



HOTEL ADVICE

Bucuti Beach Resort, L.G. Smith Blvd. 55. Tel: +297 831100. Email: bucuti@setarnet.aw. Website: www.bucuti.com. Stylish low-key Mediterranean-style hotel on the most secluded stretch of idyllic Eagle Beach. Popular with Europeans, it is lauded for its environmental initiatives thanks to its innovative owner Ewald Biemans, Aruba's general manager of the year.



Some of the little beaches I have loved are so obscure they have no name. I think of a quiet cove on the coast of Scotland where otters play in the tidal pools. And a tiny bay on the Galápagos island of Santiago where a very sociable sea lion prodded the sole of my foot with his wet muzzle, beckoning me to come in for a swim. And of course there are the windswept wintry walks along the endless seaboard of The Netherlands, guaranteed to clear your head and get your life into perspective.

But when I think about Beach with a capital 'B', I drift off on the Gulf Stream to the Caribbean and shipwreck myself on the powder-white sand of Eagle Beach on Aruba. This is purely a sensual affair and has nothing to do with brain stimulation. On the contrary, a classic Caribbean beach for me is marvelously mindless. I tried writing on this beach on one occasion but ended up being lulled into semi-oblivion by a second cocktail and the seductive sound of waves rhythmically massaging the shore and, above me, the whispering brushes of palm leaves teased to and fro by the warm prevailing trade winds.

In spite of the fact that Eagle Beach regularly tops the Caribbean charts, it's quiet and laid back. No bats or balls or nets or radios or water scooters. Only the natural elements that make up the essential Caribbean. Further up the Aruba Coast you'll find the high-rise hotels where I saw a man actually wading in the sea with a metal detector. He told me he was looking for lost watches and jewellery.

Eagle Beach however is the Holy Grain of the Caribbean. It's clean and green and, thanks to the eco-active Bucuti Beach Resort, part of Eagle Beach is reserved for sea turtles who come here to breed as they once did all over the Caribbean. Only the turtles require protection. The rest of the beach is open to the public and no one is hindered by fences or guards. Eagle Beach stretches for about a mile up the Aruban coast and is peppered all the way with more palms than people. The only activity off-shore is the odd brown pelican who you'll see diving into the turquoise sea and emerging with a beak-full of parrot fish.

As the sun, like a ripe peach, dips toward the horizon, the sky is bathed in amber. The atmosphere becomes intensely romantic and a harmonious way to conclude the day is a candle-light champagne dinner on the beach.

Ken Wilkie