LAC
Lac is the largest bay in the Dutch Caribbean and is part of the Bonaire National Marine Park. It is protected under the Marine Environment Ordinance (A.B. 2010 no 4). Lac is not only important to Bonaire, it is important to the region. It is a Ramsar site (www.ramsar.org), recognized on a global level as a wetlands of special significance.

Lac is home to globally endangered and threatened species including Green Turtles, Queen Conch and mangrove trees. The Bonaire National Marine Park enforces their legal protection.

History

There is evidence that humans lived around Lac and used the bay as early as 3000 years ago. These people lived primarily from resources found in the sea and the surrounding mangroves, such as fish, shellfish, crabs, birds and iguanas.

About 1500 years ago the Arawakan-speaking Caiquetio ethnic group arrived on Bonaire from Venezuela. They inhabited the area around the bay of Lac which provided them landing places for their canoes as well as fish and shellfish for food. Sorobon was the site of large conch shell work stations where the Caiquetio extracted conch meat for food and broke the shells down to make tools.

The Lac area was close to the rich soil inland from the bay where the Caiquetio grew maize, manioc, squash, beans and other agricultural crops.

The Caiquetio people are known to have lived in the Lac area up until the arrival of the Europeans about 300 years ago.

Nature and Environmental Education

Bonaire’s economy is highly dependent on the sustainable use of its natural resources. Information and education provided to the public is essential in order to gain support for conservation policies and practices.

Aimed at reaching all levels of the community, STINAPA has developed educational and informational programs that: increase awareness and involvement, create a positive attitude towards environmental protection and inform the people of Bonaire about the role they play in protecting their environment.

Each year, many school children participate in STINAPA’s educational programs, including after school snorkeling activities, that provide children with the opportunity to experience the beauty of Bonaire’s waters and to understand the importance of the conservation of our parks. The more advanced youth program, ‘STINAPA Junior Rangers’, focuses on gaining knowledge, learning to understand the ecology of Bonaire, and developing a sense of ownership of Bonaire’s ecosystems while developing leadership and critical thinking skills.

STINAPA seeks to motivate the public to respect park rules and regulations while building awareness of the value of nature and conservation. This is achieved through various public events, leaflets, brochures, posters, banners, signs, and STINAPA’s website and Facebook page.

Mangroves

Mangrove trees have many adaptations that allow them to live in an environment of intense sunlight and high salt concentrations. Mangroves perform many important environmental functions: protecting the shoreline from erosion by anchoring sediments with their extensive root systems, filtering harmful nutrients from land, and producing organic materials that benefit coral reefs. Above water, mangroves provide habitat for wetland birds and below water, mangroves are a nursery for coral reef fish and invertebrates.

The Green Turtle (Chelonia mydas)

In the waters around Bonaire there are three kinds of sea turtles: Green Turtles (Chelonia mydas), Hawksbill Turtles (Eretmochelys imbricata), and Loggerhead Turtles (Caretta caretta). Occasionally the Leatherback Turtle is seen (Dermochelys coriacea). Lac is an important feeding ground for juvenile Green Turtles whose favorite food is seagrass and jellyfish. The Green Turtle is endangered and protected by law.

STINAPA Bonaire is...

...the non-profit foundation that manages the Bonaire National Marine Park and the Washington Slagbaai National Park on behalf of the island government of Bonaire. It is dedicated to the conservation of Bonaire’s natural and historical heritage through the sustainable use of its resources.

Bonaire National Marine Park

The marine park extends from the high-water mark to the 60 meter (200 feet) depth contour, encompassing the entire coast of Bonaire including Klein Bonaire and Lac. The marine park’s area of 2,700 hectares (6,700 acres) is home to important and endangered species such as sea turtles, conch, and sharks. As well as globally threatened ecosystems such as coral reefs, seagrasses, and mangroves. As an International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN) demonstration site, the Bonaire National Marine Park is a model of its kind in the Caribbean, protecting the marine environment while closely regulating recreation and commercial use. Marine park staff maintain approximately 100 public boat moorings, monitor natural resources, provide information to users, monitor human and natural impacts and enforce the parks’ laws and regulations.

Washington Slagbaai National Park

Bonaire’s terrestrial park is a 5,643-hectare (14,000 acres) nature sanctuary located in the northwest part of the island. It provides safe habitat for important flora and fauna of Bonaire. Parrots, flamingos, parakeets, iguanas and many other species of birds and reptiles can be found in this sanctuary. The beaches inside the park are nesting grounds for globally endangered sea turtles and the salinas provide important habitat for migrating shorebirds.

Originally inhabited by the Caiquetio people, and comprised of two of the largest plantations on the island during the colonial period, the park is rich in historical and cultural heritage. The Visitor Center at the park’s entrance, with its museum, hiking and kid’s trails, offers an enjoyable learning experience.

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STINAPA, BONAIRE IS A MEMBER OF THE DUTCH CARIBBEAN NATURE ALLIANCE. DUTCH CARIBBEAN CONSERVATION EFFORTS ARE SUPPORTED BY:
Lac is the perfect place to enjoy windsurfing. The 7 square kilometer bay offers favorable conditions to windsurfers of all levels. The bay's protective barrier reef provides calm, shallow waters ideal for beginners. More experienced sailors can venture out into the blue-green swells to enjoy the thrill of the sport but still be protected from large waves.

Please keep out of roped-off areas indicated by buoys as these are protecting our fragile seagrass beds, and do not go beyond the turnaround buoys into the protected areas (white zone).

A kayaking adventure through the mangrove forest at Lac is both fun and educational. The water is so clear that you may see young reef fish, sea stars, sponges and an occasional turtle right from your kayak. In order to preserve this precious natural resource, a certified guide is required for all mangrove kayaking activities.

Snorkeling at Lac demands a high skill level. It is recommended that you have a guide so that you will enjoy the full benefits of this unique ecosystem. The untrained snorkelers can unknowingly damage this fragile environment.

Lac Bay is an extremely important nursery area for young coral reef fish and other invertebrates because of its lush seagrass beds. The main seagrass species found here is turtle grass (Thalassia testudinum), which is the dominant seagrass species in the Caribbean and is the favorite food of Green Turtles. When you snorkel over a seagrass bed you will see miniature coral reef fish and other small critters hiding in the grass. Seagrass is extremely susceptible to damage by trampling, daggerboards from windsurfers and boat propellers. Please stay away from shallow seagrass.

The Code of Conduct

- Snorkel, windsurf or kayak only in designated areas. Stay out of seagrass beds.
- Kayak and snorkel with a certified guide.
- Do not litter.
- Never make open fires on the beach.
- Never touch, pick up or handle marine animals.
- Do not disturb the flamingos!
- Do not participate in any of the following activities:

  - Collecting Conch
  - Catching Turtles
  - Anchoring or Spear Fishing
  - Kite Surfing

All users of the Bonaire National Marine Park (BNMP) must pay an entrance fee known as the "Nature Fee". Fees may be purchased at the dive operators, activity centers, surf shops and at the headquarters of the BNMP at Barcadera.

Buy your tag before entering our Marine Park!

Zones

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White zone</td>
<td>Undisturbed natural and wildlife area, no commercial activity allowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue zone</td>
<td>Windsurfing/kayaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow zone</td>
<td>Snorkeling/kayaking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Green zone</td>
<td>Guided kayaking activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orange zone</td>
<td>Guided snorkeling activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red zone</td>
<td>Swimming, snorkeling and general beach recreation</td>
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