

Accessing Aruba

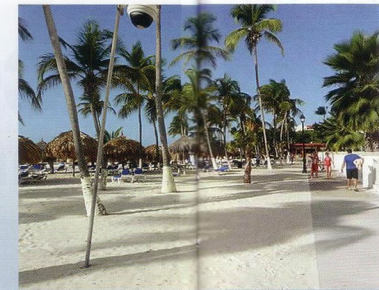
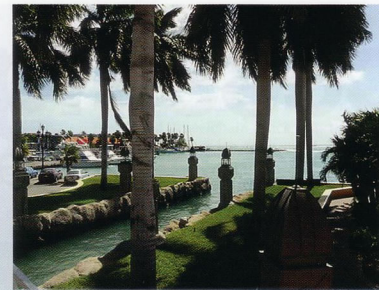
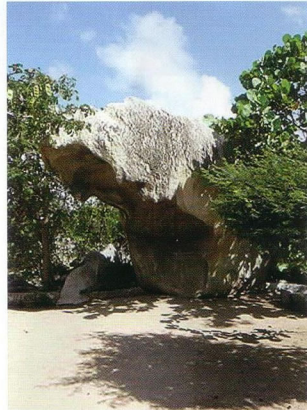
Sun, sea, sand... and success!



James Glasbergen of World on Wheelz describes his Caribbean adventure.

If you are looking for an accessible winter getaway destination that promises guaranteed sun and guaranteed heat, look no farther than Aruba. Many Caribbean islands have accessible all-inclusive resorts, but Aruba is one of the few islands that offer wheelchair accessible transportation as well.

Upon arrival at our resort, I was happy to find that I got the accessible room that I wanted. It was a fairly large room with two queen beds and an accessible bathroom. There was also an accessible balcony, although the view overlooking the alleyway



between our hotel and the next hotel wasn't much to get excited about. I was also happy to find upon arriving in our room that there was a Hoyer lift waiting for us. I arranged to rent this equipment through a local medical company, which delivered the lift to our resort and picked it up at the end of our stay. The company rents a large variety of medical equipment, including wheelchairs, walkers, scooters, oxygen tanks and concentrators, and more.

Access around our resort was fairly good, although several places required a detour to get into them. To eat at the Italian

restaurant, we had to notify them when we made the reservation that I was coming in a wheelchair so that they could be ready with a ramp at the side entrance. The Caribbean restaurant, where we did not eat, had an accessible entrance at the back of the restaurant as the main entrance had steps too. The ballroom, where all of the nightly entertainment took place, was also not accessible through the main entrance as there was a flight of stairs leading into it. We had to go into the buffet restaurant and through the kitchen, where everyone was working, in order to enter the ballroom

through a back door. There was also a bar and music room that was not accessible by the inside, but rather had to be accessed from outside near the pool. The only places that were accessible from the main entrances were the buffet restaurant, the Mexican restaurant, and the casino. While it was a little annoying to have to take side routes to a lot of the places we wanted to go, at least it was all accessible.

Access along Palm Beach was also fairly good. There was a concrete pathway that allows people to walk or wheel along the length of the beach, past the various resorts

and a section in front of our resort where the sand was hard enough to allow a wheelchair to wheel on to the beach, although there was no way for a wheelchair to get close to the water, except perhaps with a beach wheelchair.

We were fortunate to be able to do a little sightseeing in Aruba as well. There was one company on the island that offered wheelchair accessible transportation. They found some time to show us around the island one day, taking us to a number of the more popular attractions on the island, including the California Lighthouse, Alto

Vista Chapel, the Ayo and Casibari Rock Formations and the outside of an old gold mine. We also arranged for the same company to give us a ride into Oranjestad a couple days later so we could spend some time on our own in Aruba's capital city where we had a few hours to walk and wheel around town, checking out some sites and doing a little shopping.

By the end of our seven-day trip to Aruba, we had gotten what we had hoped for – seven days of relaxing heat and glorious sunshine. Of course, that is what Aruba is known for. I asked one of the

locals if there is ever a day in Aruba when the sun doesn't shine at some point and he responded with a smile, "never." With weather like that, it is understandable that Aruba is nicknamed "One Happy Island." 