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An Insider's Guide to Turks and Caicos

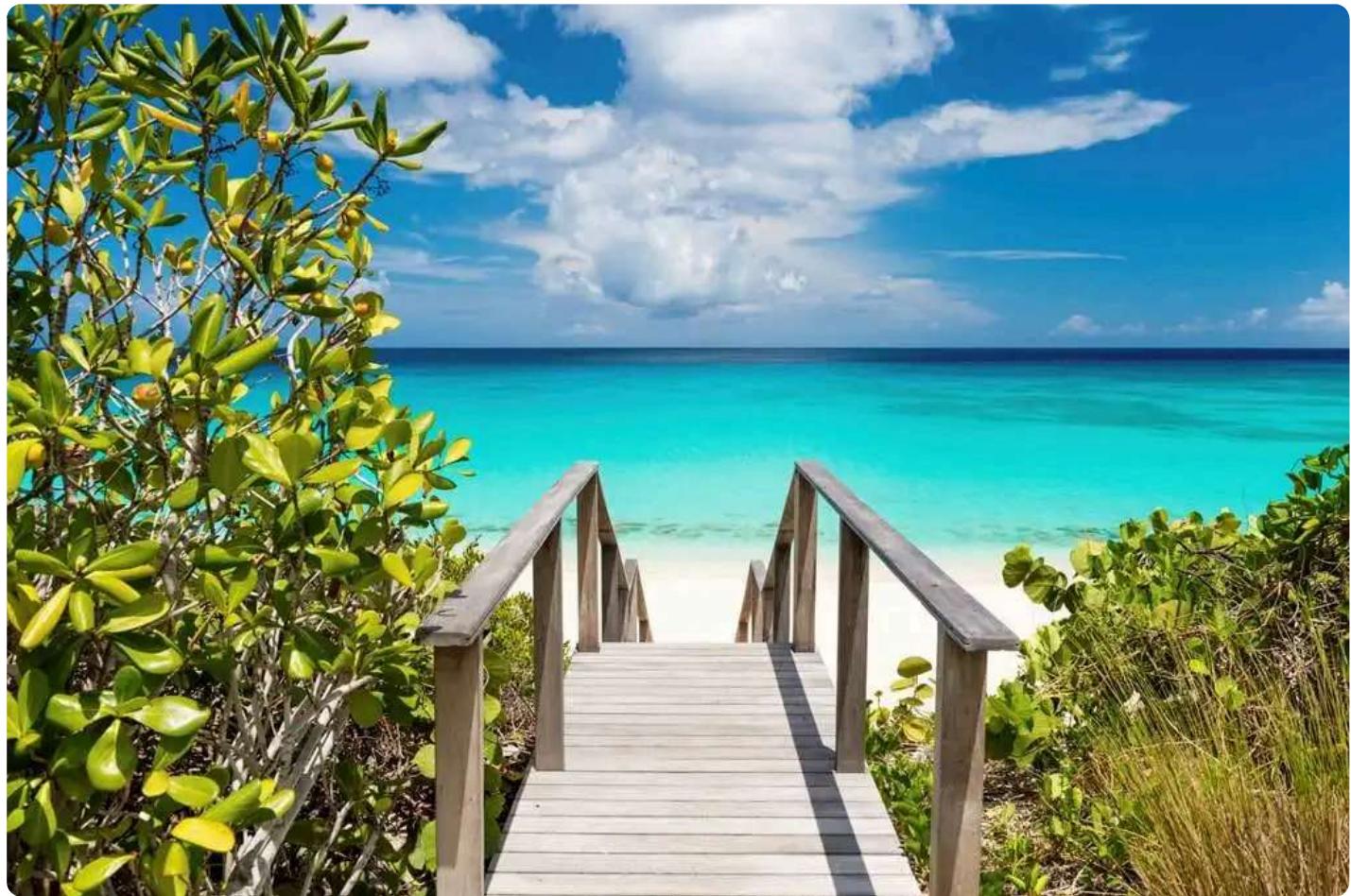
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Image courtesy of Amanyara

Home to some of the most beautiful beaches in the world, the Turks and Caicos Islands are filled with luxury resorts and laid-back vibes. Divers will love the barrier reefs, filled with fish,

turtles and even some sharks. Nature lovers can enjoy birdwatching and exploring nature reserves. The delicious seafood, historic ruins and lively festivals add cultural flair.

Direct flights from cities like New York, Toronto, Miami and Atlanta, plus seasonal offerings from more gateways, make this a convenient warm-weather getaway. Check out some of the best places to stay and things to do on a trip to the Turks and Caicos, and enjoy a getaway at your own pace.

Need to know



Image courtesy of Ritz-Carlton, Turks & Caicos

- **Currency:** The US dollar is the official currency, with credit cards being widely accepted. Have cash on hand for taxis, smaller vendors and tips (10%–20% is customary).
- **Airports:** Flights arriving to the Turks and Caicos go through Providenciales (PLS). The airport also offers an expediting service that can be especially helpful during peak travel times but can also sell out, so plan accordingly.

