



# Curacao

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# HISTORY





In many ways, Curaçao is the historical nexus of the Netherlands Antilles. The island, with its large and protected natural port, was charted before the 16th century and eventually became a significant center for mercantile commerce. It is the birthplace of Papiamentu (as it is spelled on Curaçao), the polyglot lingua franca of the ABC Islands which is spoken to an extent as far north as the Netherlands Antilles islands of Sint Eustatius, Saba, and Sint Maarten. And the island is, on another level, the birthplace of the famous liqueur, Curaçao, perhaps more well known in some circles than the island itself.



## In The Beginning

The history of Curaçao begins with Amerindian Arawaks. The Arawaks and their subgroups migrated from regions of South America some 6,000-years-ago, settling on various islands then discovered as they embarked on a centuries-long northward trek. The group that ended up in Curaçao was the Caiquetios, who gave the island its name.



## Luis Brion

Pedro Luis Brión (July 6, 1782, Curaçao – September 27, 1821, Curaçao) was a military officer who fought in the Venezuelan War of Independence. He rose to the rank of admiral in the navies of Venezuela and the old Republic of Colombia.

He was baptized as Phillipus Ludovicus Brion, son of the merchant Pierre Louis Brion and Marie Detrox, both from what is now Belgium. They arrived in Curaçao in 1777. In 1794 they sent their son to the Netherlands to complete his education. While he was there, he enlisted in the forces of the Batavian Republic to fight the British invasion of the northern Netherlands. He participated in the battles of Bergen (September 19, 1799) and Castricum (October 16, 1799). He was taken prisoner by the British but freed after a short time in the prisoner exchange under the Convention of Alkmaar.

## Luis Brion

On his return to Curaçao, he took an active part in the revolutionary movement on the island, in September 1800. Shortly after his arrival, the island was occupied by the British. He escaped from the British authorities, fleeing to the United States. There he studied naval science and business. He returned to his native island in 1803 (since recovered by the Batavian Republic), dedicating himself to business. From 1803 to 1806 he led various actions to prevent the British reoccupation of the island. Nevertheless, the British occupied the island again in 1807, and Brion went into exile on the Danish island of Saint Thomas. From here he continued to run his business and maritime interests.



# U.S. - Dutch Caribbean Friendship - 1776 to 1900

In 1776, Sint Eustatius, "The Golden Rock," was the first foreign entity to formally recognize U.S. sovereignty when a foreign official saluted the U.S. flagged ship with a 13-gun salute, a salute bestowed only upon sovereign flags. Less than two decades later, the first U.S. Consulate in Curaçao opened in 1793, laying the foundation of what would become a centuries-old friendship.

On July 28, 1798, B.H. Phillips, the first U.S. consul (a ceremonial position), wrote to the then-U.S. Department of War (the predecessor of the Department of Defense) about a French assault on shipping vessels in Curaçao, including American-owned ships. Trans-Atlantic commerce was flourishing, and Caribbean trade was significant to the newly independent United States.

American vice consuls were officially recognized by the Netherlands after the Consular Convention of 1855 went into effect. The following year, Alexander Waterman became the first vice-consul recognized by the Netherlands and approved by royal decree as an official representative of the United States of America to the islands.

# U.S. - Dutch Caribbean Friendship - 1776 to 1900

In the 19th century, the relationship between the United States and the islands was inextricably linked to the name of Leonard Burlington (L.B.) Smith. Mr. Smith (1839 – 1898) was a businessman from Bangor, Maine, who invested in various commercial projects on Curaçao. Smith and his family settled in Curaçao, inspired by its stable political climate, the friendly nature of its inhabitants, and the breezy and sunny weather. He recognized the benefits of the island's strategic geographical location and its natural harbor. Despite setbacks in his business dealings, the farmer's son persevered with his vision and became a successful businessman on the island before he was appointed U.S. consul in 1881. Mr. Smith served in this position until his death in 1898. Most famously, the L.B. Smith designed Curaçao's "Wonder of the World," also known as the "Swinging Old Lady" or Queen Emma Pontoon Bridge, which connects Punda and Otrobanda and officially opened on May 8, 1888. Less famous, but equally important, Smith was also the founder of the first water and electricity company on Curaçao, bringing these utilities to the island.



