

globaltravelerusa.com | \$4.99 January/February 2022

Globility Global Traveler

BARCELONA p. 56
HONG KONG p. 61
HUDSON VALLEY p. 64
INDIANAPOLIS p. 54
NASHVILLE p. 60
SANTIAGO p. 48
SAUDI ARABIA p. 70
SEOUL p. 58
TURKS AND CAICOS p. 72

NOT JUST ANY PORT

Explore Porto's gems, from art and architecture to its famous wine. p. 68



Sweet Retreat

Take it easy in the tropical paradise of Turks and Caicos.

BY SUSAN B. BARNES

Island Vibe:

Grace Bay Beach (above), and (opposite page) paddleboarding, pools and Seven restaurant at Seven Stars Resort & Spa

PHOTOS: © JO ANN SNOVER
| DREAMSTIME.COM © SEVEN
STARS RESORT & SPA, GRACE
BAY BEACH

Lying under an umbrella, I watch the sunlight dance on the sea's varying shades of teal, turquoise and azure blue, beckoning me to join. As I walk toward the shoreline, I notice the water turns crystal-clear, effortlessly pushing itself onto the unbelievably soft powder-white sand. I waded in up to my knees, letting the water envelop me in its cool embrace. No other people are around to distract me; and when I close my eyes, I easily transport myself back to when my husband and I honeymooned on this Caribbean island 20 years ago.

When we chose Turks and Caicos for our honeymoon, few if any of our family and friends had heard of this island nation floating in the Atlantic Ocean. (Though it lies in the Atlantic, Turks and Caicos is considered a Caribbean destination.) Back then, only a handful of

resorts welcomed guests on the island of Providenciales — Provo to those in the know — or appeared in the pages of a travel magazine.

Pulling myself back to the present and refreshed from my dip in the ocean, I retreat to my spacious junior suite at Seven Stars Resort & Spa to prepare for the evening. This time I am distracted by the sun beginning to set, its golden light illuminating the ocean, all seven miles of Grace Bay Beach and the Seven Stars pool. A warm tropical breeze kisses my skin as I sit on my private balcony, reminding me to slow down and take time to soak in every bit of this paradise on Earth.

It's easy to take it easy in Provo, with its stretches of idyllic, sun-drenched beaches and laid-back island vibe. Though more than 40 small islands and cays comprise Turks and Caicos, only eight islands are inhabited by about 31,000 full-time residents, the majority of whom live and work in Provo. I don't know how they do it, but even with more than 1 million visitors every year, it somehow seems there's never a crowded or rushed feeling in Turks and Caicos.

Once you arrive in Provo, before you know it you're spending hour after hour lazing poolside or beachside under the sun, sipping frosty umbrella drinks and pondering your next plan of action, if indeed there is one. There's no rush to make any decisions on the



LODGING

Ambergris Cay

Hop a private plane to transfer from Provo to this private island retreat complete with one-bedroom beachfront suites, 5-star dining and total rest and relaxation.

Big Ambergris Cay
\$\$\$\$\$

The Palms Turks and Caicos

You'll feel like you're arriving at a friend's luxury home when you stay at this 72-suite hotel sitting on 12 acres on Grace Bay Beach.

Grace Bay Beach, Princess Drive, Providenciales
\$\$\$\$\$

Seven Stars Resort & Spa

This beachfront resort overlooks the sublime sands of Grace Bay Beach and its fiery sunsets. Luxurious accommodations ranging from junior to three-bedroom suites, exceptional dining and a revitalizing spa ensure you'll never want to leave.

Grace Bay Road, Grace Bay, Providenciales
\$\$\$\$\$

DINING

Coco Bistro

Dine on local dishes surrounded by a coconut grove right in the heart of Grace Bay. One signature dish to try: Conch 2 Ways with pineapple, lemon and hot pepper.