- **Transportation:** Most resorts offer private transfers, best arranged in advance. Taxis, while widely available, can be pricey. Renting a car is another option if you want to explore beyond the resorts, but note that driving is on the left-side of the road.
- **Best time to visit:** The Turks and Caicos Islands enjoy warm, sunny weather year-round. Hurricane season is from June through November, bringing higher humidity.
- **Ideal length of stay:** A three- to seven-night stay allows ample time to relax on the beach, enjoy water sports, and explore all the Turks and Caicos has to offer.
- **Signature dishes:** Conch fritters (a mix of minced conch meat and vegetables fried in batter), cracked conch (tenderized conch, lightly battered and fried), grilled spiny lobster (freshly caught Caribbean spiny lobster grilled with garlic butter), johnny cakes (slightly sweet, pan-fried flat bread), blackened mahi-mahi (locally caught and seared in island spices), rum cake (a moist, spiced cake infused with local rum).
- **What to wear:** Lightweight, breathable clothing is best for the warm climate, with swimwear and cover-ups suitable for beach days. In casual dining spots, shorts, sundresses and sandals are common. At upscale restaurants, smart-casual attire like linen shirts, maxi dresses and dress sandals are appropriate.

Where to stay



Image courtesy of Amanyara

The Turks and Caicos Islands comprise an archipelago consisting of 40 coral islands, of which there are eight main islands. Most are low-lying with extensive marshes and mangrove swamps. The geography makes it a biodiversity hotspot, from endemic animals and plants to being an important breeding ground for seabirds.

The main island for vacationers is Providenciales (Provo, for short). Grace Bay Beach is home to many of these top resorts. Aside from its beaches, the interior of the island is covered in rugged hills and prickly pear cactus, as well as Colonial-era ruins. Just off shore, visitors can snorkel at Smith's Reef or dive at nearby West Caicos Island.

Best for Couples



Image courtesy of Rock House

Amanyara: Exclusive, world-class luxury is combined with vast wilderness and protected parkland at this nature lover's paradise. Set on the secluded shores of an 18,000-acre nature reserve, this lagoon-facing retreat features one-bedroom pavilions up to six-bedroom villas. From a holistic approach to wellbeing, to delicious Caribbean cuisine, this resort is perfect for luxury travelers and honeymooners.

- **Fora Perks** include a \$100 food & beverage credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Rock House: This distinctive cliffside retreat brings Mediterranean elegance to a boutique Caribbean resort. Featuring just forty-six accommodations, guests can stay in suites from studios to two-bedrooms, or villas with two to five-bedrooms. An exclusive beach club and a diverse array of food options make this unique stay even more memorable.

Family-Friendly



Image courtesy of Ritz-Carlton, Turks & Caicos

The Shore Club: This chic resort just steps from Long Bay Beach mixes modern design with laid-back island vibes. Enjoy panoramic views in their one to three-bedroom suites, or complete oceanfront privacy in three to six-bedroom villas. A stay at this luxurious resort is designed for honeymooners to multi-generational family and friends.

- **Fora Perks** include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

The Ritz-Carlton, Turks & Caicos: The iconic high-end hospitality of Ritz-Carlton can be found on Grace Bay Beach. Elegance and Caribbean charm are on display in their deluxe guest rooms all the way to their two-bedroom suites. Complete with a luxurious spa and complimentary paddle board and kayak rentals, guests of all ages can enjoy an unforgettable vacation.

- **Fora Perks** include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

The Palms: This stylish escape on Grace Bay Beach exudes classic Caribbean luxury. A boutique vibe can be felt across the seventy-two room resort, ranging from junior suites to three-bedroom suites. Add excellent hospitality and outstanding architecture, this retreat is perfect for a laid-back luxe getaway.

- **Fora Perks** include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Grace Bay Club: This luxury all-suite resort is set on eleven acres right on Grace Bay Beach. The property is divided into an adults-only section, family-friendly area, and an exclusive upscale estate. A fitness center, tennis courts, and access to Provo Golf and Country Club offer a range of activities out of the water.

- **Fora Reserve perks** include a \$100 hotel/resort credit, breakfast daily, an upgrade and extended check-in/out, whenever possible.

Alexandra Resort: This all-inclusive, family-friendly resort on Grace Bay Beach lets kids stay for free. Spacious rooms extend from studios to a four-bedroom penthouse. Fronted with a private beach, guests can also enjoy the amenities of its sister property, Blue Haven Resort.

West Bay Club, A Grace Bay Resort: This beachfront retreat on Grace Bay Beach offers a boutique, contemporary experience. Accommodations stretch across elegant studios through

expansive four-bedroom suites.

