

Grand Bahama



GRAND BAHAMA

This island is for those who love to spend their days immersed in nature, and then relish the pleasures of a lively bar, good restaurant and comfortable hotel at night. It is also a cheaper and less frenetic place to be than New Providence, despite being the Bahamas second-most popular stop.

The flat, narrow 85 mile-long island is blanketed by miles of upright Cuban pines and dwarf palms and the glorious Lucayan National Park. Grand Bahama's south shore is edged with sugar-white beaches and the warm aquamarine sea. Turtles occasionally emerge from these waters to nest at Gold Rock Creek, Hawksbill Creek and High Rock.

The north shore's mangrove and wetland habitats host colorful birdlife and raccoons meander in the undergrowth. A bracelet of cays to the east is home to the island's fishing industry and villages.

Little curly-tailed lizards are everywhere, scurrying across the sands and pavements of the hotels, golf courses and marinas that are concentrated around Freeport and Lucaya.

The small bars and restaurants of these tourism centers resound with chatter and laughter in the evenings, while strollers choose to enjoy the stars. At weekends *goombay* and reggae rhythms take over Count Basie Plaza, and the adjacent lively market stalls abound with colorful clothing and woven accessories.

Families will appreciate the affordable resorts that provide a heap of beachside and indoor activities for children. The scuba-diving is also fabulous, including opportunities to dive with wild dolphins, while some great ecotours take you kayaking, bicycling and snorkeling through a range of habitats, including the stunning marine parks.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Kayak** (p109) through mangrove forests, find the world's longest underground cavern and snorkel with fish in Lucayan National Park
- Lounge on the deck of Churchill Beach's **Club Caribe** (p114), toasting the ocean with a cold beer, before the fun of the Friday night pig roast begins
- Gallop on **horseback** (p108) along a deserted southern beach at sunset
- Watch Freeport's **Conchman Triathlon** (p110) competitors strain their way to glory
- Dive in the company of **wild dolphins** (p107) around coral reefs



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 242

■ POPULATION: 49,566

■ AREA: 530 SQ MILES

History

Juan Ponce de León visited Grand Bahama in 1513 while searching for the Fountain of Youth, and pirates marauded their way around the island during the 17th and 18th centuries. The islanders benefited from the pirates' spoils, and briefly from acting as a supply depot for the Confederacy during the US Civil War. Another prosperous time came when Grand Bahama acted as a staging post for rumrunners during Prohibition.

For many decades the islanders then lived meagerly from the proceeds of lumbering, fishing and diving for sponges, until the 1950s when American Wallace Groves and Brit Sir Charles Hayward developed the area. This turned a vast, uninhabited area into a town known as Freeport, complete with an airport and a port with an oil-bunkering storage complex that would prove a bonanza for the Bahamas. (Oil is still purchased, stored and resold to the US at a handsome profit.)

The British crown then granted permission for these men to buy and develop a further 150,000 acres of the island's middle section, which led to the destruction of the remaining West Indian and British architecture. Initial plans for tourism floundered, and Freeport was then (optimistically) promoted as an offshore financial and high-technology industrial center.

The city is still overseen by the Grand Bahama Port Authority, or 'The Port,' set up by Groves. It maintains strict zoning laws, assesses all business licenses, and has the same defining role in matters of commercial probity as the Christian Council has in Nassau.

In 1996 a development group, Sun & Sea Estates, began a major redevelopment project in Lucaya. The five-year, \$290 million multiresort project has integrated existing hotels with new hotels, vacation clubs, restaurants, shops, theme parks, a new golf course and golf school, and a marina.

Many hoped that this massive investment would do for Grand Bahama what the Atlantis resort (p78) did for Paradise Island. It is certainly successful. However, hurricanes such as Frances and Jeanne in 2004, badly damaged residential communities, nature reserves and woodlands, as well as many hotels, and certainly dampened the island's hopes.

National Parks

Grand Bahama has some of the country's best parks, which are perfect for those interested in hiking, biking and kayaking, as well as those wanting to sunbathe, stroll and lounge in the shallows! For more information see p39.

Lucayan National Park (p118) contains the world's longest known underwater cave and cavern system, with caves that are habitats for rare underground crustaceans and migratory bats, and mangrove wetlands.

Peterson Cay National Park (p118) is a one to 1½-acre cay that has a striking coral garden.

Another ocean delight is **Walker's Cay** (p173), where several dive operators from Grand Bahama venture to, while the 100-acre **Rand Memorial Nature Centre** (p103) has distinctive flora and fauna.

Dangers & Annoyances

Be careful downtown near Winn Dixie Plaza in Freeport and at Pinder's Point and Eight Mile at night. There have been issues with street lighting in some of these areas since the 2004 hurricanes, and there have been some reports of drug-related violence.

Getting There & Away

Most travelers to Grand Bahama fly into Freeport International Airport, 2 miles north of Freeport, or arrive at Freeport Harbour on the weekly mail boat from Nassau, a fast ferry from Florida or an international cruise ship.

Getting Around

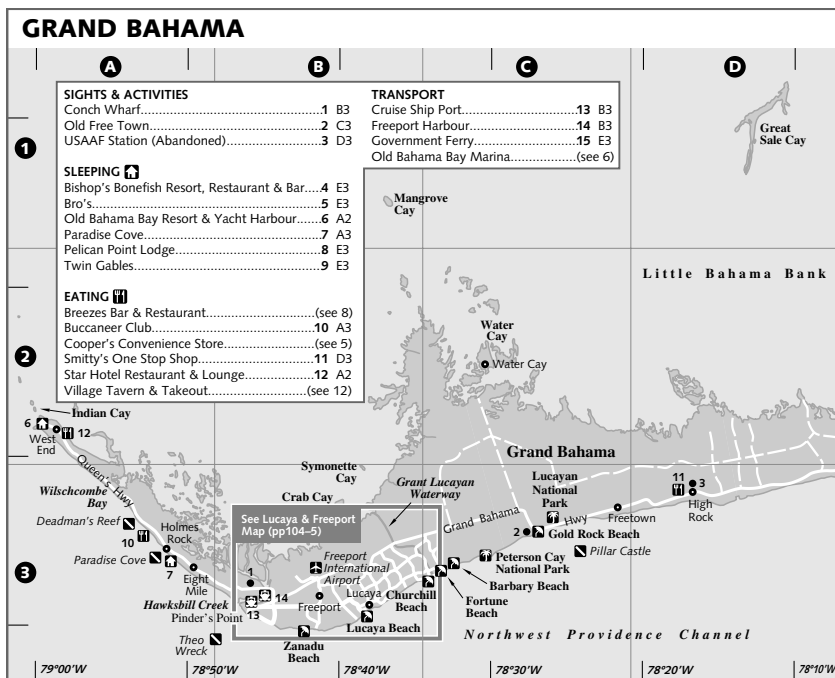
You'll need your own transport if you want to explore the island outside of Freeport or Lucaya, although these two centers are linked by a regular stream of jitney buses. Car rental agencies are located at the airport, and boats can also be easily hired.

FREEPORT & LUCAYA

pop 46,535

Freeport has the characteristic wide, grid-style streets and simple modern buildings of a planned city, but sadly no real community feeling or defined center. Downtown has only a few shops, banks and businesses. Consequently many tourists (wrongly) believe that Freeport's center is around the International Bazaar and Crowne Plaza Resort & Casino Complex, where the hotels are based.

GRAND BAHAMA



Lucaya is well designed and is a nicer option for those on holiday. It is antiseptic, but there is a great stretch of beach and it is possible to walk easily and safely to surrounding bars, hotels and restaurants. Although Freeport has marginally cheaper accommodation, the facilities in Lucaya are more centralized and offer more choice.

Orientation

Freeport's town center lies 1 mile north of the International Bazaar between West Mall and East Mall Dr. At its heart is **Winn Dixie Plaza**, but the hotels are located a mile south of downtown, centered on Ranfurly Circle and the International Bazaar.

E Sunrise Hwy runs from Ranfurly Circle in Freeport towards Lucaya, where Seahorse Rd turns off to the heart of the Lucaya hotel district. Taino, Churchill, and Fortune Beaches extend east from Lucaya. The Grand Bahama Hwy will take you to the east end of the island and McLean's Town. Queen's Hwy will take you to the West End of Grand Bahama.

Complimentary copies of the *Grand Bahamas Trailblazer Map* are obtainable from most hotel lobbies and tourist retail outlets.

Information

BOOKSTORES & LIBRARIES

Charles Hayward Library (Map pp104-5;

242-352-7048; E Mall Dr, Freeport)

H&L Bookstore (Map pp104-5; 242-373-8947;

Pt Lucaya Marketplace & Village)

EMERGENCY

Ambulance (242-352-2689, 911)

Emergency (911)

Police (911)

INTERNET ACCESS

Log on Cyber Café (Map pp104-5; 242-559-0111;

Pt Lucaya Marketplace & Village; per 15min \$5; 9am-

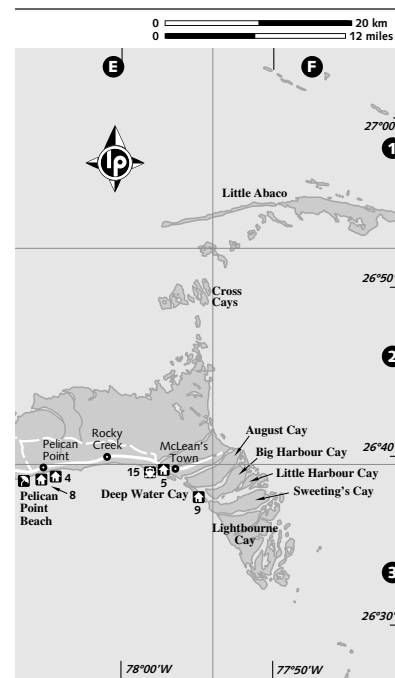
10pm) For long-distance calls and Internet – although

rates are expensive.

