredible strength of an egg at the hatchery; then head back to the pavilion to browse the impressive gift shop.</p> <p>A visit to Aruba's <b>Butterfly Farm</b> is also an unforgettable encounter with nature in all its beauty and diversity. Step into a tropical garden teeming with butterflies from around the globe and prepare to meet some of the world's most colorful and unusual creatures. Observe the life cycle of these fascinating animals from egg to caterpillar to chrysalis to butterfly</p>
<b>Teens</b>	Explore the <b>Bushiribana Ruins</b> . According to local legend, in 1824 a 12-year-old boy came across gold in one of the dry creek beds on Aruba's north coast. Naturally, the discovery set off a gold frenzy. For 30 years, Arubans were allowed to collect the precious metal, provided they sold it at a set price. In 1854, a gold-mining concession was granted to the Aruba Island Goldmining Company, which built this smelter on the north coast in 1872. Although the facility operated for only 10 years, its hulking ruins still dominate the area. Climb the

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	<p>multi-tiered interior for impressive sea views.</p> <p><b>Caves exploring:</b> In the deep recesses of rock along the island's windward coast, shallow cave formations intrigue visitors, who, in seeking to penetrate its damp chambers, are rewarded with mysterious views of rock drawings, the sudden, flapping wings of a nervous bat and nature's artwork of stalagmites and stalactites. The Guadirikiri Cave is famous for its two chambers, illuminated by the sunlight streaming through holes in the roof of the cave.</p> <p>The cave extends for about 100 feet. In the darker portions of the cave nest hundreds of harmless bats.</p> <p>The Fontein Cave is the most popular of the caves as it is the only one that has the drawings of Arawak Indians on the ceilings, providing a real sense of island history to this cave.</p> <p>The Huliba Cave is also known as the Tunnel of Love because of the heart shaped opening at its entrance. You will need flashlights to explore the 300-foot-long passageway.</p>
<b>Romance</b>	<p>My vote for the most romantic spot on the island: the <b>California Lighthouse</b> sits on a hilltop perch at Aruba's northernmost tip, but its active days are over. Part of the adjacent restaurant once served as the lighthouse keeper's home. The surrounding area features some of the island's most spectacular scenery - gentle sand dunes, rocky coral shoreline, and turbulent waves. The picturesque structure gets its name from the California, a passenger ship that sank off the nearby coast before the lighthouse was completed in 1916.</p>
<b>Honeymoons &amp; Weddings</b>	<p>Many of the larger resorts offer wedding and honeymoon packages – talk to your travel agent when you book.</p> <p>For wedding requirements on Aruba, refer to the Aruba website at: <a href="http://www.aruba.com/specializedvacations/marriage.php">http://www.aruba.com/specializedvacations/marriage.php</a></p>
<b>Seniors</b>	<p>Long beaches for gentle sunset – or sunrise – strolls; good food; and some of the best resorts in the Caribbean...all make Aruba a great choice for older vacationers.</p>

<b>UNIQUES</b>	<p>The divi-divi (<i>Caesalpinia coriaria</i>) is a leguminous tree or large shrub native to the Antilles, southern Mexico, Central America and northern South America. It grows to 9 m tall, often much less and very contorted in exposed coastal sites. The leaves are bipinnate, with 5-10 pairs of pinnae, each pinna with 15-25 pairs of leaflets; the individual leaflets are 7 mm long and 2 mm broad. The fruit is a twisted pod 5 cm long. The Divi-divi is one of the more famous species of <i>Caesalpinia</i>; it is a symbol of Curaçao and is very popular in Aruba where it is called "watapana". On the islands this tree is never straight because of the wind. Divi divi trees growing horizontally in direction of trade winds; pod used for tanning leather; gnarled and outstretched to the Caribbean Sea — have</p>
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	<p>been contorted by the steady trade winds into huge, bonsai-like figures, and their limbs point west, to the bustling hotel district.</p>
<b>Surprising</b>	<p><b>Gold rush:</b> 1825-1913 Kristalberg, Bushiri-bana: gold mines, smelters; Bushiribana: On the northern coast, midway down the island, lie the abandoned gold mines that were the center of Aruba's gold rush during the nineteenth century. In 1824, gold was finally discovered in Aruba, and eventually, the industry produced more than 3 million pounds of gold.</p> <p>Broom upside down against outside wall: gets rid of unwanted guests</p>
<b>History</b>	<p>1499 Alonso de Ojeda – Spanish explorer “I came to an island of giants”; 1600’s Dutch led by Peter Stuyvessant – horses for raiding; 1862 last pure blood Arawak died; Aruba's first inhabitants were the Caquetios Indians from the Arawak tribe.</p> <p>Fragments of the earliest known Indian settlements date back to about 1000 A.D, as do the ancient painted symbols still visible on limestone caves found at Fontein, Ayo and elsewhere. Pottery remnants can still be seen at the Museum of Archaeology.</p> <p>Spanish explorer Alonso de Ojeda is thought to have arrived about 1499. The Spanish promptly exported the Indians to Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic, where they were put to work in the copper mines.</p> <p>In 1636, near the culmination of the Eighty Years' War between Spain and Holland, the Dutch took possession of Aruba and remained in control for nearly two centuries. In 1805, during the Napoleonic Wars, the English briefly took control over the island, but it was returned to Dutch control in 1816.</p>
<b>Books</b>	<p>Frommer’s Caribbean 2009</p>
<b>Don’t Miss Out</b>	<p>Kukoo Kunuku invites you to party on a colorfully painted '57 Chevy bus. A bar crawl on wheels, it's like getting drunk with the Partridge Family. The coach has no glass in its windows - the fresh air will do you good - and every reveler gets maracas. Prepare to sing a solo and do the macarena. The carousing attracts a mixed crowd with a surprisingly large number of folks over 40; the minimum age is 18. The price of \$59 per person includes champagne at sunset, an Aruban dinner under the stars, and the first drink at each of three watering holes. The carousing begins at 6pm and lasts until about midnight, Monday through Saturday. Pick-up and drop-off is at your hotel.</p>
<b>Pirates Ahoy!</b>	<p>Jolly Pirates ( <a href="http://www.jollypirates.com">www.jollypirates.com</a> ) boards at the Moomba pier, between the Holiday Inn and Marriott, and offers a very casual evening sea cruise. The buccaneer theme can only mean walking the plank and singing "Yo, ho, ho, and a bottle of rum." The sunset sail features an open bar and rope swing (Mon and Fri 5-7pm; \$26 per person).</p>

