

Abacos

Yachting and the Abacos go together like wind and sail; the chain is known as 'The Sailing Capital of the World.' Visitors hire boats to wander the boomerang-shaped chain that has 130-mile-long Abaco, the nation's third-largest settlement, and many smaller cays stretching 200 miles from Walker's Cay in the northwest to Cherokee Sound in the southeast.

Most folks live in Abaco's Marsh Harbour, a quiet working town with a small tourist center, or on the Loyalist Cays of Elbow, Man O' War, Great Guana and Green Turtle. Tight-knit families and expats live in colourful gingerbread houses adorned with white fascia, and painted flowers, fish and turtles. Their bloomfilled gardens are framed by picket fences which line the narrow streets where cars are banned and people go about their day on foot, golf cart or bicycle. The cays vary in size and character, but all have glorious white-sand beaches and little cottages to rent, so that you can happily play at island living.

Coral-reef gardens beckon; walk off village beaches like Great Guana Cay for easy snorkeling, head to deeper waters for fabulous sportfishing, and experience the marine marvels of Fowl Cay National Reserve among special diving sites.

The inshore waters of the Sea of Abaco are also home to bottlenose dolphins. There is Abacos National Park, made for hikers and bird-watchers seeking endangered Bahama parrots, plus the exuberant onshore fun of sailing regattas and summer *goombay* festivities.

HIGHLIGHTS

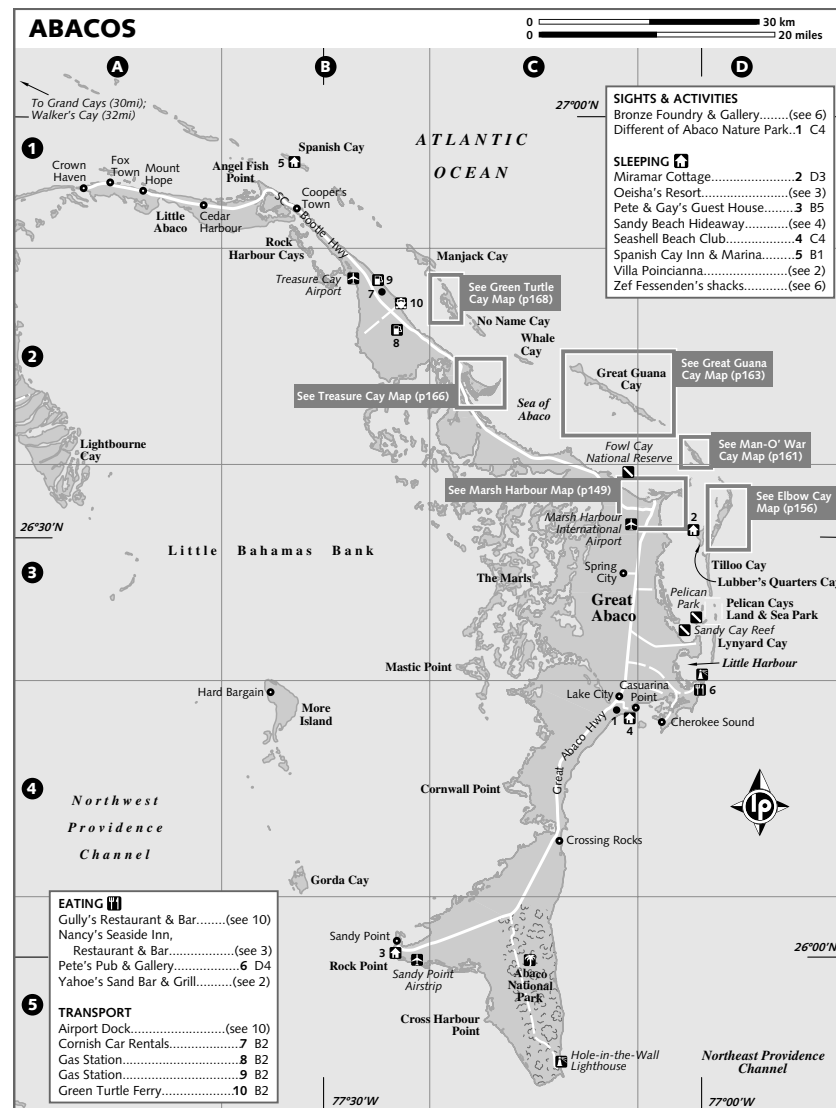
- Snorkel or dive with stingrays, angelfish and flounder at **Pelican Cays Land & Sea Park** (p160), followed with a cold beer at nearby **Pete's Pub & Gallery** (p164)
- Whiz down Elbow Cay's length on a golf cart and stroll pretty **Hope Town** (p155)
- Lounge in the brilliant azure seas off the dazzling white crescent of **Treasure Cay Beach** (p165), one of the world's top 10 beaches
- Hire a boat and head for **Tilloo Cay** (p160) to spot the rare and beautiful tropicbird
- Sip a rum-laced Goombay Smash in the affable and tiny **Miss Emily's Blue Bee Bar** (p171) on Green Turtle Cay



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 242

■ POPULATION: 14,815

■ AREA: 650 SQ MILES



History

After decimating the Lucayan Indian population on 'Habacoa,' early Spanish explorers moved on to more fruitful lands. It was not until the American Revolution, when numerous loyalists left the newly independent USA in the 1700s and settled in the Abacos, that a thriving population began.

Their names linger on today in quaint communities whose residents cherish their past and independence. On the eve of independence in 1972, Loyalist Abacoians petitioned the Queen to be made a British crown colony, separate from the Bahamas. Upon refusal, some even contemplated a revolution. Each cay still follows its own

Protestant church, but the islanders share a strong Christian ethic.

The Loyalist settlers were mostly merchants and craftspeople involved in trading, boatbuilding and salvaging shipwrecks, and they became relatively wealthy.

This island group was severely affected by Hurricane Floyd in 1999 and Jeanne and Frances in 2004. However, rebuilding began immediately after the hurricanes passed, although roads remain potholed and many outlying villages still bear visible damage.

National Parks

Most of Abaco is smothered with scrub and pine forest, good for bird-watching and nature hikes and popular with locals hunting wild boar.

Off the west shore of central Great Abaco is a vast wetlands area, the Marls, which provides a vital nursery for young fish and invertebrates, plus an important habitat for ducks, egrets and herons.

The Abacos has four national parks, notably Pelican Cays Land & Sea Park (p160), which preserves the barrier islands and coral reefs south of Tilloo Cay; also Tilloo Cay National Reserve (p39); the 20,500-acre Abaco National Park (p165), which protects the native habitat of the endangered Bahama parrot and other wildlife; and Black Sound Cay National Reserve (p39), which has mangrove habitats loved by birds.

Getting There & Away

Most travelers to the Abacos fly into Marsh Harbour's International Airport, about 3 miles southeast of Marsh Harbour; others arrive on their own boats, or on the weekly mail boat from Nassau.

Getting Around

You'll need your own transport if you want to explore the main island outside of Marsh Harbour, where a car-, bicycle- and motorbike-rental agency is fortunately based (see p155). An excellent ferry service links the mainland and the major cays, while boats can also be easily hired to explore further afield. Golf carts are used on all inhabited cays.

MARSH HARBOUR

pop 5314

This quiet town has worked hard to establish itself as a small tourism and boating

centre for visitors to the Abacos. Despite a fairly unsophisticated demeanor and outer pockets of obvious poverty, the town is a pleasant enough gateway to the island's eclectic and charming set of cays.

Many expats have settled here. The wealthiest have their homes along Pelican Shores Rd; at Eastern Shores, lined with beaches and shady casuarinas; and on Sugar Loaf Cay. By contrast, African-Bahamian residents are found northwest of Marsh Harbour in Dundas Town, a tumbledown suburb with a high crime rate (at least by Bahamian standards).

Marsh Harbour, long-reliant on sponging, fishing and shipbuilding, boomed in the mid-'80s, thanks to drug money and, more recently, because of tourism. Boating is still hugely important to the local economy, as is the steady stream of visiting yachties.

A number of hurricanes have knocked the town back over the years, most recently in 2004, taking out necessary visitor infrastructure such as marinas and boat yards; these are yet again being rebuilt.

Orientation

Marsh Harbour is situated on a peninsula just off the Great Abaco Hwy, the main road running part of the length of Great Abaco.

At the southern edge of town, at the junction with SC Bootle Hwy, Great Abaco Hwy becomes Don McKay Blvd, which leads past the clinic, post office and leading stores to Queen Elizabeth Dr, in the heart of town.

SC Bootle Hwy leads northwest to Treasure Cay.

Queen Elizabeth Dr runs through Marsh Harbour's tourist area, heading west to Dundas Town and east towards Bay St. Bay St leads past the Abaco Beach Resort and ends at Albury's Ferry Dock.

Information

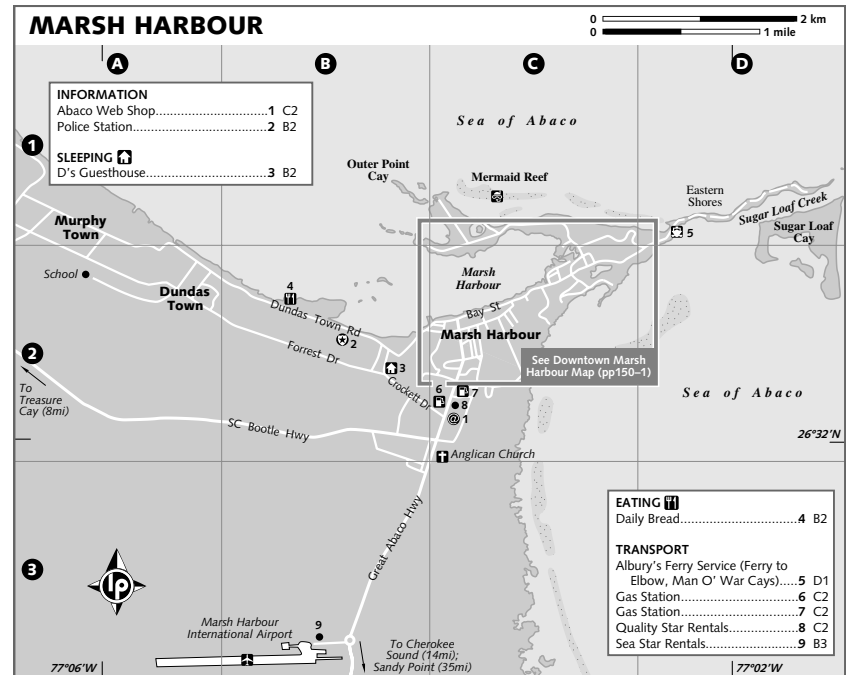
BOOKSTORES

Solomon's Supercenter (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2602; off Queens Elizabeth Dr; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 2pm Sun) Sells a few novels.

EMERGENCY

Emergency (☎ 919, 911)

Police (Map p149; ☎ 242-367-3500; Dundas Town Rd)



INTERNET ACCESS

Abaco Web Shop (Map p149; ☎ 242-367-0116; Great Abaco Hwy; per 30min \$5; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Sat, 4-7pm Sun)

Out Island Inter.net (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-3006; accounts@abacoinet.com; Queen Elizabeth Dr; per 20min \$5; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) It stays open later on some Friday evenings and from 9am to 2pm some Saturdays.

INTERNET RESOURCES

www.abacolife.com The online version of local magazine *Abaco Life*.

www.go-abacos.com The official Abaco website with good practical information.

www.oii.net Contains boat-rental, accommodations and restaurant information.

MEDIA

Abaconian (www.abaconian.com) The island's monthly newspaper.

Abaco Journal (http://oii.net/journal) A monthly news journal.

Abaco Life (www.abacolife.com; \$2) A quarterly island magazine carrying information of interest to residents and travelers.

