

Chapter 1

Discovering the Best of The Bahamas

In This Chapter

- ▶ Finding the best beaches
 - ▶ Scoping out the top hideaways and resorts
 - ▶ Seeking the most exciting watersports
 - ▶ Checking out the best restaurants, nightlife, and shopping
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In The Bahamas, you can island-hop by boat or scuba dive along what some devotees believe are the remains of the lost continent of Atlantis. Or perhaps your idea of a perfect island vacation is to plunk yourself down on a pink-sand beach with a frosted drink in hand. Whether you're looking for adventure or relaxation — or a bit of both — this chapter points you to the best The Bahamas has to offer. Throughout the book, look for the “Best of the Best” icons that highlight our picks.

The Best Beaches

- ✓ **Cable Beach** (New Providence): This crescent-shaped, sandy, 6.5km (4-mile) strip of shoreline is even better than Paradise Island's Cabbage Beach, which is more crowded. The prime beachfront strip of Cable Beach came into prominence during the post-World War II boom on the island, and today the beach is a beehive of activities ranging from water-skiing to banana-boat rides. Cable Beach isn't always kid-safe, however — during the winter months waters are sometimes rough. See Chapter 13.
- ✓ **Cabbage Beach** (Paradise Island): The sandy strands of Paradise Island, across the waters from New Providence, are called Cabbage Beach (no one's quite sure how the beach got its name). Cabbage Beach is the showpiece of Paradise Island; a spectacular strip of sand running in front of the swanky Ocean Club Resort that's ideal for swimming, sunning, and watersports, such as Jet-Skiing and

parasailing. The big drawback to this beach is that it's overcrowded in winter. There's no admission charge, but non-guests may be charged to use the facilities of hotels along the beach. Cabbage Beach stretches for 3km (2 miles), rimming the north coast from the Atlantic lagoon all the way to the intimate Snorkeler's Cove. See Chapter 13.

- ✓ **Xanadu Beach** (Grand Bahama): In Samuel T. Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, Xanadu is an idyllic, exotic, and luxurious place, and so is this aptly named stretch of white sands. Xanadu Beach is located on the most populated sector of this sprawling island and is convenient to the resorts of Freeport and Lucaya. The surf is most often tranquil, and the white sands stretch for 1.6km (1 mile). During the winter, Xanadu Beach is crowded, but it's a year-round magnet, with kid-friendly waters from spring to fall. The best watersports on the island are here. See Chapter 17.
- ✓ **Tahiti Beach** (Elbow Cay): Think South Pacific in The Bahamas. Lying at the far southern end of remote Elbow Cay Island in the yachting haven of the Abacos, this relatively undiscovered beach is Paradise Found. After three days on this strip of white sands, you lose all sense of time and space, and may be tempted to devote the rest of your life to beachcombing. The sands of Tahiti Beach are set against a backdrop of thick walls of palm trees. See Chapter 19.
- ✓ **Treasure Cay Beach** (Treasure Cay): Tucked away on a remote island in the Abacos, Treasure Cay Beach is one of the best beaches in The Bahamas, or even the Caribbean. Treasure Cay Beach is so large — 5.5km (2½ miles) — that you never feel crowded, even during the high season. Nowhere else in the Abacos (or most anywhere else) can you find sand this soft and white. Unpolluted water in striking shades of blue and green washes up on this peaceful shore. See Chapter 21.
- ✓ **Pink Sand Beach** (Harbour Island): In our view, no beach in the Out Islands — or even in Nassau, Grand Bahama, or Paradise Island — tops this lovely strip of pink sands that stretches for a whopping 5km (3 miles). Swimming is idyllic year-round because the natural harbor is protected by reefs that break up the turbulent sea's waves. Going sunning in the morning is best because afternoon can be a bit shadowy. See Chapter 22.
- ✓ **Ten Bay Beach** (Eleuthera): These golden sands, lying just north of Savannah Sound, are waiting for your beach towel. Don't expect watersports kiosks, fast-food stands, and vendors pushing handi-crafts. Instead, expect relatively undiscovered sands opening onto generally tranquil waters. In the 1960s, this beach was one of the most fashionable in The Bahamas, but the exclusive clubs that once flourished here are long gone, leaving . . . well, the beach. See Chapter 23.

