

Progressive and Sustainable in the Caribbean: Bucuti and Tara Beach Resorts LGBT-friendly and Green

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There are always enough chairs and shade on Bucuti's portion of the beautiful Eagle Beach! A low density of guests ensures no annoying overcrowding on the beach or anywhere else at the resort.

I love the Caribbean, from the Virgin Islands (British and US) to the Antilles and the Bahamas, and over my lifetime I've seen many of the gorgeous isles that populate that special sea between North and South America. What strikes me every time I visit is how each locale is so different – in architecture, cuisine, and people. Some islands have been settled for hundreds of years, and some not until recently. Some have a French influence, some British, others mixtures of African, native American Indian and Spanish.



Bucuti and Tara Resorts entranceway.

But no matter the culture you're exploring, whenever you step off a plane in the Caribbean, you are **entering a fragile ecosystem** that in recent years has taken a beating, from population increases to rapid tourism fluctuations, to Mother Nature's intensifying weather (due to climate change). While plenty of properties are only contributing to the problem, polluting local ecosystems and generating (literally) tons of waste a month, there are some real stand-outs that are quietly leading the charge to **preserve the beauty that we travel to see** – the good news is that they are beginning to be followed.



Why not get married on one of the world's most beautiful beaches? Or maybe renew your vows with your partner; I took this shot post-swim for a wedding that was scheduled for that evening. Later I saw the couple getting hitched. Simple and gorgeous!

Case in point is the beautiful beachfront **Bucuti and Tara Suites Beach Resort**, situated among the low-rise developments on **Aruba's world-recognized Eagle Beach**. (Don't take my word for it, this beach, with perfect white sand and mellow, ideal-blue seas is a "top ten beach in the world" knockout according to USA Today [and others](#).)



An ozone pool (which won't hurt local wildlife if they happen upon it by accident) just steps from the beach gives a break from the salt water, and the giant circular loungers are ideal for a nap in the sun (or shade).

Ewald Beimens is the mastermind behind both the resort's long-standing green operations and its [extremely high ratings on TripAdvisor](#) (it's the highest-rated in Aruba). I was incredibly impressed with **Ewald's commitment to the environment and customer happiness** (and I'm not the only one, [he is slated to speak](#) in Paris at the **Green Globe World Summit** at the end of May.)

And best of all? **The resort is kid-free**, so no annoying whippersnappers in the pool, splashing your vacation novel, or running into you on the beach, shovels in hand. I like kids, but their vociferous ways are not entertaining to me when I'm on vacation – at **Bucuti**, I could hear the ocean's gentle waves no matter where I was in the resort, with only adult conversation (much of it European), birdsong and footsteps to interrupt the ocean music. I think the attention to keeping it quiet plays heavily into how incredibly relaxing this resort is.



A relaxed couple walks into the new building which houses the Tara suites after some time on the beach. Bucuti and Tara is adults-only and LGBT-friendly, so cool!

Bucuti is also one of the few resorts in the Caribbean that is **openly GLBT-friendly**, which made me feel as if I were among friends; while harassment of our gay and lesbian friends isn't uncommon in the islands, there was **NONE** of that at Bucuti, and all the local staff are entirely cool with affection between any two people. The resort also offers same-sex weddings. Kudos to Bucuti for its open-minded progressivism!



Exercise in the fresh air (but keep cool in the thatched-roof shade). I ran on the beach and then used this area to stretch and do some strength training out of the sand.

Back to the green, I love that Ewald has been working on lowering the impact of his resort for going on twenty years, and that other nearby hotels are now looking to him for advice on how to cut down on consumption and waste, meaning Bucuti makes a difference in the health of the Caribbean (and specifically the **sea turtles that nest on the beachfront!**) but now those good green vibes are travelling around the island.



All the plantings at Bucuti are native species, which means they don't require extra water, pesticides or herbicides (which would run right into the beach!). And they are gorgeous too!

