Aruba

Overview

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Aruba is a small island in the Caribbean Sea that is a constituent member of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, along with the Netherlands, Curacao and Sint Maarten. The island, which has a population of less than 110,000 inhabitants, is located approximately 18 mi (29 km) north of Venezuela; it forms, along with Bonaire and Curacao, the ABC islands, located to the farthest west of the Lesser Antilles. The overwhelming majority of the population identifies as Dutch, although other ethnicities are represented on the island. The official languages are Dutch and Papiamento; however, numerous languages, including English, Spanish, French and, to a lesser extent, Portuguese, are required to be taught in schools and widely spoken on the island.

Aruba’s status as a constituent member of the Kingdom of the Netherlands gives the local government control over the majority of the island’s internal affairs; however, foreign affairs and matters of national defense are under the responsibility of the Dutch government. Some security concerns are associated with travel to the island including petty crime – such as pick-pocketing, bag-snatching and the theft of unattended items – as well as risks associated with drug-trafficking activities, as Aruba is a transit point in the transatlantic drug trade. Tourism is the island’s main source of revenue and accounts for approximately 80 percent of its economy.

In addition to security risks, Aruba is susceptible to the Atlantic hurricane season, which generally lasts from June to November, although it is rarely threatened as it lies outside the Caribbean hurricane belt. Nevertheless, tropical storms can affect air and sea transport to and from the island.

Political conditions

Political

- Political risks are MINOR in Aruba as there are no major disputes or ongoing conflicts within government parties or with other nations.

Aruba is a self-governing, constituent member of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The parliamentary democracy has three branches – executive, legislative and judicial. The executive is represented by a governor, who serves as a representative of the Dutch monarch and the head of state, as well as a prime minister, who serves as the head of government. The governor is hand-chosen by the Dutch monarch to serve
six-year terms, while the prime minister is directly elected for four-year terms. Legislative power is exercised by both the government and the unicameral Staten parliament, whose members are directly elected by popular vote for four-year terms. The judiciary is independent of the executive and legislative, and is comprised of numerous courts. Although the country passed a referendum to secede from the Netherlands Antilles in 1986, such negotiations have been suspended since 1990 and are not expected to be reinitiated in the near future.

The island’s government has control over internal affairs, while the Dutch government deals with foreign affairs and high court proceedings. The current governor is Alfonso Boekhoudt, who was appointed in January 2017. The current prime minister is Evelyn Wever-Croes, who became the first female prime minister upon election in November 2017. Her socialist democratic agenda has concentrated on enhancing the vital tourism and trade sectors to improve the country’s economic situation. Accordingly, the government enacted in April 2018 various austerity measures that have prompted political opposition. Such measures – which include a temporary crisis levy, which would raise the overall tax by 6 percent – were enacted as a temporary solution to prevent the island from going bankrupt and to prevent a government shutdown. Nevertheless, economic austerity measures are largely seen a controversial by the local population and have been known to prompt protests. While there are no indicators of such activity in Aruba, protests against austerity measures cannot be ruled out in the long term.

Corruption

- Corruption is a LOW concern in Aruba as existing anti-money laundering and corruption legislation has proven effective in curbing such incidents.

Corruption is not of major concern in Aruba despite its proximity to South American mainland, which makes it susceptible to illegal activities such as drug-trafficking. Existing anti-money laundering and corruption legislation has proven effective in curbing such incidents. Furthermore, Aruba has entered into information-sharing agreements with several nations to target tax evasion.

Transparency International, a non-governmental organization that monitors global corruption, issued its annual Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2017; however, Aruba was not included in the latest release.

Security issues

General crime

- Crime is a LOW concern in Aruba; the majority of crime is non-violent and petty in nature, including the theft of unattended items at beaches and other public areas.

