

Cruising the Caribbean

The Best Things to See & Do



© backpackandsnorkel.com

Cruising the Caribbean

Content

1.	Introduction	Page 3
2.	Disclaimer & Copyright	Page 5
3.	Anguilla	Page 6
4.	Antigua	Page 11
5.	Aruba	Page 16
6.	Barbados	Page 24
7.	Cartagena (Colombia)	Page 32
8.	Cayman Islands	Page 44
9.	Curacao	Page 51
10.	Dominica	Page 59
11.	La Romana (Dominican Republic)	Page 70
12.	Grand Turk (Turks and Caicos)	Page 79
13.	Guadeloupe	Page 96
14.	Half Moon Cay (Bahamas)	Page 102
15.	Martinique	Page 107
16.	Nassau (Bahamas)	Page 109
17.	Puerto Rico	Page 135
18.	Roatan (Honduras)	Page 165
19.	Sint Maarten/St. Martin	Page 172
20.	St. Croix (USVI)	Page 188
21.	St. Lucia	Page 195
22.	St. Thomas (USVI)	Page 208
23.	Tortola (BVI)	Page 222
24.	Closing Remarks	Page 224

Cruising the Caribbean

1. Introduction

The Caribbean are a prime vacation spot on our planet. Tourists are drawn to some of the best white sand beaches, water in any blue and turquoise shade imaginable, excellent snorkeling and diving, exotic foods and friendly locals.



This “**Cruising the Caribbean**” guide is primarily written for cruise ship passengers and short term vacationers who like to explore the highlights of the islands.

I will tell you what those attractions are, provide a google maps link to help you get there, my experiences and often links to the attractions.

To help you find out what best fits you, I have added lots of photos and links to additional reviews. To provide you with real reviews, I am only providing you with guides of the islands that I have visited.

Cruising the Caribbean

This is not an in-depth island guide. You can buy those from the big travel guide companies.

My goal is to help you Make Memorable Moments on relaxing Caribbean cruises by helping you build the perfect itinerary for you.



Please also check out [Rudy's Cruise Guide for Beginners & Others](#) to find out how to find and book the perfect cruise for you.

Cruising the Caribbean

2.1 Disclaimer

In this guide I am doing my best to give you the most accurate information. Over time, however, prices, times, and even attractions are subject to change. Therefore, I and backpackandsnorkel.com cannot be held responsible for the experiences of users while traveling. I strongly suggest that you write or call the attractions you plan to visit for confirmation when you make your travel plans.

Also, please stay alert, be aware of your surroundings and keep an eye on your belongings. Pickpockets and other criminals can easily ruin even the best planned vacation.

2.2 Copyright

This website and its content is copyright of "Rudy at Backpack & Snorkel". All rights reserved. Any redistribution or reproduction of part or all of the contents in any form is prohibited. The content on this site (including photos) may not be sold, reprinted, or used for commercial purposes without the written consent of "Rudy at Backpack & Snorkel". You may not, except with our express written permission, distribute or commercially exploit the content. Nor may you transmit it or store it in any other website or other form of electronic retrieval system.

Cruising Anguilla

3. [Anguilla](#)

3.1 General Information

Anguilla is believed to have been named by Christopher Columbus for its shape, with Anguilla being Italian and meaning “eel” or Latin meaning “snake”.

Anguilla was under British rule for much of its European settlement. In 1825, the island was placed under administrative control of Saint Kitts. When Great Britain granted Saint Kitts and Nevis full autonomy in 1967, Anguilla was part of the new Saint Christopher-Nevis-Anguilla. Many Anguillians did not like this and two revolutions in 1967 and 1969 led to a brief independence from St. Kitts and the formation of the independent "Republic of Anguilla" so that Anguilla could return back under British authority. In 1980, Anguilla finally seceded from Saint Kitts and Nevis and became a separate British Crown colony and is now a British overseas territory.

