

Landforms In Aruba

by James Werning, Demand Media



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The Dutch Caribbean island of Aruba owes its geologic formation to volcanic activity. Aruba's two main landforms, rolling hills and flat coastal regions, are possibly overlooked by most visitors who gravitate toward the sunny beaches. According to Aruba.com, "Aruba attracts more than 800,000 international visitors annually and enjoys the highest return rate in the Caribbean." Visitors who leave their beach chair in search of rewarding geological discoveries will not be disappointed. Travelers without a rental car can simply hire a taxi to get around the small island.

Geological History of Aruba

A tremendous flow of lava during the Upper-Cretaceous period arose from the sea floor, forming the Caribbean islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao. For many years tectonic forces compressed and folded the rock, causing underwater igneous and sedimentary formations to rise from the sea. In subsequent years the islands were carved by natural erosion. Coral reefs formed around much of the islands, forming calcium-rich terraces. The resulting mix of igneous, sedimentary, metamorphic and conglomerate rocks combined to build the remarkable landforms of Aruba that we see today.

Arikok National Park

Arikok National Park was established in 1997 to protect much of Aruba's flora, fauna, geology and historical remains. This park comprises about 18 percent of Aruba's land mass--an impressive figure for such a small island. The highest points of Aruba lie within the park: Jamanota Hill (617 feet in elevation) and Arikok Hill (577 feet). Visitors can climb both peaks on well-maintained hiking trails. The park also contains some of the best natural beaches, dunes, bays and coves, as well as many interesting historical sites. A paved road leads to the major sites, although visitors who want to leave the beaten path can enjoy Aruba's landforms by way of Arikok Park's hiking trails.

Aruba Lava Formations

The Aruba Lava Formation is an area of Arikok National Park that contains diverse geological features. A distinctive round, billowy rock formed from underwater lava is called pillow lava. Unique conglomerates and metamorphic rocks were formed from violent geological forces. A soft rock called tuff was formed from the volcanic ash fallout. The Hooiberg rock formations rise like a pile of massive pebbles from the surrounding landscape. Visitors can climb in and among many of these fascinating geological features.

Caving on Aruba

Fontein Cave is the most visited cave on Aruba, containing Pre-Columbian petroglyphs. The Arawak Indians painted birds and other creatures here more than 1,000 years ago, although more recent graffiti dates to the early 1800s. This cave is easily accessed through an opening in the cliff, although it is gated and entry is permissible only by guided tour. More adventurous cavers will want to make a self-guided exploration of the Guadirikiri Cave. It extends about 100 feet underground, is well-lit by holes in the ceiling, and is home to several bat colonies. The Huliba Cave, also known as the Tunnel of Love, is the largest cave, extending about 300 feet into the ground.

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About the Author

James Werning has authored books and numerous articles published on various websites. His scripts have aired for over 15 years on radio stations across the United States and Canada. He has a master's degree in communications from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland.

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