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<p><b>SPORTS ACTIVITIES</b></p>	<p><b>Kayaking:</b> The leeward (south) coast's calm waters are ideal for kayaking. Starting near the old fishing village of Savaneta, guided tours hug the coastal mangrove forests before crossing a lagoon to a small island, where you can have a bite to eat and snorkel.</p> <p><b>Off-Roading:</b> All-terrain vehicles that look like a cross between a dune buggy and a tractor mower let you play Road Warrior, and can be rented by the hour or the day. For those who want the thrill of the ride without the fear of getting lost, guided tours embark from several tour agencies.</p> <p><b>Parasailing:</b> Aruba looks even better from 180m in the air. Flight time is only 10 minutes, but secure in your boat-towed parachute, you're on top of the world. Several watersports centers along Palm Beach will be happy to put wind in your sails. Take a waterproof camera along to show your friends back home that you've been there, done that.</p> <p><b>Sailing:</b> Sailing adventures are available day and night. Some include watersports, while others feature drinks, snacks or a full gourmet dinner. For night owls, dance-and-booze cruises include a midnight dip in the sea. If you have something special to celebrate, charter a private yacht. Catamarans, trimarans, and ketches are available. The calm waters along the southern coast are also ideal for extra-buoyant individual sailboats like Sunfish. At DePalm island the trimaran Windriders come complete with a captain to navigate the waters or give you a crash course in sailing.</p>
<p><b>Golf</b></p>	<p>On the island's northern tip, <b>Tierra del Sol</b> is one of the Caribbean's best golf courses. The championship 18-hole, par-71 course was designed by Robert Trent Jones II and features stupendous views of the ocean and the California Lighthouse. Bunkers, cacti, and coral rock come into play throughout the course, while water hazards are confined to holes 13, 14, and 15. Gusting to speeds of 64kmph, the wind is the real challenge, though. Club selection is often crucial. Near San Nicolas, the Aruba Golf Club has seen better days and is used primarily by locals. It has been trumped by the recently opened <b>Divi Links</b>, near Druif Beach, a picturesque 9-hole course surrounded by landscaped water traps, lakes, and lagoons, and boasting a camera that captures your final shot so you can review the tape over drinks in the clubhouse that overlooks the greens.</p>
<p><b>Fishing</b></p>	<p>Local fishermen use simple hand lines (fishing line, hooks, and lead weights) to bring up red snapper and dolphin fish. Most activity takes place along the southwest coast, although some anglers occasionally venture to the north coast, where the rough seas trap fish in small pools carved out of the limestone bluffs. To try your hand at deep-sea fishing,</p>