Grace Bay Road, Grace Bay, Providenciales
\$\$\$\$\$

Parallel 23

Savor Caribbean fusion cuisine served alfresco and under the stars or in an elegantly chic dining room. Tip: Order the Caesar salad for an unexpected culinary work of art.

The Palms Turks and Caicos, Grace Bay Beach, Princess Drive, Providenciales
\$\$\$\$\$

Seven

Chef Edwin Gallardo draws upon his culinary prowess, local seafood and his rooftop organic garden to create memorable dishes. The Tasting Room is a must for any foodie.

Seven Stars Resort & Spa, Grace Bay Road, Grace Bay, Providenciales
\$\$\$\$\$



Under the Sea:

A feeding hawksbill turtle draws the attention of angelfish.

PHOTO: © CONCHASDIVER | DREAMSTIME.COM

INFO TO GO

All international flights to Turks and Caicos arrive at the Providenciales International Airport. A handful of major airlines operate direct flights from Atlanta (ATL); Baltimore (BWI); Boston (BOS); Charlotte (CLT); Chicago (ORD); Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW); Fort Lauderdale (FLL); Houston (IAH); Miami (MIA); Minneapolis (MSP); New York (JFK); Orlando (MCO); Philadelphia (PHL); and Washington, D.C. (IAD). Car rentals are available on Provo, as are taxis and private cars. The official currency of the Turks and Caicos is the U.S. dollar, and a valid passport is required for entry.

island, aside from what time dinner will be. If you must pull yourself away from the beach or the oceanside pool, however, plenty of other things will keep you busy on and around Provo.

For those who love being in and on the water, welcome to paradise! Choose to go standup paddleboarding or float along in a clear kayak for a different, bird's-eye perspective of the island's waterways. Consider paddling in Mangrove Cay, a small, uninhabited island that's part of Princess Alexandra National Park on Provo. The bird life includes herons, egrets and pelicans, while underneath the crystal-clear water's surface you may spot conch, starfish, turtles, stingrays and more. It's easy to get lulled into relaxation here, the only sound that of birdsong and your paddle gliding through the water.

If the wind is blowing, as it often is in Provo, opt to go sailing, windsurfing or kiteboarding. After all, one of the spots considered best for these air-fueled sports lies off Long Bay Beach on the southeast side of Provo. You don't need to be a pro to go, either — lessons are available and will have you flying in no time.

Dive below the water's surface and you'll discover a whole other side of Provo and Turks and Caicos. If you have your snorkeling gear with you, simply stop at any of the beaches, don your gear and make a splash. A couple of snorkeling sites accessible right from the shore are the outer reef at Smith's Reef (down a dirt road) and Bight Reef, also known as Coral Gardens. Dive into Coral Gardens and you may spot sea

turtles and eagle rays, as well as colorful tropical fish like angelfish, triggerfish and parrotfish. It's no wonder Bight Reef proves one of the most popular snorkeling spots on the island. For even more snorkeling spots, check with tour operators who can share their favorites, and join them for an outing.

Scuba divers from around the world travel to the Turks and Caicos Barrier Reef, the third-largest in the world. The reef keeps the waters of Grace Bay tranquil and flat. If you're planning on diving, book underwater adventures ahead of time to ensure you can thoroughly explore dive sites that span about 70 miles of barrier reef and walls. Look for protected dive sites just off the coast of Provo in Princess Alexandra National Park, Northwest Point National Park and West Caicos Marine National Park.

Back on land, there are plenty of ways to keep busy, from an island tour with a local to birdwatching and checking species off your life list to horseback riding on the beach with Provo Ponies. Of course, you can always return to the beaches and pools, too.

All of this activity is sure to work up quite an appetite, and you're in luck in Provo. Even though it's a small island, it boasts quite an impressive dining scene, from fine dining to casual beachside spots. After a day of adventure, stop by Omar's Beach Hut, overlooking the water in the Five Cays district. Order a rum punch and split a plate of conch fritters to enjoy while recounting a fun-filled day and making plans for the next ... or even planning not to plan at all.