

**TEEN TALK** with Miss Teen America

# Exotic ARUBA Fashions

Aruba may be a tiny island, but it attracts many people with its beautiful sceneries, relaxing atmosphere, and flashy clothing. By Brittany Monico, Miss Teen America 2006.



It's been a very busy year so far with most of my weekends and leisure time at one event or another. I have not really been able to dedicate myself to one of my passions... shopping! So when I headed to Aruba for some much needed R&R, it was time to hit any store that would allow me to spend some cash.

Aruba is a great place to shop. There is a wide selection of hand-crafted items made by native Arubans, and the process of producing them is carried on right in front of your eyes as you stroll along the beachfront. The wharf at Oranjestad's colorful harbor side can be a bargain hunter's dream. It has so much to choose from including paintings, t-shirts, photographs, pottery, and of course, jewelry.

Transactions are carried out in both dollars and florins and bargaining is expected and can be quite fun. It is an art form that people in the islands and Mexico seem to enjoy.

The island of Aruba got its name from the ancient gold miners. Aruba means 'real gold'. History tells us that the miners have long since gone, but there is no shortage of beautiful gold and silver jewelry. So if you are searching for gold and love fine jewelry, Aruba is the place to shop.

All transactions are not conducted in beachfront thatched shacks, however. There are some major shopping centers such as the Alhambra Shopping Bazaar, the Atrium Mall, Bubali Shopping Center, Palm Beach Shopping Center, Port of Call Marketplace, Royal Plaza, Seaport Marketplace, the Village Mall, Strada Complex and the Sun Plaza Mall, and believe me, I hit them all! It is so much fun because most of the malls feature wide open-air concept ceilings that allow the sun to shine in, which makes shopping much more pleasurable. Since people travel to Aruba from all over the world, the sales staff are multilingual and you often hear them speaking to someone in French, Dutch, Spanish and even Italian, so the whole shopping experience is pretty exotic.

Many shops offer top looks from the most prominent designers in New York, London, Milan, Paris and L.A. Because of the continual warm Caribbean climate, light and breezy fabrics are used to offset the heat with bright floral prints and abstract patterns for that island feeling. Appliqués such as flowers, shells or beads are used to enhance the beauty of many styles. They also offer a wide variety of belts, shoes and accessories in the hottest fashion trends.

As I browsed all of the bright colored fashions, different shirts, dresses, gowns and necklaces, I just couldn't resist a purchase or two. It was difficult to tear my eyes away from some of the most unique purses that I had ever seen and I knew that I had to take this information back home to my friends at Supermodels Unlimited and each of you who share my passion for fashion.



One of my most important stops in Aruba is always a specialty store called La Langosta Balnearie, which carries unique handmade bathing suits, beach clothes, bags, sandals and accessories. They are all one of a kind and spectacular! Each bathing suit is hand crafted in bright colors and fashion forward styling. Some of these bathing suits were just calling my name, so I had to try them on. The first one that grabbed my attention the moment I walked through the door was bright orange. It was beaded all over, giving it a sparkling glow. I kept imagining how this would pick up and reflect the light from the hot sun, or stage lights if you catch my drift.

There were hundreds of handmade necklaces, each design with its own significance. Gold and silver touches with a few ocean shells showed off their unique and natural style. You could spend hours in this store just admiring all of the beautiful fashions.



If you are planning a trip to Aruba, check out some of the new and innovative designs in party dresses. They are certainly not the same old looks that have been around forever. They are fun and flirty and filled with fresh new styling. One of my favorites was a long dress with multiple shades of brown, a swirl of cream and a flower design accenting the flow of the dress. It had an extra piece of material so you could tie it in your hair, around your neck or even add it to the dress.

My trip to Aruba was a shopper's delight. I caught up on all the hot Aruban trends, and even brought back a touch of Caribbean styling to quiet New England. Aruba is filled with exotic fashions and brilliant island colors that will definitely enhance your wardrobe. No wonder they call it one happy island!

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