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	<p>charter one of the many skippered boats. Typical catches include barracuda, amberjack, sailfish, wahoo, blue and white marlin, kingfish, bonito, and black- and yellow-fin tuna. A few restaurants will even cook and serve up your day's catch.</p> <p>Sailfish, white and blue marlin, wahoo, shark, barracuda, amberjack, kingfish, bonito, and blackfin and yellowfin tuna are abundant : costs are \$300 for 6 people for half day</p>
<b>Horse riding</b>	<p>Aruba's coastline and outback are just as dramatic when viewed from the saddle. Several ranches offer early morning and midday excursions, or you can ride off into the sunset. As you wend your way through cacti and random boulders in the outback, watch for iguanas and skittish cottontails. Stop at Alto Vista Chapel and California Lighthouse, then ride along the shore. Or start at the crashing waves and sand dunes of the northern coast before heading for the Natural Pool. Keep your eyes open for bickering parakeets and hovering hummingbirds. That ominous bird circling over your head? Not to worry: It only looks like a vulture.</p> <p><b>Rancho El Paso</b> \$15/hr ride through cactus plains.</p>
<b>Hiking</b>	<p>The sun is hot, and the scant foliage offers little respite, but if you bring water and a wide-brimmed hat, traversing Aruba's hills and coastline is worth the effort. <b>Arikok National Park</b> has the best trails. Climb the island's highest hills, explore abandoned gold mines, poke around plantation ruins, trek through caves, and comb limestone cliffs for coral and small-animal bones. The network of trails is clearly marked. Hiking boots are nice, but sneakers will do.</p>
<b>Windsurfing &amp; Kitesurfing</b>	<p>Aruba's high-wind season is the longest in the Caribbean. Wind speeds are best in May, June, and July, when they average 20 to 25 knots. From December through April, they slow to 15 to 20 knots, and from September through November they range from 10 to 20 knots. Most launches are on the leeward side of the island, near the hotels and major beaches. The most popular site is off the northwest tip of the island on Malmok Beach, an area known as Fishermen's Huts. Near San Nicolas, Rodgers Beach, and Boca Grandi are alternatives to the hotel area. To avoid collisions, kitesurfers and windsurfers take turns throughout the day.</p>
<b>Underwater Adventure</b>	<p><b>Diving:</b> Aruba offers enough coral reefs, marine life, and wreck diving to keep most wetsuit-wearing folks happy. The water temperature averages 27 °C. Due to currents and plankton, visibility varies, but at the leeward dive sites it usually ranges from 18 to 36m. The bountiful plankton nourishes a dense coral population, especially brain, sheet, finger, and mountainous star coral. Freshwater runoff is minimal. Sunken airplane fuselages and shipwrecks (including the largest in the Caribbean) are among the most popular destinations. In addition to snappers, grunts, angelfish, damselfish, and parrotfish, divers regularly spot less common species like frogfish, seahorses, nudibranchs, black</p>

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	<p>crinoids, basket stars, scorpionfish, and eels. Barracudas, tarpons, and jacks also call Aruba's waters home.</p> <p><b>Snuba:</b> Though not affording you the freedom and excitement of scuba, this technology allows you to breathe while descending up to 6.1m by way of a regulator tethered to a floating tank of compressed air. No experience is necessary; most of the catamaran tours allow passengers the option either before or during the trip to sign up and give it a whirl. On DePalm Island, you can also try Sea Trek, where you don a diving helmet and weighted boots and explore the sea floor; though you won't see much coral, you will see a submerged bus and plane, and can sit for a photo-op at a submerged cafe table. For those who like toys, grab a motorized jet pack and try Power Snorkel; just hold on to your swimsuit with one hand, the jet pack with the other, and pray you don't wind up in Venezuela!</p> <p><b>Underwater Touring:</b> Another way to experience life at the bottom of the sea is aboard a submarine, where you can descend 45m to observe coral, shipwrecks, and some very curious fish. If you'd rather not have your vessel submerge completely, hop on a glass-bottom boat. The viewing deck is only 1.5m below the surface, but a scuttled German freighter, encrusted with coral and teeming with other marine life, is just feet away. The sub leaves from a pier in front of the Crystal Casino in Oranjestad; the glass-bottom boat departs from Pelican Pier on Palm Beach.</p> <p><b>Snorkeling:</b> Good visibility, several shallow reefs, and a couple of wrecks give snorkelers an array of options. All sites are on the southern, or leeward, coast. Slightly north of Palm Beach, Catalina Bay and Arashi Reef feature brain and star coral, sea fans, parrotfish, angelfish, and an occasional octopus; the 400-foot Antilla shipwreck is impossible to miss. De Palm Slope, off De Palm Island, features magnificent coral as well.</p>
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<b>CULTURE</b>	
<b>Music</b>	<p>Music plays a central role in all of Aruba's major holidays as well as its more informal celebrations. Every evening music can be heard drifting down from terrace bars, flooding through the doorways of nightclubs and intimate pubs alike, working in a pied piper-like fashion in drawing in revelers in animated social interaction. Latin rhythms of salsa and merengue, mixed with American top forty and European house music offer a cornucopia of musical backgrounds in which to experience Aruba's exuberant and cosmopolitan attitudes.</p> <p>Local musicians, benefiting from a rich musical background as well as</p>

