

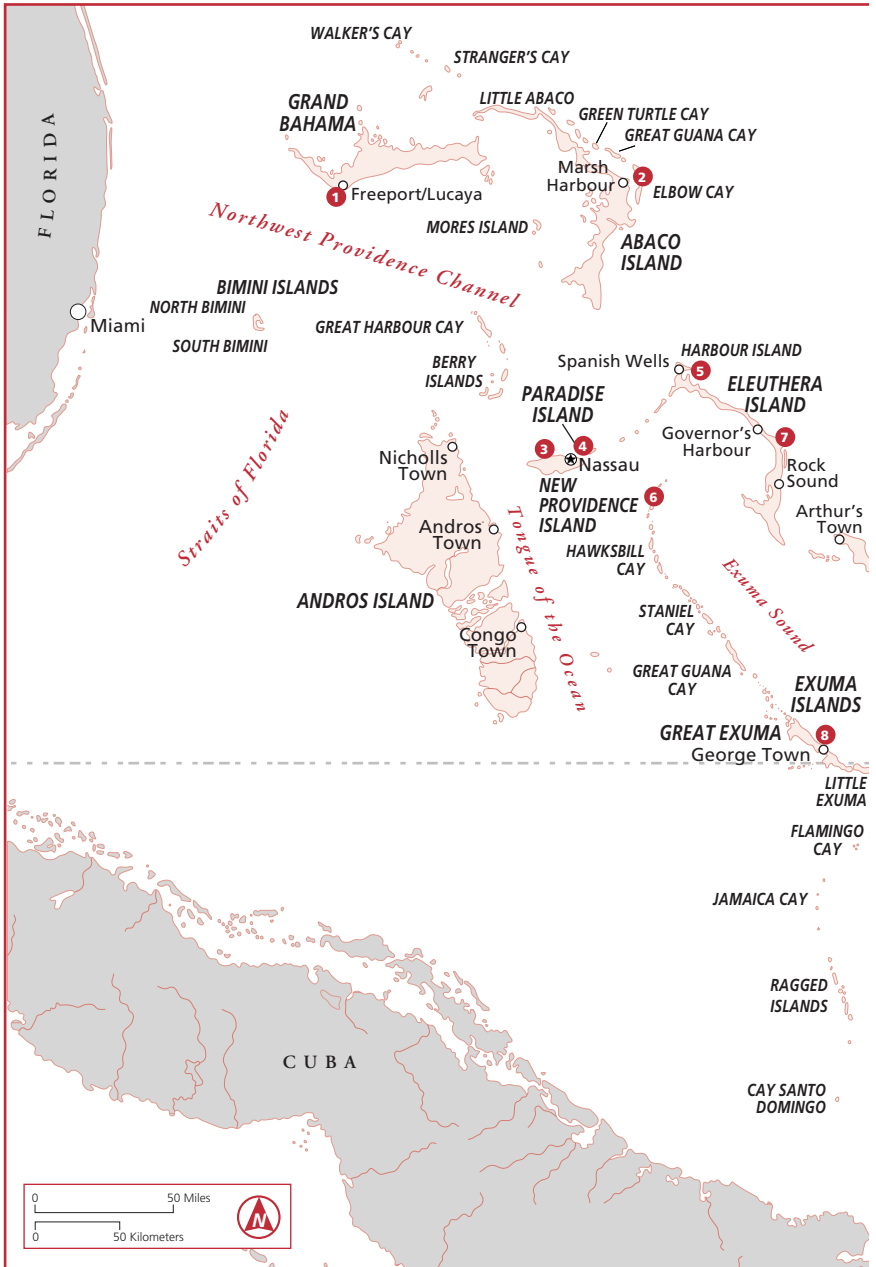
The Best of The Bahamas

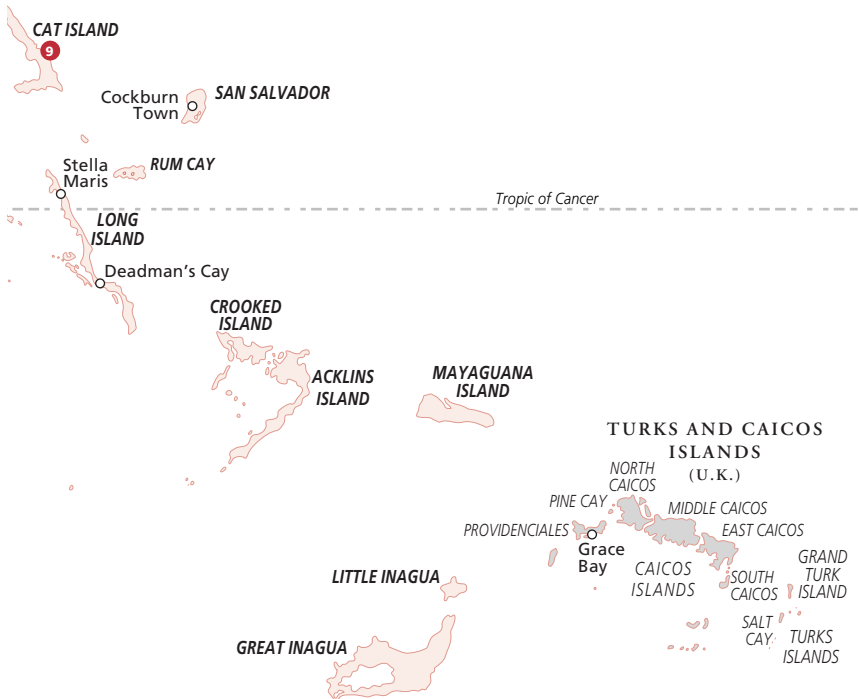
If you've decided that The Bahamas sounds like the perfect place to relax, feel free to start unwinding right now, because we've done all the legwork for you. Below you'll find our carefully compiled lists of the best that The Bahamas has to offer, from beaches and dive sites to resorts, restaurants, and sightseeing—and nearly everything else you'll want to see and do.