The risk of crime in Aruba is low, with the majority of crime being non-violent and petty in nature. Petty crime can include bag-snatching and pick-pocketing as well as the theft of unattended items at beaches and other public areas or from hotel rooms and lobbies. Vehicle theft, particularly of rental vehicles, is also regularly reported, typically occurring in unpopulated and/or unpatrolled areas or public spaces and beaches. The risk of these incidents is especially elevated in the early morning or late evening hours. Petty crime is more often reported in San Nicolas, a prominent tourist destination and Aruba’s second largest city. Areas near the Valero refinery should also be avoided, particularly after dark.

Violent crime such as assault or homicide is relatively rare in Aruba. When incidents do occur, they are often related to drug trafficking and usually only affect those involved in such illicit activities. Aruba, due to its location, is a transshipment point for drug trafficking activities from South America.

Terrorism
• Terrorism is a MINOR concern for the island since there are no known terrorist groups operating in the region.

Terrorism is of minor threat in Aruba as there are no known terrorist groups operating within the country. Nevertheless, it is important to note that indiscriminate attacks can occur anywhere and at any time, particularly in areas heavily visited by Western and other foreign travelers.

Civil unrest

• Demonstrations and strike actions are rare and pose a MINOR risk for Aruba.

Demonstrations and strike actions are rare in Aruba and normally do not pose a significant concern to business operations or cause major disruptions. As the government has implemented various austerity measures, the potential for low level protests against government cuts cannot be ruled out.

Kidnapping

• Kidnapping risks in Aruba are a MINOR threat as abductions are rare and infrequent.

While there have been incidents of kidnappings and individuals going missing while in Aruba, such cases are rare and not typically associated with organized criminal groups. The overall risk of kidnapping is minor and not of major concern.

Travel logistics

Entering the country

Entry Requirements

• A passport with a validity lasting through the visitors’ stay is required for entry to Aruba.
• Visitors of some nationalities will also need a visa. Travelers should consult their nearest Aruban diplomatic mission prior to departure as entry requirements can differ according to nationality and are subject to change.
• Visitors must all possess a return ticket, proof of accommodations and evidence of available funds to sustain travel throughout the trip.
• At this time, no restrictions for visitors with HIV/AIDS have been reported.

Political/Security Risks

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• Corruption is a LOW concern in Aruba as existing anti-money laundering and corruption legislation has proven effective in curbing such incidents.
• Crime is a LOW concern in Aruba; the majority of crime is non-violent and petty in nature, including the theft of unattended items at beaches and other public areas.
• Terrorism is a MINOR concern for the island since there are no known terrorist groups operating in the region.
• Demonstrations and strike actions are rare and pose a MINOR risk for Aruba.
• Kidnapping risks in Aruba are a MINOR threat as abductions are rare and infrequent.
**Infrastructure**

Infrastructure concerns are LOW in Aruba as the island has adequate and well-maintained systems throughout.

- In urban and resort areas, roads are generally adequate and have proper signage and lighting; however, outside of urban areas, road standards vary.
- Telecommunications infrastructure – including high-speed internet, satellite television, mobile cellular service and power networks – are well-maintained and efficient in most urban and resort areas.
- Cell phone use is significantly higher than land lines and is provided by several carriers.
- Public transportation, including buses and taxi services, are generally of adequate standard. While no rail service exists, a limited trolley service is available.
- The provision of electricity, water and other basic amenities is of good standard without major issues.

**Air travel**

Queen Beatrix International Airport (TNCA/AUA), commonly known as Aruba International Airport, is located in the capital Oranjestad and serves as the primary entry point into Aruba. All domestic and international flights are handled by the airport as there are no other major airports in Aruba. No major incidents have been reported at the airport and it meets international safety standards. Facilities include restaurants, bars, ATMs, Wi-Fi, duty-free shops and airport lounges. Car rental, public bus and taxi service are available transportation options for transit into the city.

**Getting around**

There are several transport options available in Aruba, including road, air, water and a limited trolley service. Pre-arranged transportation services through a vetted service provider is the most convenient and reliable form of transport for visitors to the country.

