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Cruising The Abacos



Island Group - The Bahamas



By Shane McClellan

I spent seven months on *Guiding Light*, a Lagoon 410, exploring the Bahamas. Here are some of the highlights of the Abacos, Bahamas, island group.

On Grand Bahama Island, West End is one of the two best locations to make landfall. Here, there is an anchorage with protection from every direction except west, and then you can go into the marina. There is an immigration office to check into the country and the marina doesn't mind if you use the pool and bar afterwards.

Cruising The Abaco's Island Group Of The Bahamas

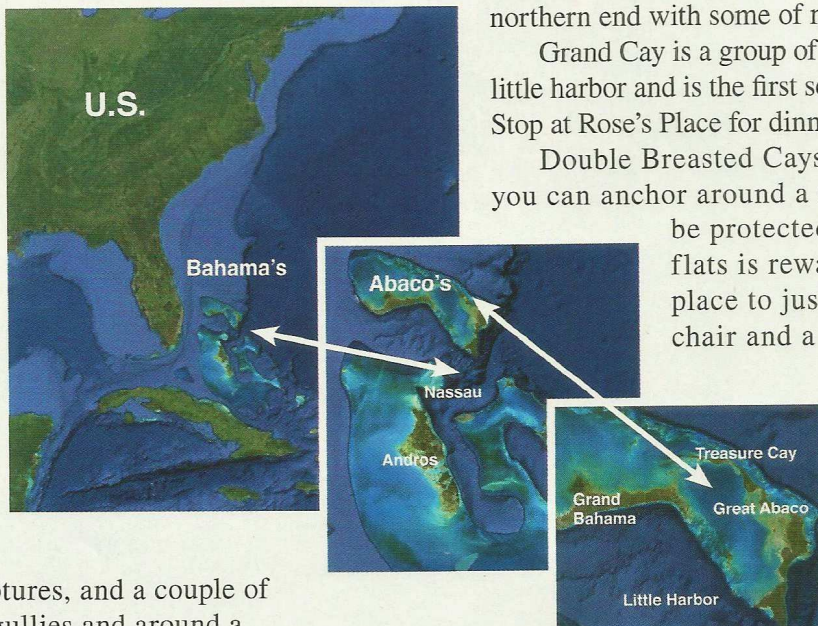
We have enough "youth." How about a fountain of "smart?"



Freeport is the second largest city in the Bahamas and is very industrial. It was established in 1955 by Wallace Groves as a government land grant with the expectation it would be economically developed and become a free trade zone.

The Lucaya waterway was built as a large ex-pat community, but many lots have not been developed, meaning you can tie your boat up in the canal. Nearby, the Garden of the Groves is a botanical garden with an aviary, café, waterfalls, chapel, sculptures, and a couple of miles of trails through gullies and around a pond. Also nearby is Port Lucaya Marketplace where you can walk among shops, eat at restaurants, and enjoy the entertainment.

The east end of the island is a national park with five different ecologies and an extensive underwater cave system.



Abacos Island

When you cruise the Sea of Abacos you are mostly visiting the chain of barrier islands to the east of Great Abacos Island and we are going to start at the northern end with some of my favorites.

Grand Cay is a group of islands forming a fantastic little harbor and is the first settlement you can explore. Stop at Rose's Place for dinner or a drink.

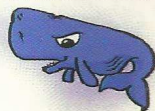
Double Breasted Cays are unique because you can anchor around a small sand flat and still be protected. A walk along the flats is rewarding and it is a great place to just relax with a beach chair and a book.

Allen-Pensacola Cay was two different islands until the '60s when a hurricane filled in the land between them. From the anchorage take the short hike to the "Signing Tree" where

people have left stuff decorated with their boat name.

Powell Cay is deserted and has a nice beach plus there is a small bluff to climb for a great view.

New Plymouth on Green Turtle Cay is a charming town of 450 and offers much to do, such as the Albert Lowe



Museum (a period house of a local sea captain), the Captain Roberts Center (combination of a small museum and nature center), the Sculpture Garden, and the old jail with stairs leading to the old gallows. When hungry, check out the Wrecking Tree (for a grouper sandwich), Sunsets (the place to be at night), and Emily's Blue Bee Bar (home of the famous Goombay Smash).

The Hub of Abacos is a 10-mile-long area where the majority of boats stay. Marsh Harbor, a town of 5000, is at the center and the place to provision and change crew. In order to get there you have to go through the Whale Cay Cut and should have local advice. Guana Cay is the first stop and if it is Sunday the place you want to be is Nipper's for the weekly pig roast.