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MONEY





The official currency of Curaçao is the Netherlands Antilles guilder (also called the florin). The guilder is tied to the U.S. dollar at a rate of \$1 (USD) to NAf1.75. Coins of the Netherlands Antilles guilder are issued in denominations of NAf0.01, NAf0.05, NAf0.10, NAf0.25, NAf0.50, NAf1, and NAf2.50. Notes are issued in denominations of NAf5, NAf10, NAf25, NAf50, NAf100, and NAf250. The U.S. dollar is widely accepted on the island by all sorts of vendors, although service vendors may have trouble changing large bills given in either U.S. dollars or the Netherlands Antilles guilders. There are no restrictions for bringing cash into the country.



## Credit Cards

Visa and Eurocard/Mastercard are accepted everywhere credit cards are accepted, but American Express is not accepted everywhere. If you plan to use American Express, be sure to check if your card is accepted before racking up a hefty bill.

## Debit Cards

Debit and credit cards are accepted in cities, but elsewhere it's handy to have cash.

# Visitors From The USA

Exercise normal precautions in Curacao. Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive Alerts and make it easier to locate you in an emergency. Follow the Department of State on Facebook and Twitter. Review the Crime and Safety Report for Curacao. U.S. citizens who travel abroad should always have a contingency plan for emergency situations.

## ATMs

ATM's in Curaçao (recognizable by the "Bankomatiko" sign) accept major credit cards as well as debit cards. For the latter they use the Maestro, Cirrus, and Cashnet systems; if you plan to use your debit card, make sure your card has at least one of their symbols on it. You can withdraw either U.S. Dollars or Antillean Guilders from ATMs in Curaçao. They take all major European currencies, Australian and U.S. dollars and Japanese yen, and are useful in an emergency, although they charge a hefty commission.



## ATMs

ATMs are found in every town large enough to support a bank and in almost all the tourist areas. If you have MasterCard or Visa, there are plenty of places to withdraw money. Cirrus and Maestro users can make withdrawals in all major towns and tourist areas. Note that in small tourist villages, the only option may be a Euronet ATM (yellow and blue). These charge a €3.95 fee (compared to €2 to €3 at bank ATMs), and offer significantly worse exchange rates.

Be aware that many ATMs on the islands can lose their connection for a day or two at a time, making it impossible for anyone (locals included) to withdraw money. It's useful to have a backup source of funds. Be warned that many card companies can put an automatic block on your card after your first withdrawal abroad, as an anti-fraud mechanism. To avoid this happening, inform your bank of your travel plans.







HELPFUL INFO







## Climate

In Curaçao, the climate is tropical, hot all year round, with daytime temperatures ranging from around 28/29 degrees Celsius (82/84 °F) between December and February, to about 31 °C (88 °F) between May and October. The period from May to October is the most sultry, but the trade winds constantly blow, tempering the heat. Curaçao is an island, and together with the neighboring islands of Bonaire and Aruba, it's part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The climate is sunny and dry, in fact, about 550-millimeters (21.6-inches) of rainfall per-year.

The only relatively rainy period is from October to December, when, however, precipitation does not go beyond 80/100 mm (3.1/4 in) per-month. From November to January or mid-February, the northeast trade winds bring showers quite frequently, although usually not abundant.

## Climate

Curaçao is an almost entirely flat island: its highest point is located at 375-meters (1,200-feet) above sea level.

The amount of sunshine is good all year round. The sea in Curaçao is warm enough to swim in throughout the year: the water temperature reaches a low of 26 °C (79 °F) in February and March and a high of 29 °C (84 °F) in September and October. Here are the average sea temperatures.