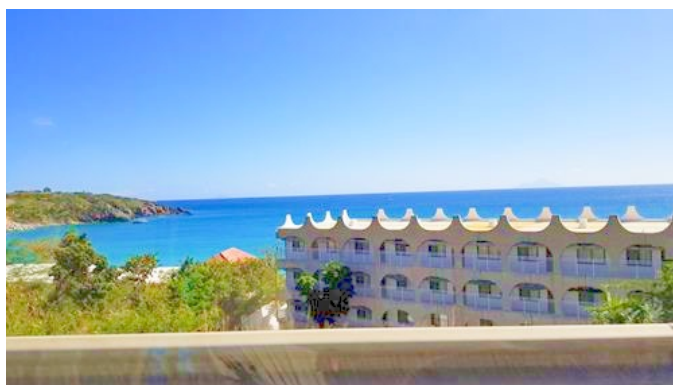
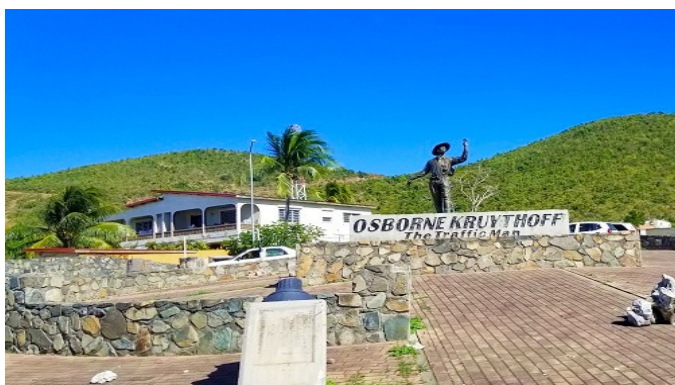
Anguilla has no cruise port. Getting there from the cruise port in St. Maarten ([map](#)) involves taking a taxi to the port of Marigot ([map](#)) on the French side of St. Martin. The ferry lands at Blowing Point in Anguilla ([map](#)) and there are taxis to bring you wherever you want on Anguilla. This trip can be done by Cruise passengers, but it requires strict time awareness to make sure that you don't miss the ferry and get back to the cruise ship on time.

Make sure you have a valid passport and enough cash with you as the departure taxes are paid in cash only and there are no ATMs in the port in Anguilla.

Cruising Anguilla

3.2 Drive to the [Marigot Ferry Terminal](#)

To do that, we took a taxi from the cruise port to the ferry pier in Marigot on the French side for US\$20. Even though there was quite a bit of traffic and we were stuck behind an extremely slow driver for quite a while, we made the trip in less than 40min.



Cruising Aruba

5. [Aruba](#)

5.1 General Information

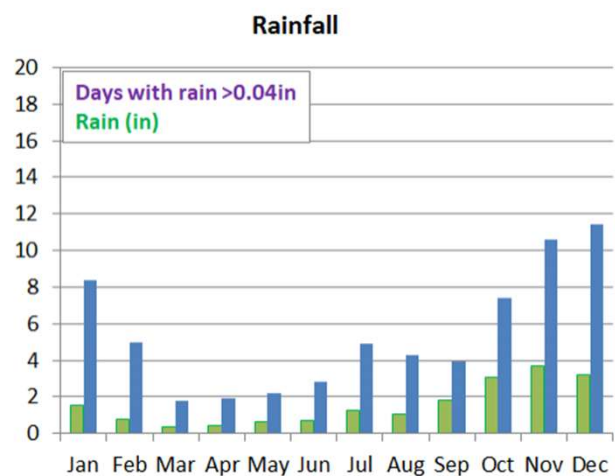
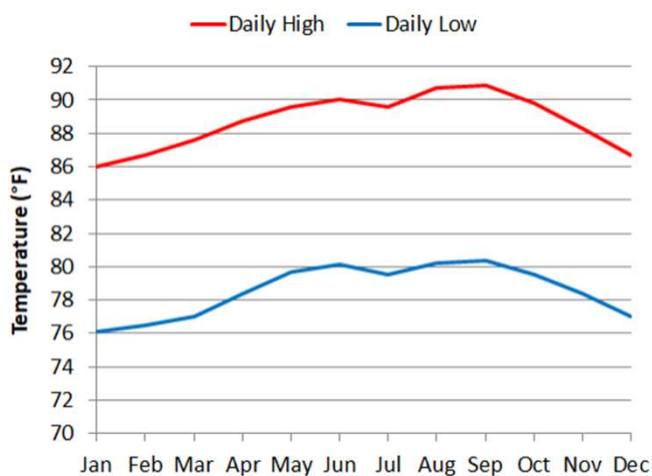
Aruba, together with Bonaire and Curacao is part of the ABC Islands. The ABC islands and Sint Maarten, Sint Eustatius and Saba, are part of the Dutch Caribbean or formerly the Dutch West Indies and thus a constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Arubans are Dutch citizens, but the island is self-governed.