The Best Places to Get Away from It All

- ✓ **One&Only Ocean Club** (Paradise Island; ☎ 800-321-3000 or 242-363-2501): This hideaway is the most exclusive on New Providence and the adjoining Paradise Island. A true pocket of posh, the Ocean Club was once a private club owned by A&P billionaire Huntington Hartford, but today it's a glitzy sanctuary of elegance and charm. Surrounded by splendid terraced gardens, it offers a country-club ambience, prime beachfront, and gourmet dining. See Chapter 11.
- ✓ **Viva Wyndham Fortuna Beach** (Grand Bahama Island; ☎ 242-373-4000): Away from the hordes of Freeport or Lucaya, this resort hotel sits on 11 hectares (26 secluded acres) and opens onto one of the best white sandy beaches on the island. A stay at this hideaway on the water is like being in a world far removed from bustling Lucaya. Like an Italian version of Club Med. See Chapter 15.
- ✓ **Hope Town Hideaways** (Elbow Cay; ☎ 242-366-0224): This series of gingerbread villas lies across the harbor from where the ferryboats from Marsh Harbour arrive. The "hideaways" in this resort's name is apt. It is reached only by boat and lies on its own 11-acre site. The grounds are beautifully landscaped and some of the villas are large enough to sleep six guests comfortably. See Chapter 19.
- ✓ **Green Turtle Club & Marina** (Green Turtle Cay; ☎ 800-963-5450 or 242-365-4271): Boasting the most complete yachting facility in its archipelago, this resort is one of the most charming of the "in" spots. Green Turtle Club has some of the best fishing and diving facilities. The villas include kitchens, and standard rooms are decorated in the colonial style. Two small, white sandy beaches are within walking distance. See Chapter 20.
- ✓ **Treasure Cay Hotel Resort & Marina** (Treasure Cay; ☎ 800-327-1584 or 242-365-8801): Boaters, golfers, fishermen, divers, yachties, and just plain escapists retreat to this luxurious resort on remote Treasure Cay. This resort boasts 5.5km (3½ miles) of spectacular sandy beach, and guests stay in privately owned condos when the owners aren't using them. The standout attractions here are the superb 18-hole golf course and the 150-slip marina. See Chapter 21.
- ✓ **Pink Sands** (Harbour Island; ☎ 800-OUTPOST or 242-333-2030): Posh and sophisticated, this plush hideaway opens onto a 5km (3-mile) stretch of pink sandy beach sheltered by a barrier reef. This luxury resort features a main house and one- and two-bedroom villas spread across 10 hectares (25 acres) of property. This resort serves the best meals in Harbour Island. See Chapter 22.

- ✓ **Four Seasons Resort Great Exuma at Emerald Bay** (Exuma; ☎ 800-819-5053 or 242-366-6800): The grandest resort to open in the Out Islands, this 183-room resort is waking up this sleepy archipelago, whose tranquil waters are loved by yachties. At the Four Seasons' centerpiece is an 18-hole golf course designed by Greg Norman, and the resort's full-service spa and health club is also the finest in the Out Islands. See Chapter 24.
- ✓ **Club Med–Columbus Isle** (San Salvador; ☎ 800-CLUB-MED or 242-331-2000): One of the most remote — and luxurious — Club Meds in the Western Hemisphere opens onto one of the most pristine beaches in the southern Bahamas. This getaway attracts tennis buffs along with scuba divers, honeymooners, and escapists. Other enticements include the lavishly decorated public lounges and the supremely comfortable bedrooms. See Chapter 25.