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	<p>exposure to international trends, often provide a new take on conventional rhythms. Their creativity and musical knowledge can be appreciated during live performances regularly scheduled at the local theater of Cas di Cultura, nightclubs or in Aruba's finest hotels, dinner theatres and restaurants.</p>
<b>Films</b>	<p>A real throwback to a simpler time, the E. De Veer <b>Drive-In Theatre</b>, on Kibaima, across from the Balashi Brewery on the road to Savaneta and San Nicolas, is a rare treat. The chance to watch a film (usually American) in a vast field under the stars? In Aruba? That's exotic. Admission is about \$4, but Sunday and Wednesday are "car crash" nights - \$10 admits a whole carload.</p>
<b>Museums</b>	<p><b>Archaeological Museum of Aruba</b> Squeezed between St. Franciscus Roman Catholic Church and the parish rectory, this small museum highlights the island's Amerindian heritage. Pottery vessels, shell and stone tools, burial urns, and skulls and bones are among the artifacts on display. Pick up the museum's booklet <i>The Indians of Aruba</i> (\$3) for a concise history of the island's original inhabitants.</p> <p><b>Numismatic Museum of Aruba</b> This small museum recently moved to a new building in order to accommodate its rather impressive collection of coin exhibits. Dedicated numismatists can spend the better part of a morning perusing the 40,000 specimens from more than 400 countries, but anyone with a passing interest in coins or history will appreciate this labor of love. The amazing collection was the work of three generations of a single Aruban family, who research and write the detailed historical notes for each item as well as give tours of the museum and create excellent changing exhibits.</p>
<b>Festivals</b>	<p>The holiday of <b>Carnival</b> is an important one in Aruba, as it is in many Caribbean and Latin American countries, and, like Mardi Gras, that goes on for weeks. Its celebration in Aruba started, around the 1950's, influenced by the inhabitants from the nearby islands (Venezuela, St Vincent, Trinidad, Barbados and Amquilla) who came to work for the Oil refinery. Over the years the Carnival Celebration has changed and now starts from the beginning of January till the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday with a large parade on the last Sunday of the festivities (Sunday before Ash Wednesday).</p> <p>In June there is the celebration of the "Dia di San Juan", with the song of "Dera Gai".</p>

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<p><b>ATTRACTIONS</b></p>	<p><b>Bus and Jeep Tours:</b> This is a great way to navigate the island in a single day without a map! You are now part of a "wagon train" that will often contain 10 or more four wheel drive jeeps. Organized tours often stop at the California Lighthouse, charming Alto Vista chapel, Seroe Crystal, the Bushiribana gold mill ruins, through the back roads to the Guadirikiri caves and finishing off on a private island that is located just a five minute ferry boat ride from the main land. A tasty barbeque lunch is often included on the island and there are also excellent snorkeling opportunities.</p> <p><b>Casibari Boulders:</b> Just north of Hooiberg, another rock formation rises up from the desert soil. The boulders' freshly strewn appearance has created some unique scenery for the area. Some of the boulders weigh several tons and feature peculiar forms. The Government of Aruba has created walking trails and steps through the boulders, allowing hikers to reach the top to obtain breathtaking views of the island.</p> <p><b>De Palm Island:</b> located just a 5 minute ferry ride from the mainland. It's the "hot spot" for snorkeling, snuba and scuba diving in Aruba. Abundant with spectacular coral formations and colorful blue Parrot Fish that are a thrill for young and old alike. Hammocks, food and beverage facilities, fun games, a playground for the small ones, snuba and snorkeling (including equipment) are all available.</p>
<p><b>Beaches</b></p>	<p>Aruba's got beaches, some of the best in the Caribbean . . . in the world, for that matter. The photos only look as if they've been doctored. What you see is what you get: miles of white, sugary sand; warm, gentle surf; turquoise and aqua seas; and plenty of space. Here's a handful:</p> <p><b>Arashi Beach and nearby Boca Catalina</b> are located just south of the lighthouse near the northwestern tip of Aruba and is known for terrific snorkeling.</p> <p><b>Palm Beach</b> is famous for calm waters and is located right in front of the major resorts.</p> <p><b>Eagle Beach</b> provides shaded picnic areas and plenty of parking right off the main road. Several hotels are nearby, just across the street from the beach.</p> <p><b>Rodgers Beach</b> features a slightly rough surf. It is located close to the Baby Beach, and offers shady areas and shower facilities.</p>

