

Insider Guide

Aruba

Insider *Ricardo de Vreede*

Photographer Ricardo de Vreede, known as 'CADO de Lanny', loves documenting Aruba's hidden treasures. He often pictures buildings, houses and monuments, capturing their beauty in colours and history.

Interviewed by Nina Glatzel from insideret.com.

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Why is Aruba special?

I grew up here, so it's always been home to me. I love being outdoors, not only to take photos but also to surf on the North Shores. I also like to hike across the *cumaca*, which means 'countryside' in our language, Papiamentu.

Which visual image sums up Aruba's vibe?

Carnival 🇵🇸, because we're all smiling of joy.

What's new?

The town of San Nicolas, 19km south-east of Oranjestad, has a new museum, called Nicolaas Store (Bernard van de Veen Zeppenfeldstraat 27). It features a mix of local artists showcasing works inspired by the San Nicolas area and historical artefacts from our culture. Plus, try to have a walk across the town to check out all the murals done by local and international artists.

Must-dos?

Just go out and explore! This is a paradise for hiking, diving and surfing enthusiasts. But be mindful of our precious nature. Morning hikes are great at Arikok National Park. And the most famous off-shore scuba diving spot is the Antilla shipwreck. Windsurfing and kitesurfing 🇵🇸 are also popular here because of the consistent wind. Dos Playa Aruba is one of my favourite surfing spots on the island.

Architectural highlights?

I love our historic houses 🇵🇸. Some are secluded, but in downtown Oranjestad, some are also being restored.

Most idyllic beaches?

Go to the secluded beaches in San Nicolas. Boca Grandi is nice for a dip and walk along the coast. For turquoise-blue waters, head to Mangel Halto 🇵🇸, which is very nice in the morning. For families with kids, I would recommend Arashi Beach; it's a bit more crowded but fun, with small waves in waist-deep waters. Don't forget to check out the new Natural Bridge at Wariruri Bay, not for swimming but for sightseeing and surfing.

Culinary hotspots?

Indo Restaurant (Noord 17) serves Surinamese dishes, with chicken roti being my top choice. Go to Local Store (Palm Beach 13A) for chicken wings, burgers and craft beers. Try local snacks at the Grote Berg (Grote Bergweg 17), such as their Salt Fish Johnny Cake. And Gelatissimo in Palm Beach (J.E. Irawsquín Boulevard 345) serves the best ice cream; order their Ferrero Rocher.

Top seafood restaurant?

Visit the amazing Conch Fritters at West Deck (Lloyd G. Smith Boulevard) in Oranjestad. My favourite sunset spot for a couple of beers and fried fish is Zeerovers in Savaneta

(Savaneta 270). And I like the fish burger at Pelican Nest Seafood Grill (Pelican Pier).

Best place for coffee?

Almost every morning, you can find me at Craft 🇵🇸 (J.E. Irawsquín Boulevard 348), in Palm Beach. From fresh cold brews to cappuccinos they have it all.

Finest cocktails?

Azia Restaurant & Lounge (J.E. Irawsquín Boulevard 348) not only serves sushi and Asian-inspired dishes, they also have top bartenders.

Shopping tips?

Cococha is an artisan store (Zoutmanstraat 1) selling locally made products. Bula Surf Shop (Lloyd G. Smith Boulevard 94) has local brands too; one is Tangerine, a handmade bag line that makes T-shirts and caps as well. Tangerine is also available at Lucy's 🇵🇸 (Lloyd G. Smith Boulevard 82).

Most stylish hotels?

The Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino (J.E. Irawsquín Boulevard 84) for its interior design, and the Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort (Lloyd G. Smith Boulevard 55B) for setting an example in sustainability.

Must-have souvenir?

Our locally made hot sauce, *Pica di Papiya*. You can get it at any supermarket. ■



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