Radio Abaco (☎ 242-367-2935; fax 242-367-4531)

The station broadcasts on 93.5FM.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Family Medical Centre (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2295, after hr 242-359-6569; Don McKay Blvd; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat)

Greater Abaco Dental Clinic (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-4070; Don McKay Blvd)

Love's Pharmacy (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-3292; fax 242-367-3292; Don McKay Blvd; ☎ 8:30am-5pm Mon-Fri)

MONEY

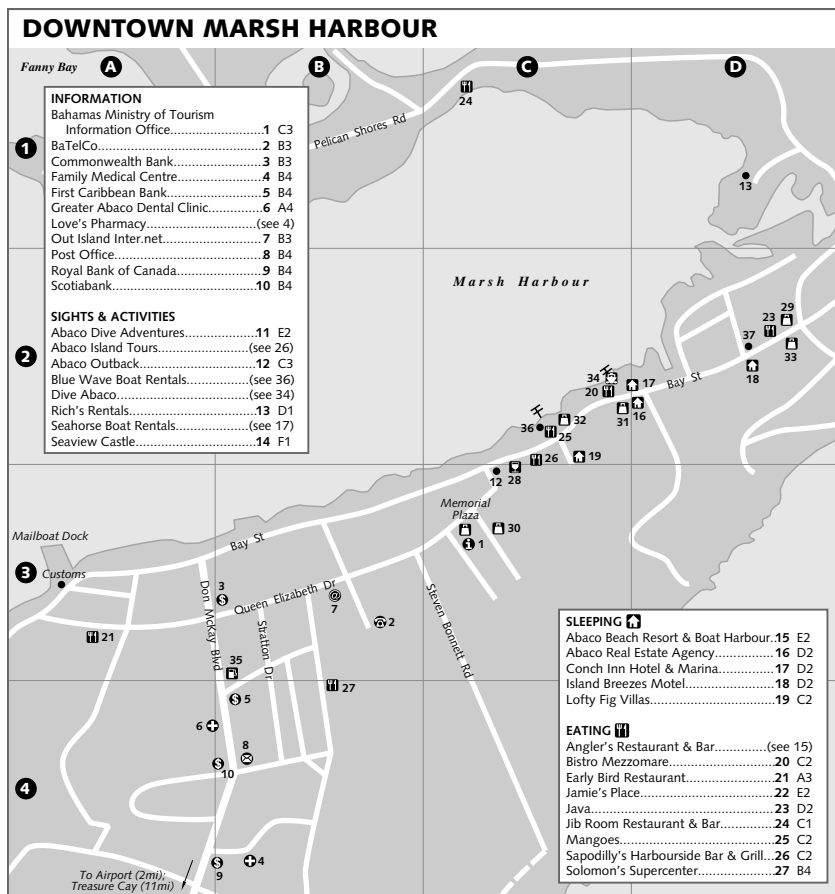
All the listed banks have ATMs.

Commonwealth Bank (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2370; fax 242-367-2372; Queen Elizabeth Dr; ☎ 8:30am-3pm Mon-Thu, to 4:30pm Fri)

First Caribbean International Bank (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2166; fax 242-367-2156; Don McKay Blvd; ☎ 9:30am-3pm Mon-Thu, to 4:30pm Fri)

Royal Bank of Canada (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2420; Don McKay Blvd; ☎ 9:30am-3pm Mon-Thu, to 4:30pm Fri)

Scotiabank (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2142; fax 242-367-2565; Don McKay Blvd; ☎ 9:30am-3pm Mon-Thu, to 4:30pm Fri)

**POST**

Post office (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2571; Don McKay Blvd)

TELEPHONE

Public telephone booths are located in several places downtown. There's also a booth just outside the office of **BaTelCo** (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2200).

TOURIST INFORMATION

Ministry of Tourism (www.go-abacos.com) Very useful website for details on entertainment, special events and accommodations.

Abaco Tourist Office (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-3067; fax 242-367-3068; Memorial Plaza, Queen Elizabeth Dr; ☎ 9am-5:30pm Mon-Fri)

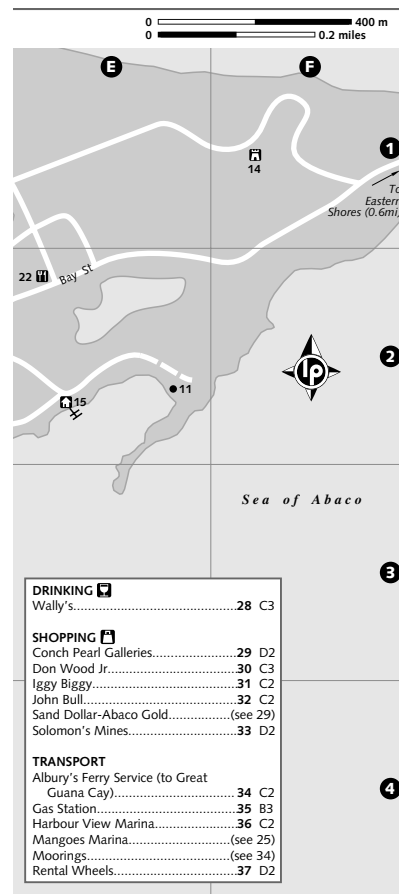
Sights

Marsh Harbour is a little lacking in terms of sights. On a hill east of town, the canary yellow **Seaview Castle** (Map pp150-1) overlooks Marsh Harbour. It was once the home of Evans Cottman, author of *Out Island Doctor*. A good mile from the town, it is not open to the public.

Activities

Although there are few boat tours on offer from Marsh Harbour, local ferries are excellent, making it easy to visit different cays and their idiosyncratic dive and snorkel sites.

There are also a large number of rental boats available.



Dive operators also offer snorkel trips (\$50).

Abaco Dive Adventures (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2963; www.abacodiveadventures.com; Abaco Beach Resort, Bay St) has two-tank dives (\$110), twilight and night dives (\$126), and Sandy Point wall and reef dives with lunch (\$189). Cave dives (\$210) include Nitrox for decompression.

Dive Abaco (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2787; www.diveabaco.com; Conch Inn Hotel & Marina, Bay St) offers two-tank dives (\$90) and two-tank shark dives (\$115) with tank refills (\$50).

SPORTFISHING

The average price for bonefishing commences at around \$250/400 per half-/full-day excursion.

JR's Bonefish (☎ 242-366-3058; www.jrsbonefishabaco.com; Casuarina Point) takes in three major fishing locations on its trips, and recommends bringing rare Crazy Charlies or Small Hermit Crab flies with you to the Bahamas.

Justin Sands Bonefishing (☎ 242-367-3526; www.bahamasvg.com/justfish.html; Marsh Harbour) is run by Cpt Justin Sands, a past Abaco Bonefish Champion, which means he knows where to find the slippery critters you desire.

Errol H Thurston Jnr (☎ 242-375-9910; loverboyliit@hotmail), or 'Loverboy,' will take you deep-water, shallow-water and shark fishing (and hold off on the romancing).

BOAT & KAYAKING EXCURSIONS

Dive Abaco (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2787; www.diveabaco.com; Conch Inn Hotel & Marina, Bay St; cruise \$25) welcomes you to gaze at Abaco's spectacular sunsets on a cruise; rum and fruit punches intensify the sensual pleasure. Minimum numbers apply.

Abaco Outback (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-5358; VHF Channel 16; www.abacoutback.com; Bay St; trips from \$95) proffers relaxing half- and full-day kayak trips to serene spots where you can snorkel off deserted beaches looking for sea turtles, explore tangled mangroves, spot wild orchids and learn about native plants.

BOAT RENTALS

Sailboats and motorboats can be rented at most marinas. Demand often exceeds supply, so make reservations early! These operators can be reached on VHF Channel 16. Rates do not include fuel and gas for cooking, but boats are provided with

DRINKING

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SHOPPING

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DIVING & SNORKELING

There are some tremendous and easy snorkeling sites to enjoy in the Abacos. **Sandy Cay Reef** in Pelican Cays Land & Sea Park is renowned for its population of spotted eagle rays and huge stingrays, **Fowl Cay Reef** in Fowl Cay National Reserve for friendly groupers, and **Pelican Park** in Pelican Cays Land & Sea Park for eagle rays and sea turtles.

A huge variety of dive sites take in wrecks, walls, caverns and coral kingdoms, including **Bonita Wreck**, a WWII wreck populated by groupers that like to be hand-fed; **Cathedral**, a swim-through cavern with rays and parrotfish; and **Tarpon Cave**, a 50ft drop-off with smiling moray eels.

THE BAHAMAS BILLFISH CHAMPIONSHIP

This renowned annual sportfishing competition tours the Family Islands and attracts hundreds of international and national teams.

The championship started in 1968 as an informal contest, set up by regular competitors in individual Bimini, Cat Cay, Chub Cay and Walker's Cay challenges. Since 1973 the Bahamas Billfish Championship has run consecutive yearly competitions including as many as six tournaments covering Bimini, the Berry Islands, the Abacos, Cat Cay, Paradise Island and North Eleuthera.

Running for over 30 years, the Bahamas Billfish Championship runs through April to the end of June. Anglers can fish any or all, the tournaments with cumulative points determining the overall Bahamas Billfish Champions.

In 2005 the Abacos leg of the tournament included several top sportfishing spots off south Abaco, Spanish Cay, central Abaco, Treasure Cay and Boat Harbour on the mainland.

Registration costs \$1000, and entry to each tournament is \$1500. Contact the **organizers** (☎ 954-920-5577; www.bahamasbillfish.com; 2 Oakwood Blvd, Suite 195, Hollywood, fl 33020, USA) in the US for more information.

communication and safety equipment. Local weather reports can be heard on FM radio 93.5 and VHF marine channel 68.

Blue Wave Boat Rentals (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-3910; www.bluewaverentals.com; Harbour View Marina) charges \$150/375/700 per day/three days/week for a 21ft Dusky, a favored family craft. They also have 26ft Paramounts for \$200/525/950 per day/three days/week.

Seahorse Boat Rentals (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2513; www.seahorseboatrentals.com; Abaco Beach Resort, Bay St) will rent a 15ft Boston Whaler for \$130/560 per day/week or a 20-footer for \$190/910 per day/week. It also has a 26-footer for hire at \$275/1295 per day/week.

Rich's Rentals (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2742; fax 242-367-2682; off Pelican Shore's Rd, Marsh Harbour) charges \$100/270/595 per day/three days/week for a 21-footer and \$150/380/850 per day/three days/week for a 26ft boat.

Tours

Abaco Outback (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-5358; VHF Channel 16; www.abacoutback.com; Bay St) has off-road cycling through pine forests (\$70); hikes to the southernmost point of Great Abaco and a blue hole (\$95) or nature walks in search of the native Bahama parrot (\$60).

Abaco Island Tours (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2936; www.abacoislandtours.com; Sapodilly's Harbour-side Bar & Grill, Bay St) has day tours to Marsh Harbour (\$19) and various cays including Elbow and Man O' War Cay (\$38) with a stop at the Albury Brothers boat-building facility. Diving, kayaking and snorkeling activities can also be organized.

Festivals & Events

Check out the www.go-abacos.com website or **Bahamas Ministry of Tourism** (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-3067; www.bahamas.com; Memorial Plaza, Queen Elizabeth Dr; ☎ 9am-5:30pm Mon-Fri) for up-to-date information on these and many other events.

FEBRUARY

Abaco Art Festival Showcases a range of Bahamian artists and their colorful subjects.

Great Abaco Triathlon Tests the mettle of teeth-gritting competitors in Marsh Harbour.

APRIL

Bahamas Billfish South Abaco Championship (www.bahamasbillfish.com) Five days of chasing fish and a record or two.

Bahamas White Marlin Open Abaco (☎ 242-367-2158) Another fishy record-chaser.

Abaco Anglers Fishing Tournament Yup, another one for fishing-fans!

JUNE

Goombay Summer Festival Party, party, party at Marsh Harbour's Junkanoo Rush, which runs through July as well.

Little Abaco Homecoming Welcomes locals back with celebrations.

Bahamas Billfish South Abaco Championship Stage 4 (www.bahamasbillfish.com) Six days of chasing Stage 4's record at Treasure Cay.

JULY

Abaco Regatta (www.rtia.net) Held over a week, this great regatta commences with the 'cheeseburger in paradise' pre-race party; festivities really jump off after the final chew.

Sleeping

There are some great rental units and cottages on the island cays, where many visitors head after a quick stop in Marsh Harbour. As well as the accommodations listed in this guide, try contacting **Abaco Real Estate Agency** (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2719; www.abacobahamas.com; Bay St) or visit www.abacovacations.com.

Island Breezes Motel (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-3776; fax 242-367-4179; E Bay St; r \$90; ☎ ☎ ☎) This small roadside property with eight modestly furnished rooms is a five-minute walk to the town's small tourist center. The location makes it a good budget option and rates include taxes.

D's Guesthouse (Map p149; ☎ 242-367-3980, 242-554-8212; Forest Dr; r incl taxes \$75; ☎ ☎) On the west edge of town, the four one-bedroom units here have simple and plain furnishings with TV, refrigerator, microwave oven and coffeepot. The place is well maintained, but take care after dark in this neighborhood.

Lofty Fig Villas (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2681; loftyfig@mymailstation.com; Bay St; r \$110; ☎ ☎ ☎) These six canary yellow units sit very conveniently in the middle of town and are a two-minute walk from the Conch Inn Hotel & Marina and adjacent to a number of eateries and bars. Surrounding a small pool, the cottages need a little TLC, but are light and pleasantly decorated in tropical colors, and come with kitchenettes and fridges.