Villas



Image courtesy of Wymara Resort Turks & Caicos

Beach Enclave: These exclusive private villas featuring hotel-style amenities can be found across the island. Ranging from two to seven-bedroom villas, each provides personalized experiences and impeccable service. If you're looking for the ultimate relaxing getaway with everything taken care of, Beach Enclave is perfect.

- **Fora Perks** include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Wymara Resort & Villas: This chic, modern beachfront escape on Grace Bay Beach is known for understated elegance. Accommodations range from studio rooms to one or three-bedroom suites, as well as private villas with one, four, five or six-bedrooms. Couples to multi-generational families will love a stay at this chic retreat.

- **Fora Perks** include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Private Islands



Image courtesy of Ambergris Cay Resort

COMO Parrot Cay: This private island escape is situated on over one-thousand unspoilt acres. The contemporary, beachy design spreads across its array of hotel rooms, family suites, beach houses and multi-villa residences (up to four bedrooms). A private car and boat transfer from the Providenciales airport takes just under an hour, but it feels like a world away. Gourmet dining, a renowned spa and attention to detail make it an unforgettable escape.

- **Fora Perks** include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Ambergris Cay Resort: This exclusive private island escape can only be reached by private jet (complimentary if arriving at Providenciales). With just nineteen bungalows (in studio or two-

bedroom layouts) and nine villas (ranging from three to six-bedrooms), it's the ultimate boutique luxury experience. The experience at this secluded hideaway is all-inclusive and fully bespoke, tailored to each guest.

Pine Cay: A short boat ride from Providenciales, this remote private island sits on the edge of the world's third-largest barrier reef. The island features eleven beachfront rooms, two beachfront cottages, as well as eight private villas (with three or four bedrooms). From unspoiled beaches to a Balinese spa, guests can disconnect from the outside world.

- **Fora Reserve perks** include a welcome bottle on arrival, choice of private meal, massage or kayak tour, full board and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

History and culture



The Turks and Caicos Islands are more than just beautiful seascapes, they are a treasure trove of history and culture. Originally settled by peoples from Cuba and Hispaniola, it eventually

became a hotspot for pirates and salt traders. Over centuries, salt production became a cornerstone for the economy.

Remnants of the islands' past can be seen in the salt pans on Salt Cay, as well as the colonial architecture of the capital city of Cockburn Town. The Grand Turk Lighthouse was built in the nineteenth century and still stands today.

The local culture evolved, blending influences from Africa, Europe and the Caribbean, all showcased through music and dance. Junkanoo festivals are also a cornerstone of the island's culture, blending costumes, drumbeats and dancing. A prime example of this is the annual Maskanoo, a lively street parade held on Boxing Day.

Activities & Experiences



- **Kiteboarding:** With steady trade winds and shallow waters, Long Bay Beach is one of the best destinations for kiteboarding.
- **Snorkeling:** Smith's Reef in Providenciales is renowned for its ocean wildlife, perfect for trips to snorkel and interact with fish and rays.

- **Diving:** Explore the West Caicos Marine National Park for pristine conditions and excellent visibility, as well as its West Caicos Wall for marine life amidst a dramatic underwater dropoff.
- **Kayak and paddleboarding:** The protected lagoon of Chalk Sound is filled with small limestone islands, perfect for kayaking or paddleboarding.
- **Boating:** Charter a yacht or explore the Caicos Cays by boat to discover uninhabited islands with secluded sandbars and opportunities to spot iguanas, stingrays and dolphins.
- **Island Fish Fry:** The Island Fish Fry in Providenciales is a must-experience event, with conch fritters, live music, and Junkanoo performances every Thursday night.
- **Golfing:** Although not a championship layout, the award-winning Royal Turks and Caicos Golf Club offers eighteen holes with excellent staff.
- **Turk's Head Brewery:** Enjoy locally crafted beers on Providenciales at the small craft brewery of Turk's Head.
- **Middle Caicos:** The island of Middle Caicos is home to the largest dry cave in the area, Conch Bar Caves, and one of the widest blue holes on the planet.

Alternative Destinations



For travelers looking at similar island escapes with a relaxed vibe to the Turks and Caicos, consider these alternate destinations:

Anguilla: This secluded Caribbean gem is known for its pristine beaches and crystal clear waters. Laid-back charm mixes with low-key luxury for a relaxing getaway. A thriving arts scene and delicious seafood round out this island escape.

Eleuthera & Harbour Island: Over 700 islands make up the Bahamas, but Eleuthera & Harbour Island are unique. Eleuthera's dramatic cliffs and Harbour Island's pink sand beaches offer boutique hotels and an intimate, laid-back vibe.

Maldives: The ultimate paradise, the Maldives are a gem for luxury and seclusion. World-class resorts on private islands feature bungalows perched over turquoise lagoons. For those looking for resort-amenities and ultimate service, this is the perfect place.

Turks and Caicos

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