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	<p><b>Baby Beach</b>, known for its tranquil swimming cove, is located in Seroe Colorado at the southeastern end of the island, near the oil refinery.</p>
<b>Wildlife</b>	<p>The <b>Bubali Bird Sanctuary</b> attracts more than 80 ornithological species to its nutrient-rich ponds and wetlands. How many brown pelicans, black olivaceous cormorants, herons, and egrets can you spot? Farther afield, Arikok National Park features several diverse ecosystems in a compact area. Birds here include hummingbirds (common emerald and ruby-topaz), rufous-collared sparrows, tropical mockingbirds, ospreys, yellow orioles, American kestrels, black-faced grassquits, yellow warblers, Caribbean parakeets, long-tongued bats, common ground doves, troupials, crested caracaras, and Aruban burrowing owls. The Wyndham, Radisson, Hyatt, and Renaissance offer close encounters with a variety of showy tropical species like toucans, cockatoos, and macaws.</p>
<b>Parks</b>	<p><b>Arikok National Park</b> is a preserve of desert resources, including several indigenous species.</p> <p>The National Park takes up approximately 18 percent of this tiny island, including three primary geological formations, the Aruba lava formation, a quartz diorite formation, and a limestone formation that extends inward from the coast. These formations have directly influenced Aruba's human settlement, as well as its natural wonders.</p> <p>Aruba is home to several species which only live on the island, including two unique species of snake and two bird species. Rock outcroppings also create micro-climatic conditions to support these unique plant and animal species, as well as settlements. These are located within the Arikok National Park almost exclusively. Inside the park are some of the island's oldest Arawak paintings, and has since drawn attention from the government.</p> <p>The two snake species are the cascabel (<i>Crotalus durissus uni-color</i>), and the santanero (<i>Leptodeira bakeri</i>), called the (Aruban) Baker's cat-eyed snake. The shoco (<i>Athene cunicularia arubensis</i>), known as the Aruban burrowing owl, and the prikichi (<i>Aratinga pertinax arubensis</i>), the Aruban parakeet. Another indigenous species, the kododo blauw (<i>Cnemidophorus arubensis</i>) is the Aruban whiptail lizard.</p> <p>First designated as an important national area in the 1980s, Arikok National Park is home to popular hiking trails, covering all kinds of terrain from hills to gold mines, and even plantation ruins.</p>
<b>Natural Bridge</b>	<p>The 100-foot-long natural arch, which loomed 25 feet above sea level, was an awesome spectacle that existed for thousands of years, but disappeared in just one evening, early in September 2005. The same wave action, which carved out the limestone structure, was the cause of its unfortunate demise.</p> <p>Other natural archways along the island's windward coast have since</p>

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	<p>garnered greater attention. Although significantly smaller in size, a natural archway still exists at the Andicuri site, standing off to the side from the collapsed older and larger twin. On either side of Andicuri, other natural bridges are also worth a look, including natural archways at the sites of Wariruri as well as at Black Stone Beach. Other intriguing natural sculptures, created by pounding seas against rough-hewn rock, can be appreciated through a drive along the island's pristine northern coast.</p>
<b>Castles/Forts</b>	<p><b>Fort Zoutman and Willem III Tower</b>          During the 18th century, pirates menaced Oranjestad's harbor, raiding for horses and anything else of value. To defend the island, the Dutch erected Fort Zoutman in 1796. Aruba's oldest example of Dutch architecture, the bastion stands on what was once the shore (landfill construction in 1930 altered the coastline). In 1867, it gained Willem III Tower, named after the then-reigning Dutch monarch. Over the years, the site has served as an aloe garden, jail, courthouse, junk room, and tax office. The fort was restored in 1974, the tower in 1983.</p>

<b>OTHER ACTIVITIES</b>	
<b>Shopping</b>	<p>Because the island's part of the Netherlands, Dutch goods like Delft porcelain, chocolate, and cheese are especially good buys. Items from Indonesia, another former Dutch colony, are reasonably priced, too. Although Aruban souvenirs tend toward cheesy cunucu (farm) houses or divi divi trees made from resin, the same items, when painted by hand and crafted from bisque or pottery, can hold their own in any folk art collection. Skin- and hair-care products made from locally produced aloe are also popular and practical. If you're looking for big-ticket items, Aruba offers the usual array of Swiss watches; German and Japanese cameras; gold and diamond jewelry; Cuban cigars; premium liquor; English and German china; Spanish porcelain; French, Swedish, and Danish crystal; and French and American fragrances</p>
<b>Markets</b>	<p>Merchandise stands clutter <b>Oranjestad's waterfront</b>. Catering to cruise-ship passengers who pass by on their way to the more varied shopping in town, most sell garden-variety T-shirts and souvenirs. Fruit and vegetables brought daily by boat from Venezuela add color to the hubbub.</p>
<b>Nightlife</b>	<p>Many casinos have theaters with Las Vegas-style shows, most of them professional and entertaining. Let's Go Latin! is especially recommended. Book the hottest tickets in advance, at least a day or two, especially during the high season, or you may miss out. Ask your hotel's concierge or activities desk for help.</p> <p>For something less dazzling, the bar and club scene is surprisingly robust. You can start early with a beachside-bar happy hour, move on to dinner and cocktails, then progress to a little jazz and cigars, or maybe</p>