1 The Best Beaches

- **Cable Beach** (New Providence Island) The glittering shoreline of Cable Beach proffers easy access to shops, casinos, restaurants, watersports, and bars. It's a sandy 6.5km-long (4-mile) strip, with a great array of facilities and activities. See p. 93.
- **Cabbage Beach** (Paradise Island) Think Vegas in the Tropics. It seems as though most of the sunbathers dozing on the sands here are recovering from the previous evening's partying, and it's likely to be crowded near the mega-hotels, but you can find more solitude on the beach's northwestern extension (Paradise Beach), which is accessible only by boat or on foot. Lined with palms, sea grapes, and casuarinas, the sands are broad and stretch for at least 3km (2 miles). See p. 131.
- **Xanadu Beach** (Grand Bahama Island) Grand Bahama has 97km (60 miles) of sandy shoreline, but Xanadu Beach is most convenient to Freeport's resort hotels, several of which offer shuttle service here. There's more than a kilometer of white sand and (usually) gentle surf. Don't expect to have Xanadu to yourself, but if you want more quiet and privacy, try any of the beaches that stretch from Xanadu for many miles in either direction. See p. 160.
- **Tahiti Beach** (Hope Town, the Abacos) Since this beach is so isolated at the far end of Elbow Cay Island, you can be sure that only a handful of people will ever visit these cool waters and white sands. The crowds stay away because you can't drive here; you have to walk or ride a rented bike along sand and gravel paths from Hope Town. You can also charter a boat to reach the beach—which isn't too hard, since the Abacos are the country's sailing capital. See p. 211.
- **Pink Sands Beach** (Harbour Island) Running the entire length of the island's eastern side, these pale-pink sands stretch for 5km (3 miles) past a handful of low-rise hotels and private villas. A coral reef protects the shore from breakers, making for some of the safest swimming in The Bahamas. See p. 243.
- **Ten Bay Beach** (Eleuthera) Ten Bay Beach lies a short drive south of Palmetto Point, just north of Savannah Sound. Once upon a time, the exclusive Cotton Bay Club chose to build a hotel here because of the fabulous

The Bahamas' Best Beaches



THE BEST BEACHESCabbage Beach **4**Cable Beach **3**Cat Island's beaches **9**Pink Sands Beach **5**Saddle Cay **6**Stocking Island **8**Tahiti Beach **2**Ten Bay Beach **7**Xanadu Beach **1***ATLANTIC
OCEAN*

scenery. There may not be facilities here now, but since the hotel closed, the white sands and turquoise waters here have been more idyllic and private than ever. See p. 234.

- **Saddle Cay** (the Exumas) Most of the Exumas are oval-shaped islands strung end to end like links in a 209km (130-mile) chain. One notable exception is Saddle Cay, with its horseshoe-shaped curve near the Exumas' northern tip. It can be reached only by boat but offers an unspoiled setting without a trace of the modern world—and plenty of other cays and islets where you can play Robinson Crusoe for a few hours, if you like. See p. 258.
- **Stocking Island** (the Exumas) One of the finest white sandy beaches in The Bahamas lies off Elizabeth Harbour, the archipelago's main harbor, which is close to the little capital of George Town. You can reach Stocking Island easily by boat from Elizabeth Harbour, and the sands of this offshore island are rarely crowded; snorkelers and divers love to explore

its gin-clear waters. In addition to its beach of powdery white sand, the island is known for its blue holes, coral gardens, and undersea caves. See p. 265.

- **Cat Island** The white beaches ringing this island are pristine, opening onto crystal-clear waters and lined with coconut palms, palmettos, and casuarina trees—and best of all, you'll practically have the place to yourself. One of our favorite beaches here, near Old Bight, has a beautiful, lazy curve of white sand. Another fabulous one lies 5km (3 miles) north of New Bight, at the Fernandez Bay Village resort. This curvy beach is set against another backdrop of casuarinas and is unusually tranquil. Another good shoreline here is the long, sandy stretch that opens onto Hawk's Nest Resort & Marina on the southwestern side. None of the Cat Island beaches has any facilities (bring everything you need from your hotel), but they do offer peace, quiet, and seclusion. See "Cat Island," in chapter 11.