Aruba lies 18 miles (29km) north of Venezuela and the population is approx. 120,000.

The name Aruba may come from one of these three origins:

- Spanish: Oro (gold) hubo (there was, or had)
- Carib: Oruba (well placed)
- Carib: Ora (shell) and Oubao (island)

Unlike most of the Caribbean, Aruba has a dry arid climate and it lies outside the hurricane impact zone. Therefore, Aruba sees tourists year-round seeking reliable warm and sunny weather.



Cruising Barbados

6.4 Brighton Beach ([map](#), [reviews](#))

On our last trip, we decided to check out Brighton Beach which is a short taxi ride ([rates](#)) from the cruise port. Brighton Beach is part of a long stretch of sand that goes from Brandon Beach in the South all the way to Batts Rock Beach in the North. The sand is almost white and the water turquoise. The beautiful view is spoiled a little by the industrial buildings and factories that you will see to the North and South. When we went there, we were only two of a handful of people on the beach. So, we spent a very relaxing day on the beach with lots of sunbathing and snorkeling.



Cruising Curacao

9.2 Walking Tour Of Willemstad

Close to the cruise port ([map](#)) in Willemstad's Otrobanda neighborhood is the **Rif Fort** ([map](#)), which is a 19th-century fortress that was built at the entrance of the St. Anna Bay to protect Curacao from pirates and other enemies. It has 5ft (1.5m) thick coral walls and used to have 56 cannons. Today, Rif Fort is a trendy tourist attraction with restaurants, bars and live entertainment.