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	<p>board a booze cruise for some shenanigans at sea. Expect live entertainment or a DJ at most bars. If you're still not sated, head for one of the high-energy dance clubs, but don't show up before midnight or 1am - that's when the party really starts. To find out what's happening, check any of the free local magazines: Aruba Nights, Island Temptations, Aruba Experience, Menu, Aruba Events, Destination Aruba, and Aruba Food &amp; Wine.</p>
<p><b>Casinos</b></p>	<p>For many years after Aruba's first casino opened in 1959, gambling was the island's major attraction (next to the beaches, of course). Today, Aruba boasts 11 gambling venues, most of them casually elegant. Table games like baccarat, blackjack, poker, roulette, and craps usually start in the afternoon or early evening; slot machines can be played at 10am. Bingo, another diversion, starts in the afternoon at some places, in the evening at others. The action goes on as long as there's a crowd, usually until 2, 3, or 4am. The Crystal Casino in downtown Oranjestad is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.</p> <p><b>The Casino at the Radisson</b>, J. E. Irausquin Blvd. 81, Palm Beach is Aruba's newest casino. In the hotel's lower-level lobby, its domed ceiling twinkles with thousands of lights and looms over 1,300 sq. m of space. The 235 slots open at noon, while tables for blackjack, roulette, and craps, as well as the new poker room, featuring Caribbean stud, three-card, Texas hold em', seven-card stud, and Let It Ride, open at 4pm in the high season, at 5pm otherwise. The action lasts until 4am daily. The bar features big-screen TVs tuned to sporting events, and there's live music Wednesday through Saturday.</p>
<p><b>CUISINE</b></p>	<p>Few places as small as Aruba can boast such a variety of quality restaurants. In fact, with the exception of the French islands and Puerto Rico, Aruba leaves most of the Caribbean in the dust. This is due in large part to fierce competition. Most restaurateurs never stop thinking of new ways to bring you through their doors. Many add a personal touch, taking the time to chat and thank you for your visit. And most are loath to leave anyone behind, so there's usually something for vegetarians, kids, and couples celebrating special occasions (how about a romantic private room or a table on the beach?). Because some form of entertainment has become almost de rigueur, expect to be serenaded by live bands, jazz saxophonists, or singing waiters. Frequent culinary competitions spur chefs to experiment and hone their skills, constantly raising the quality bar. And over the past few years, ethnic spots have burgeoned: when you're not feasting on steak, seafood, or Aruban specialties, you can try something Argentinean, French, Caribbean, Indonesian, Cuban, Belgian, Mexican, Japanese, Chinese, or Indian.</p>
<p><b>Food</b></p>	<p>Here's some local dishes:</p>

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Bananas hasa -- Fried plantains served as a side dish.

Empanadas -- Similar to pastechis but smaller and made with cornmeal rather than flour.

Funchi -- Cornmeal polenta.

Giambo -- A thick gumbo made with fish filets, salted beef, okra, fresh basil (yerba di hole), and shrimp.

Keshi yena -- Edam or Gouda cheese rinds stuffed with beef, chicken, fish, or shrimp, embellished with raisins, grated cheese, bread crumbs, olives, capers, and spices; created by frugal Dutch colonists who had to stretch their provisions to last until the next ship arrived, this recipe ensured that nothing would be wasted.

Kesio -- Eggy caramel custard with caramel sauce.

Madame Janette chile -- Considerably hotter than the jalapeño and Aruba's favorite way to spice up almost anything; better known as the Scotch bonnet pepper, it's an integral ingredient in the Creole relish that accompanies any dish prepared "Arubiana."

Pan bati -- A thick, sweet, corn bread-like pancake cut in thin wedges and served as a side.

Pastechi -- Crescent-shaped, deep-fried turnovers filled with spicy meat, shrimp, fish, or cheese; popular for breakfast and as a snack.

Ponche crema -- Creamy eggnoglike drink laced with rum and flavored with nutmeg.

Pudin di coco -- Coconut pudding made with rum and served with lime sauce.

Salsa creollo -- Red sweet creole sauce made of tomatoes, onions, and peppers and served with fish.

Sopinan -- Soups made with salt pork or beef, whole fish, shellfish, greens, potatoes, onions, tomatoes, garlic, peppers, and spices.

The Bon Bini Festival is a folkloric, touristy show that features hoaky and asynchronous dances performed by a handful of local amateur

