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Curacao Marriott Beach Resort

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Summary:

Curacao: Island of Wonder and Intrigue

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Article Body:

Curacao: Island of Wonder and Intrigue

Sunny, warm and charming, Curacao [pronounced 'koo-rah-sow'] is a beautiful resort destination that is relatively unknown to many people. With it's Dutch Colonial buildings and traditional Caribbean feel, it's a unique place that incorporates the best of 55 different nationalities to create a purely individual culture. In fact, four languages are spoken here: English, Spanish, Dutch and their own Papiamentu. It's cosmopolitan, but simple. And incredibly gorgeous. Where is Curacao? Located in the southern part of the Caribbean Sea, this exquisite island paradise is off the coast of Venezuela and is the most populated and largest of the three "ABC" islands (Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao). It is part of the Netherlands Antilles, a self-governing part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The capital is Willemstad. This busy port city sees a lot of traffic from the island's large oil refinery, which is second only to tourism for the local economy. As of result of the oil, Curacao is one of the more prosperous parts of the Caribbean region.

Also well known here are the island's coral reefs. The world's best divers and snorkelers have already discovered this wondrous vacation hideaway. Where are the hot spots? Most of them are on the south side of the island. Especially

interesting in Curacao is that the sea floor drops off steeply within a few hundred feet of the shore. As a result, you can get to the reef simply by swimming - no boat needed! In addition, the coastline of Curacao has lots of intriguing bays and inlets, many of which are good for mooring.

Surprisingly, Curacao has a semi-arid climate, similar to the Southwestern U.S., with plenty of cactus, evergreens and warm weather native plants. If you've been to the big island of Hawaii, it's more along these lines, as opposed to a lush, tropical island rainforest. Although always a possibility, Curacao typically misses many of the hurricanes each season, as it's positioned away from the hurricane belt. Curacao's highest point is Christoffelberg, rising 1,230 feet in the northwestern part of the island.

The Food

Ever tried Stoba? Well, you're in for a treat. A delicious stew made with lots of different ingredients, like papaya and goat, or beef. Stoba is a major dish of Curacao and part of the traditional fare, known as "Krioyo". Similar to Caribbean and Latin American cuisine, Curacao chefs use an eclectic blend of flavors and techniques that bring out interesting tastes. Other popular dishes include Jambo, a soup made from okra and seafood), a cactus soup called Kadushi, and Funchi which is a cornmeal mush similar to polenta. Of course, being an island community, there are always plenty of fresh fish and other seafood dishes.

Of course, there's also the one thing that many people have heard of before they even knew there was a place called Curacao. What is it? The Curacao liqueur. Developed here in the late 1800's, it started out as a local experiment with the rinds of a locally grown variety of oranges, which themselves weren't very edible. How is it made? Curacao liqueur is processed with the dried peels of the "Laraha" (Curacao native orange), which when dried by the sun, contains an etheric oil with a pleasing fragrance and even better taste.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

- Visit Historical Sites: Make sure you see the restored mansions of Scharloo and Pietermaai, dating from the 1700's. They are spectacular, and incredibly interesting. These neighborhoods have even been placed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, which commemorates unique value to the world's cultural and natural heritage.
- Curacao Seaquarium: Built on the oceanfront at Bapor Kibra in 1984, this exquisite complex is one of the most unique in the world because of its "open-

water-system," which allows seawater to be continuously pumped into the aquariums. Be sure to watch a feeding show and experience the "touch tank", which gives you the chance to touch live animals!

- **Dolphin Academy:** Get the opportunity to meet, swim, and snorkel up close with Curacao's cute and fascinating dolphins! Because you stand on a platform in the water about waist deep, the animals will swim right up to you.
- **Hato Caves:** The Hato Caves are a must-see when you come to Curacao. Formed below sea level millions of years ago, the Ice Age dropped the water level down and left these spectacular caves. Beautiful limestone formations, romantic pools, a waterfall and even a colony of fruit bats await!
- **Punda, Willemstad:** Location of many shops and tourist activities in Willemstad.
- **Landhuis Brievengeat, Curacao:** A museum by day and a partying live music club by night. This 18th-century plantation house is a great place to have some fun.
- **Amstel Brewery, Willemstad:** Take a tour of the factory and taste the only beer made with distilled seawater!
- **Handelskade, Willemstad:** The famous street with the brightly painted 18th century buildings. It's a must for any traveler to check out the many boutiques, art galleries and intriguing cafes.