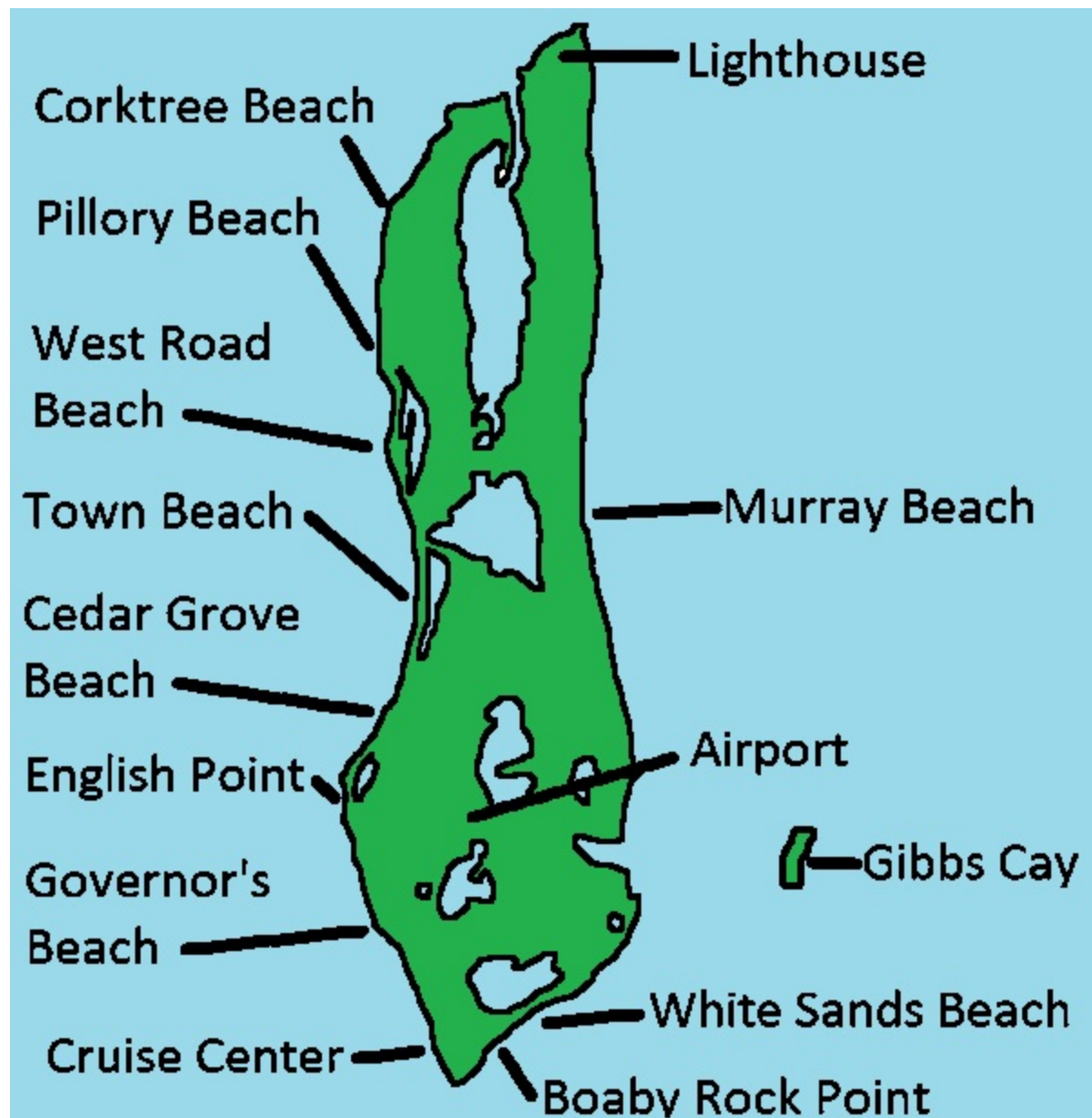
Walk towards the **floating Queen Emma Bridge** ([map](#)) and enjoy the view of the pastel colored houses of the Punda waterfront on the opposite side of the river.



Cruising Grand Turk

12.2 Best Things To See & Do

There is no doubt about it, Grand Turk's main attractions are its white sand beaches. Nevertheless, if you have some time to spare, I like to encourage you to take a taxi or an excursion to the lighthouse at the northernmost point of Grand Turk and to spend a little time in Cockburn's historic old town. Taxi rates can be found [here](#).



Cruising Grand Turk

Other Attractions

Lighthouse ([map](#), [reviews](#))

One of the major tourist sites that is not a beach is the lighthouse at the very Northern tip of Grand Turk. It was built in 1852 and is no longer operational, but it is the only lighthouse in the Turks and Caicos Islands and worth a visit.

The best way to get there is either on a tour, by taxi or rental car/scooter/bike. I think the admission of \$3 per person is well worth it, even though you cannot get into the lighthouse. On the grounds there is a small snack & gift shop, a nice vista point on the white beach and turquoise waters below and a scenic coastal path that leads down to the beach. You can see the occasional Turk and Caicos donkey elsewhere on Grand Turk, but for whatever reason we saw about 10 at the lighthouse.



Cruising Guadeloupe

Walking Tour of Pointe-A-Pitre

From the cruise terminal ([map](#)), it is a short walk to **Place de la Victoire** ([map](#)). The plaza itself is a quiet place with quite a few stands selling souvenirs to the South and, about 200ft away, a farmer's market where you can buy fruits and vegetables.



West of the plaza is the bright yellow painted **Cathedral of St Pierre and St Paul** ([map](#), [reviews](#)), that is sometimes called the Iron Cathedral because of its iron work on the inside. The inside of the cathedral is plain but nicely decorated.