On Great Abaco Island you will find the resort of Treasure Cay. This three-mile-long crescent shaped sandy beach is perfect. If you walk to the north end you can hunt for the plaque commemorating the first settlers at Carlton Point. The anchorage outside the marina is perfectly protected.

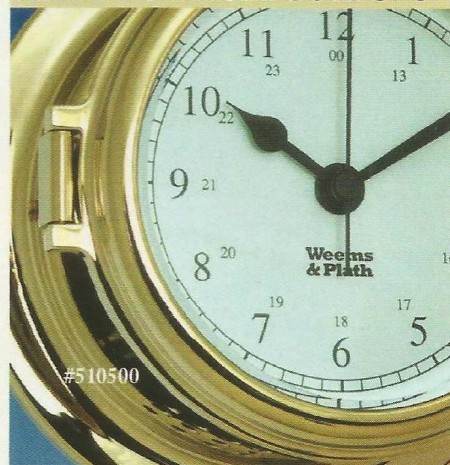
Man-O-War Cay is a community that has always revolved around boat building and repairs. You can

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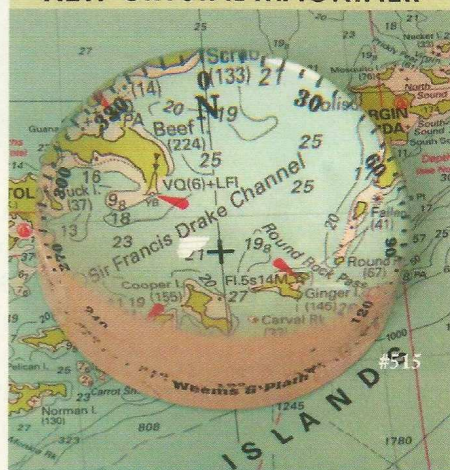
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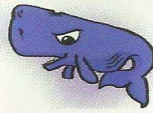


watch craftsmen build the very popular Albury 24 or see the railway used to haul boats out of the water. Albury Sail Shop was the community sail maker, but for the last 60 years and three generations they have been known for making canvas bags. Another shop to visit is Joe's Studio where you will see his half boat models and the locally made ceramics. Make sure you buy some sticky

buns from Lola and then walk up to the museum in the over 100-year-old house of a local boat builder. There is a cannon displayed which was recovered from the 1862 wreckage of the USS *Adirondack* on the windward side of the island, where you can snorkel.

The south end of the Hub is the perfect little settlement of Hope Town on Elbow Cay. Most people enjoy walking






around town gazing at the amazingly cute houses and poking into the shops. I recommend visiting the local museum and the iconic lighthouse built in 1864 (one of the last manually operated kerosene lighthouses). At night stop by Captain Jack's for a drink, dinner, and entertainment.

Even though the southern point in the Sea of Abacos is only 10-15 miles away, relatively few boats journey this way so you will get the feeling of getting away from it all with only an hour or two of travel. First we have to sail by Lubber's Quarter with the south end of Elbow Cay on the port side. This entire area is only about

6-7 feet deep and when the tide is out, Tahiti Beach is a favorite.

Over on the mainland are the ruins of a commercial dock used to load lumber and other resources, called Snake Cay. You can poke around ruins and snorkel shipwrecks or take a dinghy tour around the small island in a maze of mangroves, rocks, and islets.

Pelican Cays Land and Sea Park is a wonderful place to spend a day on the beach or under the water snorkeling.

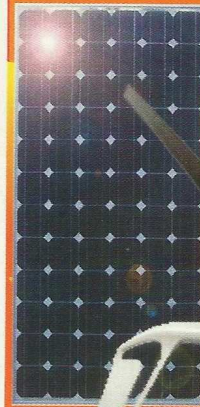
The south end of the Sea of Abacos is capped by Little Harbor where you will find Pete's Pub & Gallery. Pete has built a foundry and gallery displaying sculptures by his dad, him, and his son. 



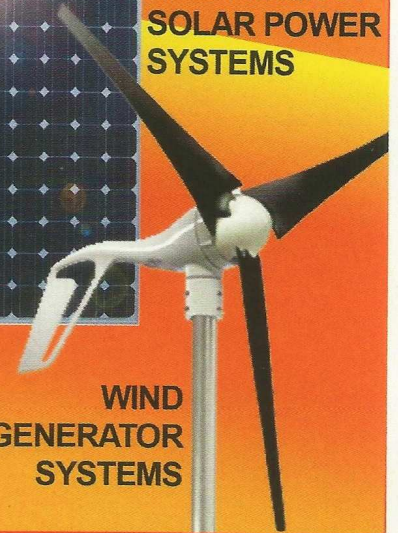
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