2 The Best Diving

- **New Providence Island** Many ships have sunk near Nassau in the past 300 years, and all the dive outfitters here know the most scenic wreck sites. Other underwater attractions are gardens of elkhorn coral and dozens of reefs packed with life. The most spectacular dive site is the **Shark Wall**, 16km (10 miles) off New Providence's southwest coast; it's blessed with incredible, colorful sea life and the healthiest coral offshore. You'll even get to swim with sharks (not as bait, of course). See p. 97.
- **Grand Bahama Island** The island is ringed with reefs, and dive sites are plentiful, including the **Wall**, the **Caves** (site of a long-ago disaster

known as Theo's Wreck), and **Treasure Reef**. Other popular dive sites include **Spit City** (yes, that's right), **Ben Blue Hole**, and the **Rose Garden** (no one knows how this one got its name). What makes Grand Bahama Island a cut above the others is the presence of a world-class dive operator, **UNEXSO** (the Underwater Explorer Society; ☎ **800/992-DIVE** [3483] or 242/373-1244; www.unexso.com). See p. 164.

- **Andros** Marine life abounds in the barrier reef off the coast of Andros, which is one of the world's largest and a famous destination for divers. The reef plunges 1,800m (5,906 ft.) to a narrow drop-off known as the

Tongue of the Ocean. You can also explore mysterious blue holes, formed when subterranean caves filled with seawater, causing their ceilings to collapse and expose clear, deep pools. See p. 185 and 195.

- **Bimini** Although Bimini is most famous for its game fishing, it boasts excellent diving, too. Five kilometers (3 miles) of offshore reefs attract millions of colorful fish. Even snorkelers can see black coral gardens, blue holes, and an odd configuration on the sea floor that is allegedly part of the lost continent of Atlantis (a fun legend, at any rate). Divers can check out the wreck of a motorized yacht, the *Sapona* (owned by Henry Ford), which sank in shallow waters off the coast in 1929. See p. 181.
- **Harbour Island** (Eleuthera) In addition to lovely coral and an array of colorful fish, divers can enjoy some unique experiences here, such as the **Current Cut**, an exciting underwater gully that carries you on a swiftly flowing underwater current for 10 minutes. Four wrecked ships also lie nearby, at depths of less than 12m (39 ft.), including a barge that was transporting the engine of a steam locomotive in 1865, reportedly after the American Confederacy sold it to raise cash for its war effort. See p. 243.
- **Long Island** (The Southern Bahamas) Snorkeling is spectacular on virtually all sides of this island. But experienced divers venturing into deeper waters offshore can visit underwater cages to feed swarms of mako, bull, and reef sharks. Dive sites abound, including the Arawak “green

hole,” a blue hole of incomprehensible depth. See p. 286.

- **Lucayan National Park** This park on Grand Bahama Island is the site of a 9.5km-long (6-mile) underground freshwater cave system, the longest of its type in the world. The largest cave contains spiral staircases that lead visitors into a freshwater world inhabited by shrimp, mosquito fish, fruit bats, freshwater eels, and a species of crustacean (*Spelionectes lucayensis*) that has never been documented elsewhere. On the 16-hectare (40-acre) preserve are examples of the island’s five ecosystems—pine forests, rocky coppice, mangrove swamps, white-land coppice, and sand dunes. Pause to sunbathe on a lovely stretch of sandy beach or hike along paths accented by orchids, hummingbirds, and barn owls. See p. 166.
- **Pelican Cays Land and Sea Park** Known for its undersea caves, seemingly endless coral reefs, and abundant plant and marine life, this park, 13km (8 miles) north of Cherokee Sound at Great Abaco Island, is a highlight for scuba divers. See p. 205.
- **Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park** A major attraction, this park is the first of its kind anywhere on the planet. The 35km-long (22-mile), 13km-wide (8-mile) natural preserve attracts scuba divers to its 453 sq. km (175 sq. miles) of sea gardens with spectacular reefs, flora, and fauna. Inaugurated in 1958, it lies some 35km (22 miles) northwest of Staniel Cay and 64km (40 miles) southeast of Nassau; it’s only accessible by boat. See p. 272.

3 The Best Snorkeling

- **New Providence and Paradise islands** The waters that ring densely populated New Providence Island and nearby Paradise Island are

easy to explore. Most people head for the **Rose Island Reefs**, the **Gambier Deep Reef**, the **Booby Rock Channel**, the **Goulding Reef Cays**, and

some easily seen, well-known underwater wrecks that lie in shallow water. Virtually every hotel on the island offers equipment and can book you onto a snorkel cruise to sites farther offshore. See p. 96 and 132.