Conch Inn Hotel & Marina (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-4000; www.go-abacos.com/conchinn; Bay St; r \$130; ☎ ☎ ☎) Also right in the center of the town's restaurant and bar area, this busy but informal marina complex is popular with yachties and local expats. Newly renovated, the smallish but comfortable rooms come with cable TV and a small patio. There is a good restaurant on site, along with a lively and convivial bar, and small freshwater pool.

Abaco Beach Resort & Boat Harbour (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2158; www.abacorort.com; Bay St; r \$205; ☎ ☎ ☎) This large resort has a Hawaiian feel, with tall palms and a small beach, while fishing tournaments keep the place busy. Rooms are smallish, but furnished with rich tropical colors and solid wood furniture; dehumidifiers and balconies help on sultry nights. There is also a kiddies' pool, tennis courts and dive shop, plus the Angler's Inn (p154).

Eating & Drinking

There's a good selection of cafés and bars across the Abacos, while Marsh Harbour restaurants also host regular musical bashes.

BUDGET

Daily Bread (Map p149; Dundas Town Rd; mains \$5-8; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat) Next to the Kingdom Wash launderette in Dundas Town, this place is named in honor of Christian gods, who have certainly blessed these cooks. Here you will find the best ribs in town (try the Kingdom Ribs and fried rice combo) and the honey-garlic wings are also lip-smackingly good.

Early Bird Restaurant (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-5310; Unit 6, Queen Elizabeth Dr; mains \$3-8; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) It opens early for workers heading to the ferries and businesspeople heading off to the airport. Tuna, corned beef or sardines with grits is the dish of choice.

Java (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-5523; Bay St; mains \$4-6; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) A nice little café serving scrumptious sugar-crust donuts, cinnamon buns and great coffee. As you sip away, enjoy the decorative, bright and colorful paintings, artworks and quilts, and the relaxed atmosphere.

MIDRANGE

Jamie's Place (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2880; Bay St; mains \$7-18; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This spotless, light and cheerful family joint serves takeaways and luscious homemade ice creams. A mix of American and Bahamian dishes includes 'scram' eggs and pancakes, fish dishes, a refreshing tropical salad of lettuce, pineapple, grapes and crushed walnuts, and great veggie omelettes.

Sapodilly's Harbourside Bar & Grill (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-3498; Bay St; mains \$12-25; ☎ lunch & dinner) The tree-shaded deck welcomes drinkers and diners throughout the day. Great burgers and crunchy fish appetizers satisfy, as do the pastas and fish dinners. A pool table and two-for-one cocktails during happy hour bring in the customers, as does the live calypso on Friday and Saturday nights.

Bistro Mezzomare (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-4444; Conch Inn Hotel & Marina, Bay St; mains \$8-25; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) For lunch, grab a tasty Angus beef burger topped with bacon, onions and cheese. The chef's dinner specials include grilled chicken with sun-dried tomatoes and

basil, plates of fettucine with marinara sauce, and seafood sautéed in a garlic, white wine and light tomato sauce. Yum.

Jib Room Restaurant & Bar (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2700; Marsh Harbour Marina, Pelican Shore's Rd; mains \$10-20; ☺ lunch daily, dinner Wed & Sat) This very casual waterside place has BBQ nights with live music and dancing. There are rib BBQs on Wednesday and steak BBQs on Saturday.

Wally's (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2074; Bay St; mains \$11-25; ☺ lunch Mon-Sat, dinner Fri & Sat) Head here for live music on weekends and Wally's Special, the lethal house cocktail.

TOP END

Angler's Inn (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2158, US ☎ 800-468-4799; Abaco Beach Resort & Boat Harbour, Bay St; mains \$20-35; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) This elegant waterside restaurant serves fine food. Try the superb island seafood cake, grilled shrimp garnished with avocado chutney and red curry sauce, or delicate coconut mango shrimp. The resort bar hosts music many nights in the holiday season.

Mangoes (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2366; Bay St; mains \$18-25; ☺ lunch & dinner) International dishes with a Bahamian twist are served on a shaded deck overlooking the marina. Fish and mango combinations are delicious, and desserts are simply wicked – a favorite among Bahamians and anyone with taste buds. Hurricane Libby is the house cocktail. There is live music a couple of nights a week.

Solomon's Supercenter (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2602; off Queens Elizabeth Dr; ☺ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 2pm Sun) This is an excellent supermarket and general store, certainly the best on the Abacos. Even vegetarians crying out for protein will find a few soya dishes.

Shopping

Conch Pearl Galleries (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-0137; Royal Harbour Village, Bay St) Enjoy Bahamian and resident artists' works depicting nature, fauna and seascapes in acrylics and oils.

Don Wood Jr (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-3681; adjacent to Memorial Plaza) Self-proclaimed 'Carver, Sailor, Rum Barrel Bailer,' Don sculpts wood, gold and other metals into furniture, earrings and desktop ornaments such as turtles and swordfish. He often works outside his shack, with his four-legged pal alongside, and enjoys a chat.

Iggy Biggy (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-3596; Bay St) Across from the Conch Inn Hotel &

Marina, this Bahamian chain sells resort clothing, T-shirts, gifts, jewelry and island music.

For duty-free watches, jewelry, china and crystal, try **Solomon's Mines** (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-3191) and for handcrafted jewelry try **Sand Dollar-Abaco Gold** (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-4405), both outside the entrance to the Abaco Beach Resort, or **John Bull** (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-2473; Bay St).

Getting There & Away

AIR

For information on international flights to the Abacos and the Bahamas see p288.

Marsh Harbour International Airport (MHH; Map p149; ☎ 242-367-2267; www.abacoaviationcenter.com) is located 3 miles north-east of Marsh Harbour.

The following airlines fly between the Abacos and other Bahamian islands.

Abaco Air (☎ 242-367-2267; www.abacoaviationcenter.com/abacoair; hub Marsh Harbour) Flies between the Abacos, Nassau and North Eleuthera.

Bahamasair (airline code UP; ☎ 242-367-2039; www.bahamasair.com; hubs Nassau & Freeport) The main airline flying within the Bahamas.

Cat Island Air (☎ 242-377-3318; fax 242-377-3723; hub Nassau) Flies between the Abaco cays and Marsh Harbour.

Cherokee Air (☎ 242-367-3450; www.cherokeear.com; hub Marsh Harbour) Flies between the Abacos and North Eleuthera.

Major's Air Services (☎ 242-352-5778; www.thebahamasguide.com/majorair; hub Grand Bahama) Flies between Freeport, Marsh Harbour, Bimini, Andros and Eleuthera.

Southern Air Charters (☎ 242-367-2498; Nassau; www.southernaircharter.com; hub Nassau) Flies between Nassau, the Exumas and Marsh Harbour.

Quoted fares are one-way.

Route	Price	Frequency
Marsh Harbour–Freeport	\$85	1 daily
Marsh Harbour–Moore Island (Abacos)	\$42	3 weekly
Marsh Harbour–Nassau	\$81	several daily
Marsh Harbour–North Eleuthera	\$90	2 weekly
Marsh Harbour–Treasure Cay (in the Abacos)	\$35	2 daily
Treasure Cay (in the Abacos)–Nassau	\$81	several daily
Treasure Cay (in the Abacos)–Freeport	\$85	1 daily

BOAT

Mail Boat

Contact the **Dockmaster's Office** (☎ 242-393-1064) at Potter's Cay in Nassau to confirm schedules, and for further contact and fare details. *Captain Gurth Dean* sails weekly from Nassau to Marsh Harbour (\$45 one-way, 12 hours).

Ferry

Pinder's Ferry sets off twice daily from McLean's Town, Grand Bahama, for Crown Haven, Abaco (adult/child \$80/40 round-trip, one hour).

Albury's Ferry Service (☎ 242-367-0290; www.oii.net/alburysferry; adult/child \$20/10 round-trip) Operates scheduled daily water taxis to Elbow (Hope Town; adult/child one-way \$15/7.50), Man O' War (adult/child one-way \$12/6) and Great Guana Cays (adult/child one-way \$15/7.50). The dock for Elbow and Man O' War services is at the east end of Bay St (Map p149); the dock for Great Guana Cay (Map pp150-1) services is at the Conch Inn Hotel & Marina. Private charters are also available.

Bahamas Ferries (☎ 242-323-2166; www.bahamasferries.com; Nassau; \$90 round-trip) These good-value fast ferries make the trip from Nassau to Sandy Point twice weekly.

MARINAS

All the following marinas can supply electricity and water.

Abaco Beach Resort & Boat Harbour (p153) Offers daily (\$1.75 per foot) and long-term (\$1 per foot for 61 days and over) dockage. The resort's full marina, accommodations and dining facilities are available with their 200 slips.

Harbour View Marina (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-3910; troy@bluewaverentals.com; Marsh Harbour) Had 68 slips and is also fairly central to the tourist area. Due to hurricane damage this marina was being completely rebuilt at the time of research.

Mangoes Marina (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-376-4255; Marsh Harbour) Adjacent to the Moorings, this marina has 30 slips, and restaurant and bar facilities.

Moorings (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-4000; www.the Moorings.com; Conch Inn Hotel & Marina, Marsh Harbour) Is central to the tourist area and has 80 slips. Accommodations, laundry, cable TV connections and provisions are also available.

Getting Around

Rental Wheels (Map pp150-1; ☎ 242-367-4643; VHP Channel 16; www.rentalwheels.com; Bay St; ☺ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat & Sun) are located in the tourist center. It's the only outfit open on Sundays. Bicycles are \$10/45 per day/week, motorbikes are \$45/200 and cars are \$65/300.

Sea Star Rentals (Map p149; ☎ 242-367-4887; Marsh Harbour International Airport; ☺ 8:30am-5pm Mon-Sat) has handy premises at the airport, and rents cars from \$65 per day.

Quality Star Rentals (Map p149; ☎ 242-367-2979; fax 242-367-2977; Don McKay Blvd; ☺ 7am-7pm Mon-Thu, to 8pm Fri & Sat) rents cars from \$65/325 per day/week and vans from \$75/375.

Taxi fares are pre-established. A ride between Marsh Harbour's airport and most hotels costs \$10 for two people. Taxis run up and down Marsh Harbour and are easy to flag down.

LOYALIST CAYS

East of Marsh Harbour lie three Loyalist Cays: Elbow, Man O' War and Great Guana. The fourth Loyalist Cay, Green Turtle, lies miles to their northwest (see p167).

Elbow Cay

pop 310

Picturesque **Hope Town** will welcome your arrival on Elbow Cay with its 120ft-high red-and-white-ringed lighthouse, set on the eastern slope of a splendid harbor. As you approach the docks, an entrancing toy-town collection of immaculate white and pastel-colored cottages will come into view. Tiny gardens full of bougainvillea and flowering shrubs spill their blossoms over picket fences and walls, and pedestrians stroll along the two narrow lanes that encircle the village.

Lying 6 miles east of Marsh Harbour, this 5-mile-long island mostly relies on low-key tourism for its income. Hope Town's council is responsible for the conservative but charming community by maintaining strict building and business codes, and banning cars in the village. The hamlet was founded in 1785 by Loyalists from South Carolina whose blond, blue-eyed descendants still live here, interacting, but not intermarrying, with African-Abaconians.

A blight in 1938 ruined the island's sponge bed industry, but some locals still make a living from boatbuilding and fishing.

In July Hope Town hosts Regatta Week, a lively mix of sailing races and land-based festivities.

INFORMATION

There's a meager visitors' information board in the peppermint green building facing the Government Dock on Bay St.

Abaco Dingy Rentals (☎ 242-366-0309; 2surfers@coralwave.com) rents dinghies from \$20/100 per hour/day, with a three-hour minimum.

Surfing

The offshore waters boast at least six good surfing breaks on the south Atlantic shore, especially in winter months. The Bahamas' top surfing is at the reef off Garbanzo Beach, 2 miles south of Hope Town. Bring your own gear.

SLEEPING

Several agents rent out a number of properties both in Hope Town and elsewhere on the cay. These rentals are great value for all sized wallets, and range in size and location.

Try **Elbow Cay Properties** (☎ 242-366-0569; www.elbowcayrentals.com; Bay St), who list a variety of cottages and villas from \$600 to \$7000 per week. **Tanny Key's Vacation Rentals** (☎ 242-366-0053; www.tannykey.com; Back St, Hope Town) has houses all over the island from about \$900 to \$2,000 per week for one or two people. **Hope Town Hideaways** (☎ 242-366-0024; www.hopetown.com; Porpoise Pl, Hope Town) and **Island View Properties** (☎ 242-366-0601; classicmarine77@hotmail.com; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat; Fig Tree Lane, Hope Town) are also worth a call. Some of the agents' properties are listed in the next section.

Hope Town

Daisy's Place (☎ 242-366-0569; Well Lane; per week \$800; ☎ ☎) This cute, light one-bedroom waterfront cottage at the harbor's edge has a nice-sized porch with great views, and is a stroll away from the town beach. Also great value is Upsy Daisy, the 2nd-floor apartment, also with fabulous views (\$875 per week). Contact Elbow Cay Properties (above).

