



Tropical Tidbits

by Sue C Travel

Winter might be waning, but that doesn't mean you should stop planning tropical get-aways. Now is the best time to save on shoulder season rates and lower fares. So, here are some ideas to jump start your spring escape plans with a few out-of-the-box activities to enrich your fun in the sun holiday...

Time to Revisit Puerto Rico

If you love Piña Coladas as much as I do, this is a great time to head to the island of their origin as the heavenly tropical libation is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year. First concocted in 1954, you can still visit the Caribar where it was born at the Caribe

Hilton hotel where they are sure to have special events around its birthday. Cheers! Also, a must visit there is the exciting new Disitrito T-Mobile complex that brings a modern Vegas-style vibe to the Puerto Rico Convention Center area. The multimedia multisensory urban park is full of dining, music, and activities like indoor ziplines, game arcades, giant video walls and they host cool cultural events. Hip entertainment now also takes place at the new Coca Cola Music Hall there, too.

But I have my sights set on a visit to neighboring Vieques Island there this year. I'm eager to see the wild horses and to try a clear-bottomed kayak night tour in their "bio

bay." There are only five bodies of water on the planet that boast "bioluminescence" where tiny organisms light up the water into neon blue traces at night. Puerto Rico has three of them, and Vieques has the brightest one in the world according to Guinness Records. For more reasons to visit or revisit Puerto Rico right now, see:

www.discoverpuertorico.com

'Love is Blind' Sets Sight on Cap Cana

If you're a fan of the reality TV series "Love is Blind," you'll get an intimate insider peek at this swanky adults-only resort called TRS Turquesa in the Dominican Republic. They



Carib Hotel Pina Colada



Bio Bay Puerto Rico



Turquesa Hotel Cap Cana



shot many scenes of its sixth season there. This stand-alone escape is part of the Palladium Hotel group's massive Cap Cana community which consists of three other family-friendly all-inclusives sprawling along beautiful Bavaro Beach. Just like the reality TV celebs, you too can be wrapped in a romantic cocoon of elite amenities replete with butlers, swim-out suites, special dinner clubs, gourmet dining, 24/7 room service, private pools, and VIP beach access. But better yet, if you're seeking to get out for some nightlife and a wider range of dining options you have access to over 40 food and beverage outlets located in all of their other resorts within the gated village with free golf shuttle service, too! It's all part of their signature Infinite Indulgence® program designed to give guests the absolute best of all worlds.

Visit: www.palladiumhotelgroup.com



Go Prehistoric in Puerto Plata

This area of the Dominican Republic produces the world's best quality, and clearest amber. You can learn all about it at their unique Amber Museum. And once you locate it tucked away in the charming colonial village there, you might find their sign reminds you of something else, namely Jurassic Park! The design is intentional because the opening scenes of the original movie were shot there, and the fascinating specimens of million-year-old insects petrified in clear resin rocks inspired the movie's theme. You'll see lots of them there, and lots of fine jewelry and art pieces made from Dominican amber can be purchased all around Puerto Plata, too. Also prehistoric is their activity of 'cascading' through the pristine nature of the protected region of Damajagua. Enjoy exhilarating guided adventures through rugged caverns, secret natural pools, and multiple rushing waterfalls to traverse the primal jungles as the ancients once did.

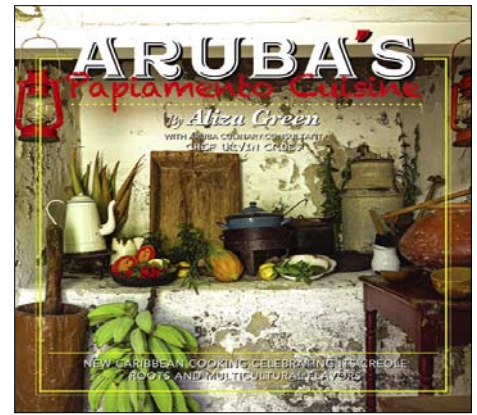
For more Puerto Plata pleasures, visit: www.godominicanrepublic.com/destinations/puerto-plata

The Lovely Loras Return to Aruba

I've had the great joy to see some of these gorgeous parrots in their natural habitat on the island of Bonaire, but sadly, though they are also endemic to Aruba, they've been extinct on that island for 70 years. (Due to manmade issues.) But now they are back! Locally known as the Lora, these yellow-shouldered amazon parrots have been reintroduced to the protected area of Arikok National Park through the Species Conservation & Reintroduction Program run by the Aruba National Park Foundation. Over two-dozen birds that were illegally smuggled on the island to be sold as pets were confiscated by the foundation and carefully rehabilitated to be able to survive on their own in the wild. And they are thriving! There is also a national awareness campaign to educate the public on the importance of protecting the Lora, and to help monitor their progress, they have set up



Photo: Patrick Peña - Aruba Parrot project



a way to report sightings. If you see one while on island, contact FPNA's Wildlife Hotline at +297 592 4476.

New Papiamento Cookbook in English

Papiamento, the native language of the Dutch Caribbean islands of Aruba, Bonaire, and Curacao, is a hodgepodge of many tongues- Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, Arawak Indian, and African dialects among them. So, as one might expect, Papiamento cuisine follows suit in its complexity, the culinary influences of the region are legion. And it's been difficult to unearth traditional island recipes handed down through the generations that are written up in English. (Or even written down at all, they are jealously guarded family secrets!) But not anymore. Aliza Green - chef, author, and world culinary tour guide has just released a wonderful resource in English called Aruba's Papiamento Cuisine. Working closely with the island's most legendary culinary talents, including master chef Urvin Croes owner of INFINI chef's table experience, and generously supported by locally produced award-winning Bodegas Papiamento Rum, the cookbook includes 120 beautifully illustrated recipes, insights from local taste creators, and even a bonus chapter of cocktail recipes. Look for it at island bookstores and participating restaurants.

See more of Aliza Green's work here: <https://alizagreen.com> ■



Award-winning travel journalist Sue Campbell is based in Montreal but makes it her business to be on top of everything cool, hot, and new under the sun throughout the Caribbean and Latin America.

World Traveler welcomes her as a regular columnist. Follow her on Instagram and Twitter @suectravel