The Best Honeymoon Resorts

- ✓ **Sandals Royal Bahamian Hotel** (New Providence; ☎ 800-SANDALS or 242-327-6400): If you're "any couple in love," you can receive the most lavish and catered honeymoon in New Providence or Paradise Island. The way to go, of course, is to book one of the 27 secluded honeymoon suites with semiprivate plunge pools. The staff handles on-site wedding celebrations, and you're supplied with everything from the minister to the flowers, not to mention champagne and a wedding cake. See Chapter 11.
- ✓ **Wyndham Nassau Resort & Crystal Palace Casino** (New Providence; ☎ 800-222-7466 or 242-327-6200): If you and your loved one want glitter and bright lights instead of romantic isolation, this mega-resort is for you. Honeymooners flock here for its wide array of drinking, dining, and gambling options. Of course, when it's time to put up the DO NOT DISTURB sign and retreat to a king-size bed, that's all right, too. Ask about honeymoon package deals. See Chapter 11.
- ✓ **Dunmore Beach Club** (Harbour Island; ☎ 800-891-3100 or 242-333-2200): The quintessential elegant hideaway. Dunmore Beach club stands on its own 3.2 hectares (8 acres) of landscaped rooms and opens onto the most beautiful beach in The Bahamas — and pink at that. You sleep in romantic cottages with private patios and can use the hot tubs in the units to get better acquainted with your mate. See Chapter 22.
- ✓ **One&Only Ocean Club** (Paradise Island; ☎ 800-321-3000 or 242-363-2501): On lush acres between the golf course and a white sandy beach, this resort is a chic — though costly — address. Ocean Club is a haven of tranquillity, with fine dining, formal gardens, luxury rooms and suites, and even reflecting pools that stretch toward a cloister assembled stone by stone from Europe. No staff on the island pampers honeymooners more, but if you

want to be left alone with your mate, the staff gently retreats. See Chapter 11.

- ✓ **Abaco Inn** (Elbow Cay; ☎ 800-468-8799 or 242-366-0133): For barefoot elegance in the sands and romance, this sophisticated little hideaway is one of the gems of the yachting haven known as the Abacos. Luxury villa suites with sunrise and sunset views are the way to go. If you and your loved one find a hammock in the gardens, the day is yours. See Chapter 19.
- ✓ **Bluff House Beach Hotel** (Green Turtle Cay; ☎ 800-745-4911 or 242-365-4247): This hotel, located in a romantic spot on a secluded beach, is an escapist's dream. The hotel has a nautical charm with British colonial overtones. The best honeymoon accommodations are the spacious suites, with cathedral ceilings and balconies overlooking the Sea of Abaco, and a beach nearby. The 4 hectares (10 acres) on which the hotel sits are some of the most desirable real estate in The Bahamas. See Chapter 20.
- ✓ **Pink Sands** (Harbour Island; ☎ 800-OUTPOST or 242-333-2030): This resort is the one place in all The Bahamas where we'd personally go for a honeymoon. Chris Blackwell, who brought reggae star Bob Marley to world attention, created the most sophisticated hideaway in the Out Islands. It opens onto the pink sands of one of the country's greatest beaches, which stretches for 5km (3 miles). The inn's luxurious accommodations are set on an 11-hectare (28-acre), beautifully landscaped estate. See Chapter 22.

The Best Family Resorts

- ✓ **Radisson Cable Beach Resort** (Cable Beach; ☎ 800-333-3333 or 242-327-6000): A well-organized kids' camp lures families to this sprawling 691-room resort, which opens onto some of the best sands along Cable Beach right outside Nassau. The resort's children's activities are the best organized on New Providence (though they're nowhere near the equal of Atlantis on Paradise Island). An added plus is that many of the bedrooms contain two double beds, making them suitable for families of four. Dining is no problem here because of the vast array of possibilities. See Chapter 11.
- ✓ **Atlantis Paradise Island Resort & Casino** (Paradise Island; ☎ 800-ATLANTIS or 242-363-3000): Imagine yourself and your kids washed up on the shores of the lost continent of Atlantis. The Bahamas don't offer any other choices that are more fun for a family vacation than this sprawling mega-resort, a true fantasy world that's nautical with a vengeance. The children's programs (for ages 4–12) are the most spectacular in the country. Better yet, kids can spend hours cavorting through a "sea world" of underground grottoes that sprawls across 5.7 hectares (14 acres) and includes aquariums, underwater viewing tunnels, and cascading waterfalls. See Chapter 11.