MEDICAL SERVICES

LMR Drugs (Map pp104-5; 242-352-7327; 1 W Mall

Dr, Freeport; 8am-9pm Mon-Sat)



Lucayan Medical Centre East (Map pp104-5; 242-373-7400; E Sunrise Hwy, Lucaya)

Lucayan Medical Centre West (Map pp104-5;

242-352-7288; Adventurers Way, Freeport)

Rand Memorial Hospital (Map pp104-5;

242-352-6735; E Atlantic Dr, Freeport)

Sunrise Medical Centre & Hospital (Map pp104-5;

242-373-3333; E Sunrise Hwy, Lucaya)

MONEY

Bank of the Bahamas (Map pp104-5; 242-352-7483; cnr Bank Lane & Woodstock St, Freeport)

British American Bank (Map pp104-5; 242-352-6676; East Mall Dr, Freeport)

First Caribbean International Bank (Map pp104-5; 242-352-6651; E Mall Dr, Freeport)

Royal Bank of Canada (Map pp104-5; 242-352-6631; cnr E Mall Dr & Explorers Way, Freeport)

Scotiabank (Map pp104-5; 242-352-6774; Regent Centre, Freeport)

Western Union (Map pp104-5; 242-352-6676)

Based at the British American Bank.

POST

Post office (Map pp104-5; 242-352-9371; Explorers Way, Freeport)

FedEx (Map pp104-5; 242-352-3402; www.fedex.com; Seventeen Plaza, cnr Bank Lane & Explorers Way, Freeport)

TELEPHONE

BaTelCo (Map pp104-5; 242-352-6220; Pioneer's Way, Freeport) Offers telephone and fax services.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Newspapers such as the daily *Freeport News* (published Monday to Saturday in the afternoons) and the monthly *Freeport Times* are both worth checking out for arts and entertainment information as well as any upcoming sporting events.

What-to-do in Freeport/Lucaya, Grand Bahama is full of handy information and discount coupons, while *Island Magazine* provides information on shopping, dining, and entertainment. *Discover Port Lucaya* has a map of Port Lucaya and discount coupons. All are free publications and can be located in hotel lobbies and tourism outlets.

Also visit the following for information on local events and activities.

Grand Bahama Island Tourism Board (www.grand-bahama.com) Main Office (Map pp104-5; 242-325-8356); Tourism Booth (Map pp104-5; 242-352-8356; International Bazaar, Freeport)

Tourism Booth, Freeport International Airport (Map pp104-5; 242-352-2052)

Sights

INTERNATIONAL BAZAAR

This small, overrated **marketplace** (Map pp104-5; Freeport) lies beyond the Japanese *torii* (gates) on the northwest side of Ranfurly Circle. Ignore the hype; this is not a center of life and activity. There is a small number of tourist shops worth browsing and some very disappointing eateries. Some of the businesses open daily, but others open only when a cruise ship is in town.

RAND MEMORIAL NATURE CENTRE

This headquarters of the Bahamas National Trust is a rewarding 100-acre nature retreat. In 1969 the **centre** (Map pp104-5; 242-352-5438; East Settlers Way, Freeport; adult/child \$5/3; 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) was established as a living memorial to Freeport philanthropist James Rand. There are more than 130 native plant species including a number of weird and wonderful orchids and a native coppice that has grown here since before the time of Columbus.

FREEPORT & LUCAYA

	A	B	C	D	
INFORMATION					
Bank of the Bahamas.....	1 B2	Police Station.....	13 G5	Lucayan Marina Village.....	22 H5
BaTelCo.....	2 A3	Post Office.....	14 A2	Nautical Adventures.....	(see 77)
British American Bank.....	3 B2	Rand Memorial Hospital.....	15 B2	Parrot Jungle's Garden of the Grove.....	23 H3
Charles Hayward Library.....	4 B3	Royal Bank of Canada.....	16 B2	Pinetree Stables.....	24 E4
Federal Express.....	5 A2	Scotiabank.....	17 A2	Pirates of The Bahamas Beach Theme Park.....	25 H5
First Caribbean International Bank.....	6 B3	Sunrise Medical Centre.....	18 D4	Regency Theatre.....	26 C4
Grand Bahama Island Tourism Board.....	(see 7)	Tourist Information.....	19 D3	RND Cinemas.....	27 B4
International Bazaar: Info & Eating.....	7 A5	Western Union.....	(see 3)	UNEXSO.....	28 C5
LMR Drugs.....	8 A2	SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		Water World.....	29 D4
Log on Cyber Café.....	(see 66)	Caribbean Divers.....	(see 32)	Watersports.....	30 G5
Lucayan Medical Centre East.....	9 E4	Dolphin Experience.....	(see 37)	Xanadu Undersea Adventures.....	31 D5
Lucayan Medical Centre West.....	10 A3	Grand Bahama Brewing Company.....	20 D4	SLEEPING	
Police.....	11 A5	Hydroflora Gardens.....	21 D4	Bell Channel Inn.....	32 G5
Police Station.....	12 A3	Isle of Capri Casino.....	(see 42)	Best Western Castaways Resort.....	33 B4

	E	F	G	H	
Viva Wyndham Fortuna Beach.....	48 G3	Pub on the Mall.....	(see 51)	Les Parisiennes.....	(see 68)
Xanadu Beach Resort & Marina.....	49 D5	Run Runners.....	(see 58)	Linens of Lucaya.....	(see 68)
EATING		Shenanigan's Irish Pub.....	(see 58)	Nautica Boutique.....	(see 68)
Café Michel's.....	(see 7)	Tranquility Shores.....	59 F4	Paradise Jewels.....	(see 64)
Caribbean Café.....	(see 54)	ENTERTAINMENT		Parfum de Paris.....	(see 64)
Club Caribe.....	50 G4	Amnesia.....	60 B4	Perfume Factory.....	(see 64)
Coconut's Beach.....	(see 39)	Illusion's Jazz Club.....	(see 66)	Plaka.....	(see 65)
Restaurant & Bar.....	(see 39)	Prop Club Beach & Bar Restaurant.....	(see 42)	Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village.....	66 G5
Gelati Silvano's.....	51 B5	Safari Lounge Dance Club & Restaurant.....	61 B2	Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village: Art.....	67 G5
Geneva's Place.....	52 B3	SHOPPING		Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village: Shopping.....	68 G5
Islander's Roost.....	(see 51)	Androsia.....	(see 68)	Smoker's World.....	(see 65)
Le Rendezvous.....	(see 7)	Bahamas Coin & Stamp.....	(see 65)	Straw Market.....	69 G5
Luciano's.....	(see 54)	Bahamian Tings.....	(see 65)	Tiffigraphs.....	(see 67)
Pepperpot.....	53 E4	Buck's Record Gallery.....	62 B3	TRANSPORT	
Pisces Seafood Restaurant.....	(see 54)	Columbian Emeralds International.....	(see 64)	Bus Station.....	70 A2
Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village: Eating.....	54 G5	Far East Traders.....	(see 65)	Bus Stop.....	71 G5
Produce Market.....	(see 57)	Flavin Gallery.....	(see 65)	Gas Station.....	72 A2
Ruby Swiss.....	55 D4	Goldlocks Jewelry.....	(see 64)	Gas Station.....	73 C3
Solomon's Food Court.....	(see 7)	Goombay Gardens.....	63 A5	Gas Station.....	74 C3
Stoned Crab.....	56 F4	Intercity Music.....	(see 66)	Gas Station.....	75 D3
Island Palm Resort.....	38 B2	International Bazaar: Luxury Goods.....	64 A5	Grand Bahama Port Authority.....	76 B3
Island Seas Resort.....	39 E5	International Bazaar: Souvenirs & Art.....	65 A5	Port Lucaya Marina.....	77 G5
Lakeview Manor Club.....	40 C4	Island Galleria.....	(see 65)	Running Mon Resort & Marina.....	78 C5
Ocean Reef Yacht Club & Resort.....	41 E5	Jewelers Warehouse.....	(see 68)		
Our Lucayan Beach & Golf Resort.....	42 G5	Jewellery Box.....	(see 68)		
Pelican Bay at Lucaya.....	43 G5	Leather Shop.....	(see 64)		
Port Lucaya Resort & Yacht Club.....	44 G5	Leo's Art Gallery.....	(see 67)		
Royal Islander Hotel.....	45 B5				
Running Mon Resort & Marina.....	46 D5				
Taino Beach Resort & Marina.....	47 H5				
DRINKING					
Happy Bar & Lounge.....	(see 58)				
Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village: Drinking.....	58 G5				
Pub at Lucaya.....	(see 58)				

It's worth making a reservation for a guided tour along the half-mile trail that meanders through numerous acres of copice and pine trees. The tour highlights bush medicine plants, and heads towards a relatively small flock of striding West Indian flamingos. Interestingly, a small indigenous fish, the Bahamian gambusia,

keeps the flamingos' pond-water free of mosquito larvae. Rand is a gathering spot for the endangered Bahama parrot, Cuban emerald hummingbirds, the tiny yet stunning parula, and Antillean peewees. Also spotted are red-tailed hawks, great blue herons, egrets, kingfishers and ospreys.

Raccoons and red-eared turtles also call this park home, as do butterflies, tree frogs, some harmless snakes and the curly-tailed lizards that nervously rush everywhere. There's also a replica of a Lucayan village and a gift shop. Guided walks are available at 10am Monday to Friday; bookings required.

HYDROFLORA GARDENS
These landscaped gardens (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-6052; on East Beach Dr at E Sunrise Hwy, Freeport; adult/child \$3/1.50; ☎ 9am-4pm) abounds in shrubs, tropical fruit trees, and fragrant foliage. Highlights include a rock garden, bush medicine plants and a hydroponics garden. Call ahead if you want to take a guided tour (\$6).