- **Grand Bahama Island** Resort hotels can hook you up with snorkeling excursions, such as the ones offered by **Ocean Motion Water Sports Ltd.** (☎ 242/374-2425; www.oceanmotionbahamas.com), the best snorkeling outfitter, which can also connect you with a number of other watersports, from banana-boating to water-skiing. The clear water around Grand Bahama is wonderful for snorkeling because it has a rich marine life. Snorkelers are fond of exploring **Ben's Cave**, a stunning cavern that's part of Lucayan Caves, as well as the coral beds at places like **Silver Point Reef** and **Gold Rock**. See p. 164.
- **Bimini** Snorkelers are enthralled with the black coral gardens that are easily accessible from shore and the colorful marine life around the island. Sometimes when conditions are right, snorkelers can frolic with a pod of spotted dolphins. Off North Bimini, snorkelers are attracted to a cluster of huge flat rocks that jut from 6 to 9m (20–30 ft.) out of the water at **Paradise Point**. The most imaginative snorkelers claim that these rocks, which seem hand-hewn, were part of a road system that once traversed the lost continent of Atlantis. See p. 181.
- **Long Island** (The Southern Bahamas) Shallow bays and sandy beaches offer many possibilities for snorkeling, and the staffs at both major resorts will direct you to the finest conditions near their stretches of beach. The island's southern end is especially dramatic because of its unique sea cliffs. Many east-coast beach coves also offer fantastic snorkeling opportunities. See p. 286.
- **Elbow Cay** With its 209km (130-mile) string of beautiful cays and some of The Bahamas' best beaches, the Abacos are ideal for snorkeling, especially in the waters off **Elbow Cay**. Visibility is often excellent because the cay lies close to the Gulf Stream's cleansing waters. **Mermaid Beach**, a particularly colorful reef, is another favorite. **Froggies Out Island Adventures** (☎ 242/366-0431; www.froggiesabaco.com) provides equipment and the best snorkeling advice. See p. 207.
- **Stocking Island** George Town is the capital of the Exumas, which is celebrated for its crystal-clear waters so beloved by yachties. From George Town, Stocking Island lies across Elizabeth Harbour, which is only 1.6km (1 mile) away. Stocking Island is a long, thin barrier island that attracts snorkelers who explore its blue holes (ocean pools of fresh water floating on heavier saltwater). The island is also ringed with undersea caves and coral gardens in stunning colors. You'll find that Stocking Island has some of the Southern Bahamas's most gorgeous beaches. See p. 265.
- **San Salvador** Following in the wake of Columbus, snorkelers find a rich paradise on this relatively undiscovered island, with its unspoiled, unpopulated kilometers of beaches ideal for swimming, shelling, and close-in snorkeling (snorkeling close to shore). A week's stay is enough time to become acquainted with only some of the possibilities, including **Bamboo Point**, **Fernandez Bay**, and **Long Bay**, all within a few kilometers of Cockburn (the main village) on the island's west side. At San Salvador's southern tip are some of our favorite places for snorkeling, **Sandy Point** and nearby **Grotto Bay**. See chapter 11.

4 The Best Fishing

- **New Providence Island** The waters around New Providence teem with game fish. In-the-know fishermen long ago learned the best months to pursue their catch: November to February for wahoo found in the reefs, June and July for blue marlin, and May to August for the oceanic bonito and blackfin tuna. Nassau, in particular, is ideal for sportfishing. Most boat charters allow passengers to start fishing within 15 minutes after leaving the dock. The best outfitter is **Born Free Charters** (☎ 242/393-4144); anchoring and bottom-fishing are also options. See p. 95.
- **Grand Bahama Island** The tropical waters along Grand Bahama lure anglers in search of “the big one” because its waters are home to some of the biggest game fish on earth. Off the coast, the clear waters are good hunting grounds for snapper, grouper, yellowtail, wahoo, barracuda, and kingfish. Many fishermen catch dolphin (the mahimahi kind, not Flipper). And Deep Water Cay is a fishing hot spot. The best outfitter is **Reef Tours, Ltd.** (☎ 242/373-5880). See p. 162.
- **Green Turtle Cay** The deep-sea fishing possibilities off the coast of this cay draw anglers from all over the world. An abundance of giant game fish as well as tropical fish live in these beautiful waters. Both dedicated fisherman and more casual anglers come to the little island seeking yellowfin tuna, a few dolphinfish, and big-game wahoo, among other catches. Green Turtle Cay also has some of the best fishing guides in The Bahamas, weather-beaten men who’ve spent a lifetime fishing the surrounding waters. The best place to hook up with one of these guides is **Green Turtle Club** (☎ 242/365-4271). See p. 223.
- **Treasure Cay** In the Abacos, some of the best fishing grounds are in the sea bordering this remote island. At **Treasure Cay Marina** (☎ 242/365-8250), fishermen from all over the world hire experienced skippers to take them out in their search for barracuda, grouper, yellowtail, snapper, tuna, marlin, dolphinfish, and wahoo. Deep-sea, bottom-, and drift fishing are yours for the asking. The cay’s own bonefish flats are just a short boat cruise from the marina. See p. 218.
- **The Exumas** Anglers from all over America descend on this beautiful archipelago for deep-sea fishing or bottom-fishing. Fishermen hunt for kingfish, wahoo, dolphinfish, tuna, and bonito in the deepest waters off the coastline. Many visitors also fly here just to go bonefishing. Among other outfitters who can hook you up with fishing outings is **Club Peace & Plenty** (☎ 800/525-2210 or 242/336-2551), which rents the necessary equipment and can arrange for experienced guides to accompany you. See p. 263.

