



Home Office Sales: 326 First St. Annapolis, MD 21403 info@bayacht.com 410-263-2311
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Itinerary, Bahamas, Abaco Group out of Marsh Harbor.

This is a sample 1-week cruise itinerary. Shorter and longer cruises are also available.
The Boats: Fountaine Pajot Catamarans, 36-48'. Jeanneau Monohulls 39-45'
Boats available with a captain, or bare boat. Full provisioning available—shopping near by.



More information about the Abacos with a 7 day itinerary to follow.

Unique Paradise

The official Bahamas Tourism website describes the Abaco Islands as follows:

“The Abaco Islands are a sailing and boating universe. The major islands of this small archipelago are Great and Little Abaco, with the off-lying cays of Elbow Cay, Man-O-War Cay, Green Turtle Cay, Guana Cay, Stranger’s Cay, Umbrella Cay, and Walker’s Cay completing the string. Somewhere in this 120-mile necklace of islands and often uninhabited cays and beaches, you’re sure to find the ideal private spot for some chilled champagne and a good book.”



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The Abaco Islands' sheltered harbors create a haven for yachtsmen and the slumber-struck alike. Here, colonial towns are gems of New England architecture waiting for those who love to roam secluded villages and taste a bit of history. For the action and adventure prone, surfing, diving, snorkeling and spectacular fishing await, as well as plenty to interest the nature lover, such as the Abaco forest, flora and fauna -- even special resorts for the ecotourist."

So What's Different About This Destination?

Being so close to Florida, The Abacos are well-developed and significantly more affluent than the Windward Islands of the Caribbean. Smart-looking but not opulent vacation villas dot the low-lying Cays. Small settlements have casually sprung up on some. Marinas and docks line their shores. Facilities are readily available. The foliage on the Cays themselves have a dry, washed-out, desert look because of the lack of rain that actually lands on them, so don't come here expecting tropical rainforest and volcanic peaks.

The Abaco anchorages are certainly beautiful, as with any Caribbean destination, but they do not possess the unique charm of the anchorages in The Grenadines. As a result, it really does not matter to a great extent, what anchorage you are in - just that you are there enjoying yourself. Surprisingly, that's the beauty of the whole area that attracts so many retired cruisers who come and park in one spot for a long time to enjoy the quiet and the slow pace. If you plan to visit, start with an itinerary plan, deviate from it if you feel like it, but do not worry if you miss an anchorage - you will not be missing anything uniquely different from where you are.

In a lot of ways, it is an unusual place. The settlements that sprung up on the various Cays have most of the essential services, such as a liquor store, supermarket, marina, etc., however these services tend to be spread out around the settlement. There seems to be no well-defined centre of town. Vacation villas are



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everywhere. They appear to be owned by well-off Americans who visit a few times a year and rent the place out at other times. There is an obvious well-developed retirement community on the Cays.

Noticeably absent is a well-established restaurant, bar, and social scene. While there are a few, you do not get the impression from anybody that they are well frequented. It seems that retired villa owners and visiting yachtsmen prefer to eat in, which makes sense.

The Weather

The easterly Trade Winds are responsible for most of the weather in the area. It is further north than Miami, so you cannot expect extremely hot temperatures in winter. During the winter, daytime temperatures are in the mid-seventies and very pleasant. You can experience high-seventies from time to time, and low-seventies during unsettled weather. Nighttime temperatures are low-to-mid-sixties. Summer is substantially hotter, as the cooling effect of the Trade Winds is reduced.

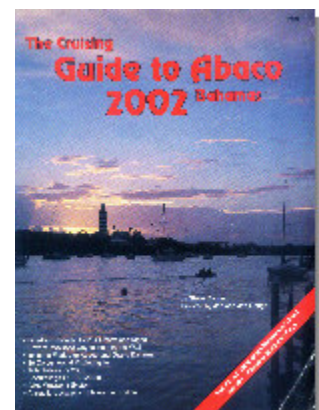
On a regular basis, a cold front from Florida sweeps through, disrupting the normal easterly weather patterns. The day before the front arrives, the wind swings to the west, meaning that you must vacate any westward-facing anchorages and find a comfortable place to “ride out” the front. Then, you experience a day of rain as the front passes through. Finally, the wind swings to the northeast and blows strong and cold for two days before returning to its normal easterly direction. Essentially, you lose four days when a front passes through.

Navigation and Passage Making

The charter company always provides a chart briefing that describes each of the passages and anchorages in detail, as well as any navigational hazards. The major concern with the Sea of Abaco is water depth, or the lack thereof, as it averages eight to ten feet. Several locations require careful attention in this regard, as depths of three to five feet are prevalent. A GPS is a necessity, as are carefully plotted waypoints. Some areas require that you pass through only during peak tide.

The Sea of Abaco is well-protected from all sides, so you will not experience huge ocean rollers. In winds over twenty knots, you might experience a foot of short chop, but nothing that will prevent you from sailing. Prevailing winds are the easterly Trade Winds in the 15 to 25 knot range. The wind will swing to the west before a passing cold front, then blow very hard for one or two days from the northeast after the front goes through.

The *Cruising Guide to Abaco* by Steve Dodge is one of the best cruising guides ever published. Now in its 13th year, this guide is essential for anyone visiting the area. It provides detailed charts and navigation instructions, complete with GPS waypoints.





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Suggested Itineraries

With the exception of Hope Town and Baker's Bay, the anchorages in the Abacos are not spectacularly unique. The Cays are quite similar, as are the settlements. What this means is that it doesn't really matter where you are - it's quiet, pretty, and you are in the Bahamas! So, if you miss a particular anchorage, your trip will not be ruined.

