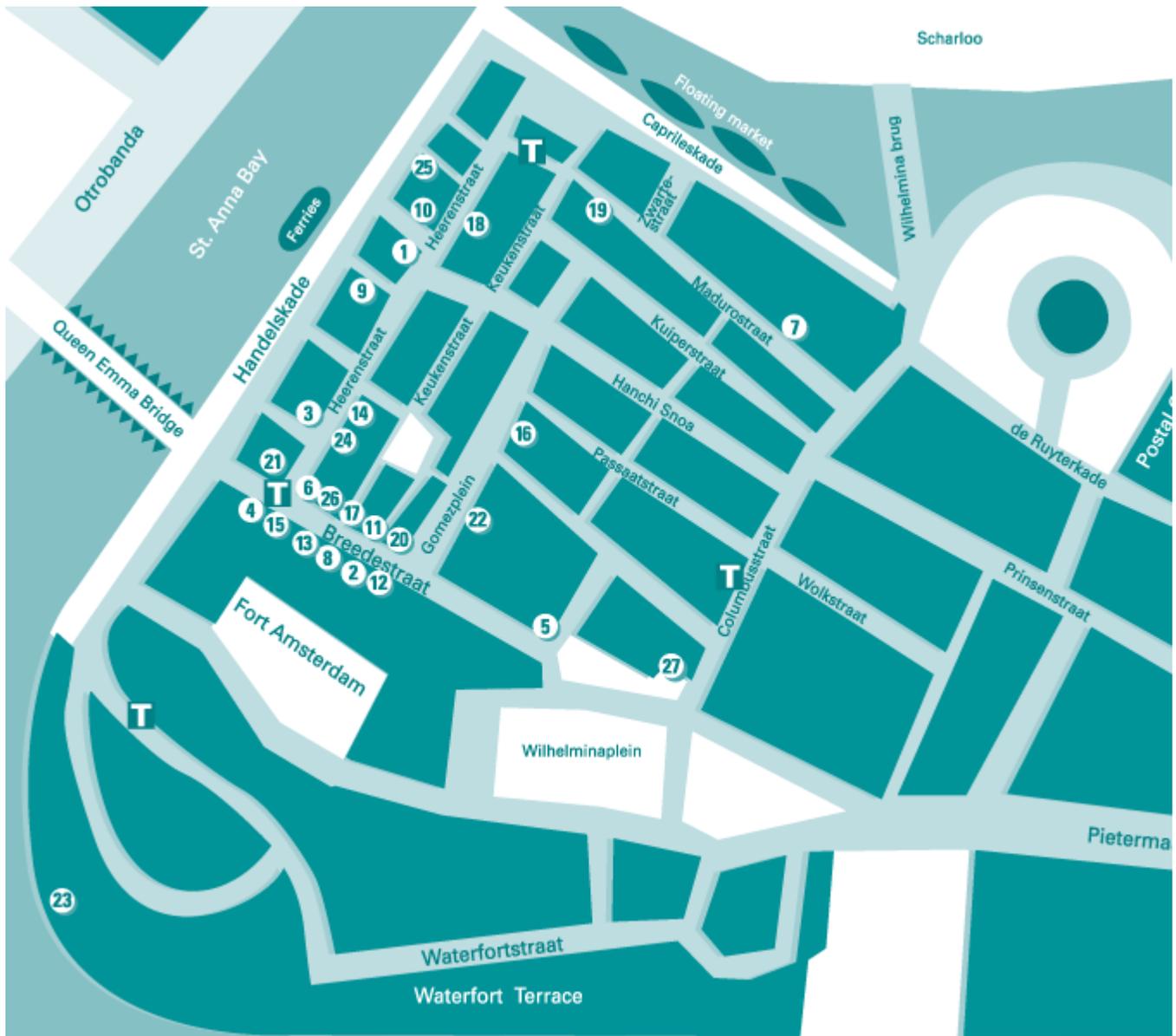


Walking Tour of Willemstad Curacao



Plagiarized from something I found on the internet.