GRAND BAHAMA

GRAND BAHAMA

PORT LUCAYA MARKETPLACE & VILLAGE

This **village** (Map pp104-5) is an attractive, low-key waterfront shopping, dining and entertainment precinct that is opposite Our Lucayan Beach & Golf Resort (p111). It is much more appealing than the International Bazaar; at its heart beats Count Basie Sq, where everyone from church choirs to Junkanoo bands performs at weekends and on public holidays.

PARROT JUNGLE'S GARDEN OF THE GROVE

This 12-acre lush **garden** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-5668; www.gardenofthegroves.com; Midshipman Rd & Magellan Dr, Freeport; adult/child \$10/7; ☎ 9am-4pm) had been closed for renovations, so check ahead for updated opening times. There are thousands of species of semitropical plants, a 400ft-long (122m-long) fern gully and a hanging garden, as well as four waterfalls cascading into a placid lake that is ringed with tropical foliage. For children, the highlight is a petting zoo with African pygmy goats, Bahamian raccoons and cuddly Vietnamese pot-bellied pigs as well as caged parrots and flamingos.

The gardens contain a peaceful hillside chapel (used for wedding parties), scenic trails and an on-site café.

GRAND BAHAMA BREWING COMPANY

The island's only **brewery** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-351-5191; Logwood Rd, Freeport; ☎ Mon-Fri) welcomes visitors during business hours to try and buy their Hammerhead Amber Ale and Stout and Lucayan lagers.

BEACHES

The island has gorgeous beaches that suit all moods and tastes. Most of the beaches close to Freeport and Lucaya can be reached via hotel courtesy buses or on foot. To go further afield you will need your own transport or to take an organized tour, but it will be well worth it. The beaches outside the main tourist centers, such as the stunning Gold Rock Beach at Lucayan National Park, are superb and offer tranquility as well as azure seas and white-sand beaches.

Xanadu Beach (Map pp104-5) is a white-sand beach at the southern end of the Mall, and is the most accessible beach from downtown. It extends westward about a half-mile and although not one of Grand Bahama's most lavish beaches, it is great for a day of

sunning or splashing around in the shallows. The beach is dominated by the Xanadu Beach Resort & Marina (p112); a snack bar opens and water sports are on offer when the resort is busy or over the Christmas and Easter breaks. A dive operation is conveniently located onsite.

Silver Point Beach (Map pp104-5) is a narrow stretch of beach east of Xanadu Beach. (They are separated by two marina channels and Silver Point Beach can be accessed from Beachway Dr.) There are a few hawkers, which can be off-putting, but the shallow waters are popular with families and water sports are available year-round. The Island Seas Resort (p112) stands at the eastern end, beside another harbor channel separating Silver Point Beach from Lucaya Beach.

Stunning **Lucaya Beach** (Map pp104-5) runs from the marina to Bell Channel, at the mouth of the Port Lucaya Harbour. There are a long stretch of white sand, water sports and a beach bar (adjacent to the Our Lucayan Beach & Golf Resort) that also whips up burgers and snacks. The central part of the beach doesn't have as many resort guests and is great for a stroll. The beach can also be accessed from various suburban roads.

East of Bell Channel lays the long and languorous **Taino Beach** (Map pp104-5) with talcum-powder sand and occasional water sports, as well as the Taino Beach Resort (p112) condos. Most of the year there are few people here, making it even more attractive to those who prefer solitude. To the north of the beach is the waterfront residential community of **Smith's Point**.

Two of the most gorgeous beaches, **Churchill** and **Fortune** (Map pp104-5), extend several miles east of Taino Beach, separated by Sanctuary Bay, a marina complex lined with the holiday homes of the well-heeled. The Viva Wyndham Fortuna Beach (p112) sits behind Fortune Beach but there is plenty of space for all to enjoy the beauty of these beaches.

Farther east, beyond the Grand Lucayan Waterway, is secluded and **Barbary Beach** (Map pp102-3). Each spring its shoreline bursts into bloom with white spider lilies.

Activities**DIVING & SNORKELING**

The diving here is considered some of the best in the Bahamas. As well as the dolphin,

shark and cave dives, wreck-dive fans will love the thrill of swimming through *Theo*, a 240ft-long sunken freighter, where you can safely wiggle through the hold and engine room, and visit the friendly resident moray eels. Other enjoyable wrecks include two Spanish galleons, the *Santa Gertrude* and *San Ignacio*, which ran aground in 1682 off the south shore near present-day Lucaya.

Another popular dive spot is East End Paradise, an underwater coral range.

All dive operators offer snorkel trips that include transportation (adult/child \$45/30). Some of the more popular and established dive and snorkel operators include:

Underwater Explorers Society, UNEXSO (Map

pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-1244; www.unexso.com; Pt Lucaya Marina) Offers facilities for those wanting to qualify as scuba divers. They also have a full range of dive programs, including a two-tank dive for \$70; equipment hire is \$43. A four-hour learning to dive course (\$90) is available as well as specialist dives with wild dolphins and sharks. Reservations are required.

Xanadu Undersea Adventures (Map pp104-5;

☎ 242-352-3811; www.xanadudive.com; Xanadu Beach & Marina, Freeport) Offers two-tank dives (\$70), night dives (\$55) and PADI certification courses (\$450). There are reduced rates if you buy a minimum of 10 dives (which can be shared amongst divers).

Caribbean Divers (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-9111;

Bell Channel Inn, Pt Lucaya Marina) Runs NAUI certification courses (\$350) and offers various dive options including two-tank dives (\$65) and night dives (\$70).

Pat & Diane Fantasia Tours (☎ 242-373-8681;

www.snorkelingbahamas.com; adult/child \$35/18) Offers two-hour snorkeling and fish-feeding trips to shallow coral reefs on their Snorkeling Sea Safari. The trip on their 72ft catamaran, which has an in-built 30ft waterslide and a 20ft rock-climbing wall is great fun.

Reef Tours (☎ 242-373-5880; www.bahamasvg

.com/reeftours) Offers snorkeling and fish-feeding tours (adult/child \$35/16) and a fabulous sailing and snorkel tour (adult/child \$45/25).

Paradise Cove (☎ 242-349-2677; www.deadmansreef

.com) There is a vibrant reef in the shallows just off the cove here. Unless you're staying at the resort (p120), pay your access fee (\$3), hire your snorkel gear (\$10 per day) and jump in. Guided snorkeling tours are also available and include snorkel hire, lunch and transportation (adult/child \$35/23).

Cave Diving

Experienced divers can check out Ben's Cave, part of Lucayan National Park, by following cables through 7 miles of underwater caves. A permit must first be obtained

from **Underwater Explorers Society, UNEXSO** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-1244; www.unexso.com; Pt Lucaya Marina).

DOLPHIN & SHARK ENCOUNTERS

There are some great options here for encounters with dolphins that live in a lagoon, but also swim freely in the ocean. The Close Encounter trip run by UNEXSO (adult/child aged 4 and under \$75/free) is great for nondivers and children, who receive an educational lecture and then stand waist-deep in a sheltered lagoon, where they meet dolphins well-accustomed to humans.

You can swim in the lagoon with the dolphins (\$170), while on a full-day Open Ocean Dolphin Experience (\$200) you will learn how to interact with dolphins from the lagoon using hand signals, but in the outer ocean.

A Dolphin Dive trip (\$160) involves enjoying these creatures' company in the outer ocean. All of these are hugely popular activities and advance bookings are required.

Adrenaline junkies will jump at the chance to dive among feeding Caribbean reef sharks at Shark Junction. Two divers armed with sticks are on hand to ward off wayward sharks. A cameraperson will record your experience on video for an extra fee. The dive adds \$40 to normal dive rates and reservations are necessary.

BONEFISHING & SPORTFISHING

The Gulf Stream, off the west coast of Grand Bahama, teems with game fish. The Northwest Providence Channel drops to 2000ft just 400yd off the south shore, where snapper and barracuda are prevalent. And bonefishing (half-/full-day \$250/350) is superb on the flats of the Little Bahama Bank to the north and east of the island.

Deep-sea fishing per person costs around \$70 to \$90 per half-day. **Night Hawk Fishing** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-7226; Pt Lucaya Marina) offers half-day charter fishing trips from \$65. Other charter operators include:

HG Forbes Charters & Tours (p109; ☎ 242-352-9311; bahamas@forbescharter.com)

Nautical Adventures (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-7180; Port Lucaya Marina)

Reef Tours (☎ 242-373-5880; www.bahamasvg.com/reeftours)

Running Mon Marina (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-6834; close to Xanadu Beach)

BOAT EXCURSIONS

There is a range of different trips offering underwater sightseeing, beach parties, on-board dining, dancing and partying.

Most hotels have booking desks for these tours. If your hotel doesn't, walk into the nearest one and book from there. Transfers are usually provided. If your time on the island is limited, see opposite as some operators combine land and water excursions.

Pat & Diane Fantasia Tours (☎ 242-373-8681; www.snorkelingbahamas.com) run snorkeling trips as well as a Steak & Lobster Cruise (adult/child \$70/45), an adults-only Mango Tango Evening Cruise (\$35), and a Deserted Island & Beach Party trip (adult/child \$70/40) where you head off to the marine park at Peterson Cay for snorkeling and then on to private beaches for swimming, sunning, lunch and drinks.

Reef Tours (☎ 242-373-5880; www.bahamasvg.com/reeftours) has a Sunset Bar Sailing Cruise (\$40) and a glass-bottomed boat tour, where a diver feeds fish underwater for your benefit (adult/child \$25/15). Fish-feeding is also on offer (adult/child \$45/30).

Superior Watersports (☎ 242-373-7863) runs two very popular party tours on board the *Bahama Mama*. The Robinson Crusoe Beach Party includes a 1½-hour snorkeling trip followed by lunch, drinks and beach games on a deserted beach (adult/child \$60/40) and the Bahama Mama Booze Cruise which is a drink and dance party (hot and cold hors d'oeuvres, and all the Bahama Mama cocktails and wine you can drink) held on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday (\$30). Dinner cruises with limbo dancing (adult/child \$70/45) and sunset dinner cruises (\$40) are also on offer.

