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The crystalline waters of The Bahamas are ideally suited for a luxury yacht charter

SPOT ON



BAHAMA

**THE BAHAMAS ARE PERFECT FOR  
CRUISING – BUT THE KEY TO A  
SUCCESSFUL CHARTER IS KNOWING  
WHICH OF THE MANY DISTINCT  
ISLANDS YOU SHOULD INCLUDE  
IN YOUR ITINERARY**

WORDS MIRIAM CAIN



# A M A S

With some 700 islands and uninhabited cays lying in a gentle east-west curve just 50 miles south of the U.S. coast of Florida, the cruising possibilities for The Bahamas archipelago can sound endless, but both nature and practicalities will help to narrow your choice. Each of the 16 main islands has its own distinct character, from New Providence island with cosmopolitan Nassau to the Exuma islands' remote string of pearl-like cays, to the endlessly scalloped bays and coves of the Abacos. For those with the desire, and time, to prolong their cruise, extending a few days to encompass Harbour Island and Eleuthera is a must.

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## HARBOUR ISLAND

With its pink sand beach and pretty pastel cottages, there is no pit stop chicer than the tiny Harbour Island off the northeast coast of Eleuthera. Three miles long and half a mile wide, the island has been a slow burner, only lazily coming of age in recent years due to the arrival of a handful of modish new places opening on the island.

### Stay @

For old-school glamour, it has to be the original **Pink Sands Resort**. It has been through some changes in recent years and is now under new management. The refurbished British Colonial beach cottages overlook the pink beach for which it is named; the restaurant **Malcolm 51** ranks as one of the top dining spots on the island. Previously known as Pip's Place, the recently refurbished **Ocean View** has a boho vibe and is also set in a fantastic location above the beach.

Set in an old colonial home overlooking the harbor in the heart of Dunmore Town, **The Landing**, which is owned and run by Prince Charles' goddaughter India Hicks, is a boutique property with just 13 guest rooms. Alternatively, The Landing's sister property, the **Guest House**, is located right on the beach and boasts a private entrance to the sand where palm-fringed cabanas await. The palatial verandas are the perfect spot for sipping sundowners. Kitted out in owner India Hicks's trademark blend of relaxed Bahamian and colonial styles, it is defiantly old-world but still elegantly modern.

The talk of the town is the recent addition to the small inventory of hotels: **Bahamas House**. A collection of colonial villas located in the center of Dunmore Town, the hotel's concierge specializes in organizing "adventure chic" activities, including kite surfing and bonefishing.

### Shop @ Dunmore Town

The two central streets on the island combine to create Dunmore Town. Here you will find the island's shops, restaurants and cafes (a handful combined). For locally woven bags, head to **Eva's Straw Work**; **The Sand Dollar Shop** is brimming with shells and local craftworks. For chic ceramics, head to **Dake's Shoppe**. India Hicks's designer boutique **The Sugar Mill** on Bay Street is a treasure trove of finds collected from around the world.

### Dine @

As chic as the island may be, there are no waiting or guest lists on Harbour Island – the island is too laid back for such things. For a leisurely lunch head to **The Dunmore** hotel overlooking the surf. Another casual option is **Queen Conch**. You will find an elegant crowd feasting on lobster at **The Landing**. Alternatively, **Rock House** has a fantastic atmosphere, fresh seafood, and live music. **Sip Sip** (the local word for gossip) is where superyacht owners and their guests congregate over a conch-chili soup. It is only open for lunch and gets packed to the rafters at peak times, so arrive early for a table on the deck.



02  
Harbour  
Island



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**Drink @ open-air bars**

For sunset cocktails, head to the **Blue Bar** at the Pink Sands Resort. Later on, punchy tiki cocktails go hand-in-hand with the open-air dance floor making the **Vic-Hum Club** the place to be. The oldest nightclub on the island, with the photographs to prove the island's celebrity status, it also has a basketball court and ping-pong tables. **Beyond the Reef** and **Daddy D's** are the places to head for reggae and hip-hop accompanied by a strong rum punch, and **Gusty's** is great for late-night fun.

