



# The Bonaire International Airport





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*Full service and growing*

According to Michael Nicolaas, CEO of the Bonaire International Airport, aviation on the small Dutch island of the Netherlands Antilles got its start 80 years ago, with the initial landing of a KLM flight at Bonaire's first airport, a small airstrip situated at Tra'i Montaña near Subi Blanku. In 1943, at the insistence of the American army, which was transshipping its soldiers to the war front via Bonaire, construction began on a new airport, at a new location: the Flamingo Airport, near Kralendijk, which began service in 1945.

Over the years, Bonaire continued to serve as a major hub for KLM, connecting all its European flights going to South America. Also over the years, the facilities at the Flamingo Airport have had to be continually upgraded and expanded in order to meet the demands of increasing air traffic as well as the ever-larger aircraft

flying onto and off of the island. The original passenger terminal was replaced in 1976, and the runway was widened and lengthened a number of times. Today, it has a length of 2,880 meters – long enough to serve the large, modern jetliners that carry international passengers and cargo.

In 2008, the Airport began implementing its 15-year master plan, ushering in a new era of expansion and







growth. In Phase 1, completed in 2011, the runway was completely renovated. Nicolaas says that Phase 2a is finished, and Phase 2b is imminent. “We just completed construction of a new \$5 million, state-of-the-art, new Air Traffic Control Tower,” he reports. “And now we can proceed to construct a new apron that can accommodate five wide-body aircrafts like an Airbus 330, or a 747.” Phase 3, will be the construction of a new passenger terminal.

Nicolaas says that, today, the Airport is looking at “different initiatives,” that will help increase traffic – both passenger and cargo – while also providing more services for its customers. “We see a strong growth in corporate operations,” he explains. “And that’s one of

## **AT A GLANCE**

**WHO:** The Bonaire International Airport

**WHAT:** Serving the island of Bonaire

**WHERE:** Kralendijk, Bonaire, N.V.

**WEBSITE:** [www.bonaireinternationalairport.com](http://www.bonaireinternationalairport.com)

the reasons that, very soon, we will be issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP), for international Fixed Base Operators (FBOs), to come and provide their services





at a new facility that we hope to develop for corporate jets and other types of general aviation.” (FBOs provide services such as fueling, hangaring, tie-down and parking, aircraft rental, aircraft maintenance, flight instruction, etc.)

“We have also been upgrading a new fire station, and we’re looking into creating other sorts of development for the airport, like a maintenance, repair, and overhaul facility (MRO),” Nicolaas continues. “So, there are quite a few developments going on at this present time at the Airport to make sure that we are well-positioned to manage the growth that we expect both in passengers and cargo, but also in other types of activities, like the FBOs, corporate jets, and the MRO that will be coming to Bonaire in the coming years.”

While Nicolaas says that capital improvements that are considered necessary for airport safety - such as the new air traffic control tower and the new runway apron - are financed through grants from the Dutch Government, developments such as a new passenger terminal, or an FBO, will have to be partly financed by private investors. “We’re looking for public/private partnerships - PPPs,” Nicolaas says. “The Bonaire Air-





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- Flight information and
- Alerting services.

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- The publication of a Dutch Caribbean Aeronautical Information Publication containing thorough details of regulations, procedures and other aeronautical information of Curaçao, Bonaire, St. Martin, Saba and St. Eustatius;
- The publication of information which alerts aircraft pilots of potential hazards along a flight route or at a location that could affect the safety of the flight for all the islands of the Dutch Caribbean.

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Throughout the years, DC-ANSP has not only maintained high quality of safety and efficiency, but has also continuously improved this along with service performance, human resources and organizational development with the ultimate aim to transform Air Traffic Management performance in the Curaçao airspace.



port has quite a bit of property that we can develop with different investors to make most of these projects economically viable.”

Aside from its capital projects, the Airport’s day-to-day operations are financed by the airlines that serve Bonaire and the passengers who travel on them. Among the international carriers are KLM, the oldest with six frequencies per week; TUI, flying out of Holland; Delta, out of Atlanta; and United out of Houston and Newark. Insel Air and Divi Divi Air both fly between Bonaire and Curacao, another island in the Netherlands Antilles chain. And Nicolaas reports that the International Air Transport Association (IATA) has recently approved a modest increase in airport fees for the next five years in order to help support those operations.