Cruising Guadeloupe



Cruising Martinique

15.4 Ferry to Anse-a-L'Ane ([map](#))

Just a few hundred feet to the East of the cruise terminal ([map](#)) is the ferry terminal ([map](#)). We took a ferry that first stopped at Anse Mitan ([map](#)) and then continued on to Anse-a-L'Ane ([map](#)). The ferry is a quick, reliable and affordable way to get to Trois-Ilets. It stops at a dock right at the beach ([map](#)). The ferry schedule is [here](#).

The sandy beach itself is bordered by forested hills to the right and left, it has a couple of buildings on it and a nice view of Fort-de-France across the bay. Swimming and snorkeling are good.



Cruising Nassau (Bahamas)

Junkanoo Beach ([map](#))

Junkanoo Beach can be easily reached from the cruise port on foot in just 10 minutes ([map](#)) or by taxi.

Due to its proximity to the cruise port, you will share this beach with many other cruise passengers. Mornings are often OK, but afternoons can get real busy especially when 2 or more cruise ships are in port. The beach has white sand and turquoise water. It is good for swimming, but not for snorkeling. There are multiple food vendors and some restaurants nearby.



Cruising Nassau (Bahamas)

16.5 Snorkeling

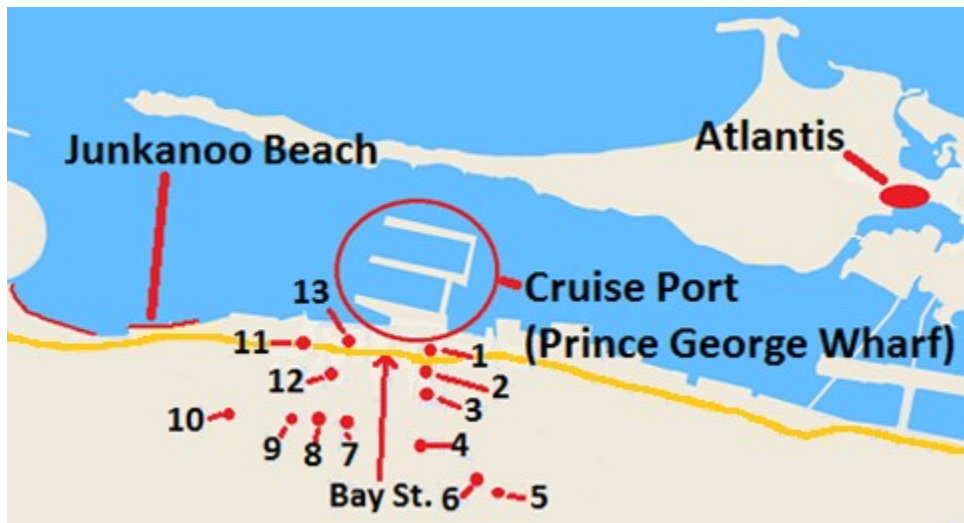
Nassau has some of the best snorkeling that I have ever seen. There are many snorkeling tours that you can join. After reading reviews on how busy snorkeling on the large tours is and how little time you may spend in the water, we decided for a small third party tour operator ([Blue Hole Watersports](#)) on two different cruises and could not be happier. Our tour was only us, 6 other customers and the crew. We stopped at 2 different reefs and, as our group was so small, we got into and out of the water in no time, greatly extending our snorkel time compared to big boats with 50 or more passengers. On the way to the snorkeling sites, our tour boat drove by some of the gigantic mega yachts and our tour guides always had good stories to tell.



Cruising Nassau (Bahamas)

16.6 Nassau Self-Guided Walking Tour

The main attractions of Nassau can be seen on a self-guided walking tour. The tour outlines below will require you to walk for 2-3h or longer if you visit the fort or museum. You can shorten this tour by skipping some destinations which can easily be done as they are all fairly close to each other.