- ✓ **Ritz Beach Resort** (Lucaya; ☎ 242-373-9354): Think Disney on Grand Bahama Island. Surrounded by semi-tropical gardens, the Ritz is in the midst of all the fun, next door to a water park and the Pirates of The Bahamas Theme Park (all that's missing is Johnny Depp). Efficiencies, one-bedroom suites, or multi-level studio pent-houses with private pools are available to suit the needs of your family. See Chapter 15.
- ✓ **Lofty Fig Villas** (Marsh Harbour; ☎ 242-367-2681): This family-owned bungalow colony is for self-sufficient types who want more of a Robinson Crusoe holiday. Vacationing families meet like-minded people around the outdoor barbecue or the freshwater pool. Each bungalow comes with a fully equipped kitchen and a private screened-in porch. See Chapter 18.
- ✓ **Banyan Beach Club Resort** (Treasure Cay; ☎ 888-625-3060 or 242-365-8111): Right on a beach that's widely hailed as one of the world's top ten, this resort offers spacious condos that are well suited for families. All the condos come with complete kitchens, and you can get burgers and hot dogs served at the beach bar and grill. For larger families, two-bedroom accommodations with an additional sleeping area are available. See Chapter 21.
- ✓ **Four Seasons Resort Great Exuma at Emerald Bay** (Great Exuma; ☎ 800-819-5053 or 242-366-6800): This resort is the only major resort in the Exumas, or in all the southern Bahamas, that caters to families, and it does so exceedingly well with its well-organized children's programs. If your budget allows, book one of the idyllic beachfront properties that has one or two bedrooms. The array of activities, the great beaches, the wide variety of dining options, and the overall comfort make this resort a winning choice. See Chapter 24.

The Best Restaurants

- ✓ **Chez Willie** (Nassau; ☎ 242-322-5364): One of the most elegant and romantic restaurants in New Providence, Chez Willie recaptures some of the magic of Nassau in the 1940s during the heyday of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. The host, Willie Armstrong, is the epitome of graciousness, and the French and Bahamian cuisine is elegantly presented and beautifully prepared. See Chapter 12.
- ✓ **Sun and . . .** (Nassau; ☎ 242-393-1205): This restaurant, which serves Continental (mainly French) cuisine and seafood, is a Nassau classic with an overlay of British charm. The chef uses exceptional products along with a finely honed technique in the kitchen and is known for his to-die-for soufflés. See Chapter 12.
- ✓ **Sole Mare** (Cable Beach; ☎ 242-327-6200): The most elegant choice for dining on the beachfront strip outside Nassau also serves the finest Northern Italian cuisine on island. Candlelit tables

and a guitarist playing soft tunes add to its romantic allure. See Chapter 12.

- ✓ **Dune** (Paradise Island; ☎ 242-363-2501, ext. 64739): This elegant dining choice is located on the lobby level of the chic Ocean Club. French-born master chef and restaurant guru Jean-Georges Vongerichten created this fine dining experience. With its trendy décor and sweeping view of the ocean, Dune is a study in culinary classicism, where flavors, aromas, and textures are perfectly combined. See Chapter 12.
- ✓ **Bahamian Club** (Paradise Island; ☎ 242-363-3000): A notch down from the superb Dune, this strictly upscale establishment is one of the leading restaurants in The Bahamas and is our favorite at the sprawling mega-resort of Atlantis. It presents a superb French and international cuisine nightly against a backdrop that evokes the British colonial era. The restaurant serves the island's finest cuts of meats. See Chapter 12.
- ✓ **Rock House Restaurant** (Harbour Island; ☎ 242-333-2053): On the increasingly chic Harbour Island, the restaurant in the Rock House Hotel 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, but at night the chefs display their culinary prowess with an array of satisfying dishes. See Chapter 22.

The Best Diving

- ✓ **New Providence:** Right off the coast of Nassau lies a spectacular underwater world with many stunning dive sites that offer a panorama of rainbow-hued fish, large sponges, and a wide variety of coral reef life along with ocean holes, wrecks, old shipwrecks, caves, and cliffs. One of the greatest dive sites is Shark Wall, which is 16km (10 miles) off the coast of New Providence. Other good dive sites are Southwest Reef, Razorback, Booby Rock Reef, and Rose Island Reef.