5 The Best Sailing

- **Marsh Harbour and Hope Town** (the Abacos) Known among yachters for their many anchorages, sheltered coves, and plentiful marine facilities, the Abacos are considered one of the most perfect sailing areas in the world. You can charter boats of all shapes and sizes for a week or longer, with or without a crew. See “The Active Vacation Planner,” in

chapter 3, and p. 204 and 211 in chapter 8.

- **The Exumas** Yachties head to these beautiful sailing waters to see some of the country's most dramatic coastal scenery. **The Family Island Regatta**, the most popular boating spectacle in The Bahamas, is held here annually. Most of the recreational boating happens in the government-protected **Exumas Cays Land and Sea Park**, an area of splendid sea gardens and rainbow-hued coral reefs that stretches south from Wax Cay to Conch Cay. You can rent motorboats at **Minns Water Sports** (☎ 242/336-3483) in George Town. See p. 256.
- **New Providence Island** Although sailing in the waters off New Providence isn't the equal of those yachting favorites the Exumas and the Abacos, boaters can still find many delights. More organized boating excursions are offered in New Providence than anywhere else in The Bahamas, especially by outfitters such as **Barefoot Sailing Cruises** (☎ 242/393-0820; www.barefootsailingcruises.com) and **Majestic Tours Ltd.** (☎ 242/322-2606). You can also choose from an array of sunset cruises, such as the ones **Flying Cloud** (☎ 242/363-4430) offers aboard its fleet of catamarans. The most popular—and the most scenic—trip is sailing to tranquil **Rose Island**, 13km (8 miles) east of the center of Nassau and reached after sailing past several small uninhabited cays. In addition, **Blue**

Lagoon Island, 4.8km (3 miles) northeast of Paradise Island, is a magnet for boaters, offering seven white-sand beaches with seaside hammocks. The drawback to this island, however, is that cruise-ship passengers flock here and many beach buffs like to come on day trips. See p. 94.

- **Grand Bahama Island** On the beautiful waters off this large island, you can go sailing aboard *Ocean Wonder* (☎ 242/373-5880), which is supposedly the world's largest twin-diesel-engine glass-bottom boat. This vessel offers the best and most panoramic picture of underwater life off the coast of Grand Bahama—a view most often reserved for scuba divers. You can also sail aboard *Bahama Mama*, a two-deck 22m catamaran, on its “Robinson Crusoe Beach Party.” The catamaran also sails at sunset on a booze cruise. **Superior Watersports** (☎ 242/373-7863; www.superiorwatersports.com) operates this catamaran. See p. 165.
- **Marsh Harbour** One of the finest anchorages in the Out Islands is in Marsh Harbour, called “The Boating Capital of The Bahamas.” **The Moorings** (☎ 888/952-8420 or 242/367-4000; www.moorings.com), one of the world's leading charter sailboat outfitters, rents boats to sail the Abacos' waters. Passengers discover white-sand beaches and snug anchorages on uninhabited cays. Sailing here is one of the great experiences of visiting The Bahamas. See p. 201.

6 The Best Golf Courses

- **Cable Beach** The main draw is the 18-hole **Cable Beach Golf Course** (☎ 242/677-4175; www.radisson-cablebeach.com/golf.html). The oldest golf course in The Bahamas, this par-71 green was the private retreat of

British expatriates in the 1930s. Today it's managed by a corporate namesake of Arnold Palmer and owned by Cable Beach casino marketers. Small ponds and water traps heighten the challenge, amid more

than 6,453 yards of well-maintained greens and fairways. See p. 96.

- **Paradise Island** Tom Weiskopf designed **Ocean Club Golf Club** (☎ 242/363-3000; www.oneandonlyresorts.com), an 18-hole, par-72 course, and it's a stunner. With challenges that include the world's largest sand trap and water hazards (mainly the Atlantic Ocean) on three sides, the course has received praise from Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player. For the best panoramic ocean view—good enough to take your mind off your game—play the par-3 14th hole. See p. 132.
- **Grand Lucaya, Grand Bahama Island** The Lucayan Country Club now boasts two separate golf courses. Designed by Robert Trent Jones, Jr., **The Reef Course** (☎ 242/373-2004; www.ourlucaya.com) opened in 2000. The Bahamian press called it a bit like a Scottish course, “but a lot

warmer.” The sandy course has links-style greens. the **Lucayan Course** (☎ 242/373-2003; www.ourlucaya.com), is a well-respected, renovated tree-lined course originally laid out in 1964. Both courses have 18 holes and a par of 72. Though they aren't immediately adjacent, shuttle buses carry golfers from one course to the other at frequent intervals. See p. 163.