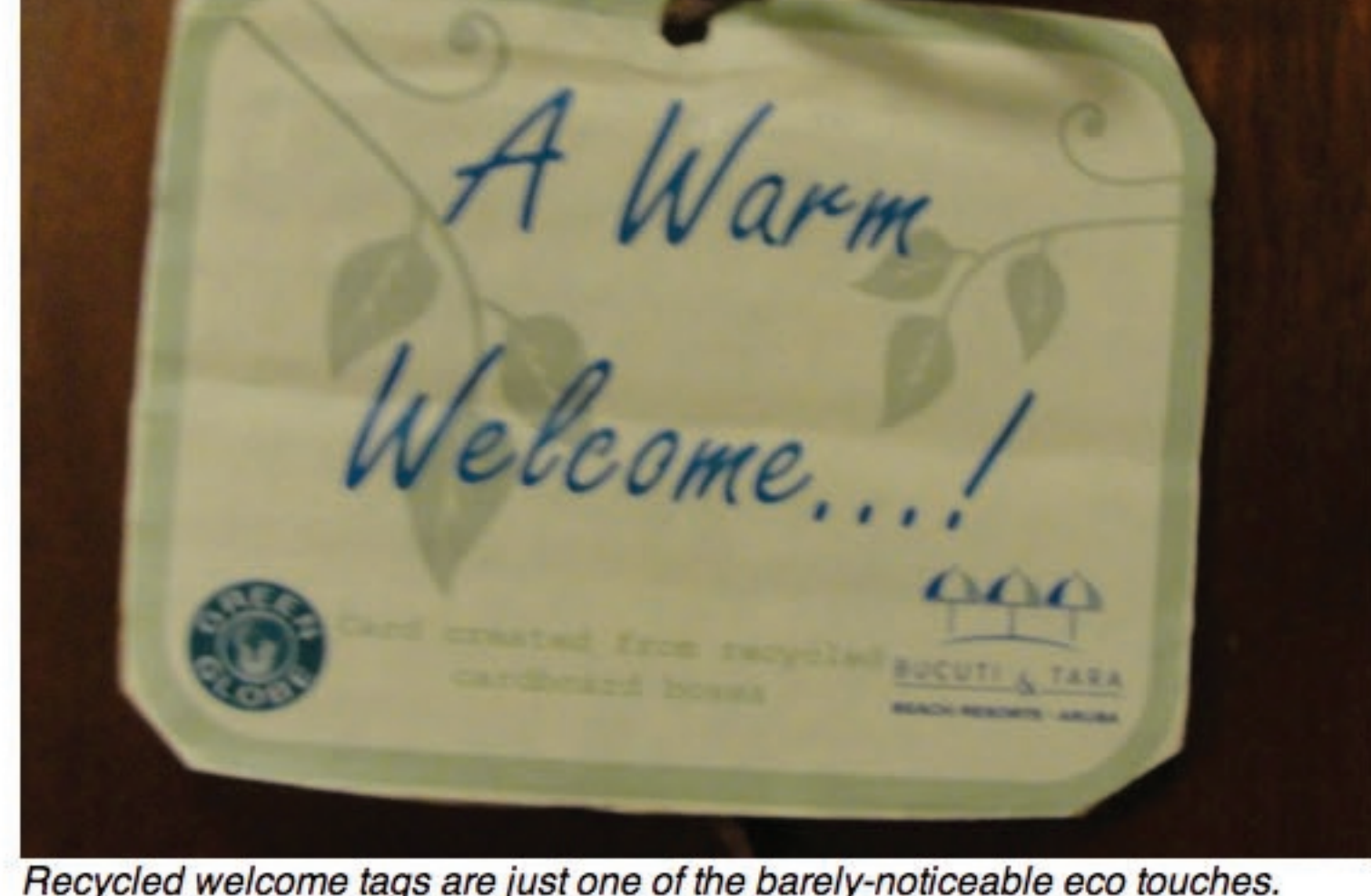
Here's just a sampling of the resort's sustainable steps (there are LOTS more, which I got a chance to check out when I was there, but here are just some):

- Switching to green, **eco-friendly types of paper** for its resort marketing materials, by which Bucuti & Tara Beach Resorts have been able to save 82 trees, as well as reduce waste water by 37,617 gallons, solid waste by 2,315 lb and greenhouse gases by 7,936 lb.
- Ensuring we have the **lowest per-occupied-room electricity usage** of all hotels in Aruba. (Source: Central Bank of Aruba study by Deloitte)
- Reducing our carbon footprint by **sourcing local suppliers and products** made on Aruba.
- Solar panels** heating water for guest rooms and the laundry.
- Water reducers, which cut down water flow by 60% in all showers and faucets, and low-flow toilets.
- Sink and shower **water treated and reused** in the gardens.
- Bulk purchasing** and use of in-room dispensers delivering genuine Aruba Aloe freshly made shampoos, conditioners and lotions instead of individual packages in plastic containers.
- Using **bio-degradable** and environmentally friendly detergents.



The view from the verandah of my room.

I had an excellent time during my stay at Bucuti and Tara Suites, and loved that the rooms didn't stink of fake "clean" smells that come from chemical cleaners, loved that every room had a verandah with a view, loved that it was so uncrowded (even though the resort, apparently, was full), and appreciated most of all **the energy and love that Ewald put into his resort AND the health of the surrounding animals, plants and people**. Because I'd like to be one of those guests that comes back in years to come and find the water, sand and native flora as gorgeous as when I visited, the result of true stewardship of a place.



Recycled welcome tags are just one of the barely-noticeable eco touches.

To read more about ethical travel adventures for women, check out the brand-new [Eco Chick Escapes](#), a new site by Starre Vartan, founder and editor of the award-winning [Eco-Chick.com](#) and author of [The Eco Chick Guide to Life: How to Be Fabulously Green!](#)



Enjoying a check-in champagne in the reception area. Being green doesn't mean giving up the bubbly!

Disclosure: I travelled to Bucuti and Tara Beach Resorts courtesy of its owner, Ewald Beimens, but without expectation of a review, positive or otherwise. All opinions shared here are very much my own, and I have pretty high standards!

All images by Starre Vartan for Eco Chick Escapes.