## Electricity

Curaçao standard current outlets provide 110-130 Volt at 50-Hz. The standard plug type is a two-pin 'Type A' power plug as used in the U.S. Some devices are designed to operate at both 110-V and 220-V, but please check in advance. It is wise to bring a plug adaptor for other plug types, but they can also be bought on the island. Some hotels and apartments do have 220-V outlets. These outlets are quickly identified, as they require the standard European plug.





N° 1871



# Technology & Communication

The island has state-of-the-art information and communication technology connectivity with the rest of the world, including a Tier IV datacenter. With several direct satellite and submarine optic fiber cables, Curaçao has one of the best Internet speeds and reliability in the Western Hemisphere.

Curaçao's cell phone network is on par with those in the U.S. and Europe, and most international providers have roaming contracts with local providers. If you choose to use roaming in Curaçao, be sure to check with your provider if roaming is available with your cellular package.



# Technology & Communication

If you stay in Curaçao for longer than a few days or a week, it might be worth buying a local prepaid sim with a data bundle. These generally only work with sim-unlocked phones.

Especially in downtown Willemstad, you'll find many open wifi networks.

Cell phone reception is good almost everywhere on the island, but some remote locations may have spottier service than in downtown Willemstad.

Nearly 100% of all accommodation options will have some form of WiFi at the premises for you to use. Especially in downtown Willemstad, where you'll find many open WiFi networks. Curaçao's country telephone code is +5999. This is usually followed by a phone number with 7 digits. If the phone number starts with a 5 or 6, it will be a cell phone number; all other numbers are landlines.



# Infrastructure & Transport

The best way to get around Curaçao is by car. Some of Curaçao's hotels offer area shuttles, and the public buses cover the majority of the island, but service is infrequent, especially outside of Willemstad. If you want to explore the island on your own time, then you'll want your own set of wheels. Taxis are available from Curaçao's primary airport, Curaçao International Airport (CUR), about 8-miles northwest of Willemstad.

However, cabs can be expensive, especially if you are planning to use them frequently.

Telecommunications is a critical element in the infrastructure of Curaçao. The privatization of this industry is a governmental priority, especially when one considers the fact that this industry is one of the fastest-growing fields in the world. The privatization process allows the services being offered to improve in both price structures as well as in quality.



# Infrastructure & Transport

The government has already taken several steps towards privatization, including the elimination of the governmental telecommunications services (Landsradiodienst) and replacing it with a corporate entity. This new organization is the first in many steps that will involve the gradual restructuring of the entire telecommunications market on Curaçao. Other measures already being introduced are deregulation and the introduction of competition. The process used to achieve these goals is based upon those similar to the United States and Great Britain.

The telecommunications infrastructure is equipped with telex, fax services, entrance to merconon, viditel and direct satellite connections.

Communication with the rest of the world is of excellent quality without disturbances.

Additional services are mobile communication, audio text, voice mail, and ISDN



← Restaurant ←

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# In Case Of An Emergency

The general emergency phone number in Curaçao is 911.

## Language

Dutch, Papiamentu, and English are the official languages of Curaçao







## LGBT Travel

Curaçao is a great vacation destination by all standards. Beaches, accommodations, activities, culturally speaking, and much more. What sets Curaçao apart and makes it unique in the Caribbean is the "Biba i laga Biba!" mentality of our people. The "Live and let Live!" mentality is what makes the island such a LGBT welcoming travel destination. The people of Curaçao are friendly and tolerant, and the island does not have a history of gay violence towards LGBT locals or visitors.

It is true that the island still needs to make some progress in equality for the gay community and that Curaçao has its share of close-minded people. In general, however, you will by no means experience problems going to dinner in one of the many restaurants or enjoying a nice beach day or just walking around in our capital, Willemstad.



## LGBT Travel

Curaçao has been embracing the LGBT Travel Community for a long time already. In 2004, the Curaçao Tourism Board launched [GayCuracao.com](http://GayCuracao.com). In addition, the CTB has created multiple LGBT marketing campaigns and continues in an effort to become one of the most welcoming destinations in the Caribbean.