- **The Exumas** At long last, the Southern Bahamas has a world-class golf course: The **Four Seasons Resort Emerald Bay Golf Club** (☎ 242/366-6800; www.fourseasons.com) opens onto Emerald Bay's waters. The par-72, 18-hole course was designed by Greg Norman, who created six oceanfront holes. The course is challenging yet not daunting, so it appeals to golfers of various skill levels. See p. 266.

7 The Best Tennis Facilities

- **Paradise Island** Well-heeled tennis buffs check into the **One&Only Ocean Club** (☎ 242/363-2501; www.oneandonlyresorts.com). Many visitors go there just for tennis, which can be played day or night on their nine Har-Tru courts. Guests booked into the club's cabanas and villas can practically roll out of bed onto the courts (tennis is free for them). Although beginners and intermediate players are welcome, the courts are often filled with first-class competitors. The tennis complex at **Atlantis**

(☎ 242/363-3000; www.atlantis.com) is more accessible to the general public, with six courts (three clay and three concrete), some lit for night games. See p. 120 and 132.

- **Grand Bahama Island** Freeport is another top choice for tennis buffs. The island's best tennis is at the **Ace Tennis Center** at the **Westin & Sheraton at Our Lucaya Resorts**, Royal Palm Way (☎ 242/350-5294), with four courts, including one that's grass. See p. 165.

8 The Best Honeymoon Resorts

- **Sandals Royal Bahamian Hotel & Spa** (Cable Beach, New Providence Island; ☎ 800/SANDALS or 242/327-6400; www.sandals.com) is one branch of a Jamaica-based chain of

couples-only, all-inclusive hotels that are favorites among honeymooners. This one is more upscale than many of its Jamaican counterparts and offers 27 secluded honeymoon suites

with semiprivate plunge pools. Staff members lend their experience and talent to on-site wedding celebrations; Sandals will provide everything from a preacher to flowers, as well as champagne and a cake. It's more expensive than most Sandals resorts, but you can usually get better prices than the official rack rates through a travel agent or a package deal. See p. 80.

- The **One&Only Ocean Club** (Paradise Island; ☎ 888/528-7157 in the U.S. only, or 242/363-2501; www.oneandonlyresorts.com) is elegant, low-key, low-rise, and exclusive. Guests include many older honeymoon couples. With waterfalls, fountains, reflecting pools, and a stone gazebo, its formal terraced gardens were inspired by the club's founder (an heir to the A&P fortune) and are The Bahamas' most impressive. At the center is a French cloister, with carvings from the 12th century. See p. 120.
- **Old Bahama Bay** (Grand Bahama Island; ☎ 800/444-9469 or 242/350-3500; www.oldbahamabay.com) is perfect for honeymooners seeking a hideaway in a boutique-style hotel with cottages adjacent to a marina. The casinos, entertainment, shopping, and dining of Freeport/Lucaya are 40km (25 miles) away, so it's ideal for quiet luxury, solitude, and romance. See p. 152.
- **Kamalame Cay** (Staniard Creek, Andros; ☎ 242/368-6281; www.kamalame.com) requires deep pockets; it's one of the most exclusive resorts in the Out Islands, a perfect honeymoon retreat for the couple wanting to escape casinos and resorts. With its 5km (3 miles) of white-sand beaches in both directions, this pocket of posh specializes in luxury and comfort. And don't worry if you've already taken your honeymoon; this is the perfect place to take a second one, or even a third. See p. 189.
- Romantics appreciate the **Green Turtle Club** (Green Turtle Cay, the Abacos; ☎ 242/365-4271; www.greenturtleclub.com) for its winning combination of yachting atmosphere and well-manicured comfort. It's small (31 rooms) and civilized in an understated way. The charming, clapboard-covered village of New Plymouth is nearby, accessible by motor launch or, even better, a 45-minute walk across windswept scrublands. See p. 221.
- **Abaco Inn** (Elbow Cay, The Abacos; ☎ 800/468-8799 or 242/366-0133; www.abacoinn.com) provides barefoot elegance and romance in the sands. This sophisticated little hideaway is one of the gems of the Abacos. Luxury villa suites with sunrise and sunset views are the way to go. You and your loved one should seek out a hammock in the gardens. See p. 208.
- **The Bluff House Beach Hotel** (Green Turtle Cay, the Abacos; ☎ 800/745-4911 or 242/365-4247; www.bluffhouse.com) was named for its location atop a 24m (79-ft.) cliff towering over a pink-sand beach. Its 4.8 hectares (12 acres) front the Sea of Abaco on one side and the harbor of White Sound on the other. The accommodations are very private, with a rustic, seafaring decor that has its own elegance. In addition to rooms, the hotel offers beach and hillside villas, and colonial suites with private balconies that overlook the water. See p. 220.
- **Pink Sands** (Harbour Island, Eleuthera; ☎ 800/407-4776 or 242/333-2030; www.pinksandsresort.com) allows for a spectacular getaway at an elite, 11-hectare (27-acre)

beachfront estate owned by Chris Blackwell, the founder of Island Records. Its location on a 5km (3-mile) stretch of private pink sand, sheltered by a barrier reef, is just one of its assets. You can ask for a bedroom that evokes an upscale bordello in Shanghai to put you in a romantic mood, and you can also enjoy the best meals on the island. See p. 245.

