

Frequently Asked Questions: Diving

What makes the diving and snorkeling in Bonaire so good?

With a far-sighted dedication to protecting their assets both under and above the water, the government of Bonaire was environmentally aware long before it became fashionable. In 1979, Bonaire designated all surrounding waters as a Marine Park, including a ban on spearfishing and coral collecting within the park, and later instituted permanent moorings to minimize anchor damage. As a result of the continued efforts of the Marine Park, divers and snorkelers find one of the world's top underwater environments with virtually untouched reefs, lush coral growth and abundant fish populations.

How many dive sites are there?

Eighty-nine (89) dive sites have been marked with the best reefs found around uninhabited Klein Bonaire and the leeward side of the island where the reefs have a narrow, sloping terrace extending seaward with a drop-off at 33 feet, followed by a slope varying from 30 feet to a vertical wall of 100 to 200 feet deep.

Do I need to take a boat to the dive sites?

While most of Bonaire's 89 marked dive sites are located along the island's shoreline, eliminating the need for a boat, those around Klein Bonaire do require a boat trip. The average boat trip is 15 minutes with the farthest reachable within an hour.

Can you really dive 24 hours a day, 365 days a year?

Yes. Because the sites are easily accessible from the shoreline and the water is so calm, visitors really can dive anytime, day or night. And with, on average, just 22 inches of annual rainfall, there is no freshwater run-off, so underwater visibility is typically 100 feet or more, and water temperatures average a warm 78-84 F (25.6 - 28.9 C).

What about the snorkeling?

All of the attributes that make Bonaire a haven for diving apply to snorkeling. Right from their hotels, snorkelers can enter the water and immediately view an array of coral and colorful fish (the reefs just off Klein Bonaire receive particular rave reviews from snorkelers). Plus dive shops offer snorkel equipment and instruction.

What exactly is the Marine Park Tag that I need to purchase?

All divers are required to purchase a Bonaire National Marine Park Tag/Nature Fee before diving. The fee is \$25.00 and the tag should be displayed on your BCD or regulator. The tags are valid for one year, and are not transferable. Additionally snorkelers and others using the waters around the island – kayakers, windsurfers, etc. – must pay a \$10.00 Nature Fee. They will receive a similar Marine Park tag.

Do I need to make special arrangements to dive at Town or Salt Piers?

Yes. As of July 1, 2004 with the implementation of new security precautions to comply with the new International Ship and Port Security (ISPS) Code, Bonaire's divemasters must now register in advance for permission to lead guided dives beneath either pier. Check with your dive shop for more details.