A testament to the fact that Curacao is not just saying that we are LGBT friendly is the fact Curaçao has the highest membership rate in the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA). In 2015 the IGLTA honored the Curaçao Tourism Board as Destination Pioneer for putting this island on the map for LGBT travel. Moreover, the Chairman of the Caribbean Travel Association (CTO) acknowledged Curaçao as a leading destination for LGBT travelers in the Caribbean in 2015. This has everything to do with the “Biba i laga Biba!” mentality of our people. Come and experience it for yourself. Curaçao is waiting for your arrival.



## Religion

The majority of the population is Roman Catholic, with Protestant minorities, both evangelical and other low-church denominations. There is also a Baha'i temple and a synagogue.





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## Getting There

**By Rental Car** -- Driving in Curaçao is easy. Valid U.S., British, Australian, and Canadian licenses are honored. The minimum age to rent for many companies is 25. Driving is on the right side, and road signs use international symbols. Avis (tel. 800/331-1084; [www.avis.com](http://www.avis.com)), Budget (tel. 800/472-3325 in the U.S., or 599/9-839-1300; [www.budget.com](http://www.budget.com)), and Hertz (tel. 800/654-3001 in the U.S., or 599/9-868-1182; [www.hertz.com](http://www.hertz.com)) have offices at the airport. Compact cars with manual transmissions start at about \$40-per-day plus taxes and insurance.



## Getting There

**By Taxi** -- Most taxis are metered, but drivers in unmetered cabs carry an official rate sheet. Fares rise 20% after 8 pm, and some go up a few dollars more after 11 pm and on holidays. Drivers appreciate a 10% tip. The \$20 trip from the airport to Willemstad can be split among four passengers. Each piece of oversize luggage is an extra \$1. In town, taxis are easiest to get on the Otrobanda side of the floating bridge. You can also call tel. 599/9-869-0752. Taxi island tours are \$50-per-hour for up to four passengers. Taber Tours (tel. 599/9-868-7012 or 567-6770; [www.tabertours.com](http://www.tabertours.com)) specializes in hotel transfers and island tours for big groups.



## Getting There

**By Bus** -- Most of the large hotels operate a free shuttle to Willemstad's shopping districts, but public transportation is limited. Large yellow buses (also called "convoys") cover the most traveled urban routes, and bus terminals are outside the post office on the Waaigat inlet in Punda and next to the underpass in Otrobanda. Fares in town and east of Willemstad are \$1 and maybe more to the western end of the island. Buses run most city routes hourly, every 2-hours for points west, and less frequently on Sunday. Shaded bus benches dot the main roads.



## Driving

Driving in Curaçao is done on the right-hand side of the road, so travelers from North America and mainland Europe will have no problem adjusting to the movement of traffic. Seat belts are required in Curaçao, and children under 12 years of age must travel in the back seat of the vehicle.



THE EXPERIENCE







# Culture

The ethnic diversity that is the signature of Curacao culture can be seen in many facets of island life. Curacao is a country diverse in heritage and ethnicity. In fact, 42 different ethnic groups call this Dutch Antilles island home. The island's residents, most of which are of European or African descent, represent various cultural heritages and have a strong sense of cultural awareness.

## European Influences

The influence of Dutch culture on Curacao is evident throughout the island, from the centuries-old colonial buildings to the remnants of plantation life seen in the landhuizen houses. As the official languages of Curacao, Dutch, Papiamentu, and English are taught in schools and spoken in business and government. As soon as the Dutch arrived on Curacao and established themselves as rulers of the country, they had an effect on all levels of society. About 4% of the Dutch population on Curacao was born in Holland. Thousands of Dutch people have made Curacao their homeland. Many Curacaoan students leave the island to study in Holland; some come back with a degree, while others never return to the island.