- **Stella Maris Resort Club** (Long Island, the Southern Bahamas; ☎ 800/426-0466, 242/338-2051,

or 954/359-8238; www.stellamarisresort.com) is right on the Atlantic, built on the grounds of an old plantation, and has become a Long Island social hub. Sailing is important here, as are diving and getting away from it all. Many of the guests hail from Germany, lending the place a European flair. The sleepy island itself is one of The Bahamas' most beautiful, and honeymooners fit into the grand scheme of things perfectly. See p. 288.

9 The Best Family Vacations

- A family could spend their entire vacation at **Sheraton Cable Beach Resort** (Cable Beach, New Providence Island; ☎ 800/325-3535 or 242/327-6000; www.sheraton.com). On the grounds of this vast resort is a pool area that features the most lavish artificial waterfall this side of Tahiti; a health club at the nearby Crystal Palace that welcomes guests and their children; Camp Junkanoo, with supervised play for kids of ages 3 through 12; and a long list of in-house activities that includes dancing lessons. Major changes and redevelopment are planned. See p. 82.
- **Atlantis Paradise Island Resort & Casino** (Paradise Island; ☎ 800/ATLANTIS [285-2684] in the U.S., or 242/363-3000; www.atlantis.com) is one of the world's largest hotel complexes, with endless rows of shops and watersports galore. Both children and adults will enjoy the 5.6-hectare (14-acre) sea world with water slides, a lagoon, white sandy beaches, and underground grottoes, plus an underwater viewing tunnel and 240m (787 ft.) of cascading waterfalls. Its children's menus and innovative, creative

children's programs are the best in The Bahamas and perhaps even in the Caribbean. See p. 116.

- **Best Western Castaways Resort & Suites** (Grand Bahama Island; ☎ 800/780-7234 in the U.S., or 242/352-6682; www.bestwestern.com) is a good choice for families on a budget. The pagoda-capped lobby is set a very short walk from the ice-cream stands, souvenir shops, and fountains of the International Bazaar. Children under 12 stay free, and the in-house lounge presents limbo and fire-eating shows several evenings a month. The hotel also offers a babysitting service and a free shuttle to Williams Town Beach. See p. 143.
- **Regatta Point** (George Town, Great Exuma; ☎ 800/688-0309 in the U.S. or 242/336-2206; www.regattapointbahamas.com) offers efficiency apartments at moderate prices. On a palm-grove cay, it's family-friendly and has its own little beach. Bikes are available and Sunfish boats can be rented. There's also a grocery store nearby where you can pick up supplies. Many units are suitable for families of four or five. See p. 263.

10 The Best Places to Get Away from It All

- **Green Turtle Club** (Green Turtle Cay, the Abacos; ☎ 242/365-4271; www.greenturtleclub.com), secluded and private, is a sailing retreat that consists of tasteful one- to three-bedroom villas with full kitchens. It opens onto a small private beach with a 35-slip marina, which is one of the archipelago's most complete yachting facilities. Many rooms open to the pool, and the dining room is decorated in Queen Anne style. See p. 221.
- **Rock House Hotel** (Harbour Island, off the coast of Eleuthera; ☎ 242/333-2053; www.rockhousebahamas.com) is a glamorous and stylish inn—really, a glorified B&B. This posh little hideaway is drawing more and more of the glitterati to its shores. Set on a low bluff above the harbor, it is tranquillity itself. No one will find you if you decide to hide out in its whimsically decorated bedrooms. See p. 246.
- **Club Med—Columbus Isle** (San Salvador, the Southern Bahamas; ☎ 800/CLUB-MED or 242/331-2000; www.clubmed.com): This was

the first large resort to be built on one of The Bahamas' most isolated islands, site of Columbus's first landfall in the New World. It's unusually luxurious, and unusually isolated, for a Club Med, and it occupies a gorgeous beach. The sheer difficulty of reaching it adds to the get-away-from-it-all mystique. See p. 281.

- **Fernandez Bay Village's** (Cat Island, the Southern Bahamas; ☎ 800/940-1905, 242/342-2018, or 954/474-4821; www.fernandezbayvillage.com) dozen stone-and-timber villas are the closest thing to urban congestion Cat Island ever sees. There's a funky, thatch-roofed beach bar that'll make you feel like you're in the South Pacific—a great place to enjoy a cold beer each afternoon after you leave the stunning sands and turquoise waters behind for the day. There's only one phone at the entire resort, and your bathroom shower will probably open to a view of the sky. See p. 277.