Seaworld Explorer (☎ 242-373-7863; adult/child \$40/25) offers a two-hour trip on a glass-bottomed boat which saves your hairdo and brings you closer to the marine world.

WATER SPORTS

Most resort hotels rent snorkel gear (\$10), sea kayaks (\$20), Sunfish dinghies (\$20) and equipment for other water sports. Independent concessions on most beaches offer parasailing (\$60), banana boat rides (adult/child \$15/10), waterskiing (\$40) and windsurfing (\$30).

Ocean Motion (☎ 242-374-2425; oceanltd@batelnet.bs; Our Lucayan Beach & Golf Resort, Lucaya) has virtually

every water sport under the sun, including water trampolines (half-day \$10), and also rents out boats (half-/full-day \$130/260).

Paradise Watersports (☎ 242-373-4001; pwsports@batelnet.bs; Island Seas Beach & Viva Wyndham Fortuna Beach) has water sports including waverunners (\$60 per 30 min).

Sea Affairs Watersports (☎ 242-352-9311; Xanadu Beach Resort & Marina) rents out glass-bottomed kayaks (\$20 per day).

GOLF

The island has five championship courses, and all clubs rent equipment and carts.

The Emerald & Ruby Golf Courses are part of the Crowne Plaza Golf Resort & Casino (p110) and Royal Oasis complex, which was undergoing extensive renovations during 2005. Green fees are \$95 for 18 holes.

Fortune Hills Golf & Country Club (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-4500; E Sunrise Hwy, Freeport) is popular with beginners. Games cost \$70.

Our Lucayan Beach & Golf Resort (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-1066; Balao & Midshipman Rds, Lucaya) contains plenty of water hazards. The Butch Harmon School of Golf is based here. Harmon, an ex-PGA touring pro, was credited with modifying Tiger Wood's game. Green fees are \$120.

Reef Golf Course (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-2002; Seahorse Rd) is the island's largest course at 6920yd. Games are \$120.

HORSEBACK RIDING

There are some grand places on the island to take a horse for a gallop, and both experienced and amateur riders are welcomed by operators.

Pinetree Stables (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-3600; www.pinetree-stables.com; Beachway Dr; \$75) takes two-hour horseback rides, where you gallop through pine forests, along the southern shore and through the shallows.

Trikk Pony Adventures (☎ 242-374-4449; leo@trikkpony.com) offers free transportation for its 1½-hour beach horseback rides (\$75). The operators say you will get wet when riding through the surf. For those inclined to make the most of these glorious romantic sunsets, horses can also be provided for weddings.

TENNIS

Most resorts have tennis courts and will rent out courts and equipment to 'walk-ins'

and guests. Typical hourly fees are \$10 to \$20 or \$20 to \$28 for night play.

Our Lucayan Beach & Golf Resort (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-1333; www.ourlucaya.com; Seahorse Rd, Lucaya) Has grass, hard and clay courts that are lit at night.

Crowne Plaza Golf Resort & Casino (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-350-7000; www.theroyaloasis.com; W Mall Dr & W Atlantic Av, Freeport) Several hard courts are lit at night.

Xanadu Beach Resort & Marina (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-6783; www.xanadubeachhotel.com) Will also hire out their hard courts to nonguests.

Tours

One way of seeing the sights would be to book a taxi through the **Grand Bahama Taxi Union** (☎ 242-352-7858/7101). Expect to pay about \$50 per hour.

CITY TOURS & FURTHER AFIELD

All the hotels can book you onto city bus tours (adult/child \$25/18). These will generally take you to Freeport's International Bazaar (p103), liquor stores as well as the Parrot Jungle's Garden of the Groves (p106). Entry fees are included in the price.

HG Forbes Charter & Tours (☎ 242-352-9311; bahamas@forbescharter.com) offers the Super Combination Tour (adult/child \$35/25), a similar tour to the East End that also takes in Millionaire Row and the home of Count Basie, as well as the West End Tour that includes Eight Mile Rock and covers local history and folklore (adult/child \$40/30).

Capron's Charter & Tours (☎ 242-352-9262; caproncharters@hotmail.com) also tours Freeport's sights and markets in a Super Combination Tour (adult/child \$35/25) and the Lucayan National Park in the East End Experience (adult/child \$35/25). Tours also explore the bush medicine plants and fauna of Rand Memorial Nature Centre (adult/child \$35/25).

NATURE TOURS

East End Adventures (☎ 242-373-6662; www.bahamas ecotours.com) offers Blue Hole Snorkeling Safari (adult/child \$85/35). Several spectacular snorkeling sites are visited by speedboat and on foot, including a blue hole and blue-hole lagoon. Lunch is provided. Their Out Island Cultural Safari Tour (\$110) is an adults-only day that includes hiking, snorkeling and cay-hopping.

Kayak Nature Tours (☎ 242-373-2485; www.grand bahamanaturetours.com) leads sea kayaking tours

from Freeport into Lucayan National Park, also biking tours (\$80) and kayaking/snorkeling trips (\$70). These trips relish the natural quiet and splendor of the park and its many scaled, furry and feathered inhabitants. The certified and trainee guides really know their stuff.

Lucayan National Park & Cave Tour (☎ 242-373-7863; adult/child \$40/30) has experienced guides to take you to the caves where Lucayan Indians once lived in part of the world's longest underground cavern, and to introduce you to the birds and wildlife of this glorious 42-acre park.

PEOPLE TO PEOPLE

The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism's 'People to People' program puts you in touch with locals who share their visitors' interests or professions. Call the **Grand Bahama Island Tourism Board** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-325-8044; www.grand-bahama.com; International Bazaar, Freeport) for information.

Festivals & Events

For information on these events and many others, contact the Grand Bahama Island Tourism Board (see p103).

JANUARY

New Year's Day Junkanoo Parade The flamboyant music, dancing and costumes of Boxing Day's Junkanoo are publicly judged and awarded, with much crowd support and hollering.

MARCH

Annual Easter Rugby Festival Join in with the Freeport Rugby Club supporters to cheer on their star players.

JUNE

Sailing Regatta A huge three days full of self-made boats, racing, and much hollering and onshore partying.
Bahamas Heritage Festival Music, the arts and the island's history are all celebrated this month.

JULY

Sweeting's Cay Homecoming A grand event with live bands, cultural performances, kid's activities, and plenty of food and drinks.

AUGUST

Bernie Butler BASRA Marathon Swim A 2-mile ocean marathon race, starting off Lucaya Beach.
Emancipation Day These public holiday and associated celebrations mark the abolition of slavery.

SEPTEMBER

Small Boat Tournament A four-day fishing tournament, which sets off from Port Lucaya Marina, features small boats and massive fish.

Grand Bahama Island Jazz, R&B Festival Two days of local and international artists keep it cool.

Latin Jazz Festival Three days of local and international artists make it hot.

OCTOBER

Kalik Junkanoo Rushout Held at Taino Beach, where Junkanoo shacks compete for the Best Music title.

Red Rose Ball A fundraising black-tie event with proceeds dedicated to those living with HIV/AIDS.

Halloween Party Count Basie Sq is the setting for children aged 12 and under to wreak havoc with games, music, a haunted house and a costume competition.

NOVEMBER

Bahamas Wahoo Fishing Championship Season-opening tournament for this celebrated national competition starts from Port Lucaya Marina.

Mini Cricket Festival Involves local and international teams at the Lucayan Cricket Club.

Grand Bahama Conchman Triathlon (www.conchman.com) Amateur athletes are tested to the limit with a ½-mile swim, 20-mile bike ride, and 3½-mile run. Exhausted just reading about this one? Then just watch with a coconut ice cream and your feet up.

DECEMBER

Festival Noel The Rand Memorial Nature Centre party has fine wine, art and crafts, food, live music, face painting, pony rides and a visit from Santa.

Junkanoo Boxing Day Parade A highlight of the social calendar, the parade kicks off at 5am with costumed revelers and a cacophony of sounds. The build up to this starts the January before, with practices downtown near the post office.

Port Lucaya New Year's Eve Celebration Put on your dancing shoes for non-stop dancing in between the drinking and the fireworks.

Sleeping

Budget hotel options are not impossible to find as nearly all accommodations here offer great specials that make a holiday much more affordable than Nassau, even in peak season.

Another very good budget and midrange option is apartment rentals. These can be great value, with studio units for two people renting from \$85/450 per night/week from mid-December to mid-April. The apartments are generally bright and light with

wicker furniture and all the mod-cons including fully-equipped kitchens. One- and two-bedroom apartments can sleep from two to six people.

Try contacting **Thompsons Real Estate** (☎ 242-373-9050; www.thompsonsrealestate.com; Freeport) which rent out a range of apartments from studios to two-bed units (mainly around Lucaya).

Many hotels in Grand Bahama also contain privately-owned condos that they rent out (on behalf of the owners), alongside their usual hotel rooms. These condos have the advantage of well-equipped kitchens and more privacy, yet guests can still use the hotel facilities.

Expect to pay additional taxes and service charges on all accommodations (see p270).

FREEPORT

Island Palm Resort (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-6648; ispalm@batelnet.bs; cnr Explorers Way & E Mall Dr; r \$70; ☎ ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) Let's just say that 'resort' is an exaggeration, and that there are some dingy rooms. There is a small pool, it's very cheap (ongoing Internet specials in peak season bring daily room rates down to \$56), and a free daily bus takes guests to beaches and into town. The Safari Restaurant & Nightclub keeps the motel lively at night, but good security stops things from getting too rowdy.