**Spend the day @ Man Island**

Cruise around the bays on **Man Island** where you can go swimming and see the indigenous turtles.

**Explore @**

Take a golf cart, the island's primary mode of transport, and slope around the island up **Coconut Grove Avenue** past the conch stall where fishermen stand patiently looking for bonefish. Discover the **Stand-Up church**, the **Wesleyan Chapel**, and the old Catholic cemetery. Alternatively, take the tender around the island, drift over fields of sea grass and discover turtles and orange starfish. Visit **Preacher's Cave**, where English settlers in The Bahamas took refuge after being shipwrecked at the Devil's Backbone reef. Adventure seekers can explore the **Sapphire Blue Hole** – not for the faint hearted, the only access is by jumping off the cliff into the hole and climbing out again unaided.

**Anchor @ Pink Sands Beach**

Take the tender ashore to discover **Pink Sands Beach** – one of nature's greatest achievements, the pink comes from the bright red or pink shells of tiny microscopic animals called foraminifera. In the early evening, for a unique experience, enjoy a horseback ride along the beach as the sun goes down.

**Berth @ Valentines Resort & Marina**

With slips for yachts up to 60 meters (200 feet), the Valentines Resort & Marina in Dunmore Town is the largest and most favored superyacht facility on Harbour Island.



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**03**  
Harbour Island

**04**  
Malcolm 51

**05**  
Sip Sip

**06**  
The Dunmore

**07**  
Bahama House

08



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## ELEUTHERA

Located just 50 miles east of Nassau in the Out Islands, Eleuthera runs 110 miles long, but just two miles wide. Home to beaches of white and pink sand, charming colonial cottages, turquoise waters and little else other than nature at its best, this is the place to head for a peaceful anchorage.

### Stay @

For those looking to spend a few nights ashore before embarking on an itinerary through the Exumas, Eleuthera has an international airport and a handful of high-end boutique hotels. **The French Leave Resort** in Governor's Harbour is one such boutique property. Overlooking the pink sand beach and harbor of Cupid's Cay (every cottage has a killer ocean view), the resort blends chic design with Caribbean and British Colonial influences. Another option is **The Cove Eleuthera** in Gregory Town, which is set on 40 acres with two private-entry beaches.

### Dine @

Dine at the **1648 Bar & Grille** at the French Leave Resort. Named after the earliest permanent European settlement in the Bahamas, the restaurant boasts spectacular sunset views over picturesque Governor's Harbour and is renowned for its fresh seafood dishes.

A short walk down from the **French Leave Resort**, **Pascal's Oceanfront Seafood Restaurant** is a fine-dining venue with both international and Bahamian fare on offer. Head to Governor's Harbour to check out the local Bahamian offerings like **Pammy's** and **Tippy's**. Both are casual hangouts, but the classic signature dishes of conch fritters, grouper, plantains and curry chicken all are well worth stepping ashore for.

### Explore @

There is more than enough to keep even the most active of guests busy over a long weekend ashore. From diving to beach hops through cultural sites, fishing and kayaking, there is plenty for all. Cape Eleuthera has 18 miles of shoreline on its 4,500-acre nature and beach preserve. The southern edge of **Rock Sound** is where you will see the **Ocean Hole**, a natural limestone-formed blue hole where you can swim with turtles. Take a soak in the **Queen's Bath** — natural pools formed out of rock formations that fill with water from the Atlantic Ocean. When heated by the sun the pools become natural hot tubs (low tide only).

**Discover @**

Discover the famed **Glass Window Bridge**, where the dark blue Atlantic Ocean meets the calm aqua-hued waters of the Caribbean. The man-made bridge was built to replace a natural bridge rock formation that was wiped out by a hurricane. It provides breathtaking views over the contrasting bodies of water.