Hope Harbour Town Lodge (☎ 242-366-0095; www.hopetownlodge.com; Queens Hwy; r \$135; ☎ ☎ ☎) Atop a bluff at the south end of Hope Town, this lodge's hammocks gently sway under coconut trees overlooking Atlantic Ocean. There is a choice between lovely oceanfront cottages with kitchenette (\$225) that spill down the garden toward the beach, or some bright and welcoming rooms in the main building, many with harbor views. Facilities include a splendid restaurant and bar, a small freshwater pool and sundeck, and water sports. Bicycle and boat rentals – including powerboats – are offered, plus snorkel gear.

Harrison House (☎ 242-366-0569; www.elbowcayrentals.com; Elbow Cay Properties; per week \$1000; ☎ ☎) This is a great-value and comfortable house in the center of town, with a large deck and porch swing, and a grassed garden where kids can kick up their heels. The house has a lovely wooden interior, three bedrooms, and is a few minutes' walk to everything.

Club Soleil Resort (☎ 242-366-003; www.clubsoleil.com; Western Waterfront; r \$140; ☎ ☎ ☎) These seven hacienda-style units have a tranquil location across the harbor. The rooms come with balconies and all mod cons. There's also a great fish restaurant, freshwater pool, complimentary boat service, and a bar where you can sip the house special, the Tropical Shock (you're warned!). Access is only by boat.

Tellin Vacation Homes (☎ 242-366-0053; fax 203-227-6898; www.hopetownvillas.com; Bay St; cottages from \$1300 per week; ☎ ☎) Three gorgeous adjacent cottages have benefited from the love and paintwork of the artistically inclined owners. Blue-and-white one-bedroom Sunrise Tellin sits on the beach, with pink curtains and a pretty garden where even the garbage cans are painted with flowers! Bay St Tellin (\$1800 per week) sits across the road, and cute Tellin Guest Cottage is closest to the sea, perfect for a lovey-dovey couple.

Sunrise Beach (☎ 242-366-0024; per week \$2200; ☎ ☎) This three-bedroom cottage with exquisite decor in West Indian style and romantic net-draped four-poster beds is another super place. The backyard is the beach, and there's also a barbecue, cable TV and stereo. Contact Hope Town Hideaways (left).

Lantana Cabana (☎ 242-366-0053; fax 242-366-0051; cottage \$1400; ☎ ☎) Another lovely historic cottage with four bedrooms that overlooks the harbor from the 2nd floor. Contact Tanny Key's Vacation Rentals (left).

South of Hope Town

Abaco Inn (☎ 242-366-0133, US ☎ 1-800-468-8799; www.abacoinn.net; Queen's Hwy; r \$126; ☎ ☎ ☎) Two miles southwest of Hope Town, these great-value and super ocean-side lodgings sit shaded by palm trees, and crown a bluff between two lovely beaches at the narrowest point of the island. A lively bar serves pub grub.

Turtle Hill Resort (☎ 242-366-0557; www.turtlehill.com; Queen's Hwy; r for 1-4 persons per day/week \$340/1850; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Fresh and clean with mainly white decor and tiled floors, these four lux-

ury villas come with kitchen, barbecue and cable TV. Some have rooftop sea views, and all are a short walk to a great beach.

Sea Spray Resort & Marina (☎ 242-366-0065; www.seasprayresort.com; White Sound; r \$1500; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) These two- and three-bedroom modern properties have great marina or beach views and spacious rooms, but small kitchens. Facilities include a barbecue, and the clubhouse has a pool table and TV. Free Sunfish sailing is offered, and surfboards, sailboards, bicycles and snorkel gear are available for rent. There's a free shuttle to Hope Town; water taxis take 20 minutes.

EATING & DRINKING

Hope Town

Munchies (☎ 242-366-0423; Back St; mains \$4-10; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Good-value, casual snack meals such as burgers, pasties and deli sandwiches can be ordered here. A small shaded patio provides some seating.

Cap'n Jack's (☎ 242-366-0247; Bay St; mains \$6-15; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) The best breakfasts in town, with waffles and tasty omelettes. This is a nice harborfront spot, and a very popular local bar with live music midweek and at weekends. Try the bar's Jack Hammer (copious rum, vodka and Tia Maria), guaranteed to get you jiving.

Harbour's Edge (☎ 242-366-0087; fax 242-366-0292; Queens Hwy; mains \$8-25; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) The deck here stretches out over the water with excellent views of the lighthouse and harbor, perfect for lingering sundowner drinks and meals. The Over the Edge cocktail (Matusalem rum, banana rum and fruit juices) was the result of a three-week taste testing.

Club Soleil Restaurant (☎ 242-366-003; Western Harbourfront; mains \$18-30; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner Fri-Wed) This alfresco and indoor waterfront restaurant serves everything from burgers to fish and steak dishes with French influences. If you book in advance the owners will dispatch a water taxi to pick you up and drop you off.

Upper Terrace Restaurant (☎ 242-366-0095; Hope Town Harbour Lodge, Queen's Hwy; mains \$28-35; ☎ dinner) For a great formal dinner, enjoy juicy salads and dishes like blackened fish; chicken marinated in coconut rum; shrimp-and-coconut-battered lobster; and creamy mango and guava cheesecake.

Rudy's Place (☎ 242-366-0062; Hope Town Harbour Lodge; mains \$23-35; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat, closed Sep & Oct)

Has Bahamian food swathed with French style and sauces.

Harbour View Grocery (☎ 242-366-0033; Bay St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) and **Vernon's Grocery** (☎ 242-366-0037; Bay St; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 7pm Sat) both sell fresh produce and groceries.

South of Hope Town

Abaco Inn (opposite) has mains from \$11 and is open breakfast, lunch and dinner. It offers an eclectic menu including vegetarian meals, but has a heavy slant toward Bahamian seafood. Reservations are required.

Boat House Restaurant (left) Eat alfresco, and munch on great blackened-fish burgers with sides of coleslaw, or rice and peas, Caesar salad and entrees (from filet mignon to seafood primavera). There's a regular barbecue with live DJ and weekly live music.

SHOPPING

Ebb Tide (☎ 242-366-0088; Back St, Hope Town) Original watercolors and prints painted by local artists and some handmade gold jewelry are sold here. Also on offer are some Androsia batiks and locally made spices and preserves.

Iggy Biggy (☎ 242-366-0354; Bay St, Hope Town; ☎ 9:30am-5:30pm) This clothing store sells some funky resort wear and handmade gifts.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The mail boat *Captain Gurth Dean* sails to Hope Town from Nassau weekly. See p155 for information.

Albury's Ferry Service (☎ 242-367-3147; www.oii.net/alburysferry/; Marsh Harbour, adult/child \$15/\$7.50) operates water taxis from Marsh Harbour to Elbow Cay at 7:15am, 9am, 10:30am, noon, 2pm, 3:30pm, 4pm and 5:45pm daily. Additionally, it runs at 9pm and 10:45pm on Friday and Saturday evenings. The boats depart Elbow Cay at 8am, 9:45am, 11:30am, 1:30pm, 3pm, 4pm and 5pm daily, and also 6:15pm, 9:45pm and 11:30pm on Friday and Saturday evenings. The ferry will stop at the lighthouse, and all docks and marinas on Elbow Cay, including many hotels. Albury's can also provide charters to Green Turtle Cay.

A water taxi runs from Man O' War Cay to Hope Town at 7:30am daily, returning at 4:30pm. The taxi pilot will drop you off and pick you up at specific docks as requested.

Marinas

Lighthouse Marina (☎ 242-366-0154; VHF Channel 16; Western Harbourfront) offer dockage (\$1.75 to \$2.50 per foot) at one of their slips in the harbor. It has a nice setting right in township and has an off-license and small shop.

Sea Spray Resort & Marina (p159) has a 24-slip, full-service marina exclusively for the use of guests at the Sea Spray Resort. It offers daily transient dockage (\$1.20 per foot) and long-term dockage (\$0.75 per foot on a daily basis). Electricity and water is extra.

GETTING AROUND

You can walk or bicycle everywhere in Hope Town. Cars and golf carts are banned along Bay St but can be hired at the ferry dock (Government Dock) to explore the rest of the island.

Island Cart Rentals (☎ 242-366-0448; VHP Channel 16; www.islandcartrentals.com; Hope Town; ☎ Mon-Sat) have 20 carts at \$45/270 per day/week.

T & N Cart Hire (☎ 242-366-0199; fax 242-366-0393; Centre Line Rd; ☎ Mon-Thu) also offers carts from \$45 per day and will deliver to your accommodation or to the ferry landing.

Lubber's Quarters Cay

This 300-acre private island lies between Marsh Harbour and Elbow Cay. It's perfect for secluded beaches and nature trails. There are few lodgings, no roads, cars or stores.

The modern, spacious **Villa Poincianna** (Map p147; US ☎ 815-399-4068; www.poincianna.com; cottage for 2/4/6 persons \$950/1100/1250; ☎) sits just 50ft from the shore.

Miramar Cottage (Map p147; cottage \$800) is a simple two-bedroom lodging that requires a boat for access. Contact Abaco Real Estate Agency (p158).

The popular **Yahoo's Sand Bar & Grill** (Map p147; ☎ 242-366-3110; VHF Channel 16; mains \$10-18) has new-moon parties, and serves burgers, pasta and seafood dishes.

Tilloo Cay

This 5-mile-long cay, spitting distance south of Elbow Cay, is renowned for its bonefishing flats. The 20-acres of pristine wilderness is a vital nesting site for seabirds, including the rare and beautiful tropicbird.

Pelican Cays Land & Sea Park

This 2,100-acre park protects the half-dozen tiny Pelican Cays, south of Tilloo, and their

surrounding waters and fringing reef. The park is centered around **Sandy Cay Underwater National Sea Park**, which has great snorkeling. The cays are nesting sites for bridled, sooty and least terns. The park also boasts shallow coral gardens and underwater caves that abound with marine life.

Man O' War Cay

pop 306

This thin little island is imbued with a highly conformist and proud 'Conchy Joe' Loyalist culture (see p30). Almost as powerful is the 200-year-old boat-building industry that still thrives today.

Lying 3 miles northwest of Elbow Cay, most of this cay's income is derived from the sea. Fishermen use homemade fiberglass boats or 12-foot wooden crawfish boats to collect their catch; dozens of these sailing dinghies date back half a century and are still in perfect shape.

The cay's boatyards have a long-held reputation of employing black laborers, mostly 'Bahaitians' (Haitians born in the Bahamas), who are also employed as domestic help but who are obliged to leave the island by nightfall. This Bible-steeped, white-only island lifestyle also prohibits the sale of liquor (bring your own) and prefers residents and visitors to dress conservatively.

The wreck of the USS *Adirondack*, which went down in 1862, lies offshore in 40ft of water and attracts many divers, who head over for the day, as do most visitors.

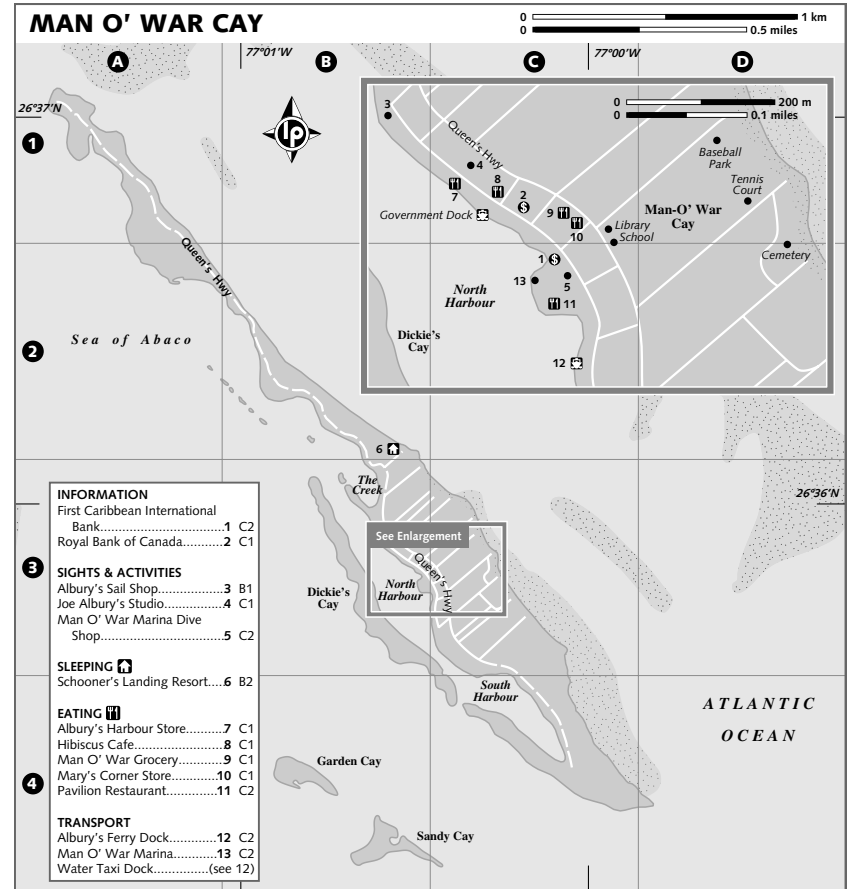
INFORMATION

There are public phones, and two banks: the **First Caribbean International Bank** (☎ 242-352-9365; ☎ 9:30am-1pm Fri) and the **Royal Bank of Canada** (☎ 242-365-6323; ☎ 10am-2pm Thu).

