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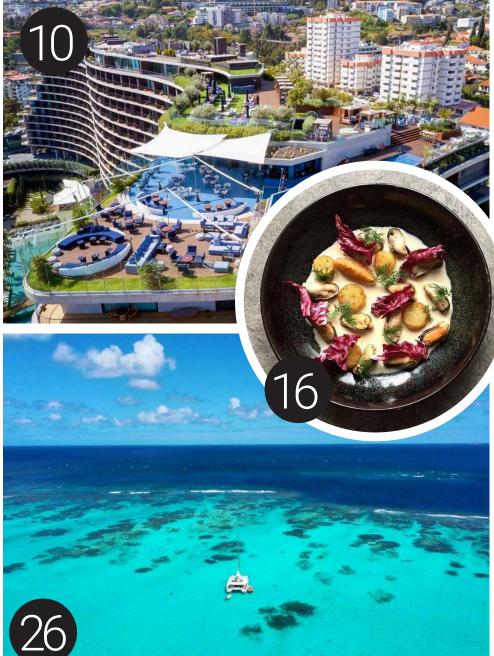
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CURAÇAO



Diving into Coral Reef Restoration in Curação

This Caribbean island is working hard to protect its underwater wonders for future generations BY SABRINA PIRILLO



on bini (welcome) to Curaçao! This colourful island is home to some of the best beaches in the Caribbean, unique cultural experiences, activities for all ages and the UNESCO-listed capital of Willemstad filled with street art, pastel-hued buildings and bustling shops and cafes. It also offers an abundance of vibrant coral reefs, marine

life and crystal-clear waters that make Curação a diver's paradise. The island is widely recognized as one of the best shore diving destinations in the world, boasting more than 38 world-class shore diving sites scattered across the island, something that makes their reef renewal program a vital part of strengthening the local ecosystem.





Just 15 minutes from Hato International Airport and five minutes from the historic capital of Willemstad, Curação Marriott Beach Resort is nestled amidst six oceanfront acres, complete with a robust and healthy house reef and burgeoning coral nursery. Located at the far west end of Marriott's beach is Goby Divers, an esteemed dive shop and an integral part of the property's coral restoration efforts.

home to nearly 25 per cent of all marine life, highlighting the importance of this restoration project.

Coral reefs also play a vital role in the economy, boosting economic development through tourism and fishing, from snorkelling tours to recreational fishing trips. The coastal barriers also protect against storms, wind damage and erosion. Goby Divers are a proud project

snorkel sessions for guests who would like to see the nursery and explore the reef.

Divers who visit the island can also participate in a Reef Renewal Diver course with Goby Divers, which provides a handson approach to reef restoration. And of course, all guests are welcome to donate to the foundation to help further the work that protects the underwater wonders of Curação for future generations.

As coral reefs around the world are threatened by climate change, Curação Marriott Beach Resort is taking the initiative to help restore the island's natural beauty and vital ecosystems by sponsoring Reef Renewal Curação, an organization that partners with Goby Divers to grow and maintain a coral nursery just to the side of Marriott's abundant house reef.

Founded in 2015, Reef Renewal Curação is a key driver behind the revitalization of the island's underwater ecosystem, establishing nurseries and planting new coral. Coral reefs cover less than one per cent of the ocean floor but are

partner, serving as an active centre for education through which hotel guests can learn about reef restoration thanks to Curação Marriott Beach Resort's sponsorship of complimentary guided

I had the pleasure of taking part in Goby Divers' educational sessions and guided snorkel activity just in front of the property last November. This complimentary session is offered to guests every Tuesday. Visiting the nursery felt like I was snorkelling with purpose. It was incredible to see the work that these dedicated divers are doing. One of the dive volunteers waved to me as he added

coral to the bamboo sticks that are made into vertical fences. I waved back as I swam by, curious as to what this lush reef restoration will look like in a few years.