- 1 = Rawson Square
- 2 = Parliament Square
- 3 = Nassau Public Library and Museum
- 4 = Nassau General Post Office
- 5 = Queen's Staircase
- 6 = Fort Fincastle
- 7 = St. Andrew's Presbyterian Kirk
- 8 = Government House
- 9 = Graycliff Hotel
- 10 = St. Francis Xavier Cathedral
- 11 = British Colonial Hilton
- 12 = Christ Church Cathedral
- 13 = Straw Market

Cruising Puerto Rico

Isla Verde Beach ([map](#), [reviews](#)): This is probably Puerto Rico's busiest beach. Contributing to this are the many hotels that line the beach.



Cruising Puerto Rico

Castillo de San Cristobal ([map](#), [reviews](#))

Castillo de San Cristobal was completed in 1785 and is situated on 27 acres of land which makes it the largest fort in Puerto Rico.

It was built to protect Old San Juan against attacks from the east. From here, the first shot of the Spanish-American War was fired in in 1898. In 1942, concrete pillboxes and an underground bunker control center were added by the US army.

In 1961, the US army moved out and the US National Park Service took over the site.

In 1983, the "San Juan National Historic Site" encompassing the Old San Juan section of San Juan was declared a World Heritage Site by the United Nations.



Cruising Puerto Rico

As to the bioluminescence: we had mostly clear skies and some residual lights from the moon and nearby settlements and the festival area where the boat dock is located. This light did not limit the viewing experience at all. The glow could easily be seen, but it is extremely difficult to photograph it. It was either a ghostly bluish glow of at one spot a bluish sparkling. Fish that swam away from the boat left bluish trails in the water. Holding your hands or feet in the water, using the supplied sticks or splashing water will get you some great glowing effects.

Towards the end of the trip, one of the guides offered to adjust our cameras (only works with DSLR cameras) so that we could take photos. I wish he had done it when we got to the lake.



Cruising Sint Maarten/St. Martin

19.2 Best Things To See & Do

St. Maarten is a popular destination for cruise ships and for tourists that stay there for a few days or e.g. snowbirds that stay there all winter long.

As the island of Saint Martin is close to St. Barths and Anguilla, cruise ship passengers can visit these two uncrowded paradise-like islands for a few hours. If you stay longer on Saint Martin, then I can only encourage you to visit St. Barths and especially [Anguilla](#) for one or more days.



Cruising St. Croix, USVI

20.3 Self-Guided Walking Tour of Frederiksted

Getting off the pier ([map](#)), you see the **Oscar E. Henry Customs House** ([map](#)) in front of you and the red painted **Fort Frederik** ([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#)) to your left.



Cruising St. Thomas

22.3 Magens Bay Beach ([map](#), [reviews](#))

This is St. Thomas' most popular beach for good reason. National Geographic Magazine named it one of the top ten of the world's most beautiful beaches.

The beach is one mile long, has white sand, turquoise water, is lined with palm trees and lies in the sheltered Magens Bay, which makes for good swimming. To get there, take one of St. Thomas' taxis. The beach has an admission for tourists of US\$5 per person 13 years and older. You can buy snacks and rent water sports equipment.

When we arrived, there were only few people on the beach but people kept coming and by noon, it got so crowded that we decided to leave and explore Charlotte Amalie.

Between 10am and 11am, dark clouds appeared and it started raining on one side of the beach while it was dry on the other. Almost as quick as the clouds appeared did they vanish and we ended having beautiful blue skies again.



Cruising Tortola (BVI)

23.2 Brewers Bay ([map](#), [reviews](#))

As usual, we wanted to snorkel, swim and sunbathe. Our two top contenders were Cane Garden Bay and Brewers Bay. We decided for Brewers Bay as it seems to attract fewer visitors and apparently has the best snorkeling on Tortola. Brewers Bay is just North of Cane Garden Bay.

To get to Brewers Bay, the taxi has to go down a winding steep road. As a reward, you will find an almost white sand beach with turquoise water, forested hills, few people and very few buildings. There were pelicans fishing and there was good snorkeling by the rocks to the South.