The tour really starts at Mathey Werf where Carnival docks on the OTRABANDA. There's an Information booth on the Pier which has a Map and Instructions.

Walk by the Renaissance Hotel & Casino and an area that is their "mall" - the shops there may not be open early in the morning.

Walk through Rif Fort which hasn't changed much -- a couple of new shops - the internet café is gone -- a couple of new small restaurants.

The walking tour map has 2 other stops on it if you start at Mathey Werf before you actually get to the Pontoon Bridge. One is the Kura Hulanda Museum which which may not be open and the Brionplein -- which contains the Belgian Flavour & Haagen Dazs Ice Cream shop - both probably open.

Cross over the Queen Emma Pontoon Bridge which takes you to the PUNDA and cross over Handelskade to walk by a couple of shops including Penha Building. Continue up Breedestraat Punda and turn left onto Keukenstraat passing by the Postal Museum (may not be open early in the morning) as you walk down to the Floating Market. The Postal Museum is located in one of the oldest buildings in Willemstad - built in 1693.

Turn right on Sha Caprileskade and continued walking until you come to Columbusstraat.

If you want to see the Maritime Museum - you need to turn left from Sha Caprileskeade onto the Wilhelmina Bridge - after crossing over the bridge you turn left onto Van der Brandhofstraat where the museum is located. The Museum occupies one of the oldest houses in Scharloo. The exterior has been artfully restored while the interior has been completely redesigned in a maritime style to bring Curacao's rich seafaring history to life. If you are not pressed for time, you can make your way around the corner to the D'Art Gallery on Werfstraat.

After visiting the museum you retrace your steps and return to Sha Caprileskade and walk to Columbusstraat.

About three blocks down Columbusstraat you will come to the Mikve' Israel-Emanuel Synagogue (The Snoa), the oldest synagogue in continuous use in the Western Hemisphere. Jewish families from Amsterdam founded the congregation in 1651 while the current building was consecrated in 1732. The hushed interior has a sand floor symbolizing the desert where the Israelites camped on their journey to Freedom. The Jewish Cultural Historical Museum, also located here, displays traditional religious objects and is accessible from the synagogue's courtyard. Everything was open.

From there we continued down to Wilhelmina Park - which really needs a lot of work done on it. Here you will see the statue of Queen Wilhelmina. This park is surrounded by a handful of attractive government and office buildings, including the Tele Museum which traces the history of telecommunication on Curacao.

Immediately behind these is the Waterfort, built in the same time as the Rif Fort to defend the canal. At the eastern end of the fort, now known as Waterfort Arches, shops and restaurants occupy the arches that once held barracks and munitions. The seaside terrace is a pleasant place to stop for a drink or snack.

Much larger Fort Amsterdam lies to the west. Construction on this fortification began in 1635, making it the oldest monument in Curacao. Inside its massive stone walls, you'll find the Governor's Palace. It is still the official residence of the Governor of the Netherlands Antilles, along with the Fort Church Museum. There is a British cannonball from an 1804 attack that is still embedded in the façade above the left entrance.

Walk back over the Pontoon Bridge and then walk back through Rif Fort and walked into the Renaissance Hotel. The Casino is quite large - lots and lots of slots and several tables. The majority of the hotel is open. There is a restaurant there and a jewelry shop.

Above the "mall" area they have built an artificial beach area - you can get to it by going to the second floor of the hotel and crossing over a small bridge.

Stop for a drink at the Anchor in Rif Fort - it is located on an upper level of the fort with a good view of downtown and around.

Some added information:

1. Floating Market: One of the city's most famous and colorful sights. Venezuelan produce is brought over by the boats regularly. This is the freshest produce on the island, and it's quite safe to eat. The Venezuelans, who stay for weeks at a time, live aboard their boats. The market is open from 5 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, until noon on Saturday, closed Sunday.