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

A hand carved sign on the waterfront points the way to **Joe Albury's Studio** (☎ 242-365-6082), Man O' War's finest boatbuilder. Joe crafted traditional Bahamian sailboats with a purist's passion, just as his great-great-uncle Billie Bo did 150 years ago. Beautiful model boats now dominate the studio, along with local artisans' works.

Albury's Sail Shop (☎ 242-365-6014), on the waterfront, no longer makes sails but has continued manufacturing all manner of things from cast-off sail material, such as



jackets and duffle bags. Some fashion items using Androsia batiks are also sold.

Man O' War Marina Dive Shop (☎ 242-365-6013) rents equipment (except regulators) and provides air fills but does not offer dives. You can rent snorkel gear for \$10 per day. It also offers kayak and bicycle rentals.

SLEEPING & EATING

Schooner's Landing Resort (☎ 242-365-6072; www.schoonerslanding.com; r \$280; ☎) Five two-bedroom town houses with full kitchen overlook the sea from their tranquil position northeast of town. The houses come with TV/VCR, private patio, dockage, plus laundry, bar and barbecue pit. Beaches lie a stone's throw in either direction.

Hibiscus Cafe (☎ 242-365-6380; mains \$8-14; ☎ lunch Mon-Sat, dinner Thu-Sat) Indoor dining is based around Bahamian cuisine and burgers.

Pavilion Restaurant (☎ 242-365-6185; mains \$5-24; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, closed Aug 15-Sep 30) This waterfront eatery serves hot Bahamian dishes, with roasts, barbecues and steaks on weekends.

Albury's Harbour Store is a fully stocked groceries. You can also pick up groceries at **Man O' War Grocery** and **Mary's Corner Store**.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Albury's Ferry Service (☎ 242-367-3147; www.oii.net/alburysferry/; Marsh Harbour; adult/child one-way \$12/6) operates scheduled daily water taxis from Marsh Harbour to Man O' War Cay at

10:30am, 12:15pm, 2:30pm, 4pm and 5:30pm daily (the 12:15 and 2:30pm ferries don't operate on Sunday). Return service departs Man O' War at 8am, 11:30am, 1:30pm and 3:15pm (there are no 11:30am or 3:15pm services on Sunday). Charters are available to outlying cays.

Water taxis also run from Man O' War to Great Guana Cay at 7:30am and 3:30pm Friday; and from Man O' War to Elbow Cay at 7:30am, returning at 4:30pm. They leave from the same dock as the ferry to Marsh Harbour.

Facilities for boaters include the 60-slip **Man O' War Marina** (☎ 242-365-6008), complete with kiddies' playground, boat rentals and water sports.

Ask at businesses in Man O' War town about renting a golf cart.

Great Guana Cay

pop 134

This 6-mile-long cay lying 8 miles north of Marsh Harbour is the least developed of the Loyalist Cays, with a tiny, unsophisticated fishing village that concentrates on lobstering for an income.

A weathered old sign on the cay welcomes visitors with 'It's Better in the Bahamas, but...It's Gooder in Guana.' It is hard to argue with that statement when you see the spectacular 5-mile-long beach with soft, pure-white sand that runs the length of the Atlantic shore.

Just southeast of Great Guana Cay is the wondrous Fowl Cay Reef Reserve, a national underwater sea park which protects a stunning coral reef and seabirds' shore-based nesting sites. There is also fabulous snorkeling off the town beach in front of Nipper's Beach Bar & Grill.

Small pockets of strewn rubbish and the occasional unfriendly local do detract somewhat from the charm of nature's gifts here, as do the clouds of vicious mosquitoes that hover over the island's center. Come prepared with bug spray and you will love the quiet and unspoiled nature of this little island.

July's Regatta Week features sailing races and festivities on Great Guana and other towns and cays.

INFORMATION

A post office with varied opening hours sits on the harborside. A part-time police office

shares the same tiny cement building. The **emergency** (☎ 911, 919) numbers for the cays are the same. A public phone box also sits on the waterfront.

ACTIVITIES

Great Guana has superb snorkeling inside the reef along its windward shore and some excellent diving and bonefishing. Troy Albury is 'the main man' for many visitors' needs. He runs the friendly dive shop, and hires out a ton of gear for different activities, as well as looking after some decent accommodation.

Dive Guana (☎ 242-365-5178; VHF Channel 16; www.diveguana.com; Fishers Bay) offers two-tank dives (\$80) and snorkeling trips (\$40) to the fabulous Fowl Cay and the northern end of island. Ask about visiting the divers' favourite 'pet' fish, Gilly the 70lb black grouper and Charlie the reef shark. Also call here for bikes (\$12 per hour), kayaks (\$12 per hour), fishing rods (\$7 per day) and boat hire: a 23ft Robalo (\$140 per day) and a 21ft Angler (\$130 per day).

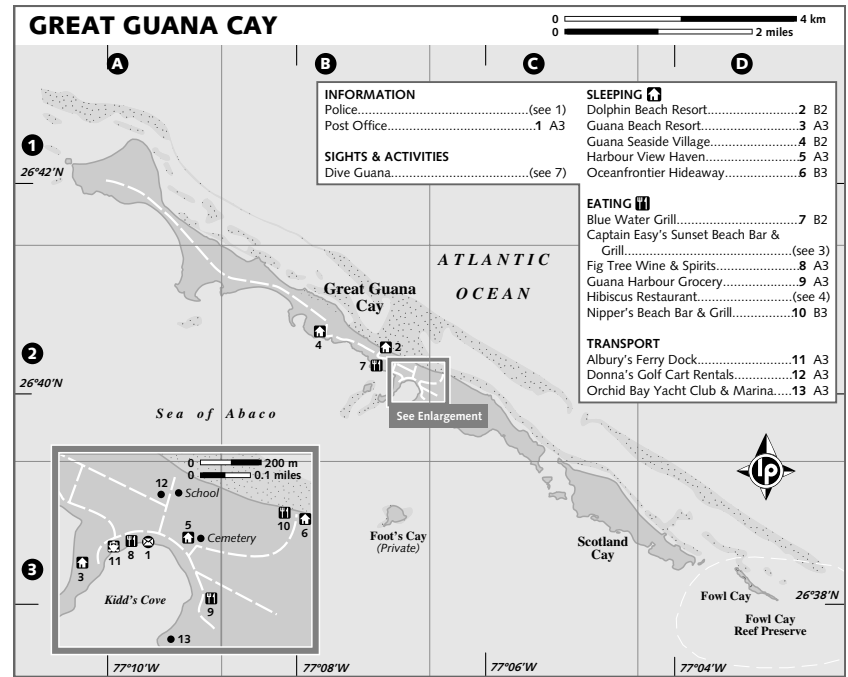
Henry Sands (☎ 242-365-5140) operates as a bonefishing guide.

SLEEPING

Guana Seaside Village (☎ 242-365-5106; www.guana-seaside.com; Crossing Bay; d \$130; (P) (X) (B) (C)) Both hotel units and a variety of separate wooden cottages sit right on beach. These were being repaired at the time of research. The hotel provides complimentary water gear (snorkel equipment, sea kayaks, paddleboats) and has a poolside bar and grill, and a restaurant.

Harbour View Haven (☎ 242-365-5028; www.guanacayvillas.com; Great Guana Cay Villas; r \$130-145; (X) (B) (C)) In the village, this very well-maintained place has a choice of lovely spacious rooms with shared balcony. It also has good weekly rates and equally tasteful sibling apartments for rent.

Guana Beach Resort (☎ 242-365-5133; VHF Channel 16; www.guanabeachresort.com; d/q \$1000/1500; (P) (X) (B) (C)) These gorgeous beachside rooms and two-bedroom units are spacious, cool and airy, and furnished with beautiful handmade Balinese four-poster beds and love seats. Kitchens have toasters, microwaves and fridges. Adjacent to the public dock, there is a beachside bar, sundeck and hammocks, and volleyball and water sports on offer.



Also recommended:

Dolphin Beach Resort (☎ 242-365-5137, US ☎ 1-800-222-2646; www.dolphinbeachresort.com; r per day/week \$190/1330, cottages per day/week \$276/1932 plus per child \$15; (P) (X) (B) (C)) Tucked away, this place has super and cheerful private villas.

Oceanfrontier Hideaway (Canada ☎ 519-389-4846; www.oceanfrontier.com; d \$200/1200 per day/week; (P) (X) (B) (C)) Beachfront log cabins.

EATING & DRINKING

Hibiscus Restaurant (☎ 242-367-3498; Guana Seaside Village; mains \$8-22; (X) breakfast, lunch & dinner) A Bahamian and American menu includes kids' menu, charbroiled steak and deli sandwiches. This beachside eatery is neat and clean, and has a shady garden with palm trees.

Captain Easy's Sunset Beach Bar & Grill (☎ 242-365-5133; Guana Beach Resort; mains \$7-13; (X) lunch & dinner) Seafood, steaks, pastas and island-style, hickory-smoked barbecue buffets are all great choices at this atmospheric little waterside bar at the harbor.

Blue Water Grill (☎ 242-365-5230; mains \$12-27; (X) lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) This classy bar and spacious restaurant gleams with polished

wood, while huge windows overlook their deck and sea views. Italian and Bahamian dishes are interspersed with prime rib nights, which makes this a perfect place for a romantic meal or long lunch on the deck.

Nipper's Beach Bar & Grill (☎ 242-365-5143; VHF Channel 16; mains \$10-24; (X) lunch & dinner) Rely on the free rides from the harbor to get here; it is quite a hike to this well-known beachside bar. A late-middle-aged crowd of locals and visitors enjoy drinking here during the day, while visitors drift in at night and for the Sunday afternoon pig roasts.

For groceries, try **Guana Harbour Grocery** (☎ 242-365-5067). **Fig Tree Wine & Spirits** (☎ 242-365-5058; mains \$16-20; (X) breakfast & lunch) is a one-stop shop for drinks, cigarettes and groceries.

Orchid Bay Yacht Club & Marina (p164) offers lunch (\$10 to \$14), such as tasty grilled jerk chicken and catch-of-the-day sandwiches (with blackened, grilled or fried fish).

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Albury's Ferry Service (☎ 242-367-3147; www.oii.net/alburysferry; Marsh Harbour; adult/child one-way \$15/7.50) operates scheduled daily ferries from

Marsh Harbour at 6:45am, 10:30am 1:30pm, 3:30pm and 5:45pm. The ferries depart Guana Cay at 8am, 11:30am, 2:30pm, 4:45pm and 6:30pm. Charters are available and the ferries will drop off or pick up at locations upon request.

Green Turtle Ferry (☎ 242-365-8749; Mariner's Cove, Treasure Cay) travels from Treasure Cay to Guana Cay at 10am and 3pm, going onto Green Turtle Cay, and departs Guana Cay for Green Turtle Cay at 11am and 4pm Wednesday and Friday to Monday (\$8/15 one-way/return).

Orchid Bay Yacht Club & Marina (☎ 242-365-5175; www.orchidbay.net) has 32 slips, a laundry, showers, telephone and Internet service, pool, tennis court, restaurant and bar.

Donna's Golf Cart Rentals (☎ 242-365-5195) charges \$40 per day for golf carts.

SOUTH OF MARSH HARBOUR

The Great Abaco Hwy runs from Marsh Harbour to Sandy Point, at the southwest end of the island.

Little Harbour

Be prepared from some very rocky and roughly hewn roads to get down to the beach at Little Harbour. To reach the jewel in the crown, Pete's Pub, abandon your car at the beach and walk across the sands toward an icy-cold beer and gorgeous views of this lovely bay, popular with yachters and turtles.

The perfectly sheltered crescent bay is held in the cusp of crumbling limestone cliffs and a kerosene-lantern lighthouse looms over the holiday 'shacks' of wealthy American expats. You can climb to the top for a view of the waves running in toward the reef and the wreck of the *Anne Bonney*.