- **Road** – Road infrastructure is generally of good quality in urban areas. While such infrastructure in rural areas may be in a lesser state of repair, it is still generally adequate. Roadside assistance is also adequate for those in need of aid while traveling. It should be noted, however, that livestock and other animals often wander on roads causing a potential hazard for individuals, particularly in the interior areas of the island. Furthermore, lighting and signage may also be lacking outside major urban areas.
  - **Self-Driving** - Rental vehicles are available at the airport as well as other areas in Aruba. Individuals must be at least 21 years of age to rent a vehicle and drive legally in Aruba. In order to rent a vehicle, foreign nationals may be required to present an International Driving Permit (IDP). Traffic flows on the right.
  - **Bus** - Public buses, charter buses and mini-buses are available for travel throughout Aruba. Buses travel to most major areas of the island, but wait times can be unpredictable as buses stop when hailed or when travelers need to exit. Arubus, the government-owned bus company, is the most economical and widely used means of travel in Aruba. Buses generally do not operate past midnight from Monday to Friday and Sunday service schedules are limited. In addition to public bus services, there are a number of tour operators that offer transport services on the island. While are generally more expensive than buses these services offer a higher level of comfort, including air conditioning. Despite this availability, private hired car services are recommended over public transportation due to safety and security concerns such as overcrowding and risk of pick-pocketing.
  - **Taxi** - Taxis are widely available throughout the country. Fares are regulated by the Aruba Department of Public Traffic and taxi drivers are required to carry a rate card. If taxi use
becomes necessary, only registered taxis with “TX” on the license plates should be used. Taxis are generally not metered and, while fares are set, drivers are often reported as inflating rates; therefore, fares, including the type of currency being used, should be discussed prior to travel.

• **Water** – There are two ports in the capital Oranjestad: Barcadera and port of Oranjestad. Barcadera port is the country’s main cargo port while port of Oranjestad is the port of call for all cruise ships arriving in Aruba. There are two cruise terminals that provide a wide variety of services and shops, including information booths, ATMs, telecommunication services as well as souvenir and local food shops.

**Culture**

• The three “imported” languages widely spoken in Aruba are Dutch, English and Spanish. Aruba’s native language is Papiamento.
• Eye contact should be maintained during conversation, as failure to do so is considered rude.
• When entering a room or arriving, it is considered rude not to use greetings such as good morning, afternoon and evening. Similar expressions should be used upon departure.
• While punctuality is not strictly enforced, most people are prompt and tardiness more than 15 minutes normally requires a valid excuse.
• Personal contact/touching during conversations is not common, particularly in professional settings. A distance of about an arm’s length is customary during conversation.
• In business, it is inappropriate to wear jeans, shorts or non-business apparel despite the warm weather.
• The use of Mr. and Mrs. followed by the individual’s surname is imperative in professional environments.
• It is considered rude to point or summon someone using one finger. Using the entire hand to signal, point at or summon a person is the norm.
• Extending the middle finger at a person is considered a major insult in Aruba.
• Being drunk in public is not acceptable.
• Small wrapped gifts are considered polite when entering into a business relationship. The gift is not opened immediately.

**Important Dates 2018**

• 1 January – New Year’s Day
• 25 January – Betico Croes’ Birthday
• 18 March – National Anthem and Flag Day
• 30 March – Good Friday
• 2 April – Easter Monday
• 27 April – King’s Day
• 1 May – Labor Day
• 25 May – Ascension Day
• 25 December – Christmas Day
• 26 December – Boxing Day

**Health concerns**

Medical care is generally adequate in Aruba, although it can be limited in secondary cities, towns and rural areas outside major urban centers, particularly emergency medical care. Dr. Horacio E. Oduber Hospital in the capital Oranjestad is the only major hospital in Aruba, which has higher levels of care. It should be noted that the level of service may be dependent on the medical coverage the patient has or their ability to pay. Most medical practitioners and facilities expect immediate cash payment for services regardless of whether the patient has insurance or not. Pharmacies, known as boticas, are available in Aruba; however, a local prescription is required for anything that is not over the counter and some Western medications may not be available.
According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), pre-travel vaccinations are recommended for hepatitis A and typhoid for most travelers while some travelers may also need vaccines for hepatitis B and rabies. It is also important to ensure that routine vaccinations are up to date for diseases including influenza, chickenpox (or varicella), polio, measles-mumps-rubella (MMR), diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus. It is advised to secure adequate travel and medical insurance and to consult a medical practitioner prior to travel.