Crowne Plaza Golf Resort & Casino (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-350-7000; www.theroyaloasis.com; Mall Dr & W Atlantic Av; r \$100; ☎ ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒ ☒) The resort at the Royal Oasis complex carried out pretty extensive hurricane repairs and renovations in 2005 to comprehensively update this vast, lush resort. Cleverly designed as a family-friendly complex, it has pools and waterslides, tropical gardens, tennis courts, a gym, a spa, indoor and outdoor games, watersports, and a new beach lagoon and water park. Seven restaurants include the children-only Odie (where kids can be left to eat with free hotel supervision for an hour), the Fat Cat Beach Club (☎ 9am-9pm, for kids aged three years and over) and baby-sitting facilities (from \$20). Golf fans are well taken care of with two championship 18-hole courses, and those inclined can enjoy the casino's temptations. Revelers will relish the Tonic nightclub and for the simple hedonists, surely a swim-up pool bar and a steady stream of multihued cocktails will

suffice? Accommodation is in two separate locations; the Crowne Plaza Tower adjacent to the casino contains more luxurious rooms with bright comfortable and classical furnishings, while the self-contained Crowne Plaza Country Club is next to the gardens. Rooms here are decorated with lively tropical decor and cool tiled floors, and are arranged in a circle around a splendid water park. All rooms have TV, fridge and coffee-making facilities.

Best Western Castaways Resort (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-6682; www.castaways-resort.com; E Mall Dr; r \$110; ☎ ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒ ☒) This new hotel is spotless and offers large, light and comfortably furnished modern rooms with cable TV and balconies. Facilities include a reasonably priced restaurant and full-sized pool. It's only a five-minute walk to the casino complex and courtesy buses go to two beaches. Security is great and so are the staff.

Lakeview Manor Club (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-9789; lakeview@coralwave.com; adjacent to Ruby Golf Course; r \$100; ☎ ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) Well-maintained studio (\$85), one-bed (\$100) and two-bed (\$115) rental apartments are available here. All units have great weekly rates, fully-equipped kitchens, comfortable furnishings and cable TV. Guest facilities include spacious grounds, a generous-sized pool, an on-site laundry, complimentary town and beach buses, baby-sitting services and some poolside social activities.

Royal Islander Hotel (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-351-6000; www.royalisdanderhotel.com; E Mall Dr; r \$124; ☎ ☒ ☑ ☒) This attractive two-story property is centered on a courtyard with a pool and shady palms. It's a few minutes' walk to the casino complex and rooms are large, cheerfully furnished with bright prints and there's heaps of light. Rooms come with an in-room safe, cable TV and phone, but unfortunately no tea- or coffee-making facilities. There's also a Jacuzzi, restaurant and children's playground.

LUCAYA

Bell Channel Inn (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-1053; www.bahamasvg.com; King's Rd, Pt Lucaya Marina; r \$80; ☎ ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) All taxes and service charges are included in the rates for these lodgings situated off Jolly Roger Dr on the east side of Bell Channel and Port Lucaya Marina. Older rooms have dated facilities, but all rooms overlook the marina and are only

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Our Lucayan Beach & Golf Resort (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-2396; www.ourlucaya.com; Seahorse Rd, Lucaya; r \$320; ☎ ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒ ☒) Incorporating two main accommodations; the Westin and less expensive Sheraton hotels, this attractive open complex is brilliant for both couples and families who want everything within easy reach.

The resort sits on 7 acres of public beachfront, and incorporates numerous restaurants, bars (with dance floors), casino, three great swimming pools with slides totaling 50,000 sq ft (4645 sq meter), kids' facilities, the Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village promenade of boutiques, cafés, bars and shops, and two 18-hole golf courses, all linked by a ¾-mile boardwalk.

Special deals bring rates down to as low as \$200 in peak season. If this place suits your bank balance, gambling mother-in-law, golf-fanatic partner and kids who are attention-span challenged, you should book soon.

a 10-minute walk to Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village or 15-minute walk to Lucaya Beach. Facilities include a restaurant and on-site dive operation.

Port Lucaya Resort & Yacht Club (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-6618; www.portlucayaresort.com; Bell Channel Rd, Pt Lucaya Marina; r \$100; ☎ ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) This lodging wins the prize for the best location for the most reasonable rates in Lucaya. Although 'resort' is an optimistic description, 10 two-story units encircle a lawn and a full-sized pool with Jacuzzi. The rooms are light, spacious and spotless, all of them have patios or balconies. Some look out over the full-service marina. Adjacent to Port Lucaya's Marketplace & Village's plaza of bars and restaurants, it is a five-minute walk across the road to the Our Lucayan Beach & Golf Resort and that lovely beach.

Coral Beach Hotel (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-2468; www.bahamasvg.com/coralbeach; Royal Palm Way; r \$110; ☎ ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) The neat little units at this high-rise condo are a great and affordable beachfront option (rates are inclusive of taxes and charges). Although the building can get warm in the hotter months, individual units do have air-con and there is a small pool onsite. It is about a 20-minute walk to Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village. Balconies

overlook the gardens and private parking facilities. Popular with retired couples, this is not suitable for children or party animals!

Pelican Bay at Lucaya (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-9550; www.pelicanbayhotel.com; Pt Lucaya Marina; r \$165; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This award-winning boutique hotel is pretty luxurious, and it's a five-minute walk to Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village. Although part of the Our Lucayan Beach & Golf Resort, it maintains its distance and intimacy. The contemporary but soothing rooms are excellent, and are equipped with TV, phone, safe, refrigerator, coffee machine and private balcony. Hotel guests can use their own small on-site pool and bar, hot tub and restaurant as well as all of the resort's facilities.

THE BEACHES

Island Seas Resort (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-1271; iseas@batelnet.bs; 123 Silver Point Dr, Silver Point Beach; r \$120-220; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Tucked away on its own, this intimate resort sits on a small beach and is highly popular with families. One- and two-bedroom self-contained units surround Coconuts Grog and Grub Bar (their beachside bar) and facilities include a pool with swim-up bar, plus tennis court, shuffleboard court and water sports. A complimentary bus runs into town.

Running Mon Resort & Marina (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-6834; www.running-mon-bahamas.com; 208 Kelly Court, near Xanadu Beach; r \$100; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Although this place is a good hike to the beach or town, it is attractive, peaceful and good value. Additionally, free transport is offered to Xanadu Beach (a 20-minute walk) and Freeport. The marina-view rooms have colorful floral furnishings, TV, fridge and safe. There is also the popular Mainsail Restaurant & Bar, a children's playground, dive shop, deep-sea fishing charters, tennis courts and a swimming pool.

Taino Beach Resort & Marina (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-4677; Jolly Roger Dr, Taino Beach; r weekly \$850) Located at the far west end of Taino Beach, near Port Lucaya, these beachside condos and their *Pirates of the Bahamas* theme park were badly damaged during the 2004 hurricanes and were still undergoing renovations at the time of research. Popular with families, the self-contained apartments have good-value weekly rates.

Flamingo Bay Yacht Club & Marina (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-4677; www.flamingobayhotel.com; Port Lucaya

Marina; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) The sibling to Taino Beach Resort & Marina, these lodgings sit across the marina from Taino Beach. Rooms come with microwaves, coffeemakers and toasters, and all have balconies. The rooms are small but nice, with simple decor. However the lodgings feel tired and the staff are not as helpful as they could be. Hourly water taxis will take you across to Taino Beach.

Xanadu Beach Resort & Marina (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-6783; www.xanadubeachhotel.com; Xanadu Beach; r \$145; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This high-rise and isolated hotel looks over small Xanadu Beach and all the rooms have private balconies. The hotel obviously was once grand, (Howard Hughes locked himself up completely with his toenail and urine collections on the 12th and 13th floors for two years until his death in 1976.) However the hotel is now faded and its staff are not exactly enthusiastic. The rooms are spacious and comfortably furnished, rates are negotiable and there are tennis courts and water sports, plus an on-site dive shop and a fully serviced marina.

Ocean Reef Yacht Club & Resort (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-4662; www.oryc.com; Bahamas Reef Blvd off Coral Rd, nr Silver Point Beach; r \$260; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Boaters love this quiet and tucked-away club that has rows of townhouses and suites with Jacuzzis that sits alongside the marina. The grounds and lodgings are wellmaintained, the rooms are attractive and comfortable, and the facilities are very nice. There are two swimming pools, one with a swim-up bar (that also serves hot snacks), hot tubs, a guest laundry and complimentary buses to town and the beach as part of the package.

Viva Wyndham Fortuna Beach (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-4000; www.vivaresorts.com; Fortune Beach; d/q \$180/130; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This sprawling resort is not flashy and some of the facilities are a bit dated, but it has a large pool and sun deck and backs onto its best feature, a really beautiful section of beach. Packages can be inclusive of meals and there are tons of family activities; dance lessons, volleyball, bingo, karaoke, table tennis, and a good kids' club that runs a minidisco each evening for the children before a nightly show.

Eating & Drinking

Hotels tend to have at least one in-house café or restaurant, while resorts offer a choice of casual and formal dining rooms

and bars which are always open to non-guests.

There are a heap of informal places to eat in the Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village; on Thursday nights and at weekends the atmosphere is enlivened by the plaza's live music and DJ nights.

FREEPORT

Gelati Silvano's (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-5110; Ranfurly Circle, E Mall Dr at E Sunrise Hwy; mains \$9-18; ☎ lunch & dinner, closed Mon) Making the best coffee and homemade gelati in town, this elegant and cheerful restaurant also serves a good plate of pasta. Dishes such as beef with mushrooms and white-wine sauce, and vegetarian lasagna keep the locals happy.

Islander's Roost (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-5110; Ranfurly Circle, E Mall Dr at E Sunrise Hwy; mains \$28-42; ☎ lunch & dinner, closed Sun) Adjoining Silvano's, this lofty restaurant is a steak-lover's paradise and vegetarian's nightmare. Large portions of beef in different satisfying guises are accompanied by live entertainment on most nights.

Geneva's Place (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-5085; cnr E Mall Dr & Kipling Lane; mains \$5-10; ☎ breakfast & lunch) For good Bahamian food, this is the place. The fish, peas 'n' rice are great and the guava duff (sweet dumpling with guava purée) is virtually drowned in a milky rum sauce.

