



# Abacos

TELEPHONE CODE: 242 / POPULATION: 16,700 / AREA: 650 SQ MILES

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## Best Beaches

- » Tahiti Beach, Elbow Cay (p123)
- » Treasure Cay Beach, Treasure Cay (p134)
- » Coco Bay, Green Turtle Cay (p128)
- » Gillam Bay Beach, Green Turtle Cay (p128)

## Best Places to Stay

- » Lofty Fig Villas, Marsh Harbour (p119)
- » Hope Town Harbour Lodge, Elbow Cay (p124)
- » Abaco Inn, Elbow Cay (p124)
- » Dolphin Beach Resort, Great Guana Cay (p127)

## Why Go?

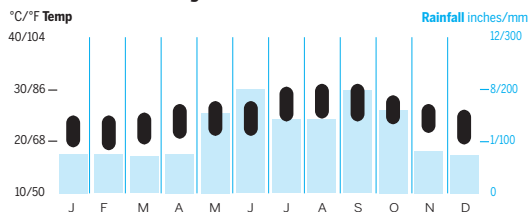
Yachting and the Abacos go together like wind and sail: this glittering crescent of islands and cays is known as the 'Sailing Capital of the World.'

The main island is 130-mile-long Abaco, whose main city, Marsh Harbour, is the prime launch pad for exploring the surrounding cays and reefs. The Loyalist Cays – Elbow, Great Guana, Man O' War and Green Turtle – beckon offshore just a short ferry ride away. Named after the 18th-century settlers who came here to avoid prosecution during the American Revolution, they're an inviting collection of clapboard homes, narrow streets and chock-a-block museums.

But it's not all fish and history. The Abacos may be most fondly known for their fantastic island bars, which make this lovely chain the best Bahamian spot for a yacht crawl.

## When to Go

### Green Turtle Cay



**December–February** High season means balmy weather and better nightlife, but higher prices.

**July** Regatta Week brings hundreds of yachties to the islands. Party time!

**August–November** Hurricane season brings things to a slowdown, with some hotels closing while others slash their prices.

## History

After decimating the Lucayan Indian population on 'Habacoa,' early Spanish explorers moved on to more fruitful lands. It was not until the American Revolution, when numerous Loyalists left the newly independent USA in the 1700s and settled in the Abacos, that a thriving population began.

Their names linger on today in quaint communities whose residents cherish their past and independence. On the eve of independence in 1972, Loyalist Abaconians petitioned the Queen to be made a British crown colony, separate from the Bahamas. Upon refusal, some even contemplated a revolution. Each cay still follows its own Protestant church, but the islanders share a strong Christian ethic.

The Loyalist settlers were mostly merchants and craftspeople involved in trading, boatbuilding and salvaging shipwrecks, and they became relatively wealthy.

This island group was severely affected by Hurricane Floyd in 1999 and Jeanne and Frances in 2004. However, rebuilding began immediately after the hurricanes passed, although roads remain potholed and many outlying villages still bear visible damage.

## National Parks & Reserves

The Abacos has four national parks and reserves: Pelican Cays Land & Sea Park (p126), which preserves the barrier islands and coral reefs south of Tilloo Cay; Tilloo Cay National Reserve (p126) is an 11-acre shoreline area, popular with birdwatchers; the Abaco National Park (p133), which protects the native habitat of the endangered Bahama parrot and other wildlife; and Black Sound Cay National Reserve (p244), which has mangrove habitats loved by birds.


## Getting There & Away


Most travelers to the Abacos fly into Marsh Harbour's International Airport, about 3 miles southeast of Marsh Harbour; others arrive on their own boats, or on the weekly mail boat from Nassau (see p121). For information on international flights to the Abacos, see p260. For information on flights from other islands in the Bahamas, see p263.


## Getting Around


You'll need your own transportation if you want to explore the main island outside of Marsh Harbour, where a car-, bicycle- and motorbike-rental agency is fortunately based (see p122). An excellent ferry service links the mainland and

the major cays, while boats can also be easily rented to explore further afield. Golf carts are used on all inhabited cays.

**FERRY Albury's Ferry Service** ( 242-367-3147; [www.alburysferry.com](http://www.alburysferry.com)) Operates scheduled daily water taxis from Marsh Harbour to Elbow Cay, Man O' War Cay and Great Guana Cay.

**Bahamas Ferries** ( 242-323-2166; [www.bahamasferries.com](http://www.bahamasferries.com); Nassau) Comfy passenger ferry makes the three-hour trip between Nassau and Sandy Point twice weekly; keep in mind that Sandy Point is 1½ hours from Marsh Harbour with no public transportation or rental car agencies.

**Green Turtle Ferry** ( 242-365-4166) Makes eight daily trips between the Treasure Cay dock (a few miles north of Treasure Cay town) and Green Turtle Cay, from 8:30am to 5pm.

**Pinder's Ferry** ( 242-365-2356) Sets off twice daily (one way \$40, one hour) from McLean's Town, Grand Bahama, for Crown Haven, Abaco and back.

## Marsh Harbour

POP 5300

Believe it or not, this one-stoplight town is the third-largest city in the Bahamas. Situated on a peninsula, quiet Marsh Harbour has worked to establish itself as a small tourism and boating center for visitors to the Abacos. It's a pleasant enough place, with most of the hotels and restaurants lining a small strip of road alongside the marina. Most visitors stop here to refuel, shop for groceries, get cash (seriously, DO take advantage of the ATM) or rest for a night or two before sailing on or hopping a ferry to the cays.



The ferry docks for Elbow Cay and Man O' War are at the eastern end of Bay St and the Great Guana Cay ferry stops beside the Conch Inn. For Treasure Cay, follow the Bootle Hwy 17 miles north from Marsh Harbour. The Green Turtle Cay ferry dock is a few miles further north off the Bootle.

## Sights

Marsh Harbour is a little lacking in terms of sights.

## Abaco Neem

PLANTATION

( 242-367-4117; [www.abaconeem.com](http://www.abaconeem.com); McKay Blvd, Marsh Harbour;  9am-5pm Mon-Sat) In Casuarina Point, 14 miles south of Marsh Harbour, a few enterprising Bahamians have coaxed the notoriously poor Abaconian soil into supporting a thriving organic neem plantation. The neem – a type of tree native