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The beach at Harbour Village



Harbour Village

Bonaire

PEACE, QUIET AND THE LIFE AQUATIC IS THE WAY OF THIS PRISTINE CARIBBEAN ISLE.

BY JESSICA REMO

It's easy to find serenity in a hammock on the shores of Bonaire, the "B" of the ABC island chain: Like neighbors Aruba and Curaçao, Bonaire offers year-round sunshine, clear waters and a trade-winds breeze, and it's located outside of the hurricane belt. But you'll find that many visitors here seek serenity literally beneath the surface, exploring the sea life on the world-famous reefs of this "diver's paradise"—the island's motto. And what could be more romantic, really, than shutting out the world after the wedding craziness and handholding your honey in the Caribbean, pointing out turtles, seahorses and tropical fish? At Harbour Village, Bonaire's only five-star resort, you'll find friendly scuba and snorkeling instructors, plus lots of on-land pursuits to keep you busy if getting in the water isn't your thing. (Aromatherapy massage, anyone?) Plus, Bonaire's focus on conservation has led to strict laws about development. You won't see any big hotel chains or a single McDonald's, which makes this isle far quieter and more pristine than its neighbors—just about perfect if seclusion is what you're after.

BY DAY: Don't be intimidated out of diving just because serious divers are in your midst: Bonaire's shallow reefs and calm waters are perfect for beginners. Harbour Village offers a PADI dive center and an intro package that lets you dive down to 40 feet with an instructor even if you aren't certified. If you already dive, rent a pickup and hit the road looking for the yellow rocks that mark shore-diving sites. Diving too intense for you? The snorkeling right off the beach is also excellent, as is windsurfing at Jibe City on Lac Bay, on the southeast side of the island. Rather relax? At Harbour Village, you can grab a hammock, bird-watch by the pool (the island is home to more than 200 species), or visit the lovely spa. For a great tour, take a ride with Bonaire Taxi Services. The friendly locals will give you the full scoop on the island's history, drive you past the pink salt ponds and donkey sanctuary, and help you spy pairs of Bonaire's famous wild flamingos. (Did you know they mate for life?)

BY NIGHT: Nightlife on Bonaire is mostly casual and subdued, but you'll find a bit of activity along the streets of downtown Kralendijk, about a five-minute cab ride from the hotel. CONTINUED ON PAGE 146



The coastline at Harbour Village

OPPOSITE PAGE FROM LEFT: ISTOCKPHOTO/THINKSTOCK; HARBOUR VILLAGE BEACH CLUB. THIS PAGE: HARBOUR VILLAGE BEACH CLUB



Cancún

NO LONGER JUST A HANGOUT FOR SPRING BREAKERS, THIS REGION OF MEXICO OFFERS HONEYMOONERS DELECTABLE CUISINE, LUXURY RESORTS AND, OF COURSE, PICTURE-PERFECT BEACHES.
BY JOSH MIDDLETON

Situated on the gorgeous northeast corner of the Yucatan Peninsula, Cancún, with its mesmerizing turquoise waters and fluffy white-sand beaches, is a destination seemingly lifted from a honeymoon handbook. It's a shame, then, that the allure has been cheapened by its reputation as a go-to for spring breakers more concerned with guzzling cheap tequila shots than reveling in the rich natural wonders of this tropical idyll.

Don't let that scare you away, as Cancún has all the makings of an A-plus getaway for newlyweds. More and more hotels, such as the clean, modern Live Aqua Cancún, are closing their doors to the girls-gone-wild set, and a burgeoning culinary scene within an upscale enclave of the region is adding just the flair of sophistication needed to trail-blaze a path for lovebirds looking to cozy up in paradise.

BY DAY: Though it's easy to while your day away being pampered at Live Aqua (in a cabana on the beach; by one of the seven pools; at the oasis-like spa; in refreshing cou-

ples-yoga sessions with Erika, the hotel's fitness instructor), you shouldn't let your trip go by without experiencing some of Cancún's more adventurous offerings. Parasailing stations line the beach, there are multiple places from which to zipline through the jungle, and you should definitely talk to the concierge about planning a trip to a cenote. These water-filled sinkholes are rife along the Yucatan, giving thrill-seekers the chance to swim through mesmerizing caverns that the Mayans saw as portals to the underworld from which they could communicate with the gods. There are thousands of them, and they all offer something different: At Ik Kil, you can snorkel in a cool 130-foot-deep lagoon fed by small waterfalls and surrounded by lush, low-hanging vegetation, while at Gran Cenote, you'll find sea turtles and an impressive display of subterranean stalactites.

BY NIGHT: While you'll be treated to a stunning sunrise over the Mexican Caribbean every morning from your room, you'll have to venture away from your hotel to catch it setting over the west-facing Nichupte Lagoon. For an ultimate view, reserve a table on the terrace at Harry's Prime. The chic CONTINUED ON PAGE 148

OPPOSITE PAGE FROM LEFT: LIVE AQUA CANCÚN; FRIDMAR DAMM/CORBIS. THIS PAGE: MATTHEW WAKEM/PHOTOLIBRARY/GETTY IMAGES

HONEYMOONS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 142



A snorkeling cove on Bonaire

TOURISM CORPORATION OF BONAIRE

For drinks with a view, sit on the deck at Karel's Beach Bar (don't be afraid of the name—try the delish “Sex With an Alligator”) or at Rum Runners restaurant at Captain Don's Habitat resort, where the water is so clear you can see the fish. You'll find a late-night crowd at cigar-bar Little Havana or the small casino at the Divi Flamingo, which offers table games and slots. For a different nighttime excursion, climb aboard the Samur, an authentic 56-foot junk boat built in Thailand, for a cocktail or dinner cruise or a moonlight sail.