# Culture

## Jewish Culture

The Jews are another ethnic group that settled on Curacao and had a significant impact on the island's culture. The first Jewish settlers came to Curacao around 1659 from places such as Amsterdam, Europe, and South America, trying to escape the remnants of the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions. The Dutch Protestant environment on Curacao didn't limit the freedom of the Jews, and there were no laws against their employment or residences. As a result, they became highly successful in the trade and shipping industry. From the time they first arrived on the island seeking relief from persecution, the Jews had a significant impact on Curacao's politics, culture, and economy. By the early 18th century, the Jewish population on the island reached about 2,000 people. In 1732, the Jews established the Mikve Israel Emanuel Synagogue in Willemstad. This synagogue still stands today and is one of the oldest temples still in use in the Western Hemisphere.



# Culture

## African Heritage

The heart of Curacao's heritage beats with the rhythm of African culture, and the majority of the island's population consists of people of African descent. These islanders have overcome a history of slavery and oppression to establish an intriguing culture that resonates throughout the island's language, music, art, and beyond. Although Curacao's official language is Dutch, most of the islanders speak a dialect called Papiamentu. Curacaoans even spell the name of their island Korsou, which is a Papiamentu word. This Creole language originates from a mixture of Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, and several African languages. The islanders speak Papiamentu, which has been used on the island for about 300-years, just as well as they speak Dutch. This multifaceted language came from an oral tradition and was meant to be expressed more so than written. Because of this, you may find different spellings of the same word used throughout the island.



# Culture

## African Heritage

One of the most enduring manifestations of African culture on Curacao is music. Tambu, an ancient form of music and dance, can be attributed to the island's African heritage. The Africans brought to Curacao as slaves passed along the traditional rhythms from generation to generation. The beat of a drum is the foundation of the tambu. Initially, slaves used farm equipment as makeshift instruments.

Later, they used small hollow cargo containers covered with goatskin. Many fascinating musical instruments are used to carry on the African musical traditions on Curacao. These include the bastel, a horn made from a cow's horn; the chapi, made from a hoe and metal rod; and the carco, a drilled conch shell that is used as a horn. From Europe to Africa, the diverse heritage of Curacao has blended to create a beautiful tropical culture.



# Bucket List

Take in culture-filled capital

Stop by a historic synagogue

Explore natural landscapes

Sample rich cuisines

Eat from a food truck

View African artifacts

Swim the enchanting coastline

Attend Thursday Punda Vibes

Jumping off the 40-foot clifftop at Playa Forti

Check out street art

Buy Curaçaoan crafts

Visit the blue lizards

Knockback some green rum







# Family Travel Highlights

Hit the Beach at Seaquarium Beach, Playa Lagun, Blauwbaai, or at Daaibooi

Ride a Choo-Choo

Feed an Ostrich

Meet Some Dolphins

Tour Ancient Caves

Learn All About Fish

Explore Under the Sea in a Submarine



# Tourism Authority

The Curacao Tourist Board was established in 1915 to develop tourism & travel to Curaçao. Curaçao's tourism industry has been growing ever since, increasingly becoming a more popular tourist destination in the Caribbean. As it has grown, it has become more efficient in providing a range of information to a diverse group of visitors. The main office of the Curaçao Tourist Board is located at Pietermaai 19, just outside of Willemstad in Curaçao.





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Bitterballen

Oliebollen

Funchi or Tutu

Stroopwafels

Stoba

Poffertjes

Seafood

Arepas

Liqueur from Curaçao







# Drinks To Try

Amstel Bright & Brion beer

Curacao Liqueur

Awa di Koko

Awa di Lamunchi

Fria

Lovers







# Photography Hot Spots

Kokomo Beach

Playa Porto Mari

Grote Knip beach on Curacao

Limoncello view- a perfect break

Curacao - The wild north shore

Curacao Sea Aquarium view

Old Lighthouse

Curacao Island view



# Souvenirs To Buy

Gift Packs of Orange Liqueur

Chichi Doll

Tropical-Inspired handcrafts

Aloe Vera Products

Dutch Cheese

Colorful Paintings by Local Artists

Dutch Delft Blue Souvenir

Jewelry