Pepperpot (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-7655; 8 E Sunrise Hwy; mains \$6; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This takeout reputedly serves the island's best peas 'n' rice and fried chicken. Stopping here at night is not recommended, though.

The **International Bazaar** (see p103) has more than a dozen places to eat; but most are highly forgettable. The following are popular for quick meals.

Zorba's (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-4185; International Bazaar; mains \$5-12; ☎ breakfast & lunch) The sibling to Zorba's in Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village, you will see a steady stream of working Bahamians come here for their breakfast and lunchtime takeouts. This is the Bazaar's best grub; try the authentic Greek salads and breakfast omelettes for simple but good food.

Le Rendezvous (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-9610; International Bazaar; mains \$10-20; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Opening when the cruise ships are in port, this outdoor restaurant has breakfast specials from \$3 along with a range of

good-value ethnic meals. Dishes include a range of savory and sweet soups. The aromatic onion with melted cheese and chilled mango soup (made with cream, rum, ginger and nutmeg) are both delicious.

Cafe Michel's (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-2191; International Bazaar; mains \$9-20; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This alfresco café opens every day, serving an ambitious range of Bahamian and American dishes from black-bean soup to cheeseburgers, steak and some upmarket seafood dishes. The food here is pretty ordinary, but it is popular with many visitors seeking a quick bite to eat.

Also recommended for its European cuisine is **Ruby Swiss** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-8507; cnr W Sunrise Hwy & W Atlantic Dr; mains \$18-30; ☎ lunch & dinner). For a drink and to watch some sport, try the **Red Dog Sports Bar** (☎ 242-352-2700) or have an old-fashioned drink and a chat the **Prince of Wales Lounge** (☎ 242-352-2700), both located in the **Pub on the Mall** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-5110; Ranfurly Circus, W Sunrise Hwy).

The **Western Bakery and Produce Market** (Map pp104-5) at Winn Dixie Plaza are good for bread and groceries.

LUCAYA

All the following eateries and bars are located in the **Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village** (see p106). Count Basie Sq sits in the middle of this plaza and hosts a stage for live performers. There is a great atmosphere at the square's surrounding small bars where people perch on bar stools to sip cold beers and exotic cocktails or wander into one of the neighboring eateries for a range of ethnic dishes.

Zorba's (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-6137; mains \$8-15; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Enjoy your meal alfresco beneath a canopy of grapevines and pink bougainvillea. Tasty, reasonably priced breakfasts and Greek cuisine, such as moussaka and Greek salad for \$10, are drawcards.

Luciano's (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-9100; mains \$20-40; ☎ lunch & dinner, closed Sun) Specializing in Italian and French fare, this food is simply delicious. Try any of the day's specials and seafood dishes. Also enjoy the balcony's harbor and plaza views with a predinner drink.

Pisces Seafood Restaurant (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-5192; mains \$18-35; ☎ dinner till late, closed Sun) Wonderful things are done with seafood,

pasta, garlic, butter and cream at this small and charming restaurant. Pizzas add to the fattening and thoroughly wicked options presented here.

Caribbean Cafe (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-5866; mains \$6-18; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) A pleasant, clean and cheerful little place, this café is wellsuited for breakfasts, salads and a sandwich.

Also recommended for food or pre-dinner drinks, these bars are all open for lunch and dinner:

Rum Runners (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-7233)

Has ice-cold Red Stripe beer and friendly chatter.

Happy Bar & Lounge (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-6852) A sports bar with a large-screen TV that shows all the big games.

Shenanigan's Irish Pub (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-4734) Serves Guinness.

Pub at Lucaya (☎ 242-373-8450) The place for Brits and lovers of great pub grub.

THE BEACHES

The beachside hotels and resorts listed in Sleeping (p110) all have bars, most of them beachside, that will happily indulge you with fruity rum cocktails or an icy, golden beer. Most of these bars also serve snacks.

Coconuts Beach Restaurant & Bar (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-1271; Island Seas Resort, Silver Point Beach) This popular poolside bar has a happy hour nightly from 4pm and serves a range of fried goodies, perfect to eat with sandy fingers and a cold drink.

Stoned Crab (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-1442; Taino Beach; mains \$22-30; ☺ dinner) This classic two-story restaurant overlooks the sea and beach and serves its specialty to many amateur gourmands, namely the seafood platter: lobster, crab, mahi-mahi and shrimp. Crab-cake appetizers are also yum. Seafood dishes dominate the menu and guarantee a full house, so book ahead.

Tranquillity Shores (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-374-4460; Taino Beach; mains \$6-10; ☺ lunch Sun-Thu, dinner Fri & Sat) An all-timber beachfront bar is enhanced by nets and driftwood and a mix of visitors and locals keen to enjoy the party atmosphere on weekends. Situated next to the Stoned Crab, many head to this bar for pre-dinner drinks, or stop for a Bigmouth Burger and chilled Kalik beer after an energetic day on the beach. It's open until late on Fridays and Saturday nights.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Club Caribe (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-6866; Mather Town off Midshipman Rd, Churchill Beach; mains \$8-12; ☺ 11am-6pm Sun & Tue, 11am-10pm Wed-Sat) As soon as you walk onto their wooden deck with a chilled beer in hand and look out over the wide, blue ocean and deserted beach, you'll understand this recommendation.

Hidden away from the madding crowds, this restaurant/bar is simple, homely and a marvelously friendly place to hang out. Bahamians gather here for great peppery fish salads and Friday night pig roasts, as well as live Bahamian music on Friday and Saturday nights (hotel transfers are provided). Whether you're here for a long tasty lunch, convivial dinner or a rum-fueled celebration of the sunset, you won't be disappointed with the ambience, food or surroundings.

Entertainment

The resorts offer in-house entertainment and shows as well as live music and plenty of opportunities to trip the light fantastic. Hotels also host frequent beach parties, which include bonfires and BBQs (remember your mosquito repellent).

Many of the evening boat excursions (see p108) are tremendous fun, providing liberal drinks, liberating music and lithe limbo dancers; a great way to spend an evening or two.

NIGHTCLUBS

Amnesia (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-351-2582; E Mall Dr, Freeport; ☺ 9pm-late Thu, Fri & Sat) This tropical-themed nightclub has a state-of-the-art lighting and sound system, and the nights blend reggae, soca, *goombay* and hip-hop. Hours and admission fees vary so check beforehand (if you can remember!).

Prop Club Beach Bar & Restaurant (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-1333; Our Lucayan Beach & Golf Resort, Lucaya; ☺ till late) The TV screens attract the boys for the big American sports games, but the dance floor takes pride of place for either nights of entertainment or live music. Karaoke nights are *de rigueur* for the more extroverted, and the glass walls lift up to expose a sand volleyball court.

Safari Lounge Dance Club & Restaurant (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-6648; Island Palm Resort, Explorers

Way at E Mall Dr, Freeport; ☺ 9pm-late Thu, Fri & Sat) Locals head here at the weekends for *goombay* and hip-hop. Admission prices vary (some nights are free), so check beforehand. Take care when leaving the hotel, although security guards do patrol the parking lot.

LIVE MUSIC

Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-8446; www.portlucaya.com) This place hosts live music from Thursday to Sunday. It has a great open-air setting with a stage and dance floor, as well as a plethora of surrounding bars and cafés. Head there for some rake 'n' scrape, quadrille dancing and general fun.

Illusion's Jazz Club (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-8576; 2 & 9 Pt Lucaya Marketplace & Village; admission \$15; ☺ Sat & Sun till late) Live jazz is played twice weekly depending upon the season.

CASINOS & FLOORSHOWS

The two main casinos also host shows and entertainment.

Crowne Plaza Golf Resort & Casino (see p110) A Las Vegas-style sports book, slot machines and table games here cover a huge 28,000 sq ft space. A twice-weekly floor show and fine dining add to the entertainment.

Isle of Capri Casino (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-2396; www.ourlucaya.com; Our Lucayan Beach & Golf Resort, Seahorse Rd, Lucaya) This 19,000 sq ft (1765 sq meter) casino has 400 slot machines, 21 game tables and a racing sports book.

THEATER

From September to June **Freeport Players Guild** (☎ 242-373-3718) and **Grand Bahamas Players** (☎ 242-557-6997, 242-352-9851) both appear in

plays, musicals and comedies at the **Regency Theatre** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-5533; Regency Park, Freeport).

CINEMAS

RND Cinemas (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-351-3456; RND Plaza, E Atlantic Dr, Freeport; admission \$10) This five-screen cinema shows mainstream hits.

Shopping

The duty-free shopping fans head to the International Bazaar (p103) and Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village (p106) for their jewelry and perfume. It is worth bringing a price-comparison list from home when considering purchasing these goods.

Some of the resort wear and batik prints are worth a look too, but you will find that prices can vary quite considerably between the Freeport and Port Lucaya markets, where it is acceptable to haggle the prices down by about 10% to 15%.

ARTWORKS

Many artworks are small enough to pack into a suitcase. Check out the African-style wooden carvings and some simple but colorful Haitian and Haitian-style oil and acrylic paintings that are sold from around \$15 unframed. A bargain gift or souvenir! **Bahamian Tings** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-9550; 15 Poplar Cres, Freeport) Sells Bahamian craftsworks.

Flovin Gallery International Bazaar (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-7564); Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-8388) Exhibits include original paintings and artworks.

Leo's Art Gallery (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-1758; Pt Lucaya Marketplace & Village) Leo paints vibrant and rich portrayals of Caribbean living in Haitian-style.

MARKETS & STALLS

Duty-free shopping is best conducted in the two main markets, the International Bazaar (p103) and the Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village (p106), which should cover all your needs for luxury goods. *What-to-do in Freeport/Lucaya* lists major stores and has maps of the International Bazaar and Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village. The other markets listed sell mainly souvenirs, woven straw-work, craftworks and clothing.