The coastline of New Providence, called "the best-kept diving secret in The Bahamas," is home to some fascinating wrecks that you can explore in shallow water, including the *Mahoney* and the *Alcora*. The *Never Say Never Again* wreck was a backdrop for the James Bond film: A 34m (100-ft.) freighter, seized as a drug runner, was sunk by the film crew. Nearby, you can explore the remains of an airplane prop created for another Bond thriller, *Thunderball*. The best outfitter is **Bahama Divers** (☎ 242-393-5644). See Chapter 13.

- ✓ **Grand Bahama:** On Grand Bahama, you can hook up with **Underwater Explorer's Society** (UNEXSO; ☎ 800-992-DIVE or 242-373-1244), which is one of the premier dive outfitters in The Bahamas. Its escorted dives include a series of dramatic reef trips, shark dives, shipwreck dives, and even night dives. See Chapter 17.

- ✓ **Theo's Wreck** (Grand Bahama): This is one of the most famous wrecks in The Bahamas, and it lies off Freeport. The site is ideal for photo ops. In 1982, the 70m (230-ft.) freighter was deliberately sunk just to attract marine life. It succeeded: The wreck teems with sea turtles, moray eels, eagle rays, and horse-eyed jacks, among other creatures of the deep. For spur and groove coral beds, you can also explore other dive sites, including Gold Rock, Pygmy Caves, and Silver Point Reef. If you're an experienced diver, you can explore these sites independently; otherwise, hook up with the previously recommended UNEXSO. See Chapter 17.
- ✓ **Marsh Harbour:** You can explore the *Abacos Train Wreck* in 4.5 to 6m (15–20 ft.) of water. This wreck consists of two almost-intact locomotives lying on their sides. Another wreck in the area, *Adirondack*, also lies in shallow water some 3 to 7.5m (10–25 ft.) deep. Marsh Harbour is also the jumping-off point for the government-protected **Sea Preserve** and **Fowl Cay Land**, both teeming with sea life in shallow reefs. Divers have actually kissed barracudas here (not recommended!). Look for "The Towers," two coral towers rising 23m (75 ft.). The best outfitter is **Dive Abaco** (☎ 800-247-5338 or 242-367-2787). See Chapter 18.
- ✓ **Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park:** A major attraction of The Bahamas, this park, inaugurated in 1958, is the first of its kind in the world. 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. You can access it only by boat. See Chapter 24.
- ✓ **San Salvador:** Some of the best diving in the southern Bahamas centers around this remote island, which is the site of Riding Rock, a dive resort, and a Club Med. Some 40 well-preserved dive sites are no more than 45 minutes away by boat from either resort. You can experience *wall diving* here — diving amid stunning sea walls at sites where the coral reef drops steeply. The underwater photography is great here, and you can even arrange to night dive. The best outfitter is **Guanahani Dive Ltd.** (☎ 242-331-2631). See Chapter 25.

The Best Snorkeling

- ✓ **New Providence/Paradise Island:** Most of the big hotels and resorts at Cable Beach and on Paradise Island lend or rent snorkeling equipment. A number of intriguing sights await you, especially at Love Beach on New Providence. Also attracting snorkelers are such areas as Rose Island Reefs, Booby Rock Channel, the Goulding Reef Cays, and Gambier Deep Reef, plus some underwater wrecks lying in shallow water. **Bahamas Divers** (☎ 242-393-5644) can give you the most helpful advice on snorkeling possibilities. The company's branch on Paradise Island is located at the Sheraton Grand

Resort (☎ 242-393-8724). Also consider **Hartley's Undersea Walk** (☎ 242-393-8234), which allows you to walk through an underwater world. See Chapter 13.

