

The Triple Stay: Turks and Caicos in 3 Days

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I'm a beach snob. Having grown up in the Philippines, my standards for white sand and turquoise waters are impossibly high. Don't get me wrong: After having traveled extensively in the Caribbean, I'm not going to deny that I've been impressed by what I've seen—but so far there's been no *playa* like home.

Until I visited Turks and Caicos.

A far cry from the grassy beaches (and not-so-serene waters) of the Hamptons or Maine or even Florida, Turks and Caicos offers the kind of tropical paradise that might as well put you in Southeast Asia's better regions. The sand is powdery to the touch. Cotton candy clouds abound even on unexceptional days. Snorkeling in the islands' majestically clear waters never disappoints—delivering sightings of sea turtles, moray eels, giant grouper, trumpetfish, and even several shipwrecks (if you're so inclined). And from January to April, visitors can enjoy encounters with humpback whales migrating from the north.

Not a fan of physical exertion? No desire to hobnob with fellow travelers on snorkeling or diving tours? Then charter a boat and park your weary self under an umbrella in one of Turks and Caicos' many secluded beaches, such as Half Moon Bay.



Turks and Caicos is the kind of paradise for vacationers who truly need to get away from it all.



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Beyond the more obvious pleasures of island life—the water activities, pristine beaches, and the daily rum punch—food is another good reason to visit, especially if you like a good mix of high and low.

And when it comes to variations on conch dishes—conch yourself out.



When you book a suite at The Beach House, you're guaranteed a spot at the beach—just look for the wooden placard with your room's name on it.

WHERE TO STAY

[The Beach House, Providenciales](#)

The Beach House in Provo (as Providenciales is affectionately called) is one of the few all-suite boutique hotels along Grace Bay beach. And this is where you want to be—at least if you don't want a party scene and prefer to stay in a quiet but conveniently-located hotel. It's best for families, couples, and solo travelers who need a respite from frenetic city living without the fuss and pretentiousness of a 24-hour on-call butler. (I like to think of the resort as a low-key luxury hotel that's big on friendly and "anti-precious" service, where guests actually get to know the staff by name). Out of the property's 21 suites, 16 face the ocean while the other five face the pool and the surrounding gardens. The Beach House prides itself as a hotel "where the rooms have no numbers." Instead, each one is given names such as "Dream" or "Driftwood." And every suite is guaranteed its own set of chaises at the beach—so you never have to worry about losing a much-needed umbrella. Another plus: Each suite comes with a living area, a small dining nook, and a kitchen replete with amenities. The Beach House will even do some grocery shopping for you beforehand, should you request it. (But I am, of course, a fan of chef Christian Rebolledo's work at the hotel's Kitchen 218 restaurant). As for wi-fi, it's free throughout the property, but on an island as beautiful as Turks and Caicos, you probably won't need it.



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The Beach House is an all-suite boutique hotel with 16 ocean-facing rooms.

[Alexandra Resort](#)

As hard as it is to believe, there's more to Turks and Caicos than its beaches. For one thing, there's Providenciales' topnotch Karl Litten-designed golf course: the [Provo Golf Club](#). So if working an 18-hole course is your thing, book one of Alexandra's several [golf packages](#)—or have them customize one for you.

[Grace Bay Club](#)

If you're looking for a family-friendly resort that won't compromise your need for luxury and more sophisticated pleasures, Grace Bay Club is your best bet. Its "Kids Town" program offers all kinds of [activities](#)—from catamaran trips and scuba lessons to kayak tours and "cave safaris." There are even on-site arts and crafts sessions. The best part? Parental participation is not required.

WHERE TO EAT

[Infiniti, Grace Bay Club](#)

Celebrity interior designer Thom Filicia (of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* fame) reimagined the resort's first restaurant, Anacaona. And Infiniti, its sleek incarnation, is the enhanced version of the original. Serving up Caribbean fare with a modern approach, the menu offers local seafood in addition to more established classics such as veal osso buco, yellow king fish tartare with shaved foie gras, and chilled avocado soup. But the real highlight is Infiniti's five-course lobster menu (a must, if you ask me) and the raw bar. And if you're there with someone special, arrange for a private dinner on the beach where you can dine under tiki torches away from the crowd, feet buried in the fine sand.



Infiniti is one of Turks and Caicos' more romantic restaurants. If you need it to be extra special, book a private dinner on the beach.

[The Thursday Fish Fry](#)

This one's for travelers who like to get down and sandy, experiencing island life through the eyes of a local. Every Thursday from 5:30pm to 9:30pm, residents and visitors get together on Bight Park just off the Gansevoort hotel to mingle, dance, and of course, eat. There's always a local band to amp up the crowd. And there are more than a dozen vendors serving island fare such as conch salad, fried (or grilled) fish with pepper sauce, lobster boil, and beyond—just the way the locals like it.

[Fire and Ice, Blue Haven Resort](#)

Fire and Ice is certainly one of the fancier restaurants in Turks and Caicos—and it's worth every penny. Executive chef Vitelio Reyes has certainly outdone himself with his [South American-inspired Caribbean menu](#). For instance, it's difficult to order the roast suckling pig without wanting the tiradito, seafood chupe, and escabeche to preface it.

[Da Conch Shack](#)

When the weather is great—like, say, every day—the open-air restaurant specializes in Turks and Caicos' unofficial national mollusk: the conch. The shack serves the humble sea snail in every possible way—from ceviches and fritters to salads and chowder. Of course, there are also local catches (such as grouper, lobster, and snapper) to be had.

WHAT TO SEE AND DO



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[Big Blue Eco Tour](#)

Big Blue’s snorkeling eco tour is highly regarded as one of the best in Turks and Caicos. Often catering to an intimate group (there’s never more than 10 per excursion) that lasts around three hours, the tour takes you to some of the islands’ most fascinating sights. On the agenda: Iguana Island—also known as Little Water Cay, a shipwreck, and Turks and Caicos’ coral reef, which is the third largest in the world. And to help keep the tropical fish colors extra bright, they serve rum punch on every trip. But if you’re not too keen on snorkeling, the travel outfitter also offers bike tours, diving, kite boarding, and a slew of other activities.

[Caicos Dream Tours Conch Cruise](#)

Think of Caicos Dream Tours as the island party boat. Unlike Big Blue’s decidedly more tame educational daytrip, this one is all about boisterous fun—definitely not something for misanthropes and Caribbean curmudgeons. There’s alcohol. There’s snorkeling. There’s singing (imagine Busy Signal’s “Dreams of Brighter Days” blasting on the sound system). And of course there’s plenty of conch. Well into the four-hour trip, crewmembers harvest a live conch for each passenger. The sea snails are then extracted and chopped before being mixed with minced onions and peppers as a ceviche. (You get sandwiches too). Wash this all down with beer or rum punch before disembarking. And yes, you get to keep your shell as a souvenir.



Half Moon Bay—a three-quarter-mile beach between two cays—is the last stop on Caicos Dream Tour’s Conch Cruise.