

Aruba



They call it the Aruba Effect: the feeling travelers experience when they head to the destination dubbed One Happy Island. Marketing speak aside, it's pretty much impossible *not* to feel a sense of calm wash over you as you take in the breathtaking ocean views, pristine white beaches, and blue skies showcased vibrantly across this 70-square-mile isle. Although a constituent country of the Netherlands, Aruba is rich in history and cultural influences, and with more than 90 nationalities residing here, diversity reigns supreme when it comes to dining and experiences.

WHERE TO STAY: It's basically two for the price of one when you stay at Divi Aruba or Tamarijn Aruba All Inclusives, since guests can take advantage of amenities at both hotels conveniently located next to each other on Druif Beach. That includes access to 10 dining spots, eight bars, four freshwater pools, a state-of-the-art fitness and watersports center, evening entertainment, and more.

BEST BEACHES: Whether you prefer privacy, meeting new people, or simply hanging with your multi-gen crew, there's a stretch of sand for you. Palm Beach is known for its buzzing nightlife nearby, while Boca Catalina is perfect for those seeking seclusion. The aptly named Baby Beach, meanwhile, is ideal for families with small kids, and Eagle

Beach is the country's widest and most well known.

TOP TABLES: You're in Aruba—it only makes sense to dine beach-front. You can't get much closer to the seafood on your plate than at Flying Fishbone, where tables are placed on the sand and in the ocean. Meanwhile, at Fusion Restaurant Wine & Piano Bar, you'll find a tapas-heavy menu with international flair, an extensive wine list, and live entertainment every night.

ONE-OF-A-KIND ADVENTURES: Submarines, UTVs, and caves... oh my! Embark on both land and sea excursions with local guide De Palm Tours, or channel your inner equestrian with a horseback tour at the Gold Mine Ranch.

WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN: Feeling lucky? Known affectionately as the "Las Vegas of the Caribbean," Aruba has 12 casinos located throughout the island. The popular Alhambra Casino houses 22 dining and retail outlets, a spa and salon, and, of course, plenty of gaming options.

HOW TO GET THERE: In just under five hours, you can head to your happy place via direct flights with Delta or JetBlue from Logan.

—STEFANIE SCHWALB

Holbox

MEXICO



This 26-mile island off the coast of Quintana Roo is what Tulum was 50 years ago, long before all the yoga bros with man buns and Instagram influencers in butt floss invaded. There isn't much to Holbox, which is precisely the point: no paved roads, no cars (golf carts only), and a town square where none of the buildings exceeds six stories. What you do get, extending in either direction, are pristine, talcum-powder beaches overlooking pale, placid blue water, with *palapas* serving food and drink in the sand and a range of hotels arrayed across the street.

HOT SPOTS: Ser Casasandra is an art hotel that boasts two of the island's finest restaurants: Ser Esencia, which was lauded by the *New York Times*, and the toes-in-the-sand Mojito's Beach Club, serving local and Cuban cuisine.

ON THE WATER: Deep-sea fishing and other sports await, but a hammock suspended above the water is an equally popular activity.

WHO YOU'LL RUN INTO: Nobody. Holbox has yet to catch on with the Kardashians of the world, and that's part of its charm.

RISKS: Mosquitos are a fact of life on the island, but some heavy-duty bug spray will help keep them at bay. On the upside, the protected mangroves help prevent the build-up of sargassum seaweed that's such a nuisance elsewhere on the Riviera Maya.

WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN: From July through this month, enjoy the otherworldly experience of nighttime snorkeling in a bioluminescent bay with tour operators such as Holbox Travel and Holbox Island Tours. Maybe even spot a flamingo or two around the island, if you're lucky.

HOW TO GET THERE: Fly to Cancun, Mexico, and either charter a puddle-jumper or hire a car or shuttle to take you the two hours to the coastal town of Chiquila, where a 20-minute ferry ride brings you to paradise.