Locals do their shopping downtown at malls such as The Towne Centre and Churchill Square, while visitors enjoy the following markets:

- **Goombay Gardens** (Map pp104-5; Freeport) This collection of market stalls sells ethnic jewelry, straw-work, craftworks and T-shirts. It is worth the short walk west of the International Bazaar.
- **Port Lucaya Straw Market** (Map pp104-5; Seahorse Dr, Lucaya) These stalls both west and east of the Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village sell clothing, T-shirts and crafts including straw-work.

Tiffographs (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-6662; Pt Lucaya Marketplace & Village) Has displays of batik paintings & prints.

CIGARS

Cuban cigars are a great buy. Most quality gift shops sell Cohibas (the Rolls Royce of cigars), Montecristos, and other notable brands at 50% or more off black-market prices in the US. We recommend **Smoker's World** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-351-6899; International Bazaar, Freeport).

CLOTHING & CLOTH

If you're into striking textiles, try these places.

Androsia (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-8387; Pt Lucaya Marketplace & Village) Sells batik clothing and cloth.

Far East Traders (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-9280; International Bazaar, Freeport) For embroidered linens, silk pajamas and clothing.

Leather Shop International Bazaar (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-5491); Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-2323) Sells leather clothes, shoes and handbags.

Linens of Lucaya (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-8697; Pt Lucaya Marketplace & Village) Sells hand-embroidered materials.

Nautica Boutique (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-8642; Pt Lucaya Marketplace & Village) Sells resort wear, silk paintings and custom-made crafts with a nautical theme.

Needful Tings (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-3450; Pt Lucaya Marketplace & Village) Sells resort wear and swimwear.

CRYSTAL & COLLECTABLES

The Bahamas is renowned for some of its collectible stamps.

Bahamas Coin & Stamp Ltd (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-8989; International Bazaar, Freeport) Sells coins from ancient Rome, Spanish galleons, the USA & UK.

Island Galleria International Bazaar (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-8194); Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-4512) This is the store for crystal and fine porcelain.

Plaka (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-5932; International Bazaar, Freeport) Sells items from Greece.

JEWELRY

Watches and gems are top of most visitors' shopping lists.

Colombian Emeralds International International Bazaar (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-5464); Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-8400) A chainstore specializing in watches and gems.

Goldyllocks Jewelry International Bazaar (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-3872); Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-5920) Has Bahamian jewelry.

Jeweler's Warehouse (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-8400; Pt Lucaya Marketplace & Village) Has watches and trinkets.

Jewellery Box (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-8319; Pt Lucaya Marketplace & Village) Gold, silver and gems for all.

Paradise Jewels (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-351-1392; International Bazaar, Freeport) A range of gems and gold on offer.

MUSIC

Buck's Record Gallery (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-5170; Churchill St, Freeport) Downtown on Pioneers Way near E Mall Dr or at the International Airport, Buck's is one place for serious music buffs to build up their collections of Bahamas and Caribbean music.

Intercity Music (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-8820; Pt Lucaya Marketplace & Village) Another outlet that is well-established, it sells *goombay*, reggae and soca, including some local recordings.

PERFUME

Perfume Factory (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-9391; International Bazaar, Freeport) Adjacent to the Bazaar's parking lot, this shop allows you to mix, bottle, and name your own fragrance (\$30 for one-ounce spray) using the six Fragrances of the Bahamas. Every bottle of Sand perfume for men has real Bahamian sand; each bottle of Pink Pearl contains several conch-shell pearls.

Also recommended:

Les Parisiennes (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-2974; Pt Lucaya Marketplace & Village)

Parfum de Paris International Bazaar (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-5923); Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-8403)

STRAW-WORK & TRADITIONAL ITEMS

There are several straw markets behind the International Bazaar that sell woven-straw crafts, as well as T-shirts, carvings, and ethnic jewelry. Look for Bahamian wood-carvings, especially the simple yet dramatic works by Michael Hoyte which are often hewn from ebony driftwood washed ashore from Africa.

Solomon's Food Court (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-9681; Cedar St, Freeport) For Bahamian sauces and preserves, specialty oils, and other culinary items, head towards the International Bazaar and you'll find it.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Freeport International Airport (FPO; Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-6020) lies 2 miles north of Freeport. For international flights to Grand Bahama and the Bahamas see p288.

The following airlines fly between Grand Bahama and other Bahamian islands.

Bahamasair (UP; www.bahamasair.com) Freeport (☎ 242-352-8341); Moss Town, George Town, Exuma (☎ 242-345-0035); Nassau (☎ 242-377-5505) Hub Nassau.

Major's Airlines Bahamas (☎ 242-352-5778; www.thebahamasguide.com/majorair) Hub Grand Bahama.

Flamingo Air (☎ 242-351-4963) Hub Nassau.

Quoted fares are one-way:

Route	Price	Frequency
Freeport–Nassau	\$85	6 daily
Freeport–Marsh Harbour, Abaco	\$85	1 daily
Freeport–San Andros, Andros	\$150	2 weekly
Freeport–Fresh Creek, Andros	\$150	2 weekly
Freeport–Mangrove Cay	\$150	2 weekly
Freeport–Congo Town	\$150	2 weekly
Freeport–Bimini	\$65	1 daily
Freeport–Governors Harbour	\$135	2 weekly
Freeport–Nth Eleuthera	\$135	2 weekly

BOAT

Mail Boat

Contact the **Dockmaster's Office** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 242-393-1064) located at Potter's Cay in Nassau or **Freeport Harbour** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-9651) to confirm departure schedules, and for transport operators, and contact and fare details.

Marcella III (\$50 one way, 12 hours, one weekly) sails on Wednesday for Freeport from Nassau. It docks half a mile east of the Cruise Ship Port.

Marinas

If traveling in your own boat, you must clear customs and immigration at Lucayan Marina Village, Port Lucaya Marina, or Running Mon Marina.

You'll need to call ahead to arrange clearance with **Customs** (☎ 242-352-7361) and **Immigration** (☎ 242-352-9338).

All marinas provide electricity & freshwater hookups.

Lucayan Marina Village (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-8888; www.lucayanmarinavillage.com; Pt Lucaya Marketplace & Village) Located on the north side of Port Lucaya,

facilities include 150 slips, fuel and accommodations. A ferry to Port Lucaya is free to guests.

Ocean Reef Yacht Club (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-272-4661; www.oryc.com; Silver Point Beach) Has accommodations, over 55 slips and free buses to town.

Old Bahama Bay Resort & Marina (see p120) Has 70 slips and there are fuel, shower and laundry facilities.

Port Lucaya Marina & Yacht Club (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-373-9090; www.portlucaya.com; Pt Lucaya Marketplace & Village) Off Seahorse Rd, this modern marina has 150 slips and accommodations.

Running Mon Marina (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-6834; www.running-mon-bahamas.com; Kelly Ct at the foot of the Mall, Freeport) Has 70 slips, fuel, accommodations, a boat-lift, laundry and showers.

Xanadu Beach Resort & Marina (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-6783; Sunken Treasure Dr, Freeport) Has 75 slips and accommodation facilities next to Xanadu Beach.

Getting Around

AIR

To/From the Airport

Freeport International Airport (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-6020) lies 2 miles north of Freeport. There's no bus service to or from the airport. However, car rental booths are based in the arrivals hall and taxis meet each flight. Displayed fares are set by the government.

Taxi rides for two people to/from the airport to Freeport are \$11 and \$19 to/from Lucaya. Each additional passenger costs \$3.

BOAT

Cruise ships dock at **Freeport Harbour** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-9651). Taxis meet all cruise ships and charge \$16 to Freeport and \$24 to Lucaya.

McLeans Town to Sweeting's Cay (East End) has a free government **ferry** (Map pp102-3) which runs twice daily.

CAR & SCOOTER HIRE

The following companies have car-rental agencies at the airport. The local companies are cheaper than the internationals, and daily car hire is from \$60. Collision waiver insurance is about \$15 a day.

Avis (☎ 242-352-7666)

Brad\$ (☎ 242-352-7930)

Dollar (☎ 242-352-9325)

Hertz (☎ 242-352-9277)

KSR Rent A Car (☎ 242-351-5737)

You can rent a scooter in the parking lot in front of the Port Lucaya Resort & Yacht

Club (p111) for \$40 a day, plus a hefty cash deposit.

BUS

The eastern end of the island is known as the East End and the western end of the island is known as the West End. A handful of private minibuses operate as 'public buses' on assigned routes from the bus depot downtown at Winn Dixie Plaza, traveling as far afield as West End and McLean's Town. Buses are frequent and depart when the driver decides he has enough passengers. The bus stop in Freeport is at the parking area behind the International Bazaar, and the bus stop in Lucaya is on Seahorse Dr, 400yd west of the Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village.

Timetables can be obtained from the **Grand Bahama Island Tourism Board** (p103).

Fares from Freetown include Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village (\$1), East End (\$8, twice daily) and West End (\$4, twice daily). Buses will occasionally drop you in taxi-designated city areas for \$2.

Free shuttles also run between the most downtown hotels, the beach and town.

TAXI

You'll find taxis at the airport and major hotels. Fares are fixed by the government for short distances. Bonded taxis (with white license plates) can't go outside the tax-free zone. You can call for a radio-dispatched taxi from **Freeport Taxi** (☎ 242-352-6666) or **Grand Bahama Taxi Union** (☎ 242-352-7101).

EAST OF FREEPORT

East of the Grand Lucayan Waterway (a 7½-mile canal), the Grand Bahama Hwy runs parallel to the shore to East End. Side roads lead to the south shore's talcum-powder soft beaches.

Water Cay

This tiny, simple settlement is on the cay of that name, 2 miles off the north shore. The community relies on fishing and is as unspoiled as things get on Grand Bahama. You can catch a boat from Hawksbill Creek or the Grand Lucayan Waterway or drive the dirt road from the Grand Bahama Hwy to the north shore dock, where you might be able to hire a local's boat to Water Cay.