11 The Best Restaurants

- **Sun and . . .** (Nassau, New Providence Island; ☎ 242/393-1205) has made a comeback after being closed for many years. Once again, it is the leading independent choice on New Providence, serving a finely honed international cuisine. It's a throwback to Nassau in its grand heyday. Originally built in the 1930s as a private residence, it lies in an upscale residential neighborhood east of Nassau's center. See p. 86.
- **Moso** (in the Wyndham Nassau Resort, Cable Beach, New Providence Island; ☎ 242/327-6200) is the island's best Asian restaurant. Its

well-trained staff has learned the secrets of the cuisines of the Far East, and they dispense an array of some of the best-known and tastiest dishes, including teriyaki specialties. See p. 90.

- **Nobu** (Atlantis, Paradise Island; ☎ 242/363-3000) brings a member of this celebrated chain to The Bahamas. It's the island's most-talked-about—and arguably its best, attracting a string of celebrities. The setting is glamorous, and the cuisine is top-rated, prepared with either market-fresh ingredients or exotic imported ingredients. See p. 128.

- **Dune** (in the One&Only Ocean Club, Paradise Island; ☎ 242/363-2501, ext. 64739) is the most cutting-edge restaurant in Paradise Island and Nassau. It's the creation of French-born restaurant guru Jean-Georges Vongerichten, the moving force behind several of New York City's top dining spots. Every dish served here is something special—from shrimp dusted with orange powder to chicken and coconut milk soup with shiitake cakes. See p. 127.
- **Bahamian Club** (Paradise Island; ☎ 242/363-3000), a notch down from the superb Dune, is still one of The Bahamas' leading restaurants and our favorite at the sprawling mega-resort of Atlantis. Strictly upscale, it presents superb French and international cuisine against a backdrop evoking the British Colonial era. See p. 125.
- Head to **Mangoes Restaurant** (Marsh Harbour, the Abacos; ☎ 242/367-2957) for the best and most authentic Bahamian food in the Abaco chain. Visiting yachties and locals flock to this welcoming spot for its fine cuisine. Order a conch burger for lunch and then return in the evening for the catch of the day—straight from the sea and grilled to your specifications. The namesake mango sauce really dresses up a plate of grilled pork tenderloin. See p. 203.
- **The Landing** (Harbour Island, Eleuthera; ☎ 242/333-2707; www.harbourislandlanding.com), an attractive restaurant at the ferry dock, has awakened Eleuthera's sleepy taste buds. Brenda Barry and daughter Tracy feed you well from a choice of international cuisines, often prepared from recipes gathered during their world travels. Under mature trees in their garden, you feast on delicious pasta dishes, freshly made gazpacho, pan-fried grouper, or warm duck salad. See p. 248.
- **Rock House Restaurant** (Harbour Island, Eleuthera; ☎ 242/333-2053; www.rockhousebahamas.com), in the Rock House Hotel on increasingly chic Harbour Island, serves superb international cuisine. Its hip bodega aura evokes Miami, but it's thoroughly grounded on the island. At lunch, you can get a rock lobster sandwich; at night, the chefs display their culinary prowess with an array of satisfying dishes. See p. 251.

12 The Best Nightlife

- **Cable Beach** has a lot more splash and excitement than Nassau, its neighbor on New Providence Island. Wandering around Cable Beach is also much safer than exploring Nassau's back streets at night. The main attraction is the **Wyndham Nassau Resort & Crystal Palace Casino** (☎ 242/327-6200; www.wyndhamnassauresort.com), with an 800-seat theater known for staging glitzy extravaganzas and a gaming room that will make you think you're smack-dab in the middle of Vegas. One of the largest casinos in the islands, the Crystal Palace features 750 slot machines, 51 blackjack tables, nine roulette wheels, seven craps tables, and a baccarat table (we think the Paradise Island casino has more class, though). Despite all the glitter, you can still find cozy bars and nooks throughout the resort, if you'd prefer a tranquil evening. See p. 112.
- **Paradise Island** provides the flashiest nightlife in all of The Bahamas, hands down. Not even nearby Nassau and Cable Beach can come close. Nearly all of the action takes place at the incredible **Atlantis Paradise**

Island Resort & Casino (☎ 242/363-3000; www.atlantis.com), where you'll find high rollers from Vegas and Atlantic City alongside grandmothers from Iowa who play the slots when the family isn't looking. It's all gloss, glitter, and showbiz, with good gambling (though savvy locals say your odds of beating the house are better in Vegas). For a quieter night out, you can also find intimate bars, discos, a comedy club, and lots more

in this sprawling behemoth of a hotel. See p. 135.

- **Lucaya**, on Grand Bahama Island, also offers gambling action that's less elaborate than the venues listed above. It happens on the Isle of Capri casino at the **Westin & Sheraton at Our Lucaya Resorts**, Royal Palm Way (☎ 877/OUR-LUCAYA or 242/373-1333; www.ourlucaya.com). The facility also operates a bar and restaurant. See p. 169.