



TAKE IN KALEIDOSCOPIC SIGHTS IN CURAÇAO'S WILLEMSTAD (ABOVE) AND PIETERMAAI (BOTTOM LEFT) DISTRICTS. RELAX AT PLAYA KNIP (LEFT) OR BAOASE LUXURY RESORT (CENTER), BEFORE VENTURING TO JAN KOK TO SEE THE RESIDENT FLAMINGOS.



PAUL RUBIO



QUICK TRIPS

The Many Colors of Curaçao

Meet the southern Caribbean's most ECLECTIC, OFFBEAT ISLAND

By Paul Rubio

The only thing more colorful than Curaçao's rainbow-coated streets? The island's bold personality. Aruba's lesser-known neighbor is a melting pot of cultures, styles, flavors, and bright hues, which together foster a Caribbean experience that's anything but ordinary.

Amble through Willemstad, the island's historic waterfront capital to discover a mash-up of Wynwood-style urban art alongside

seventeenth-century Dutch Colonial architecture drenched in vibrant pastels. Eye-catching murals by noted local artists such as Francis Sling and Garrick Marchena interpret Curaçao's living history, while surrounding structures reveal another side of the island's cultural past and present. Sights like the oldest surviving synagogue in the Americas (circa 1730) and a daily floating market (comprising Venezuelan vendors docked in wooden boats along the waterfront) are as exciting as they are unexpected.

Head north along the island's west coast and take your pick of petite cove beaches, each with a unique story to tell. According to oral history, Playa Knip was once disqualified

from a global competition of the world's most beautiful beaches because submitted images were thought to be that of a swimming pool. Truth is, the water's just that stunning. At Playa Piskado, snorkel in crystalline waters teeming with green and loggerhead sea turtles that have grown so accustomed to easy eats from fishermen, sightings are nearly guaranteed. Veer over to the salt pans flanking Jan Kok and watch the horizon glow in hot pink



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THE ISLAND ABOUNDS WITH MURALS BY ARTISTS SUCH AS FRANCIS SLING (ABOVE AND BOTTOM RIGHT). ACCOMMODATIONS AT BAOASE LUXURY RESORT INCLUDE PRIVATE POOL VILLAS (RIGHT) AND BEACHFRONT POOL SUITES (BELOW).

thanks to the resident Caribbean flamingo population.

Curaçao's restaurants are as varied as its sights. Number 10 (numbertencuracao.com) is an adorable, love-themed café serving breakfast and lunch in a half-dozen personality-driven rooms across a converted mansion. The shared plates at Mosa (mosa-restaurant.com) reflect Curaçao's mélange of cultures in items like grilled octopus with blood sausage and black olives, as well as fresh ceviche made with lychee, red peppers, pomegranate, and corn nuts. At Restaurant and Café Gouverneur de Rouville (de-gouverneur.com), feast on local delicacies such as *keshi yena* (a stuffed cheese casserole) and Cuban-influenced dishes like creamy plantain soup in a Colonial home peppered with European ornaments and Indonesian artifacts.

The island's premier resort, the 23-unit Baoase Luxury Resort (baoase.com), is a little slice of Bali in the southern Caribbean. Set in a quiet residential neighborhood, tucked behind stone walls and lush landscaping, this boutique beachfront property was inspired by the Dutch owners' many visits to Indonesia, resulting in grounds strewn with giant Budhas, traditional Balinese vases, Hindu statues and idols, and private alcoves. Villas are bejeweled in Indonesian woodwork and dark-wood furnishings illuminated by teal and violet soft goods. A romance factor is palpable in accommodations with outdoor stone bath tubs and private infinity pools, while a touch of kink

prevails thanks to ubiquitous mirrors above the beds. Ample space and prolific seating along Baoase's beachfront means the resort never feels crowded, elevating its zen vibe.

At such a calming property, it's easy to want to remain in the comfort of your hammock or chaise lounge. However, Curaçao isn't the type of island for unapologetic lingering. With so many colors, flavors, and cultures, it's a place to explore, learn, see, and do. And while it doesn't always deliver on the luxury factor, it does promise authenticity, diversity, and excitement for those willing to travel outside of their five-star comfort zone. (curacao.com) ◀◀



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