Peterson Cay National Park

This 1½-acre park is the only cay on Grand Bahama's south shore. It is one of the Family Islands' most heavily used getaway spots, busy with locals' boats on weekends. Coral reefs provide splendid snorkeling and diving. You can hire a boat from any marina in Freeport and Lucaya or take an organized snorkeling excursion (see p106).

Old Free Town

The settlement of Old Free Town, 3 miles east of the Grand Lucayan Waterway, was forcibly abandoned in the 1960s when the Port Authority acquired the land. There are several blue holes (subaqueous caves) in the surrounding swamp, notably **Mermaid's Lair** and **Owl Hole**. Stalactites dangle from the roof of the bowl. And owls have nested on the sill as long as residents can remember – the blue holes are well hidden, so ask a local for directions!

Lucayan National Park

This 40-acre park is the Grand Bahama's finest treasure. It is divided in half by the Grand Bahama Hwy. On the north side, trails lead from the parking lot onto a limestone plateau riddled with caves that open to the longest known underwater cave system in the world, with over 6 charted miles of tunnels. From here you can follow steps down to viewing platforms in **Ben's Cave** and **Burial Mound Cave**, which have formed blue holes. These blue holes will fill with fish if you sprinkle the surface with bread. Colonies of bats use Ben's Cave as a nursery in summer, where a unique class of opaque blind crustacean, *Speleonectes lucayensis*, that resembles a swimming centipede also resides. In 1986 four skeletons of indigenous Lucayans were found in what appeared to be an ancient cemetery on the floor of one cave.

Creek Trail (330yd) and **Mangrove Swamp Trail** (480yd) form a loop on the southern side of the park and pass through three signed shoreline ecosystems. The trails head first through miniature woodlands with ming, cedar, mahogany, and poisonwood, cinnecord, cabbage palms, and agaves, which produce towering yellow flowers favored by insects and hummingbirds. Their low branches are festooned with orchids and bromeliads.

Between this area and the shore lie mangroves, where raccoons and land crabs roam under the watchful eyes of ospreys, herons and waterfowl. **Gold Rock Creek** is the home to snapper, barracuda, manta ray and crabs. Passages lead underground between the creek and the Lucayan Caves so that ocean fish are often seen in the blue holes north of the road.

Trails are marked through the beachside whiteland coppice of giant poisonwood and pigeon plum trees, frequented by woodpeckers ('peckerwoods' in local parlance).

Both trails spill out onto the secluded and beautiful white-rippled sands of **Gold Rock Beach**, fringed by dunes fixed by coco plum, sea grape, spider lily and casuarina trees. Named for the small rock that lies 200yd offshore, this is one of the island's most stunning beaches.

Bring all water and food with you and don't forget your bug spray. The park is open daily year-round, although Ben's Cave is closed in June and July to protect the birthing bats. For more information contact the **Bahamas National Trust** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 242-352-5438; Rand Memorial Nature Centre, E Settlers Way, Freeport).

You can take a jitney bus from Winn Dixie Plaza in downtown Freeport to reach the park. The jitney buses (\$8 one-way, twice daily) pass by the park en route to McLean's Town. Check with the Grand Bahama Island Tourism Board (p103) for updated schedules.

However a number of operators organize tours (p109) and activities (p106) that explore the park on foot, horse, bike, kayak and boat.

Cave diving is allowed only by special permit under the supervision of UNEXSO in Port Lucaya (see p107).

Lucayan National Park to McLean's Town

The route to McLean's Town (population 3744) is normally taken by those seeking a boat ride to Sweeting's Cay, Lightbourne and Deep Water Cays for snorkeling or the excellent bonefishing.

On the way you will pass sleepy **Freetown** and **High Rock** settlements. About 10 miles east, beyond the Burma Oil Depot (with a harbor facility for the world's largest supertankers), is **Pelican Point Beach** and **Rocky Creek**, which harbors another blue hole.

McLean's Town residents live off their conch and lobster fishing, and some also act as bonefishing guides.

Deep Water Cay attracts fishing fans while **Sweeting's Cay** (population 483) holds a small fishing village and some visitors' accommodations. **Lightbourne Cay** has a lovely beach and shallows that are a snorkeler's dream.

Captain Phil & Mel's Bonefishing Guide Service (Map pp102-3; ☎ 242-353-3960; www.bahamasbonefishing.net; half-/full-day \$250/350) provides transport to and from Freeport.

SLEEPING & EATING

Bishop's Bonefish Resort, Restaurant & Bar (Map pp102-3; ☎ 242-353-5485; www.gbweekly.com/bishopsbonefish; High Rock Beach; r \$85; ☎ ☒ ☒ ☒) Eight light and bright motel-style rooms are set on the beach, each with a fridge. An on-site bar and popular local restaurant serve Bahamian dishes and burgers, and the owner can also organize bonefishing trips.

Pelican Point Lodge (Map pp102-3; ☎ 242-353-6064; r \$80; ☎ ☒ ☒ ☒) These three beachside units have kitchenettes. A small bar and restaurant **Breezes Bar & Restaurant** is attached.

Twin Gables (Map pp102-3; ☎ 242-373-6662; eastend.safari@yahoo.com; Sweeting's Cay; r \$140; ☒ ☒) Three rooms in this waterside villa come fitted with TV and fridges. The nearby **Seaside Fig Tree** (mains \$7-15) offers meals and drinks all day.

Bro's (Map pp102-3; ☎ 242-353-3440; McLean's Town; r \$50; ☎ ☒) This mint-green, three-story building on the left as you enter town has a choice of clean but very basic rooms, some with air-con.

Smitty's One Stop Shop (Map pp102-3; ☎ 242-353-4242; Bevan's Town) About 5 miles east of Lucayan National Park, Smitty's serves burgers and basic fare (mains \$6-10); sells gasoline and has a general store.

You can buy groceries at the **Cooper's Convenience Store**, a tiny hut in the middle of McLean's Town.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

A minibus operates twice daily from Winn Dixie Plaza in downtown Freeport.

East End Adventures (p109) also takes in McLean's Town on its day trip to Sweeting's Cay.

Water taxis operate between McLean's Town and the cays. Rates are negotiable.

WEST OF FREEPORT

This peninsula is separated from the ‘mainland’ by Freeport Harbour Channel and the surrounding industry. Already pretty poor, the area was further devastated by the 2004 hurricanes and is in the process of recovering.

The highlight here is **Paradise Cove** and the pristine **Deadman’s Reef** which can be reached by simply walking off the beach.

Hawksbill Creek to West End

The channel opens to **Hawksbill Creek**, named for the once-common marine turtles that now infrequently come ashore. Fishermen bring their catch ashore here to the **Conch Wharf**; and huge shell mounds line the road.

The rough and poorer suburb of **Eight Mile** lies west of the channel and should be avoided after dark, along with the area that stretches west to Holmes Rock. Nearby are several ‘boiling holes’ (subterranean water-filled holes that bubble under the tides’ pressure).

There’s good diving and snorkeling off-shore, especially from **Paradise Cove** (☎ 242-349-2677; pcove@batelnet.bs; Paradise Cove; r per night/per week \$100/625; 📍 📞 📺). Definitely the bargain of the week, this handful of small apartments sits on secluded Coral Beach and has the most amazing sea views at a very reasonable weekly rent! Fully-equipped, the apartments come with all linen, including beach towels. The attractive furnishings are simple and there is a bar on site that makes killer piña colodas. What else do you need?

Farther up the road is the atmospheric **Buccaneer Club** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 242-349-3794; mains \$10-35), centered on a magnificent Old World stone-and-timber restaurant festooned with polished driftwood and nautical regalia. You can also dine on traditional seafood dishes, rack of lamb and broiled lobster outside on a patio shaded by palms.

Jitney buses run several times a day from Winn Dixie Plaza in Freeport to Eight Mile and Holmes Rock (\$4). Excursions are also offered from Freeport/Lucaya (see p109).

West End

This fishing village, 25 miles west of Freeport, was a sleepy haven of tumbledown

shacks, half-sunken boats and piles of sun-bleached conch shells before the decimating 2004 hurricanes which swooped over Grand Bahama from this end of the island. Rebuilding the community will take some time.

Once the center of activity on the island, Prohibition rumrunners dominated the area and yachters with sterling surnames like Kennedy, DuPont or Hearst were callers to the Grand Bahama Resort & Country Club.

The village was also known for the stone-and-wood **Mary Magdalene Church** (1893), which has three small yet beautiful stained-glass windows in contemporary style.

SLEEPING & EATING

Old Bahama Bay Resort & Marina (Map pp102-3; ☎ 242-346-6500; www.oldbahamabay.com; Bayshore Rd; r \$275; 📍 📞 📺 📺) The luxurious Bahamian-style cottages are part of an upmarket 150-acre resort that is full of boaters. Classic darkwood and comfortable furnishings in the open-suite rooms incorporate all mod-cons including bars and DVD/CD-players, coffeemakers and fridges. Private porches complete the spacious and luxurious feel of this attractive and low-key resort. Facilities include walking and snorkeling trails, a vast heated swimming pool with massage jets, tennis courts, a gym, spa, dive shop, helipad and well-equipped marina.

Star Hotel Restaurant & Lounge (Map pp102-3; ☎ 242-346-6207; Bayshore Rd; mains \$7-18; 📍 lunch & dinner) This weather-worn, two-story old clapboard hotel now serves simple but hugely popular Bahamian fare. Weekends here are party time, with live music and late nights on offer.

Village Tavern & Takeout (Map pp102-3; ☎ 242-346-6102; Bank Lane off Bayshore Rd; mains \$6-12; 📍 breakfast, lunch & dinner) They serve traditional Bahamian breakfasts and fried and souse (stew) meals at this small place.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

A jitney bus (\$4 one-way) runs several times daily from Freeport’s International Bazaar and Port Lucaya Marketplace & Village.

The marina at Old Bahama Bay Resort & Marina attracts many boaters.

Several tour operators include West End in their sightseeing excursions (see p109).

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it’s fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don’t upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - ‘Do the right thing with our content.’