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	<p>junior talents. A few arts and crafts booths and one or two trays of homemade, local food surround the makeshift bar. The show takes place year-round every Tuesday, from 6:30 to 8:30pm at Fort Zoutman in Oranjestad</p>
<p><b>Restaurants</b></p>	<p><b>Papiamento</b> - the Ellis family has served award-winning Caribbean food in their 200-year-old cunucu (farm) home for almost two decades. Over the years, tables have spilled out from the thick-walled, antiques-filled interiors to the large fairy-lit palm garden. At twilight, birds serenade outdoor diners around the luminescent pool...</p> <p><b>Chez Mathilde</b> – opulence and first-rate French cuisine make Chez Mathilde a superb choice for special occasions. The restaurant's ambience is classically elegant, and although the service is formal, it's never intimidating.</p> <p><b>Gasparito</b> – Here's a favorite with people in love. Located in a restored cunucu (farm) home - the well out front is especially picturesque - Gasparito features intimate dining rooms inside and a breezy outdoor patio and bar. The tinkling of a fountain, modern rattan chairs, and lambent candlelight enhance the courtyard's warmth. Inside, vaulted ceilings embrace cozy rooms made more romantic by the sounds of classical piano.</p> <p>New restaurants include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Mr. Jazz</b>, a jazz club offering a Cuban flair, is now open as part of the Paseo Herencia mall complex. Offering live music, cocktails and dancing, the club is open six days a week excluding Sundays, and offers cuisine from their newly opened kitchen from 6 p.m. until closing.</li> <li>- <b>The Havana Beach Bar &amp; Restaurant</b> has reopened following an expansion, now offering guests the choice of casual dining or an intimate dinner in a quiet corner of the restaurant.</li> <li>- <b>Passions Beach Bar &amp; Restaurant</b>, located on Eagle Beach at the Amsterdam Manor Beach Resort, is now open Wednesday through Sunday from 6 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., offering fresh seafood and romantic barefoot dining under the stars. All entrees are grilled, and range from seafood to meat, with daily specials. Reservations are highly recommended.</li> </ul>

<p><b>MORE INFO</b></p>	
<p><b>Brochures</b></p>	<p>For information about visiting Aruba, contact the Aruba Tourism Authority tel. 800-TO-ARUBA</p>
<p><b>Website</b></p>	<p><a href="http://www.Aruba.com">www.Aruba.com</a></p>

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<b>HOTEL PRIZE PARTNER</b>	<p><b>Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort</b>          Nestled on Aruba's world famous Palm Beach, the 600-room Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort Aruba offers exceptional value and a wealth of services and activities for travelers of all ages and interests. From its full service casino, Intermezzo Day Spa, fitness center, and on-site shopping arcade, to its KidSpree Vacation Club, zero-entry Pool, game room and jungle gym, this resort truly offers something for everyone.</p> <p>For those who must stay in touch despite being away, Wi-Fi Internet service is accessible throughout much of the resort, as well as at the Internet Zone in the lobby.</p> <p>For seniors ages 60 and over, the resorts' GoldenSpree program offers exclusive privileges and amenities, including dance, cocktail and cooking classes, 10-20% discounts on dining and nearby attractions, fitness activities, arts and crafts and more.</p> <p>Three on-site restaurants offer a variety of culinary delights, while the expansive pool area hugs one of the world's best beaches.</p>
<b>Location</b>	Approximately 10 minutes from the Port of Aruba and shopping, restaurants and nightlife in downtown Oranjestad, and 15 minutes from the Aruba airport
<b>Facilities</b>	Pool and Whirlpools • Snorkelling • Pedal boat • Kayaking • Volleyball • Tennis • Basketball • Gym • Shuffleboard • Ping-pong • Library Wedding and free honeymoon packages are available
<b>Children</b>	KidSpree Vacation Club (ages 4 to 11) • Playground • Board games • Movies • Babysitting (subject to availability) Children under 13 stay and eat free
<b>Accommodation</b>	This recently renovated resort offers 600 well-appointed and comfortable rooms. Hotel Room: 1 king-size or 2 double bed • Bathroom • Hairdryer • TV • Radio/alarm clock • Internet (\$) • Coffee-maker • Mini-fridge • In-room safe • Iron • Balcony or terrace • Island or resort view • Maximum occupancy 3 adults (or 2 adults and 2 children)
<b>Activities</b>	Theme nights and nightly entertainment Selected non-motorized water sports Golf course nearby • (PADI) Scuba diving centre • Parasailing • Casino • Spa • Shopping arcade
<b>Restaurants</b>	Restaurants including 2 à la carte (Caribbean and Italian) • Pizzeria