I have borrowed the suggested itinerary for a typical seven day cruise from *The Moorings*, only as a point of reference. Because of the extremely short distances between each anchorage, it is easy to alter the schedule and still include everything. There are three factors that might influence the order:

- Weather - a passing cold front can disrupt your schedule for up to four days.

The day before the cold front passes will present winds out of the west, meaning that some open westward-facing anchorages will not be tenable. You will have to adjust.

The day of the cold front will be wet and windy. You will want to be docked or anchored in a well-protected anchorage, one with reasonable shore attractions, as most watersports will not be possible.

The two days following the cold front will present strong northeasterly winds. The Whale passage might not be possible, which will interfere with your plans to visit Green Turtle Cay. You also do not want to be stranded at Green Turtle near the end of your trip, waiting for The Whale to settle down. Schedule Green Turtle near the beginning.

- Sunday - If you like a good gathering, the Sunday Pig Roast at *Nipper's* is a lot of fun. Consequently, you must be in Great Guana on that day.
- Wind Direction - You might choose to alter your schedule based on the wind direction of the day. Essentially, wake up and head to the next downwind destination.

Typical Seven Day Itinerary

The following itinerary is borrowed from *The Moorings*:

- Day 0 Airline schedules and routing could take you almost day to get to Marsh Harbor on Great Abaco. If you live on the eastern seaboard of the United States and have reasonably direct airline connections to Miami, it is possible to arrive in Marsh Harbor just after lunch. If so, this part of the trip can be made on Day 1 and you can avoid having to overnight in a local hotel.
- Day 1 From Marsh Harbor to Man-O-War Cay - After completing



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your briefings, sail across to Man-O-War Cay, Abaco's traditional boat building town. Wander through the quaint little village and enjoy the hospitality of the locals and their local table fare.

- Day 2 From Man-O-War to Great Guana Cay - Head north west to Fowl Cay Marine Park for a snorkeling stop. Continue on to Baker's Bay at the northern tip of Great Guana Cay and anchor in the turquoise, tree-lined cove to watch a sunset that rivals any.
- Day 3 From Great Guana Cay to Green Turtle Cay - Sail through Whale Cay Passage to New Plymouth on Green Turtle Cay and visit the museum and famous sculpture gardens. Overnight in nearby White Sound and enjoy dinner at *The Green Turtle Club*.
- Day 4 From Green Turtle to Treasure Cay - Sail north for an early snorkel stop at Manjack Cay, then continue on to dock for the night at Treasure Cay to sample the local seafood.
- Day 5 From Treasure Cay to Hope Town - On to Hope Town, home of the famous candy-striped lighthouse. Wonderful snorkeling can be found just a few yards off the ocean beach and the picturesque village boasts many of Abaco's best eateries.
- Day 6 From Hope Town to Little Harbor - A short sail south brings you to the underwater wonderland of Pelican Cays Land and Sea Park. Drop anchor off Sandy Cay for snorkeling and lunch. Continue south to Little Harbor and experience the unique ambience of *Pete's Pub*.
- Day 7 From Little Harbor to Elbow Cay - Sail through Lubbers Quarters and lunch anchored off Tahiti Beach. Spend the night docked in White Sound on Elbow Cay. Dine at *The Abaco Inn* with the Atlantic laid out before you.
- Final Morning From Elbow Cay to Marsh Harbor - Set sail for the 10 mile voyage to *The Moorings* base, arriving in time for de-briefing by noon.

Financial Planning



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The Bahamian Dollar is pegged to trade at par with the US dollar, so one Bahamian dollar is equivalent to one US dollar. They are both used universally and interchangeably, meaning that you can pay using a combination of currencies, and receive change in both. Near the end of your trip, you should pay close attention to unloading all Bahamian currency, as you will not be able to use it when you return home.

Marsh Harbor has numerous banks with ATM machines that are connected to the *Plus* and *Cirrus* networks, so you can withdraw local currency there. This method provides the most competitive exchange rates, and money is withdrawn from your local account at that rate. There are no ATMs on any of the Cays.

Surprisingly, not all restaurants accept credit cards, so it will be necessary to check first. As a result, you will find that you need to carry more cash with you than you might expect. Not to worry, this is common practice and the area is extremely safe.

The People

This was a strange one to figure out. For the most part, most of the people you see out and about are well-off retired Americans. There is virtually no youth here. Apart from the Albury clan who have spilled over from Man-O-War onto neighboring Cays, there is little evidence of indigenous black inhabitants. A few imported Haitian workers can be seen from time to time during the day, but they are ferried back to their residence on Great Abaco every evening.

The Florida sport fishing community makes its way across the Gulf Stream regularly, so you will be treated to a number of "good ole boys" with massive fishing rods and stories to match. The cruising community tends to be of the more affluent category, as the boats tend to be big and well-appointed. You will generally not see any "trailer parks" in the anchorages.

Given that the majority of the people are older, retired, well-off, and seeking the peace and quiet of their villas and yachts, you will not witness a striking social scene. It seems that people prefer to stick to themselves to enjoy their own peace and quiet.

Security Non-Concerns

One thing that is really impressive about the area is the obvious feeling of the lack of crime. Yes, it is *zero*. You can tell because nobody locks anything; dinghies, boats, cars, homes. People carry cash around because there is never any fear of being robbed. You never hear anybody even mention a concern over security. You feel safe.