

## Bonaire February 2024

**Harbour Village on Bonaire** (<https://www.harbourvillage.com>). This was our fourth time to Bonaire and third time staying at Harbour Village. It is close enough to town to walk to (though we always rent a car), snorkeling their beach is amazing, and there are several restaurants close by. The property is very well maintained and all of the staff is ever so helpful and friendly. The Wi-Fi is slow but reliable. The rooms have daily maid service. Our room (324) had a stove, microwave, cooktop and fridge. It was second story, facing the beach with a nice porch. Just perfect.

**Fish identifications** are done using three guides by Paul Humann and Ned DeLoach titled “Reef Fish”, “Reef Creatures” and “Reef Coral”. I also use the internet, particularly the site <https://reefguide.org/carib/>. The Humann “Fish” book is only fish; the “Creatures” book includes many genera including arthropods, cephalopods, mollusks, worms, sponges, jellyfish and more. The “Coral” book includes many types of corals, algae and sea plants. Sometimes confirmation includes searching the hypothesized fish in Google images or writing friends. The fish, algae and land animals are identified with a high confidence but the sponges and corals are to a lesser degree of confidence. Often algae imbed themselves into sponges, making them green or purple when the base color is brown, for example. Fish sizes are, of course, are estimates. In some cases, I think I have the correct IDs, but if not sure, I add a “?” after the name.

Identification corrections are welcome!

**About the Photography:** Bob used a “GoPro 4 Black” and Sharon used a RICOH WG4 underwater camera. Both are excellent cameras. The Ricoh does not have the fisheye distortion, so longer distance shots are better. Often the color balance is more uniform for the Ricoh as well. The GoPro has the pole for reaching under shelves. I set it to a 1-second time lapse, so when I dive down, I hit “go” and just let it shoot. Then I use “preview” in my computer to select the good shots. Most of the land pictures used an iPhone 12 max.

Most pictures are then shoved through Photoshop where “Auto Levels” removes constant background colors and some (few) needed “Shadows/Highlights” adjustments if in dark shadow of a cave or coral. I never use color balance or Hue/Saturation alterations. The pictures were then loaded into iPhoto for rotation and cropping. The iPhoto “Export/Web page” function was used to build the index sets for the webpage (“gallery generator”). The controlling “buttons” in the website are simply hand written in HTML pointing to the iPhoto built sets.

A humorous thing about the GoPro is that the waterproof casing has a flat plate over the lens, so the fish see their reflection in it. The Damselfish and some others will attack the reflection, so you get some really interesting “Here’s lookin’ at ya” pictures.

**Snorkeling Tips:** Swim slowly (sometimes just hover), shoot with sun behind you, shallow water is your friend but be wary of waves, NEVER touch anything, float on top of the water, not with legs down. We use toothpaste to clean our mask’s inner lens surface using our power toothbrush. Be sure to rinse well. Then spit at snorkeling time. We never have fogging trouble. Octopus: Two ways to find an octopus: 1) On a “walkabout” is just luck, 2) look for fresh shells all in one place with a hole nearby – this is the “Octopuses Garden” (The Beatles did not coin that phrase, they barrowed it). Damselfish are much easier to ID from their juveniles. The adults need a good sideways view to ID but the juveniles are very distinctive.

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### Reefs Visited:

**Harbour Village** is an excellent reef with many species to see including eels, octopus, parrotfish and so much more. The rocks at the end of the restaurant are like a huge aquarium with endless fish. There is a coral experiment going on there too, next to the reef-camera where two large iron domes can be seen. One is negatively charged and the other simply sitting there. It has been 8 years this way and the difference in growth is amazing. See <https://www.shakakai.com/blogs/news/reef-restoration-in-bonaire>

**Bari Reef** just past Sand Dollar. It is a good snorkel up there (about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile north of Harbour Village). The very healthy Elkhorn coral was badly broken since last year. It almost looks like a boat plowed into it. The broken piece are growing new shoots, but was sad to see. The fish population there is still very impressive and the outer-most corals were not damaged.

**Between Harbor Village and Dari:** This snorkel is full of fish varieties. We have seen turtles, octopus and endless fish on this snorkel. Half way to Dari is the foundation of some old building that is home to huge variety of fish. Last year there was a nurse shark sleeping in there. It is a nice hour-long snorkel.

**Kline at Jerry's Reef:** Kline Bonaire is interesting as the fish population is quite different from the larger island of Bonaire. This site is deep with healthy soft corals. Not as many fish as expected, but lovely just the same. This reef is on the near side of the little island on the north end.

**Kline to "Monti's Divi" reef:** This reef is on the southern tip of Kline and features large, healthy soft corals that are mesmerizing to watch as they sway with the current.

**1000 Steps Reef:** This is a must. It has HUGE growths of very healthy corals both soft and hard as well as huge sponges. The fish population just goes on and on. We saw a lovely green sea turtle there too.

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**Restaurant Reviews:** Most restaurants need reservations. The food on this island is much more reasonably priced than in Atlanta. All fish is excellent, having just been caught. Most lunches were in our room since grocery shopping is excellent at Van Den Tweel and the Chinese grocer. Shipped food come in on Wednesday night, so the only day you can buy bananas is on Thursday. Be sure to have the Dutch to English dictionary loaded on Google Translate, since all boxed items are in Dutch.

**Capriccio (5\*+):** This is an excellent, fine restaurant. They also have a great wine selection, but their “House” wine is also excellent. Like many restaurants on Bonaire, they preparation of fish is delicious. We also enjoyed Osso Buco and Lamb Shank. Service is excellent.

**El Bigote Mexican Kitchen (5\*+):** The best ribs we have ever had, and being from Georgia, that is saying something! It is a very friendly place on a side street near the resort.

**Cuba Compagnie (5\*):** They have a “Japanese Salad” that is full of raw tuna that is amazing. Their fajita is finger-licking good. We found the chicken skewer to be a bit tough. Service is excellent.

**Rains Fishes (5\*):** AMAZING fish and great service. It is located exactly across the street from the fish vender, so the red snapper I savored was swimming hours before we ate it. Watching them weigh the fish and pay the fishermen was fun. We saw the Tokyo fish market many years ago and this was a tiny miniature of that! The restaurant serves excellent fish with friendly service and a fabulous view of the sunset.

**Donner station (5\*):** These Turkish wraps are yummy. When night snorkeling, it is great to pick up and eat after coming back to the room. It is an easy walk or short drive.

**Between Two Buns (4\*):** This is a fun place with great sandwiches of all sorts. I like the BLT (called something else) that is heaped with BL&T. The hamburger is very large and delicious. Have never had a bad meal there.

**Food trailer at the circle (4\*):** His meal (don’t remember what they are called) was very good with him preparing and cooking it while you wait.

**Balandra (At Harbour Village):** The food was good (4\*), but the night we were there, the service is terrible (2\*). It took a long time to get your food and just refilling your water glass is nearly impossible (we just got up and refilled it ourselves). It could have been just an “off” night, but that was our experience.