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<p><b>Vacation Company Prize Partner:</b> <b>TRANSAT HOLIDAYS</b></p>	<p>Transat is now the largest tour operator in Canada, and is at the core of the vertical integration process developing and marketing vacation products as well as flights to destinations in the South and Europe. The company acts as a master craftsman in assembling different components of leisure travel: air transportation, passenger transfers from airport to hotel, accommodation, recreational and cultural activities, meals, cruises, and much more.</p> <p>As an industry leader, <b>Transat Holidays</b> offers departures from many Canadian cities including: St. John's, Halifax, Moncton, Fredericton, Montreal, Quebec City, Ottawa, Hamilton, Toronto, Brandon, Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, Victoria, Comox, Abbotsford, Prince George and Kelowna.</p> <p>They also own a second brand for vacationers: <b>Nolitours</b> cover many additional destinations and resorts to complement the Transat Holidays line-up.</p>
<p><b>Mission</b></p>	<p>Transat Holidays offers quality vacation packages to a wide variety of destinations. Each season, the company presents a wide selection of quality products, in order to meet the diversified needs of Canadian travellers. In keeping with their mission, their employees aim to exceed vacationers expectations in order to maintain their position as a market leader. They see their role, ultimately, to turn holiday dreams into reality: making the vacation experience one of the most memorable ever.</p>
<p><b>Products</b></p>	<p>Packages, Cruises, Hotels, Flights, Tours, Car Rentals &amp; Train Travel. With a choice of over 300 hotels located in more than 50 destinations and a complete line of itineraries offered in partnership with the most prestigious cruise lines, all products offered by Transat Holidays are subject to a rigorous standard review.</p>
<p><b>Awards</b></p>	<p>At the annual Addison Travel Show for industry professionals held at the Palais des Congrès in Montreal on February 19, 2008, Transat Holidays was the recipient of the "2007 wholesaler of the year" award, part of the <b>2007 Merit Awards</b> determined by Quebec Travel Agents.</p> <p><b>2005 Agent's Choice Awards:</b> Transat Holidays ranked number one for a third year in a row by Canada's travel agents according to the results of the Agents' Choice Awards 2005, a survey carried out in February 2005 by Canadian Travel Press and Travel Courier. Transat Holidays is without a doubt the country's leader in the tour operator category, maintaining a sizeable lead over its closest competitor. In fact, since the survey began, it is the only tour operator to consistently finish first in its category for three consecutive years.</p>
<p><b>Air Transat Kids Club</b></p>	<p>To ensure that your family vacations are fun and unforgettable from beginning to end, Air Transat has created Kids Club so that young</p>

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	<p>passengers can really enjoy themselves while onboard an Air Transat flight. It is designed to make air travel a fun experience for young travellers (and for their parents!). Even before the doors of the plane are closed following boarding, every child receives a small bag containing all sorts of surprises and games. The more fun they have, the easier the flight. Furthermore, children who are members of Air Transat Kids Club enjoy certain exclusive privileges.</p> <p>Members of the Air Transat Kids Club will enjoy several benefits that the whole family can share. You can check in at a special "Air Transat Kids Club Members" counter. Thanks to these special counters located in major Canadian airports where Air Transat flies, checking-in is quicker than before. At check-in, special tags will be placed on your baggage; as a result, your baggage gets priority treatment.</p>
<b>Website</b>	Check out their website at <a href="http://www.TransatHolidays.com">www.TransatHolidays.com</a> for latest deals
<b>Nolitours and Transat Holidays flights</b>	With added leg room in Economy class, advanced seat selection at your fingertips, onboard duty free shopping, the Air Transat Kids' Club to keep your children entertained, the best on-time performance and best aircraft reliability in Canada, you can depend on us to get you where you want to go as quickly and as comfortably as possible.
<b>Air Transat's Club Class</b>	Enjoy exclusive privileges such as wider, more comfortable leather seats, even more legroom, a selection of gourmet meals and fine wines, priority check-in, baggage service and boarding, and much more!
<b>Weddings, Honeymoons &amp; Renewal of Vows</b>	Imagine a romantic moment in paradise – overlooking the turquoise sea, in a hibiscus covered gazebo or directly on a white-sandy beach – surrounded by family and friends. Nolitours and Transat Holidays propose resorts that offer affordable wedding and renewal of vows packages that include the essential elements of the important day as well as free honeymoon packages that pamper newlyweds with gifts such as champagne bottles, room upgrade, breakfast in bed and much more.
<b>Family Getaways</b>	<p>Nolitours and Transat Holidays invite you to spend some quality time with your family under the warm sun. With plenty of resorts offering activities and services for all age groups, it's a great way for all generations in the family to enjoy their stay and reconnect. Kids' Clubs, babysitting services, Kids free promotions and single parent specials are among the elements that are available for you to take full advantage of this wonderful way to travel.</p> <p>For further details on Nolitours or Transat Holidays, consult your travel agent or visit <a href="http://www.transatholidays.com">www.transatholidays.com</a> .</p>

<b>TRANSAT TO ARUBA AND CURRENT DEALS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct flights from Toronto to Aruba</li> <li>• "Not Ready for Winter" sale is stilling running, travellers will save \$200 per person on any Package Holiday. This is a limited time offer, so book as soon as possible. Christmas departures are still available</li> </ul>
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staying at the All Inclusive Holiday Inn Sunspree Resort Aruba for \$1428 per person + tax departing December 21 or January 04 for \$1288 p/p

- Flights to Aruba for Summer 2009 now available to book with Transat Holidays. Packages are available until October 25, 2009
- Holiday Inn Sunspree Resort is exclusive to Transat Holidays.
- Other resorts available, check with your travel agent or visit

[www.transatholidays.com](http://www.transatholidays.com)

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