Zef Fessenden's Shacks (Map p147; US ☎ 813-495-0222, 1-845-679-5334; r per week \$425) Zef can offer you a choice of accommodations: a house overlooking the ocean on one side of the bluff (\$675 per week), and a tiny little A-shaped shack (ideal for one or two small, and romantically inclined, people) in this quiet little bay on the other. Both places are fairly basic, with no electricity, but have gas cookers and lamps, beds and outdoor showers. They are right on the beach in stunning settings, just a hop, skip and jump away from Pete's Pub.

Pete's Pub & Gallery (Map p147; ☎ 242-366-3503; www.petespub.com; mains \$8-18; ☎ lunch & dinner

This beachside bar and grill at the north end of the beach were knocked together from driftwood, with sand for a floor and T-shirts and ships' pendants for decor. You can sip grog at a bar shaped like a ship's prow and order burgers or a barbecue from the open grill. Don't miss the famous 'Pete's Pub Pig & Pea Party' (pig roast) every Saturday.

The adjoining **Bronze Foundry & Gallery** (Map p147; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-4pm Mon-Sat) contains some marine sculptures and gold jewelry as well as some remarkable bronze castings; the Vatican museum owns one of the pieces, *St Peter Fisher of Men*.

The turnoff from Great Abaco Hwy is 15 miles south of Marsh Harbour and leads to Cherokee Sound. Two miles before Cherokee Sound, a turnoff leads to Little Harbour via a very rough dirt road; you're warned!

Froggies Out Island Adventures (p157) offers excursions to Little Harbour.

Albury's Ferry Service (☎ 242-365-6010) may take you from Marsh Harbour.

Casuarina Point

The small, pin-neat village of **Cherokee Sound** (population 122), 25 miles south of Marsh Harbour, sits at the end of a peninsula jutting out into its namesake sound, and surrounded by mangrove shores and miles of turquoise flats. The fishing village of **Casuarina Point**, with a beautiful beach, lies on the west side of Cherokee Sound.

Different of Abaco Nature Park (Map p147; ☎ 242-366-2150; www.differentofabaco.com; r \$125-200; ☎ call ahead for access; ☎ ☎ ☎), immediately west of Casuarina Point, is a run-down natural-adventure park where you can go bird-watching, boar- and flamingo-spotting and hiking in the extensive mangroves and pine forests. Different of Abaco also owns **Seashell Beach Club**, with modest, meagerly appointed rooms with high ceilings, fans and oceanfront verandas.

Sandy Beach Hideaway (Map p147; ☎ 242-367-2655; kopet@aol.com; Casuarina Point; per week from \$1400; ☎ ☎ ☎) This attractive, fully contained three-bedroom house is in a fantastic location on a nice family beach with shallow waters and a sheltered bay. A modern open-plan design with church-style roof, fans and blinds keep it cool, while a balcony and deck have terrific views.

Sandy Point

South of **Crossing Rocks**, a forlorn fishing village 40 miles south of Marsh Harbour, the Great Abaco Hwy sweeps southwest through vast acres of pineland and ends at Sandy Point, a picturesque fishing community backed by a coconut-palm plantation.

Twenty miles northwest of Sandy Point, **More Island** is the only inhabited island off the west coast of the Abaco mainland. The settlements of **Hard Bargain** and the **Bight** have a long fishing tradition and a wild, rustic spirit.

Oeisha's Resort (Map p147; ☎ 242-366-4139; fax 242-366-4493; r \$70; ☎ ☎ ☎) sits between the airstrip and village, and has a restaurant that doubles as a dance club.

Pete & Gay's Guest House (Map p147; ☎ 242-366-4119; fax 242-366-4007; r \$70; ☎ ☎ ☎), at the head of the dock, has rooms with TV and also serves meals.

The other eatery and bar of choice is **Nancy's Seaside Inn, Restaurant & Bar** (Map p147; ☎ 242-366-4120).

A taxi from Marsh Harbour to Sandy Point costs \$140.

Bahamas Ferries (Map p147; ☎ 242-323-2166; www.bahamasferries.com; Nassau) makes the trip from Nassau to Sandy Point twice weekly (\$90 round-trip, four hours).

Captain Gurth Dean (Map p147; ☎ 242-393-1064) mail boat sails from Nassau to Sandy Point weekly (\$30 one-way, 11 hours), also stopping at More Island.

Abaco National Park

The 32-sq-mile park was established in 1994 to protect the major habitat of the endangered Bahama parrot. About 1500 parrots now live here along with some wild pigs and stunning orchids.

There's also an extensive limestone cave system to explore (the local parrot population is unique – the birds nest in holes in the limestone rocks), plus hiking trails, lonesome beaches, and incredibly wild and spectacular scenery along the Atlantic shore. A turnoff for the park is signed 10 miles south of Crossing Rocks.

The dramatic headland at the southern tip of the island is dominated by red-and-white-hooped **Hole-in-the-Wall Lighthouse**, reached by a horrendously potholed and tortuous road that adds to the sense of separation from civilization. The mosquitoes are

very active here, so if you want to climb the lighthouse for the view, make sure you come prepared!

NORTHWEST OF MARSH HARBOUR Treasure Cay

Treasure Cay, which lies 17 miles north of Marsh Harbour, is not a true cay but a narrow peninsula that has secreted away one of the Bahamas most idyllic and captivating beaches, Treasure Cay Beach. A 4-mile-long crescent of sugar-soft white sand appears to melt into a vast expanse of glittering jewel-like waters that extend to the horizon. Docile rays glide through the turquoise shallows and seabirds echo their movements across the sky. Voted one of the world's top 10 beaches, this treasure is protected by a ring of palm trees, although some private houses and condos have crept alongside the perimeter.

Treasure Cay still has an island feel about it, attracting a retired expat community that inhabit condos and play golf or indulge their boating hobbies at the one hotel's marina.

INFORMATION

Most facilities exist here. For emergencies call the **police** (☎ 242-365-8048, 919, 911; VHF Channel 19), while **Corbett Medical Centre** (☎ 242-365-8288; Wilson Ronald M Dr) also has a minor **Emergency Medical Clinic** (☎ 242-375-8882).

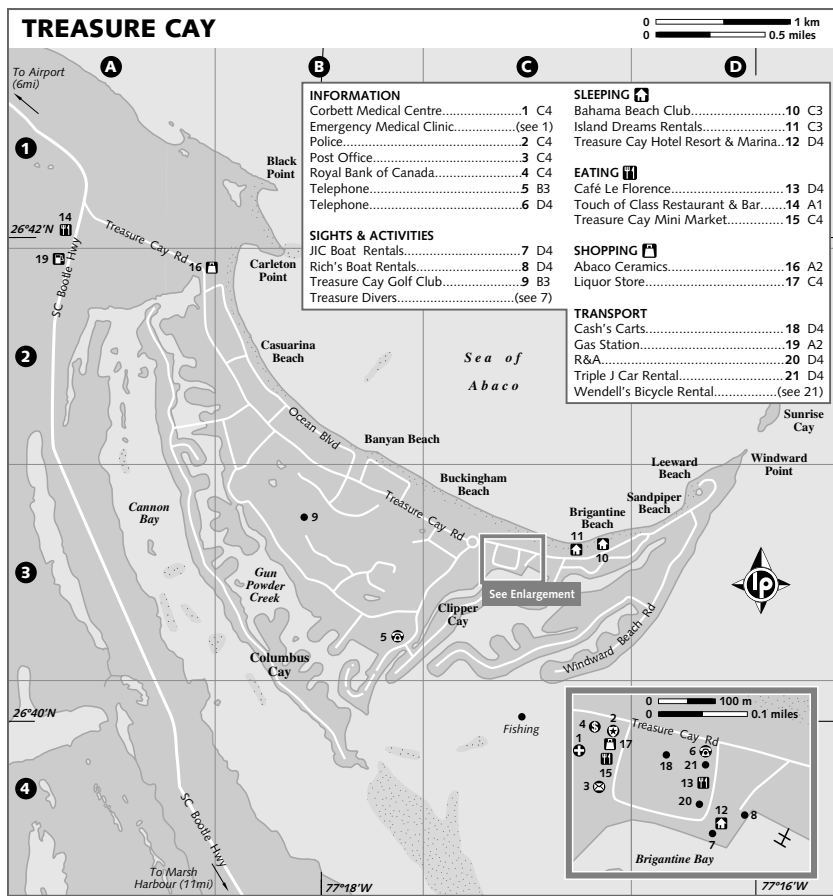
The **Royal Bank of Canada** (☎ 242-365-8119; ☎ 9:30am-2pm Mon, Tue & Thu) has an ATM. Public telephone booths can be found north of shopping complex where the **post office** (☎ 242-365-8230; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) is based.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Anything to do with that compelling azure sea must be taken advantage of! There's good bonefishing in the shallow waters on the south side of the peninsula. Treasure Cay Hotel Resort & Marina (p167) can organize sportfishing trips (from \$375/500 per half-/full-day charter).

Treasure Divers (☎ 242-365-8465; VHF Channel 16; www.treasure-divers.com; Treasure Cay Hotel Resort & Marina) offer two-tank dives (\$80), night dives (\$85) and blue-hole dives (\$85). Snorkeling is \$35. They also rent gear, mask and snorkel (\$8), fins (\$8) and fishing rods (\$10).

Rich's Boat Rentals (☎ 242-365-8582; VHF Channel 16) provides 21ft Paramount boats (\$100/270/595 per day/three days/week) and 26ft



Paramount boats (\$150/380/850 per day/three days/week).

JIC Boat Rentals (☎ 242-365-8465; VHF Channel 16) provides a 24ft Angler (\$150/390/840 per day/three days/week) for rent and conducts guided tours as well as fishing trips to Shell Island, Great Guana Cay, Green Turtle Cay and New Plymouth (prices upon application).

Treasure Cay Golf Club (☎ 242-365-8045; Treasure Cay Rd; green fees \$85) is a 6985yd, 18-hole golf course that has a reputation for its narrow fairways. They have cheaper rates for Treasure Cay Hotel Resort & Marina guests. It is possible to rent golf carts and tennis courts are also available (\$20 per hour).

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

In May the **Annual Bahamian Arts & Crafts Show** is held here as part of the long-running **Treasure Cay Billfish Tournament** (☎ 242-365-8578; www.treasurecayfishing.com), held in June (see the boxed text, p152). Another popular event is December's **Treasure Cay Golf Championship** (☎ 242-365-8578; www.treasurecay.com).

SLEEPING & EATING

Rentals are available from **Island Dreams Rentals** (☎ 242-365-8507; www.islanddreamrentals.com; Treasure Cay Rd; d \$250; (P) (X) (B) (D)). It has a variety of good-quality accommodations for rent, including two-bedroom beach villas, townhouses (\$300) and three-bedroom houses (\$400).

Treasure Cay Hotel Resort & Marina (☎ 242-365-8578; www.treasurecay.com; Treasure Cay Rd; r \$170; (P) (X) (B) (D)) Pleasant two-story buildings house spacious, light and airy rooms (deluxe suites are \$315) and two-bedroom fully furnished condos. Rooms are furnished with floral prints, wicker furniture and balconies, as well as coffeemakers. There is also Spinnakers Restaurant, Coco Beach Bar and the Topsy Seagull Outdoor Bar. Golf and diving packages are available.

Bahama Beach Club (☎ 242-365-8500; www.bahamabeachclub.com; Treasure Cay Rd; d \$350; (P) (X) (B) (D)) These super pale-pink two-story condos sit on the beach and offer spacious and light living areas and fully equipped kitchens (four to six people \$400). There's a three-night minimum stay, but it may take longer to drag yourself away from the balconies' sea views. A perfect spot.

Banyan Beach Club (☎ 242-365-8111; www.banyanbeach.com; Treasure Cay Rd) Was closed for renovation at the time of research (due to the 2004 hurricanes), but should be checked out for the stunning beachfront location alone.

Touch of Class Restaurant & Bar (☎ 242-365-8195; SC Bootle Hwy; mains \$15-30; (X) dinner) On the highway 100yd south of the turnoff for Treasure Cay, this popular and pleasant place serves Bahamian dishes, a great range of turf 'n' surf plates and lobster.

Cafe Le Florence (☎ 242-367-2570; shopping center; (X) 7am-6pm) A sticky, spicy and warm cinnamon roll creates queues at this small café and takeaway. Fresh bread, pies and cakes also run out of the door.

Gully's Restaurant & Bar (Airport Ferry Dock; mains \$5-10; (X) breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) Don't miss the Fish Fry on Sundays, or the grilled red fish (snapper) and lobster. Burgers and other snacks are also available.

Treasure Cay Mini Market (☎ 242-365-8350; shopping center; (X) 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) This very good supermarket is well stocked, and considerably has an adjacent liquor store.