Cases of dengue and chikungunya, mosquito-borne viruses, have been reported in Aruba. There is no cure for these diseases; therefore, the best form of protection is to avoid being bitten by potentially virus carrying mosquitos. Adequate clothing and/or mosquito repellent should be worn at all times.

Water in Aruba is processed by one of the largest desalination plants in the world and is generally safe for consumption and use. Undercooked meat and fish should not be consumed; in particular, Barracuda should not be eaten as it contains biotoxins, even when cooked.

Natural hazards

Aruba is susceptible to the Atlantic hurricane season, which runs from June to November, although it is rarely threatened as it lies outside the Caribbean hurricane belt. Nevertheless, tropical storms can affect air and sea transport to and from the region. It should be noted that solar radiation is particularly strong on the island and adequate protection, clothing and or sunscreen should be worn at all times while outdoors during the daytime hours.

Money

- **Currency** - While Aruba’s official currency is the Aruban florin (AWG), the U.S. dollar (USD) is widely accepted and most products and services are priced in both currencies. The Aruban florin is divided into 100 cents. Notes are available in 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 denominations.
- **Foreign exchange** - Money can be exchanged at commercial banks, currency exchange offices and some hotels. Many currency exchange locations do not take traveler's checks; however, traveler's checks can be exchanged at major banks and some businesses.
- **ATMs / Credit Cards** - U.S. dollar as well as local currency ATMs are found throughout the island. Major credit cards (Visa, MasterCard, American Express) are accepted in most hotels, restaurants and stores.
- **Tipping** - Many restaurants incorporate a 10 – 15 percent tip for service into the bill; however, some do not, in which case a 15 – 20 percent is customary. Taxi drivers expect a tip of about 10 – 15 percent while the equivalent of about 2 USD is customary per bag for porters and similar amounts for housekeeping staff per day. For other services, 15 percent is about the norm.
- **Business hours** – Business hours are generally from 09:00 to 17:00, Monday to Friday. Banking hours are Monday to Friday from 08:00 to 16:00.

Contact Information

International dialing code: +297  
International dialing prefix: 00  
Police: 911  
Ambulance: 911  
Fire: 911

Cultural factors

General
A large number of immigrants from several countries have brought significant cultural changes and customs to the island. Arubans pride themselves on being among the most diverse and tolerant Caribbean nations. As such there is a multitude of customs and holidays that are celebrated and there is little in the form of discrimination against religious beliefs or sexual orientation. The yearly carnival, Betico Day, Dera Gay and Flag and Anthem Day are just a few of the holidays celebrated in Aruba, in addition to several religious celebrations from the Catholic liturgical calendar.

**Etiquette and norms**

- Eye contact should be maintained during conversation, as failure to do so is considered rude.
- When entering a room or arriving, it is considered rude not to use greetings such as good morning, afternoon and evening. Similar expressions should be used upon departure. While punctuality is not strictly enforced, most people are prompt and tardiness over 15 minutes normally requires a valid excuse.
- Personal contact/touching during conversations is not common, particularly in professional settings. A distance of about an arm’s length is customary during conversation.
- In business, it is inappropriate to wear jeans, shorts or non-business apparel despite the warm weather.
- The use of Mr. and Mrs. followed by the individual’s name is imperative in professional environments.

**Dos and don'ts**

- It is considered rude to point or summon someone using one finger. Using the entire hand to signal, point at or summon a person is the norm.
- Extending the middle finger at a person is considered a major insult in Aruba.
- Being drunk in public is not acceptable.
- Small wrapped gifts are considered polite when entering into a business relationship. The gift is not opened immediately.

**Contact details**

**Important contact details**

- International dialing code: +297
- International dialing prefix: 011

**Emergency numbers**

- Police: 911
- Ambulance: 911
- Fire: 911

**Embassies**

Australia does not maintain diplomatic representation in Aruba. Citizens are advised to contact the embassy in The Hague for consular services.

