



# Biminis, Andros & Berry Islands

TELEPHONE CODE: 242 / POPULATION: 10,200 / AREA: 2321 SQ MILES

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## Best Places to Stay

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## Best Beaches

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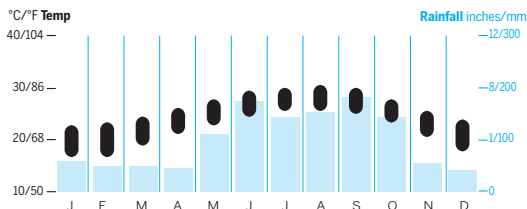
## Why Go?

No casinos. No nightclubs. No fancy cocktails. These three relatively undeveloped island groups on the western side of the Bahamas may not be glitzy, but they're absolute heaven for anglers, divers and explorers.

The Biminis, just 50 miles east of Miami along the edge of the Gulf Stream, are a world-famous big-game fishing destination. Come to commune with the ghost of Hemingway, who immortalized the Biminis in his novel *Islands in the Stream*, or to explore the famed Bimini Road – is it really the lost city of Atlantis? Andros, the Bahamas' largest but least densely populated island, has the world's third-largest barrier reef, vast bonefishing flats and miles of dense interior forest filled with mythical man-bird creatures. The tiny Berry Islands, barely more than specks on the map, are a playground for yachties. Spend days sailing from cay to cay without ever encountering a fellow human.

## When to Go

### AliceTown



**March & April**  
Prime bonefishing season in Andros, so book your guides early.

**June–August**  
Gulf Stream waters are calmest, making this Bimini's busiest time of year.

**December–February** While the rest of the Bahamas crawls with tourists, Bimini, Andros and the Berries slumber.

POP 2000

Itty-bitty Bimini has an outsized reputation. Its proximity to the Gulf Stream makes it one of the world's premier big-game



## Biminis, Andros & Berry Islands Highlights

- 1 Diving into the dizzying abyss of the **Tongue of the Ocean** off Andros (p107)
- 2 Hiking through the vast, unspoiled **Androsian forests**, searching for blue holes while avoiding the mythical chickcharnies (p108)
- 3 Channeling the spirit of Hemingway by angling for marlin off **Bimini** (p98)
- 4 Splashing and playing with wild dolphins in the Bimini seas at **Bill & Nowdla Keefe's Bimini Undersea** (p98)
- 5 Snorkeling above the **Bimini Road**, an underwater limestone formation claimed to be the lost city of Atlantis (p99)
- 6 Sailing from secluded cay to secluded cay in the tiny **Berry Islands** (p111)

fishing spots, attracting heavyweights like Ernest Hemingway and Howard Hughes since the early 20th century. During Prohibition, Bimini was a base for rum-runners heading to Florida, only 53 miles east. The combination of macho fishermen and lawless bootleggers gave Bimini a gritty, slightly Wild West feel, which it retains to this day. That may be changing though, as the new Bimini Bay Resort plans to turn the top half of North Bimini into luxury resorts and golf courses in the coming years – stay tuned.

The Biminis (as the islands are formally known) are composed of two main islands. The skinny island of North Bimini stretches for almost 7 miles before fanning out into a quilt of mangrove swamps and fishing flats. The western side is edged with silver-white sand, which becomes whiter and lovelier the further north you go. The main settlement is ragtag Alice Town, at the south end of the island. The King's Hwy, the only real road, runs straight north through the shabby hamlets of Bailey Town and Porgy Bay, all the way to the Bimini Bay Resort.

A five-minute water taxi ride away, less-developed South Bimini is home to the airport and a number of expat-owned homes. Here, wide swaths of scrub forest are fringed by glorious, nearly untouched beaches. South of South Bimini, a number of small cays dot the continental shelf, accessible only by private boat.

Although Bimini's still mainly a fisherman and yachtie spot, it's also one of the best (and most economical places) to dive. In recent years the island has attracted scores of divers to explore its reefs, sunken wrecks and dizzying drop-offs.

Don't come here expecting anything fancy – you won't find any Nassau-style megaresorts or flashy nightclubs. But if your idea of a good time is swapping big fish stories with the locals over a cold Kalik, Bimini's your place.

## History

Pirates like Henry Morgan thought the Biminis a splendid lair from which to pounce on treasure fleets, while the five founding families here in 1835 were licensed wreckers – 'rescuing' ships and their cargoes. Later Biminities tried the more honest occupation of sponging, which thrived until a decimating blight in the 1930s. Prohibition in the 1920s boosted the Biminis' economy (if not reputation)