- ✔ **Grand Bahama:** Resort hotels on island can hook you up with snorkeling excursions, such as the ones offered by **Ocean Motion Water Sports Ltd.** (☎ 242-374-2425), which is the best outfitter for snorkeling. In addition, the outlet can connect you with any 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 Chapter 17.
- ✔ **Elbow Cay:** With its 209km (130-mile) string of beautiful cays and some of the best beaches in The Bahamas, the Abacos are ideal for snorkeling, especially in the waters off Elbow Cay. Visibility is often great because the cay lies close to the cleansing waters of the Gulf Stream. Mermaid Beach, a particularly colorful reef, is a favorite. **Sea Horse Boat Rentals** (☎ 242-367-2513) provides equipment and the best snorkeling advice. See Chapter 19.
- ✔ **Green Turtle Cay:** Because the Abacos have one of the world's largest barrier reefs, the island chain — and especially Green Turtle Cay — is a snorkeler's delight. Some of the colorful reefs start at depths of just 1.5m (5 ft.). Immerse yourself in a world of schools of fish along with coral caverns, huge tube and barrel sponges, and fields of elk and staghorn coral. Snorkelers can contact **Green Turtle Divers** (☎ 242-365-4271) or **Brendal's Dive Center** (☎ 242-365-4411). See Chapter 20.
- ✔ **Stocking Island:** George Town is the capital of Exuma, which is celebrated for its crystal-clear waters so beloved by yachties. From George Town, Stocking Island lies across Elizabeth Harbour, which is only 1.5km (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 salt water). The island is also ringed with undersea caves and coral gardens in stunning colors. Stocking Island also has some of the most gorgeous white-sand beaches in the southern Bahamas. See Chapter 24.
- ✔ **San Salvador:** Following in the footsteps of Columbus, snorkelers find a rich paradise on this relatively undiscovered island, with its unpolluted and unpopulated kilometers and kilometers of beaches that are ideal for swimming, shelling, and close-in snorkeling. A week's stay is enough time to become acquainted only with the possibilities, including Bamboo Point, Fernandez Bay, and Long Bay, which are all within a few kilometers of Cockburn (the main settlement) on the western side of the island. At the southern tip of San Salvador is one of our favorite places for snorkeling, Sandy Point, and its satellite, Grotto Bay. See Chapter 25.

The Best Fishing

- ✓ **New Providence/Paradise Island:** The waters around New Providence are thick with game fish. In-the-know fishermen long ago learned the best months to pursue their catches: November through February for wahoo found in the reefs, June and July for blue marlin, and May through August for the oceanic bonito and blackfin tuna. Nassau is ideal for sportfishing. Most boat charters allow their passengers to start fishing within 15 minutes after leaving the dock. The best outfitter is **Born Free Charters** (☎ 242-393-4144), where anchoring and bottom-fishing are also options. See Chapter 13.
- ✓ **Grand Bahama:** Off the coast, the clear waters are good hunting grounds for snapper, grouper, yellowtail, wahoo, barracuda, and kingfish. The tropical waters along Grand Bahama lure anglers in search of “the big one” because the island is home to some of the biggest game fish on earth. Many fishermen catch dolphins (not the Flipper kind, though). And Deep Water Cay is a fishing hot spot. The best outfitter is **Reef Tours, Ltd.** (☎ 242-373-5880). See Chapter 17.
- ✓ **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 fishermen and more casual sportfishermen come to the little island, seeking yellowfin tuna, a few dolphinfish, and the big game wahoo, among other catches. Green Turtle Cay boasts 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 Chapter 20.
- ✓ **Treasure Cay:** In the Abacos, some of the best fishing grounds are in the sea bordering this remote island. At the **Treasure Cay Marina** (☎ 242-365-8250), fishermen from all over the world hire experienced skippers to take them out in their searches for barracuda, grouper, yellowtail, snapper, tuna, marlin, dolphinfish, and wahoo. Deep-sea, 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 Chapter 21.
- ✓ **Exuma:** Anglers from all over America descend on this beautiful archipelago for deep-sea or bottom-fishing. Fishermen hunt down kingfish, wahoo, dolphinfish, tuna, and bonito in the deepest waters off the coastline of the Exumas. Many visitors also fly here just to go bonefishing. Among other outfitters who can hook you up with fishing outings is **Club Peace & Plenty** (☎ 242-345-5555), which rents the necessary equipment and can arrange experienced guides to accompany you. See Chapter 24.