**Australian Embassy in The Hague**
Carnegielaan 4
2517 KH ‘S-Gravenhage
Netherlands
Tel: +31 70 310 8200
The United Kingdom does not maintain diplomatic representation in Aruba. Citizens are advised to contact the Consulate General in Amsterdam for consular services.

British Consulate General in Amsterdam
Koningslaan 44
1075 AE Amsterdam
Netherlands
Tel: +31 20 676 4343

French Consulate
Bucutiweg 19
Simeon Antonio
Oranjestad
Tel: +297 582 3104
Fax: +297 582 3104
Email: narepo@setarnet.aw

German Consulate in Oranjestad
Klipstraat 7
P.O. Box 1020
Oranjestad
Tel: +297 583 2929
Fax: +297 583 2165
Email: oranjestad@hk-diplo.be

Mexican Honorary Consulate
Topmanagement N.V.
Tanki Leendert 275, Noord
Oranjestad
Tel: +297 587 3437
Fax: +297 587 4655

The United States does not maintain diplomatic representation in Aruba. Citizens are advised to contact the consulate general in Curacao for consular services.

United States Consulate General in Curacao
J.B. Gorsiraweg 1,
Willemstad
Curacao
Telephone: +599 (9) 461 3066
Emergency After-Hours Telephone: +599 (9) 510 6870
Fax: +599 (9) 461 6489
ACSCuracao@state.gov

Health advisory

Health infrastructure
Medical care is generally adequate in Aruba, although standard of care, especially emergency medical care, can be limited in secondary cities, towns and rural areas outside major urban centers. Dr. Horacio E. Oduber Hospital in the capital Oranjestad is the only major hospital in Aruba. It should be noted that the level of service may be dependent on level of medical coverage the patient has or their ability to pay. Most medical practitioners and facilities expect immediate cash payment for services regardless of whether the patient has insurance or not. Pharmacies, known as boticas, are available in Aruba; however, a local prescription is required for anything that is not over the counter and Western medications may not be available.

Pre-travel recommendations

The following vaccinations are recommended or required if traveling to Aruba:

- Hepatitis A (recommended)
- Hepatitis B (recommended)
- Rabies (recommended)
- Typhoid (recommended)

It is also important to ensure that routine vaccinations are up to date for diseases including influenza, chickenpox (or varicella), polio, measles-mumps-rubella (MMR), diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus.

Travelers are advised to visit a doctor or clinic that specializes in travel-related medicine at least four to six weeks prior to their intended departure. This should allow the necessary time for any vaccinations prescribed by the doctor to take effect. If travel is to be undertaken in less than four weeks, a visit to a medical professional is still recommended.

Comprehensive medical insurance, including provision for medical repatriation or evacuation, is strongly recommended. Travelers are also advised to take an appropriate supply of any prescription medication; this should be accompanied by a written doctor's instruction, explaining the need for the medication and justifying the quantities required.

Significant diseases

The following are some of the more significant diseases that might affect travelers to the country:

- Zika virus has been identified in Aruba. The virus is transmitted by mosquitos infected with it. The virus can cause mild symptoms and some may not get sick. There is currently no vaccine or specific treatment and the best defense against the disease is preventing being bitten by mosquitos.

Recent outbreaks

- There have been no recent outbreaks in Aruba.

Food and water safety

Water in Aruba is processed by one of the largest desalination plants in the world and is generally safe for consumption and use. Pasteurized milk can normally be found in major cities, hotels and resorts. Unpasteurized milk should be boiled before consumption, or powdered or tinned milk should be used as an alternative. Fruit and vegetables should only be consumed if they have been peeled or cooked. Undercooked meat and fish should not be consumed. In particular, Barracuda should not be eaten as it contains poisonous biotoxins, even when cooked. Food from street vendors should be avoided as this carries a higher risk of causing infection.

Emergency response
The number for an ambulance in Aruba is 911.