

» A TOWN BY ANY OTHER NAME »

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» AUGUST 15, 2013

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Time Is of the Essence

SUMMER'S ALMOST OVER, and if you're like me, you're cramming as many activities into your schedule as physically possible. School's about to start, the kids need to be put back on a schedule, the car needs washing, I should have bought more cereal, the cat's getting fat ... etc. So many things going through your mind. You'll get everything done — you always do. But there's one thing you haven't done yet, and I'm here to tell you that if you miss out, you'll be absolutely kicking yourself in January when it's freezing out and you just want to get as far from your house (and your new laundry list of problems) as possible. So read this, then read the rest of the magazine, then go enter *American Way's* 12th Annual Road Warrior contest. You're almost out of time: The last tick of the clock on the last day of this month automatically closes the contest.

Turn to page 1 to read about all the prizes you'll take home if you're one of our five winners. But let me take this opportunity to tell you about my favorite part of



crowning you an *American Way* Road Warrior. You and a guest will be our guests when we photograph you for the March 15, 2014, issue of *AW*. And I'm here to tell you that you, your guest, my team and I will have the times of our lives. That's how it always works. This year, we're all going to Curaçao!

Now, the most common question one is asked after he announces that he's going to Curaçao is, "Where's that?" At least, it's the most common question that Americans ask. Not out of ignorance, nor out of geographic ineptitude. Many in the United States don't know about this island paradise because it is underpromoted. One-third of the ABC islands (with Aruba and Bonaire being the A and the B), Curaçao routinely plays second fiddle to the very well-promoted island of Aruba. But America's loss, at least in this case, has been Europe's gain.

As I wrote in the Oct. 15, 2010, issue of *AW* (seen below), Curaçao was one of five island nations in the Caribbean known as the Dutch Antilles. Late that year, Curaçao became an autonomous country, but because it was part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for so long, Europeans have been traveling there seemingly forever. The Dutch occupied the island in 1634 and literally have been vacationing there ever since. They've managed, over the centuries, to create an isle paradise that remarkably resembles the old country. The multi-colored buildings along Willemstad Harbor are the originals built in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Their rainbow edifices, coupled with their gabled rooflines and their placement along the banks of the harbor, uncannily resemble the Old Center and the grachtengordel (canal banks) in Amsterdam. The similarities between Curaçao and Amsterdam are noticeable down to even the roads and bridges. Curaçao's Queen Emma Bridge — built in 1888 as a series of 16 pontoon boats suspending wooden planks and connecting the Punda and Otrobanda districts — is a ringer for the famous Magere Brug, or "Skinny Bridge," over the Amstel River in Amsterdam.

Likenesses to Amsterdam aside, the island remains a tourism paradox. It's only 40 miles from Venezuela, yet there is little evidence of a Venezuelan presence, save for the copious amount of Venezuelan-brewed Polar Beer. More peculiar still are the nationalities of the tourists. Most of them meander along the shoreline and congregate

on restaurant patios speaking Dutch, German and Papiamentu. There's English spoken on the island, too, but with a decidedly Canadian dialect. There are scarcely any Americans vacationing there. The Dutch and Germans flew for 10 hours to get to this 171-square-mile island that's only three hours from Miami. And having been there twice myself, I'm here to tell you that the trip we have planned for you undoubtedly will make you want to return.

As if the photo-shoot trip alone isn't enough to make you want to enter, listen to these testimonials from last year's winners:

"I would encourage anyone to enter if they want to create a wonderful memory," says last year's second-prize winner, Jerry Swain. "As gifts to the winners, the prizes and miles were fine and appreciated, but the true gift was the friendships I made with the *AW* staff, creative team and fellow Road Warriors. The whole experience created a memory that cannot be taken away, and for that, I am most grateful."

"The best unexpected thing was the number of people who reconnected with me after seeing me in the magazine and in the in-flight video," says third-prize winner Ruban Selvakumar. (I forgot to mention: There'll be a video of you from the photo shoot on AA planes throughout the month of March.) "I didn't just hear from current friends and family, but also classmates from high school, undergrad and grad school, co-workers around the world and even a family friend who used to baby-sit me when I was 5 years old!"

And then, there are the practical applications of having your face on the cover of an international magazine. "When you forget your government-issued ID," says third-prize winner Flory Ellis, "you can whip out the *American Way* magazine."

OK, you made it to the end of this column. Now finish the magazine, then go enter. I'm here to tell you: You should hurry.


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