SHOPPING

Abaco Ceramics (☎ 242-365-8489; Treasure Cay Rd; (X) 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) Handmade and hand-painted kitchenware and adornments are manufactured and sold here.

The gift shop at the marina sells Abaco gold jewelry and resort wear.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

For information on traveling to the Abacos and flights between the Abacos and Bahamian islands please refer to p154.

Air

Treasure Cay International Airport (airport code TCB) is located 15 miles north of town. A taxi to/from the airport to Treasure Cay for two people is \$14. To catch a taxi, there is the **Airport Taxi Stand** (☎ 242-365-8661).

Bicycle, Scooter & Car

Cars rent from \$80 per day, and bicycles from \$10 per day. Weekly rentals should be cheaper. Most rental companies close on Sundays (except R&A, which is open daily).

Cornish Car Rentals (☎ 242-365-8623)

R&A (☎ 242-365-8475; VHF Channel 16; (X) daily) Rent motor scooters (\$31/44 per three hours/day).

Triple J Car Rental (☎ 242-365-8761)

Wendell's Bicycle Rentals (☎ 242-365-8687)

Boat

Captain Gurth Dean sails from Nassau to Treasure Cay weekly (see Marsh Harbour, p155).

Treasure Cay Hotel Resort & Marina (left) has 150 slips, and provides dockage \$1.10/0.75 for transient/long-term stays. Cable TV and all facilities are available, including dining and accommodations.

Golf Carts

Cash's Carts (☎ 242-365-8771; shopping center; (X) 8am-5pm) rents golf carts for \$25/40/245 per half-day/day/week. Use the radio if they are not there.

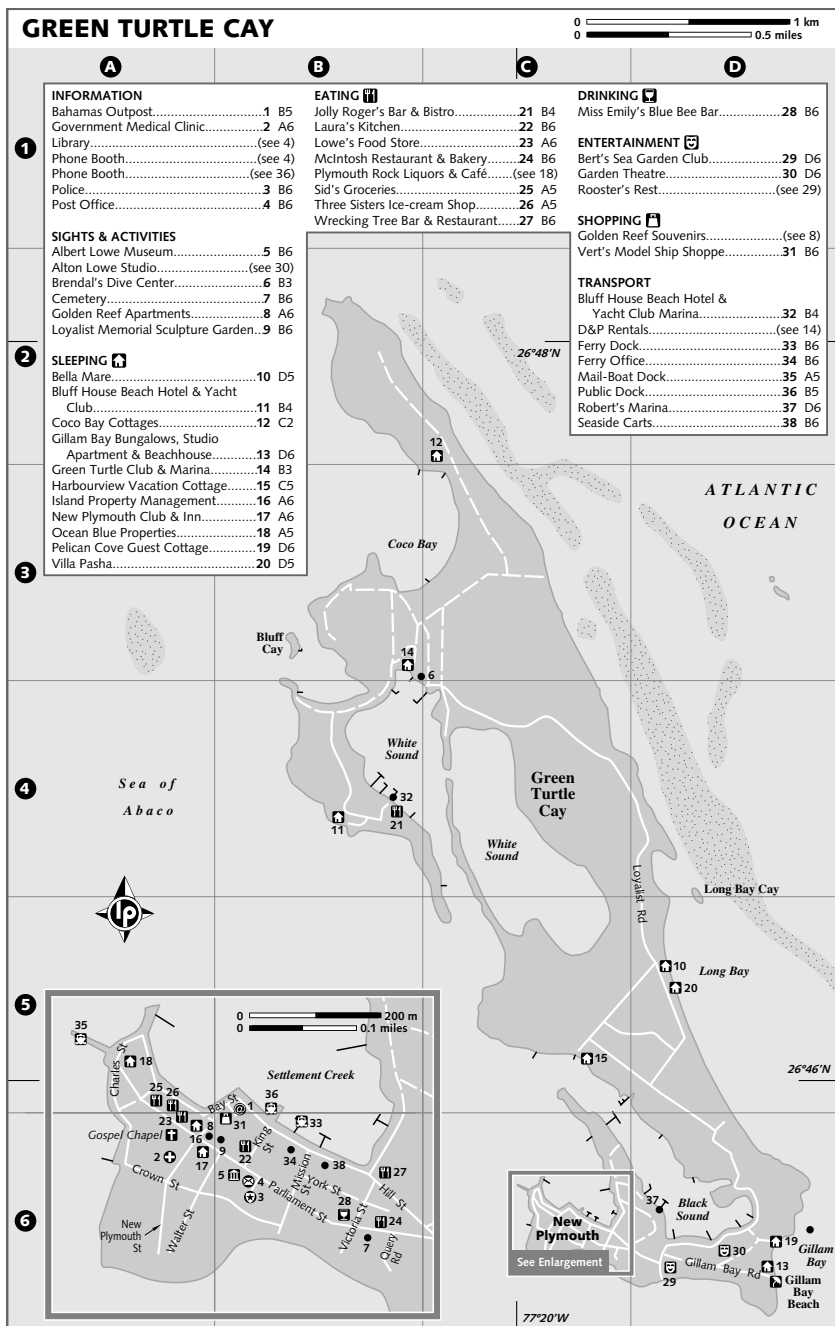
Taxi

A taxi to/from the ferry dock from Treasure Cay is \$14. Call **Hart's Taxi Service** (☎ 242-365-8572; VHF Channel 6).

Green Turtle Cay

pop 461

This gorgeous island has it all, and it is still enough off the beaten track to give you an authentic Family Island experience. It's 8 miles north of Treasure Cay and the northernmost of the four Loyalist Cays. The shores are lined with magnificent white-sand beaches, and reefs call to divers, snorkelers and the loggerhead turtles that still crawl ashore to nest.



New Plymouth, the island's town, is a pretty, amiable and historic place, with neat little streets and pastel-colored cottages with carefully tendered gardens. Spirited churches exhale the songs of tuneful congregations on Sundays (listen to the exuberant meetings at the daffodil-yellow Gospel Chapel) and charismatic tiny bars jump to rake 'n' scrape bands.

The three-masted schooner that sailed into these sun-dappled waters in 1783 carried 500 New Yorkers (mostly Irish Protestants whose property had been confiscated by the victorious colonials). During the 19th century, the town they founded grew to be the second-largest city in the Bahamas, and it remains a charming place. Many locals gain their income by fishing for conch and lobster. Loyalist descendants won't sell town property to out-of-towners, although some rich expats live elsewhere on the island.

INFORMATION

For emergencies contact the **police** (☎ 242-365-4450, 911) who are adjacent to the **post office** (☎ 242-365-4242) in the old pink-and-white building on Parliament St.

For communications, phone booths are in several locales, including outside the library and by the ferry dock. The library, adjoining the post office, has a good array of novels and general reference titles. Books are borrowed on the honor system. **Bahamas Outpost** (☎ 242-365-4695; bahamaoutpost@cocotels.net; Bay St, New Plymouth; ☒ 9am-4:30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) has Internet access. **Government Medical Clinic** (☎ 242-365-4028; New Plymouth St, New Plymouth).

SIGHTS

The 1826 **Albert Lowe Museum** (☎ 242-365-4095; Parliament & King Sts, Loyalist Rd, New Plymouth; admission \$6; ☒ 9am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Fri) is housed in a building (1826) that has served as headquarters for the US consul and as home to Neville Chamberlain before he became prime minister of England. The museum was founded in 1976 by the nation's most prominent artist, Alton Roland Lowe, who has dedicated most of his adult life to preserving the long-neglected history of his native Abacos.

Albert Lowe Studio (☎ 242-365-4094; Black Sound; ☒ Mon-Sat Jul & Dec or by appointment) belongs to the nation's artist laureate, and he is certainly the Bahama's most successful (his works are sought after by monarchs, prime

ministers and others with heaps of cash to spare). There's no sign. Look for the tall white gates set back from the road and the white, pink and peppermint green house amid trees on the hill above.

Vert's Model Ship Shoppe (☎ 242-365-4170; vertsmodels@hotmail.com; Bay St, New Plymouth; ☒ Mon-Fri) is a small place owned by Alton Lowe's brother Vert. He makes intricate model sailing ships, a genius he picked up from his father, a master model-boat builder. You are welcome to watch him conjuring miniature sailing vessels from redwood, spruce and fir.

Loyalist Memorial Sculpture Garden (Parliament St, New Plymouth) features 25 bronze busts of notable loyalists and slaves from all the Bahamian islands, arranged in the shape of the Union Jack. Two loyalist women – one black, one white – stand as the centerpiece atop a coral platform.

The 200-year-old bones of Loyalist ancestors lie in a wee **cemetery** at the east end of Parliament St. Descendants of the long-deceased still adorn the graves with flowers and wreaths.

The handsome **Gilliam Bay Beach** lies a half-mile east of town and lines a glorious 2-mile wide bay.

White Sound is a deep bay protected by a bluff-faced peninsula – the setting for a notably affluent community of expats. Pre-Columbian Lucayan artifacts have been found on the bluff. It's located 2 miles north of New Plymouth,

Dirt roads lead north from White Sound to the wild Atlantic shore and **Coco Bay**, with a lovely crescent of powder-soft sand.

ACTIVITIES

Diving & Snorkeling

Brendal's Dive Center (☎ 242-365-4411; VHF Channel 16; www.brendal.com; White Sound) This excellent diving outfit offers two-tank dives (\$82), night dives (\$72) and snorkel trips (\$52). Ask about meeting the divers' wild 'pets': groupers Junkanoo and Calypso, who cuddle up like dogs, and Goombay the grinning green moray eel. Dolphin encounters are instigated by the dolphins. Specialty trips include diving and hand-feeding a family of wild stingrays (\$95, including fresh seafood picnic). There's also a snorkel reef trip and wild dolphin encounter with lunch (\$75) or a Guana Cay trip to Nipper's Beach Bar (\$75). You can rent all kayaks, bicycles, diving

and snorkeling equipment here, including underwater camera and video gear.

Boat Excursions & Rentals

The Green Turtle Club & Marina (right) offers island cruises to guests.

Brendal's Dive Center (p169) offers day-long sailing cruises with beach cookout and punch on Manjack or No Name Cays. Other options include snorkeling, hand-feeding stingrays, diving for lobster, hiking, and shelling (prices on application). Glass-bottomed boat excursions to the reef are \$75; snorkeling gear is extra.

Lincoln Jones (☎ 242-365-4223) runs fishing and snorkel trips with beach picnics and cookouts (\$75/45 per adult/child).

Boat rentals range from \$80 to \$150 per day. Weekly rates are better.

Donny's Boat Rentals (☎ 242-365-4119)

Reef Rentals (☎ 242-365-4145)

Bonefishing & Sportfishing

A 1035lb blue marlin was caught in 1998 in one of the Abaco tournaments held annually (the Green Turtle Club & Marina hosts the annual bonefishing tournament in May). Typical bonefishing rates are \$250/400 per half-/full-day.

Joe Sawyer (☎ 242-365-4173) Has 45 years of bonefishing experience.

Rick Sawyer (☎ 242-365-4261) A reef and bonefishing guide.

Ronnie Sawyer (☎ 242-365-4070) A bonefishing guide profiled in the media.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Green Turtle Cay's traditional **Junkanoo** parades, held on Boxing Day and New Year's Day, attract scores of visitors. In the weeks leading up to Junkanoo, visit Corporal Hubert James Smith (Corporal 'Smitty'), the undisputed king of costuming, and watch him make his magical suits. You can find him at Miss Emily's Blue Bee Bar (opposite).

The **Bluff House Fishing Tournament** in May is a winner, but the annual highlight is **Regatta Week**, held each July, beginning with sailing races and festivities at Green Turtle Cay, followed by the same at Great Guana Cay, Marsh Harbour, Man O' War Cay, Elbow Cay and, again, Marsh Harbour.

During the last week in December, the **Christmas Concert Under the Stars** is held at the Garden Theatre (p172). **An Evening of Music &**

Comedy is traditionally held here in January. Call **Ivy Roberts** (☎ 242-365-4094) or **Alton Lowe** (☎ 242-365-4264).

Also in December, during **Plymouth Historical Weekend**, Green Turtle residents celebrate their loyalist heritage with cultural events and barbecues.

SLEEPING

For some super vacation rentals contact **Island Property Management** (☎ 242-365-4047; ipm@batelnet.bs; Parliament St, New Plymouth) and **Ocean Blue Properties** (☎ 242-365-4636; www.oceanblueproperties.com; Parliament St, New Plymouth).

New Plymouth

Golden Reef Apartments (☎ 242-365-4055; harmony@batelnet.bs; Parliament St, New Plymouth; apt per week \$1200; ☎ ☎) A peppermint green building on the main street in the centre of town contains this 2nd-floor, two-bedroom apartment. The attractive decor of pale wood, white tile, rattan furniture and breezy ceiling fans lends a cool tropical feel to the place, and a spacious veranda overlooks the street below.