**Cool off @ Surfer's Beach**

**Gaulding Cay Beach** offers a long stretch of powdery white sand and shallow waters perfect for snorkeling. Walk through the shallows at low tide directly to the little casuarina tree-covered island right off the beach for a picnic lunch. Catch the waves at nearby **Surfer's Beach** — one of the best and most reliable surfbreaks in The Bahamas — before touring the mile-long cavern system of **Hatchet Bay Cave**. Filled with saltwater pools, stalactites, stalagmites and bats, the cave provides a welcome respite from the heat of the midday sun.

**Dive @ Current Cut**

Eleuthera is, like most of The Bahamas, ideal for snorkeling and diving. Particular hot spots include the **Current Cut** channel — the swift and strong current that moves between Eleuthera's Current Settlement and Current Island; the inland saltwater lake known as the **Blue Hole** and the **Train Wreck**.



**08**  
The Cove Eleuthera  
in Gregory Town

**09**  
French Leave Resort

**10**  
The Queens Bath at  
Rock Sound

**11**  
Rocky shoreline on  
the island Eleuthera  
in The Bahamas



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12  
Virgin beaches and secluded  
anchorage, hallmarks of  
The Bahamas experience

13  
Abundant marine  
life make the diving  
truly memorable



**CONDITIONS FOR SNORKELING  
& DIVING ARE FIRST-CLASS  
IN THE EXUMAS & THE  
BEAUTIFUL REEFS ARE  
ABUNDANT WITH MARINE LIFE**





## EXUMAS

The Exumas is the most popular yacht charter area in The Bahamas, but never seems crowded. The entire chain extends some 100 nautical miles and comprises 365 islands, islets and cays. Turquoise vistas are punctuated with vast stretches of white sand backed by colored clapboard houses ashore. Easily accessed from nearby Nassau, anchorages are anything from an hour to seven hours apart – so where you go really depends on the length of your charter, how many islands you want to visit and the speed of your yacht.

