

# Frequently Asked Questions: Attractions and History

## ***What is there to see in Bonaire?***

Attractions in the northern part of the island include Washington-Slagbaai National Park, which offers opportunities for hiking, snorkeling, scuba diving and birdwatching, Gotomeer, a favored flamingo spot, Rincon, the island's oldest village, and 500-year-old Arawak Indian inscriptions.

In the southern part of the island visitors will find the enormous salt flats which are home to the island's largest flamingo nesting ground, primitive huts, which were once home to slaves, and 30-foot obelisks which were built in 1838 to help mariners locate their anchorages. Further down the coast is the island's oldest lighthouse, Willemstoren, built in 1837. Landlocked Lac Bay offers excellent windsurfing, while Lac Cai offers the opportunity to explore mangroves on guided kayak excursions.

## ***What is there to do in Bonaire?***

One of the top scuba diving and snorkeling destinations in the world, Bonaire has been long recognized for its unique climate, topography and protected environments. It is these attributes that provide the ideal conditions for mountain biking, kayaking windsurfing, kiteboarding, hiking, bird watching, deep sea fishing and nature touring.

## ***I will be traveling with two kids, is Bonaire family-friendly?***

Bonaire's relaxed atmosphere and diversity of activities make it a perfect destination for families. In addition to environmental learning programs, guided group tours, and eco-adventure activities, many of the island's hotels and dive shops offer special programs just for children and teenagers.

## ***Where are Bonaire's two National Parks?***

Bonaire has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to preserving and protecting the environment both above and below the water, and, in 1969, become the first Netherlands Antilles island to establish a national park, 13,500-acre Washington-Slagbaai National Park. Just ten years later, in 1979, the Bonaire Marine Park was established. In 1999, it became Bonaire's second National Park. The Bonaire National Marine Park extends from the high water mark to a depth of 200 feet, encompasses all the waters around Bonaire and the uninhabited island of Klein Bonaire.

## ***What is Bonaire's history?***

Bonaire was discovered in 1499 by Amerigo Vespucci, but had been inhabited for centuries prior by Arawak Indians. In 1634, the Dutch claimed Bonaire and established a military stronghold on the island. In the early 1800s, the island suffered from the raids of French and British pirates, however in 1816 the Dutch regained control and established a government plantation system based on commercial crops. By the 1830s, Bonaire was a thriving center of salt production, an industry that was revitalized nearly 100 years later and still continues today. The mid-1900s brought not only the re-emergence of the salt industry, but the growth of international tourism and hotel development on the island.