The Best Sailing

- ✓ **New Providence:** Although sailing in the waters off New Providence isn't the equal of yachting-favorites the Exumas and the Abacos, boaters can still find much to delight in. 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) and **Majestic Tours Ltd.** (☎ 242-322-2606). You can also choose from an array of sunset cruises, like the ones **Flying Cloud** (☎ 242-393-4430) offers, which feature its fleet of catamarans. The most popular — and the most scenic — trip is sailing to tranquil Rose Island, which is 13km (8 miles) east of the center of Nassau and is 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 because it offers seven white-sand beaches along with seaside hammocks. The drawback to this island, however, is that cruise-ship passengers flock here and many beach buffs come over on day trips. See Chapter 13.
- ✓ **Grand Bahama:** 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 boat offers the best and most panoramic view of under-life off the coast of Grand Bahama Island — a view most often reserved for scuba divers. You can also go sailing aboard *Bahama Mama*, a two-deck 22m (72-ft.) catamaran, on a Robinson Crusoe Beach Party. The catamaran also sails at sunset on a booze cruise. **Superior Watersports** (☎ 242-373-7863) operates this catamaran. See Chapter 17.
- ✓ **Marsh Harbour:** One of the finest anchorages in the Out Islands is found in Marsh Harbour, which is called "The Boating Capital of The Bahamas." **The Moorings** (☎ 888-952-8420 or 242-367-4000) is one of the leading charter sailboat outfitters in the world, renting boats to sail the waters of the Abacos. Passengers discover white sand beaches and snug anchorages on uninhabited cays. Sailing here is one of the great experiences of visiting The Bahamas. See Chapter 18.
- ✓ **Exuma:** Yachties flock to these beautiful sailing waters to see some of the most dramatic coastal scenery in The Bahamas. The National Family Island Regatta, the most popular boating spectacle in The Bahamas, is held here annually. Most recreational boating is 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 Chapter 24.

The Best Shopping

- ✓ **Nassau:** Nassau is home to more shops than anyplace else in The Bahamas. If you're seeking anything from a Swiss watch to British-made china, you can find it at one of the shops along Bay Street in the heart of Nassau. Some of the merchandise — but hardly all of it — sells at discounts that range from 30 to 50 percent. You can purchase a lot of the merchandise for the same price or lower in your hometown, so the wise shopper who knows his prices can make off with the bargain merchandise. Surprisingly, goods actually made in The Bahamas are hard to come by. If you're in the market for Bahamian handicrafts, you can stroll by the famous Straw Market in Nassau, but watch which items you pick up — that handicraft may have *MADE IN TAIWAN* stamped on it. See Chapter 13.
- ✓ **Grand Bahama:** The only island in The Bahamas to rival the shopping in Nassau is the **Freeport/Lucaya** area. Much of the same merchandise that's sold in New Providence — including international imports of china, perfume, crystal, gemstones, or watches — is also for sale here at virtually the same prices. We're drawn more to the **Port Lucaya Marketplace** these days than to the more famous **International Bazaar** at Freeport. The situation at both markets is very tricky. We've found merchandise 20 to 40 percent lower than Stateside prices displayed along with so-called "discounted" and "duty-free" products that were actually cheaper in our hometown. See Chapter 17.

The Best Nightlife

- ✓ **Cable Beach:** The partying crowd packs the bars and restaurants at the resorts along this beachfront strip at night. Most of the action is around the **Crystal Palace Casino** (☎ 242-327-6200) in the center of Cable Beach. This resort and casino obviously evoke Las Vegas and stand up well when compared to other glittering casinos in the Caribbean. See Chapter 13.
- ✓ **Paradise Island:** The most glamorous casino in The Bahamas is **Atlantis Paradise Island Resort** (☎ 242-363-3000), which is the largest casino in the Caribbean. When you tire of blackjack, you can also join the party at the resort's **Dragons Night Club** (see Chapter 13).
- ✓ **Grand Bahama:** Most of the after-dark diversions on this island spin around its casino: the **Isle of Capri Casino** at the Westin & Sheraton at Our Lucaya Resorts (☎ 242-373-1333). In winter, guests can catch periodic stage shows, which pack the house with Las Vegas-style revues. Another popular gathering place is **Count Basie Square** at the Port Lucaya Marketplace, where musicians perform live three nights a week. And did we mention that it's free? See Chapter 17 for more information about nightlife on Grand Bahama.