2. Mikve Israel-Emanuel Synagogue & Jewish Historical Museum: Dedicated in 1732, this is the oldest continuously operating synagogue in the Western Hemisphere. Its floor is loose sand. The museum contains many artifacts from the congregation's history, including replicas of 17th century gravestones, Hanukkah lamps and Torah scrolls. Open Monday through Friday 9-11:45 a.m. and 2:30-4:45 p.m. Also open Sundays when large cruise ships are in port.

3. Postal Museum: Located in an elegantly restored wood and stone structure, the oldest standing building in Punda (1693). The museum contains permanent exhibits of Netherlands Antilles stamps and related materials, such as old post boxes. Open Monday through Friday 9-5, on Saturday 10-3. Admission charge.

4. Ferry Terminal & Waterfront: This is the famous view of old merchant houses. This is also the place to catch the free ferry to Otrobanda when the Queen Emma bridge is open. Probably the most famous building here is Penha, at the corner of Bredestraat and Handelskade. It is a notable example of 18th century Dutch colonial architecture with curlicue gables and galleries that wrap around the second floor.

5. Art Gallery 86: It may be the island's largest art gallery but it's also small. It showcases work by both local and Dutch artists. Open Monday through Friday 9:30 -12 and 3-5:30; on Saturday from 10:30 - noon .

6. Queen Emma Bridge : Affectionately known as the “swinging old lady,” the first floating pontoon bridge, Emmaburg, was built in the 1880s. The bridge allowed easy pedestrian access across the channel but it is busy these days opening to allow cruise ships and huge oil tankers to pass through. It's quite a humbling sight to be at the waterfront when one of these behemoths comes through. It is sometimes lit at night with numerous lights but always at Christmas.

7. Fort Amsterdam : Another large yellow building and seat of government for the Netherlands Antilles . In front of the Fort is the Horn of Plenty Monument given by Holland for loyal assistance during World War II. You'll enter the fort courtyard through a covered alleyway. The bright yellow building with white columns is the Cabinet of Ministers, The lighter yellow building with the cupola is the old Fort Church , home to Curacao 's first Dutch Protestant congregation. In back of it is the Fort Church Museum . Besides congregational relics, the museum contains some of the Curacao 's oldest maps. The museum is open Monday through Friday 9-12, 2-5.

8. Wilhelminaplein (Wilhelmina Plaza): This pleasant plaza and adjacent park is dedicated to Queen Wilhelmina who ruled the Netherlands for half a century, from 1898 to 1948. The plaza, which is well shaded, has benches, a small bandstand and a children's playground. Cultural events are sometimes held here.

9. The Temple : Many tourists mistake this worn-looking synagogue built in the late 19th century as the oldest in the western hemisphere because it looks like it should be. It's not and there is constant talk of renovating it that never seem to go anywhere.

10. Marshe (The Old Market): It's noisy but the best place to sample local food is at these independently owned food stands. Seating is first come, first served at the long counters and small tables. Portions are generous, the prices the best in town and it's all safe to eat. But be here between 11-2 only, Monday through Friday.

11. Scharloo: Cross the Wilhelmina Bridge and begin a wonderful 1-2 hour walking tour of 19th century mansions in Scharlooweg, a once thriving Jewish community. The buildings were built with a neo-classical style, brighter colors and far more intricate detail than those of the Dutch. They set the standards that plantation houses all over the island would copy. Their intricate and elaborate details, windows, gables, various colored roofs, stairways and courtyards show more variety in these few blocks than you'll see on the rest of the ABCs combined. Amazingly, this area was almost in ruins until the late 1980s, but now that it's an important business district many buildings have been renovated.

Except for the public buildings open to everyone, you'll have to admire the rest from the outside. One of Curacao's most famous buildings is here, the green and white National Archives. It's appropriately nicknamed the "wedding cake" because the front of the building looks like it's covered in elaborate white frosting. Although it's Scharloo's best known building, it's also one of the youngest, built in 1916. Regrettably, on some buildings still awaiting renovation you'll see what locals fittingly call "wall cancer," the peeling away of the plaster facade by the salts in the sea stones and sand used in constructing the buildings.