But he also maintains that in order not to put too much burden of the Airport’s costs on its customers, it needs to devise different ways to raise more non-aeronautical revenues. And some of his proposals are eye-opening. “We’re very focused on how we can further use the Airport properties to bring the community to the airport by creating other types of amenities that

are not only used by passengers, but also used by the public in general,” he says. “For example, we’re looking to construct a bowling alley at the airport. We have the space, so why don’t we bring some people to the airport to bowl? We’re looking for partners to do that.”

Nicolaas also suggests that the Airport could host a hotel and convention center as part of a greater airport city and that Bonaire is particularly well-positioned for this type of growth. “The opportunity that Bonaire Airport is offering is to be part of Holland, not just part of the region as a Caribbean airport,” he declares, “and because you’re part of Holland, you can easily do business with Europe. If you want to be part of any European type of exchange business, Bonaire is the place to be. Another thing is that Bonaire is in the unique situation of having a Class 1 runway, with the availability of space to develop. Also, we’re so suitably located from the U.S. – it’s only a two and a half hour flight from Atlanta, or four hours from Newark.”

Eighty years after the first flight touched down on this small, Dutch island in the southern Caribbean, Bonaire International Airport is poised for another period





of growth and development. And it is actively looking for like-minded partners who are as intrepid and confident as its original aviators and risk takers. “Most times you look at an airport and say ‘Where do I fit?’ because most of the opportunities have been taken, already,” Nicolaas states. “Bonaire is in a favorable

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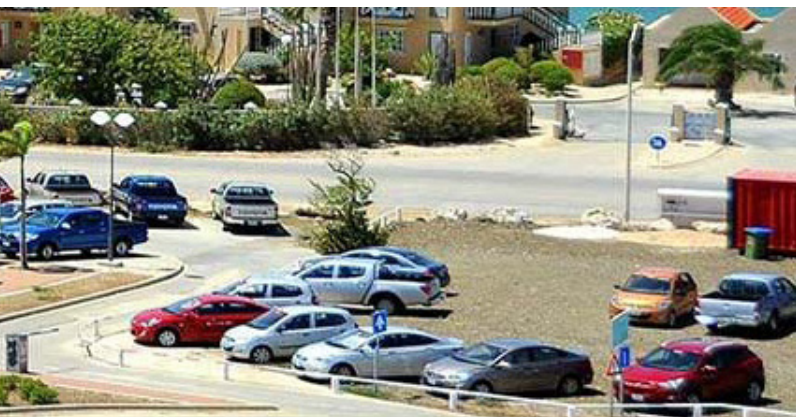
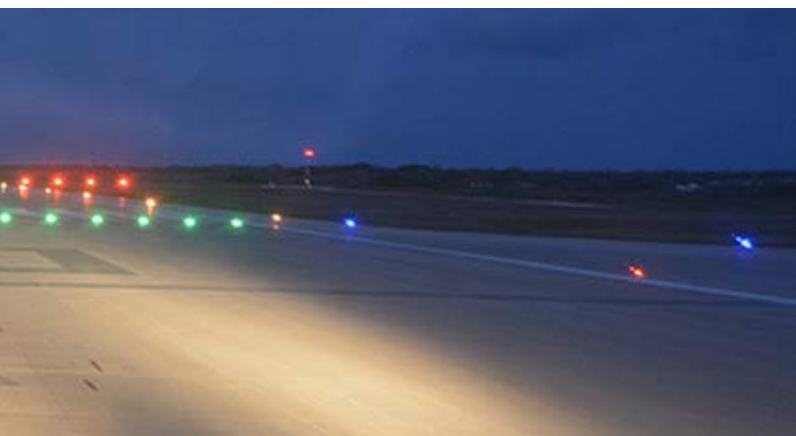
position in that we are developing. And we are looking for people to develop with us and make this sustainable. We invite people to come and develop the airport with us in a smart way that becomes a win-win for all the stakeholders.”

## PREFERRED VENDORS

**DC-ANSP** - Dutch Caribbean Air Navigation Service Provider (DC-ANSP) is an Air Navigation Service Pro-

vider which is responsible for the Air Traffic Services within the Curaçao’s Flight Information Region. These services consist of: accompanying planes while airborne, airport assistance, providing flight information, and alerting services to mainly Curaçao and Bonaire. DC-ANSP was first founded as the Netherlands Antilles Air Traffic Control (NAATC) which was incorporated in Curaçao on February 9th, 2005, and became operational on April 1st 2006. DC-ANSP operates under the





rules set down by the Curaçao Civil Aviation Authority which are developed using International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) guidelines. As for the services rendered on Bonaire, it operates according to the BES-legislation. [www.dc-ansp.org](http://www.dc-ansp.org)

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