WHERE TO STAY: Harbour Village is the island's lone member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World. It offers diving, snorkeling, a spa, a private white-sand beach, a full-service marina, and breakfast, lunch, dinner and a bar at La Balandra, their restaurant on the water. Go for the honeymoon-perfect Premiere Beachfront Suite, which includes a living room, a patio, a hammock and a fully equipped kitchen.

WHAT TO EAT: At La Balandra, get a table overlooking the water and try any of the carefully crafted daily specials. For breakfast, the eggs Benedict with orange-Cajun hollandaise and gouda (this is a Dutch isle, after all) is a standout, and for dinner, don't miss the sesame-crust seared tuna. Off the resort, check out It Rains Fishes. Housed in a historic 100-year-old home, this pretty open-air restaurant boasts an on-staff fisherman who brings back the catch of the day. For dessert, sweet-tooths won't want to miss the gelato at Gio's in downtown Kralendijk.

WHAT TO PACK: An underwater camera (or phone case) is a must to capture the sea life while snorkeling and diving. Also bring: passport, resort casual wear, bug spray for mosquitoes, and a hat and good sunscreen—Bonaire is a mere 12 degrees north of the equator, and the sun is *strong*. No need to change currency, as the island uses the U.S. dollar.

BEST TIMES TO GO: Anytime, really—the island offers year-round sunshine and very little rainfall. You're also safe from hurricanes and tropical storms here, which makes Bonaire a great worry-free honeymoon choice. Note that the island gets busier (and the accommodations more expensive) during peak season, from December through April. For extra fun and partying, visit during the annual Bonaire Regatta in October, which draws sailing teams from around the globe.

NEWLYWED NEWS: Harbour Village's romance package includes seven nights' accommodations, a full American breakfast daily, a torch-lit dinner on the beach, an aromatherapy massage for two, resort scuba experiences for non-certified and certified divers, and one night with a reserved double hammock on the beach and a bottle of champagne. You can register online for guests to contribute toward your honeymoon, at honeymoonwishes.com.

GETTING THERE: During high-traffic months there are direct flights on United Airlines from Newark. But for a quick one-stop anytime, fly from Philly to Atlanta and take Delta's Saturday-only flight to Bonaire. Otherwise, fly to Fort Lauderdale, Aruba or Curaçao and take Insel Air or Tiara Air for the last leg of the trip (about 15 minutes flying time from Curaçao and 35 from Aruba). Be aware that Tiara Air flights are often late, so leave plenty of time if you have a connection coming home. If you do fly home through Aruba, you'll clear U.S. customs and immigration there, saving time when you land back in the U.S.

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HONEYMOONS

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The beach at Live Aqua

MACDUFF EVERTON/CORBIS

restaurant is considered one of the best steakhouses in town, featuring not just dry-aged Kobe beef but also a selection of fresh seafood cooked Argentine-style, on a *parilla*. (Just be sure to save room for the complimentary cotton candy that's served after dinner.) Once you've eaten your fill, head back to the romantic Egos bar at Live Aqua for a nightcap Caipirosca, a Brazilian drink made with crushed grapes, vodka, sugar and lime.

WHERE TO STAY: At Live Aqua, you'll be greeted with the calming scent of lavender, a chilled towel for your hands, and a cup of steamy tea. The luxury all-inclusive is more like a massive spa than a resort, as the emphasis is on awakening the senses and creating that blissful lost-in-the-moment vibe. Depending on where you are, you'll find a different scent and sound crafted specifically for that area. Feeling peppy? Head to the pool area in the afternoon for upbeat house tunes. Need a pick-me-up? The bar area is infused with the deliciously invigorating aroma of chocolate. The rooms are bright and cozy, each offering a view of the grounds and the unbelievably blue Caribbean. Honeymooners should opt for the two-room (one bedroom and a living room) Aqua Suite, with its large private balcony and a state-of-the-art Jacuzzi.

WHAT TO EAT: There are eight dining options on the grounds of Live Aqua, from lively poolside joints to more atmospheric fine dining. The best among them for dinner is MB, a sexy, dimly lit spot where head chef Eric De Maeyer turns out contemporary Latin-inspired plates. An evening on its palm-tree-covered terrace is a must, as is the chipotle seafood pasta. Oenophiles will go mad for AKA Bar's extensive collection of wines, including some interesting Mexican varietals. The cafe is open all day, serving a nice selection of coffees, teas and artisanal pastries. Quick tip: On your last morning, stop in to grab a homemade, prepackaged cookie or lemon tart to nibble on the plane ride home.

WHAT TO PACK: Most of your days will be spent poolside, so come prepared for sun and splash. In the evening, Live Aqua guests spiff up a bit for dinner, but flowy garments that will move freely with the warm evening breeze are key. If you forget something, designer-packed La Isla Shopping Village is just across the street.

BEST TIMES TO GO: There are four seasons to consider in Cancún: the wet one (May to October); the dry one (November to April); the tourist season (December to May); and, if you ask us, the preferable slow season (August to November). Though this is the time of year that sees the most rainfall, the showers don't come every day, and when they do, it's a quick downpour before the clouds open back up to sunshine and blue skies.

NEWLYWED NEWS: Live Aqua employs in-house "romance expert" Lisbeth Cruz to cater to your every amorous whim. Ask her about arranging a private dinner on the beach, or helping you set up a couples massage in the resort's fab award-winning spa.

GETTING THERE: You can be in Cancún in three and a half hours on a direct flight from Philadelphia. Live Aqua doesn't have a shuttle, so once there, hop in a cab or arrange a car ahead of time to have a driver take you the 20 minutes to the hotel.

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