New Plymouth Club & Inn (☎ 242-365-4161; fax 242-365-4138; Parliament St, New Plymouth; s/d/tr \$100/130/195; P ☎ ☎ ☎) This place, set among quaint cloistered gardens, has 19th-century colonial charm. It also has a restaurant (see opposite).

Gillam Bay Beach

The following great properties all sit on a lovely hidden-away beach, found down the end of a forested road. They can be rented from **Ocean Blue Properties** (above). Choose from the cute **Gillam Bay Bungalows** (2-4 persons per week \$950), **Gillam Bay Studio Apartment** (d per week \$1250) or **Gillam Bay Beachhouse** (2-6 persons per week \$2500) which all sit on the beachside.

Also recommended is the one-bedroom **Pelican Cove Guest Cottage** (d \$650).

Black Sound Harbour

Harbourview Vacation Cottage (☎ 242-365-4120; marilyn@oil.net; Black Sound; per week \$1250; P ☎ ☎) This blue-and-white two-bedroom cottage is a great family rental with a good-size garden and screened deck.

White Sound & Coco Bay

Green Turtle Club & Marina (☎ 242-365-4271, US ☎ 800-688-4752; www.greenturtleclub.com; White Sound; r per day/week \$195/1070; P ☎ ☎ ☎) This

THE GOOMBAY SMASH: THE BIRTH OF A CLASSIC COCKTAIL

Miss Emily, a Christian teetotaler who passed away in March 1997, came up with the seductively lethal trademark drink of **Miss Emily's Blue Bee Bar** (☎ 242-365-4181; Victoria St; ☎ noon-10pm) when she was 'fooling around' with mixes about 20 years ago. This mix of rums and fruit juices is now as famous across the Bahamas and the world as the Bahama Mama cocktail. However, only family members are entrusted with the original cocktail's recipe – a still closely guarded secret. If you have enjoyed the inferior versions of the Goombay Smash, try one here and you will be very happy indeed!

The bar is now run by her charming daughter, Violet, who still brews the secret recipe at home in plastic jugs. The simple wooden hut has only rustic seating, and decor is provided by a large portrait of the kindly-looking Miss Emily (who should be toasted with respect), business cards festooning the walls, T-shirts hanging from the ceiling, and all manner of scribbles from happy customers. Yacht pennants from around the world also indicate the fame that this modest blue bar (named after a tiny fish) has justifiably gained.

The friendly mood of the bar is only heightened when the music gets going. Junkanoo kicks off here, as do many celebrations. By the way, the record number of Goombay Smashes consumed in one night is a whopping 23; the man was taken home in a wheelbarrow.

hugely popular and good-value place gets booked out well in advance. Rooms have attractive tropical decor and pine decks. Facilities include an English pub-style lounge, and a restaurant offering candlelit dining. Activities include fishing and diving. Excursions are offered.

Coco Bay Cottages (☎ 242-365-5464; www.cocobaycottages.com; Coco Bay; d per day/week \$250/1500; P ☎ ☎) Secluded and fabulous with miles of beach.

Bluff House Beach Hotel & Yacht Club (☎ 242-365-4247; www.bluffhouse.com; White Sound; d per night/week \$180/800; P ☎ ☎ ☎) These light and immaculate modern two-story villas are spaced across a low hillside and have balconies facing the sea and a private beach to share. A minimum three-night stay is required. An elegant bar and restaurant serves lunch and formal dinners, and has a predinner cocktail hour which is included in the price (\$40).

Long Bay Beach

Bella Mare (☎ 242-287-3849; www.bellamaregreenturtle.com; Long Bay; r 1-8 persons \$5000, 9-10 persons \$5500; P ☎ ☎) The modern beachside Bella Mare has huge glass windows and a deck; perfect for families.

Villa Pasha (☎ 242-287-3849; www.bellamaregreenturtle.com; Long Bay; villa for 1-4 persons \$5500, 9-10 persons \$6500; P ☎ ☎) Next door to the Bella Mare is the immaculate Villa Pasha, with a coat of arms on their golf cart and a chandelier in the living room.

EATING & DRINKING

Along with some excellent hotel dining and bars, the island is not short of places to eat and drink.

McIntosh Restaurant & Bakery (☎ 242-365-4625; Parliament St, New Plymouth; mains \$5-11; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) American breakfasts and local fare for lunch and dinner are served here, where you also can buy carrot cake and homemade desserts. For luscious, creamy homemade ice cream, head to the adjoining Three Sisters Ice-cream Shop.

Plymouth Rock Liquors & Café (☎ 242-365-4234; Parliament & Charles Sts, New Plymouth; ☎ lunch & dinner) Sandwiches and soups and 70-odd options of rum will keep you occupied. If not, the gallery of extensive local art certainly will!

Laura's Kitchen (☎ 242-365-4287; King St, New Plymouth; mains \$6-12; ☎ lunch & dinner) The Bahamian fare is simple but good. The lunch menu includes a tuna sandwich, Bahamian platters and burgers.

Wrecking Tree Bar & Restaurant (☎ 242-365-8635; Hill St, New Plymouth; mains \$6-15; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) The site where 19th-century wreckers brought their ungodly salvage is now a grand place for breakfast, or a beer and fried fish or chicken lunch.

You can buy groceries at **Low's Food Store** (☎ 242-365-4243; Parliament St, New Plymouth) and **Sid's Groceries** (☎ 242-365-4055; Parliament St; New Plymouth).

New Plymouth Club & Inn (opposite) serves dinner (\$25 to \$33) in the cozy lounge-cum-dining room, with jazz and classical

music and soft candlelight adding to the romance. Dinner is with reservations.

The attractive, busy and upmarket restaurant at the Green Turtle Club & Marina (p170) overlooks the marina and water. Try dishes such as the succulent coconut-cooked shrimp or Asian-spiced duck breast with raspberry drizzle (mains \$27 to \$30). A log fire is lit on cool winter evenings. It's open for breakfast, lunch and dinner but dinner is only with reservations.

Bluff House Beach Hotel & Yacht Club (☎ 242-365-4247, US ☎ 800-688-4752; White Sound; mains \$15-25; 🍴 lunch & dinner) Jolly Roger's Bar & Bistro is popular for the reggae, lively bar staff, American and Bahamian food (mains \$8-15), frozen daiquiris and Vern's famous Tranquil Turtle (more like crawling-on-your-knees-turtle), to be sipped on the wooden deck.

ENTERTAINMENT

Rooster's Rest (☎ 242-365-4066; Gilliam Bay Rd, New Plymouth) The Gully Roosters perform rake 'n' scrape calypso and soca music here on Friday and Saturday nights.

You can play pool next door at **Bert's Sea Garden Club** (Gilliam Bay Rd, New Plymouth), where Bert Reckley serves a house concoction of coconut, rum and milk.

The Gully Roosters also perform at Bluff House (above) on Thursday night, and at the Green Turtle Club (see p170) on Wednesday night.

On Thursday night there's a beach barbecue with live bands and Junkanoo mini-events at Bluff House (p172). Live music is also offered on Tuesday.

The open-air **Garden Theatre** (Black Sound), adjacent to the Alton Lowe Studio, hosts comedy, and musical and theatrical concerts throughout the year.

SHOPPING

Model boats at Vert's Model Ship Shoppe (p169) are not cheap, beginning at over \$100. A 26-inch one-master costs about \$600. For two- or three-masted ships up to 5ft long, expect to pay \$1200 to \$2500.

Golden Reef Souvenirs (☎ 242-365-4511; Parliament Rd, New Plymouth) They sell handmade gold jewelry, resort wear and other souvenirs.

Also look for paintings by Alton Lowe, sold at the gallery next to the Albert Lowe Museum (p169). You might see some of his works displayed at the Ocean Blue

Gallery in the Plymouth Rock Liquors & Café (p171), where over 50 artists are represented by prints, oils and watercolors. Other gems include stained-glass work by Rome Heyer.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Green Turtle Ferry (☎ 242-365-4166; VHF Channel 16, Airport Ferry Dock; \$8/14 single/return) departs from Green Turtle Cay for Treasure Cay at 8am, 9am, 11am, noon, 1:30pm, 3pm and 4:30pm. The ferries return at 8:30am, 10:30am, 11:30am, 1:30pm, 2:30pm, 3:30pm, 4:30pm and 5pm.

The ferries will drop you at White Sound for an extra \$2. The skipper will also drop you off at the dock nearest your hotel or radio ahead so that your rental's caretaker will be waiting for you. Ferries also operate on demand, at extra cost, for people with flights; call ahead.

Mail boat *Captain Gurth Dean* calls in once a week from Nassau; see p155.

Green Turtle Cay is a Port of Entry for the Bahamas; **Customs & Immigration** (☎ 242-365-4077) is on Parliament St, in New Plymouth. Black Sound is considered a hurricane shelter.

Bluff House Beach Hotel & Yacht Club (☎ 242-365-4247; VHF Channel 16; www.bluffhouse.com; White Sound) has 45 slips and there is transient/monthly dockage on offer for \$1.15/0.85 per foot. It provides electricity, water and laundry.

Green Turtle Club & Marina (p170) has 40 slips offering dockage and providing electricity, water and laundry facilities.

Robert's Marina (☎ 242-365-4249; Black Sound) has a full-service marina.

GETTING AROUND

The preferred mode of transportation is the golf cart. Carts can be ordered by getting the ferry captain to call ahead on VHF.

D & P Rentals (☎ 242-365-4655; VHF Channel 16; dmcintosh@oii.net; Green Turtle Marina, White Sound; 🕒 8am-5pm) rent gas or electric carts for \$25/50/240 per half-day/day/week and scooters for \$50 per day.

Seaside Carts (☎ 242-365-5497; VHF Channel 16; seasidecarts@hotmail.com; Bay St, New Plymouth) meets the ferries and rent carts for \$25/50/230 per half-day/day/week.

Brendal's Dive Centre (p169) rents out bicycles (\$12) and kayaks (\$10 per hour).

Spanish Cay

On your way to Spanish Cay you will pass **Cooper's Town**, a center for commercial citrus farms. Spanish Cay, a 3-mile-long sliver of land 3 miles off the northern tip of Great Abaco, was once owned by Queen Elizabeth II. Four beautiful beaches line the eastern shore. Most of its 185 acres are covered in palm groves and tropical forest, with a few homes of the international gentry hidden in their midst.

Spanish Cay Inn & Marina (Map p147; ☎ 242-365-0083; www.spanishcay.com; r \$150; 📞 🍴 🏠) This small luxury resort used to host the Dallas Cowboys. It has light and comfortable two-room suites, condos and villas. Facilities include a waterfront restaurant, tennis courts, and a whirlpool with a nearby bar. Golf carts are available, as are boats for fishing or diving. The marina offers 82 slips and full facilities.

Spanish Cay has a 5000ft airstrip for guests arriving by private plane.

A water taxi runs from the Government Dock at Cooper's Town.

Little Abaco

Great Abaco finishes 5 miles northwest of Cooper's Town at Angel Fish Point, where SC Bootle Hwy swings west over a bridge onto Little Abaco island.

The population lives in four small and relatively poor settlements: Cedar Harbour, Mount Hope, Fox Town and Crown Haven. There's a post office, small hotel and police station in Fox Town. There are a few modest beaches and the bonefishing on the south side of the island is said to be excellent.

NORTHWEST CAYS Grand Cay

pop 435

Near the top of the Abacos chain, Grand Cay is divided into the larger, box-shaped, virtually uninhabited isle of that name and, to its east, Little Grand Cay and Mermaid Cay, both with small settlements. There are several beaches; the most spectacular is Wells Bay, which runs the 2-mile west shore of Grand Cay. The bonefishing here is superb.

Walker's Cay

This tiny rocky cay sits right at the northern end of the Abacos chain. It is fringed by a barrier reef that offers spectacular diving, often in less than 30ft of water. Highlights include old wrecks, including a WWII relic; Jeanette's Reef, boasting a large population of eels; caverns full of silver minnows; and Travel Agent Reef, a beautiful coral garden ideal for snorkelers and novice divers.

Walker's Cay Hotel & Marina (☎ 242-353-1264; www.walkercay.com; d/ste \$170/335; 📞 🍴 🏠) has been a firm favorite with fishermen since the 1930s, and is operated by staff who boat in each day. Other than visitors, the cay's residents consist of scurrying, curly-tailed lizards and seabirds, including sooty terns and frigate. Two restaurants and bars offer enough steak and fish to keep everyone happily fed. Attractive rooms have private terraces. Facilities include two swimming pools (one freshwater, the other saltwater) and a Jacuzzi, plus stores, a volleyball court, a tennis court and water sports, including diving.

An airstrip welcomes chartered planes from Florida and elsewhere, while the marina has 75 slips and full facilities.

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