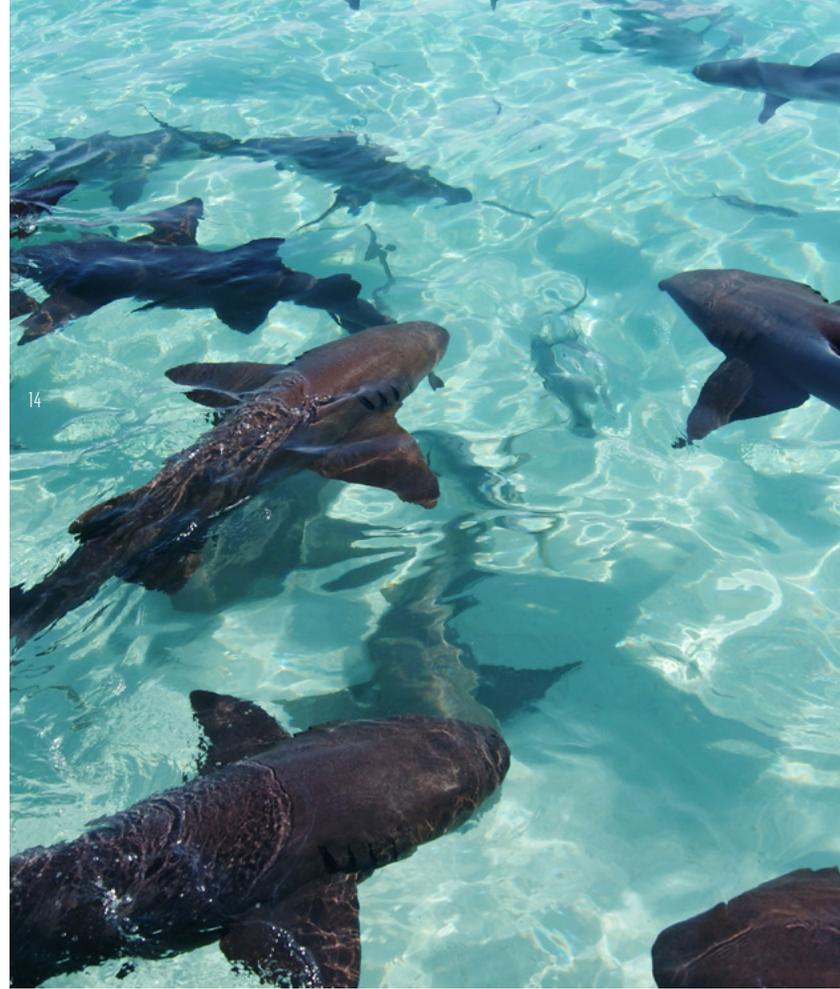
### Discover @

Conditions for snorkeling and diving are first-class in the Exumas (think 98-foot/30m visibility) and the beautiful reefs are abundant with marine life. A stone's throw from Staniel Cay, **Thunderball Cave** is famed for its appearance in the James Bond movie “Thunderball.” Tides permitting, you can feed the fish as you swim and snorkel through the waters of this hollowed out island. **Norman's Cay** was famous in the drug-running days and you can now visit its hidden runway and an old **DC-3 airplane** that was used for drug smuggling in the 1980s. It was shot down and today makes for an excellent dive and snorkel site.

For the ultimate diving experience, **Warderick Wells Cay** is among the cluster of islands that make up the **Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park**. Often referred to as the Garden of Eden, this natural marine preserve is home to brilliant coral reefs and exotic marine life. Directly off **Highbourne Cay** is a drop off that faces the Exuma Sound – a vertical, 72-foot (22m) coral wall that is populated by all manner of sea life. Deep-sea fishing trips from wahoo, tuna, marlin and mahi-mahi also can be arranged either on board your yacht or with a local company.

### Dine @

Fans of seafood will be endlessly well cared for as most restaurants and shacks serve signature dishes of conch salad and grilled grouper or other locally caught fish. The bar and restaurant at the **Staniel Cay Yacht Club** is where the Exumas social scene converges. The catch of the day is really the catch of the day and the delicious cracked conch accompanied by a rum punch is the specialty. **McDuffs at Norman's Cay Beach Club** is the perfect spot for curry conch chowder, a glorious sunset, and all manner of rum cocktails.



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**14**  
The prevalent nurse  
& reef sharks

**15**  
Wild, swimming pig on  
Big Majors Cay

**16**  
Royal Bahamas  
Police officers

**17**  
Staniel Cay Yacht Club

**18**  
Submerged wreckage  
of DC3 airplane at  
Norman's Cay

**Shop @**

Exuma shopping is generally limited to hotel boutiques, but for those looking for artisans and authentic Bahamian crafts, the Straw Market in **George Town** on Great Exuma has an eclectic array of stalls and is worth a visit.

**Explore @**

A natural paradise, **Compass Cay** is made up of 450 acres with 15 beaches to explore. The most spectacular beach is the long Crescent Ocean Beach, where you can throw hot dogs to the nurse sharks that swim around the shallow waters and then dive in to swim with them. For more thrills, take a jet ski ride to the mangrove-edged archipelago known as Shroud Cay to catch high tide for the famous **Mangrove Run**.

**Spend the day @ Rachel's Bubble Bath**

A deep, crystal clear lagoon on the northwest of Compass Cay, **Rachel's Bubble Bath** is one of the finest swimming holes in the Caribbean. At mid to high tide, ocean waves splash into the pool creating white foam: nature's very own Jacuzzi.

**Anchor @ Staniel Cay**

Staniel Cay is a great anchorage where you will find not only the famous swimming pigs, but also the **Thunderball Cave** that starred in the James Bond movie Thunderball; and it is a great place to go snorkeling with stingrays.

*Nicholas Air provides private jet solutions to The Bahamas and the Caribbean. Contact an N&J charter broker for details.*