

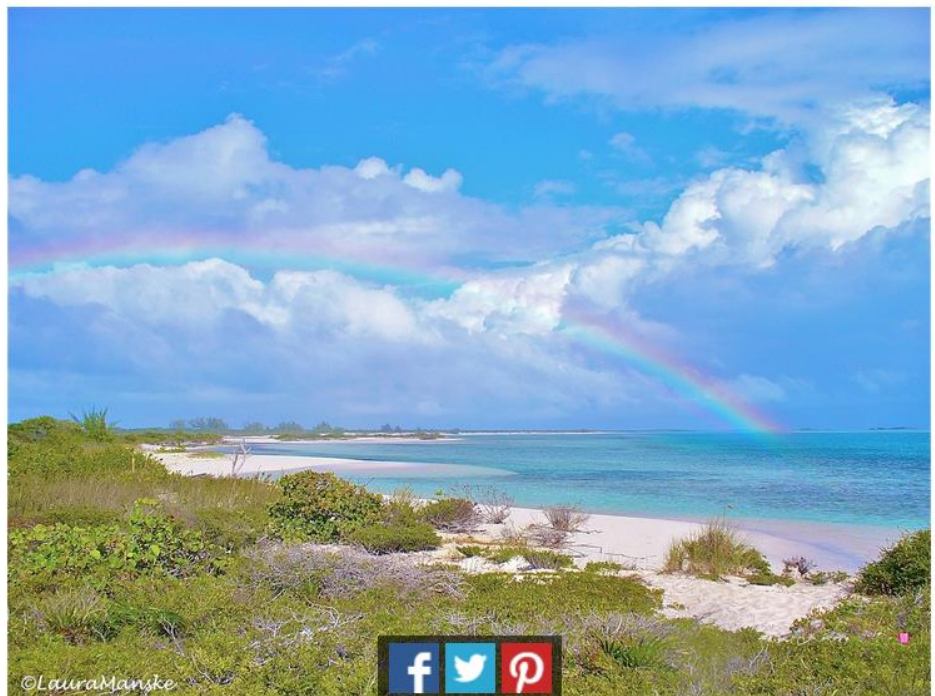
LIVING

# Pretty in Providenciales... Getaway to Island Time in the Turks & Caicos

JANUARY 30, 2014 – 2:00 PM – 0 COMMENTS



By LAURA MANSKE @lauramanske



Sometimes—especially when winter temps dip to a deep freeze, *like now*—fantasies of hot sun-drenched islands dance in our dreams. If you can swing a quick getaway, then the next question is: Where to warm up and chill out? One easy answer is peaceful, pristine Providenciales (photo above), the 38-square-mile paradise belonging to the Turks & Caicos Islands, a British Crown Colony, located in



Susan Magrino Agency  
352 Park Avenue South, 13 FL  
New York, NY 10010  
212.957.3005  
www.smapr.com

the Atlantic about 550 miles southeast of Miami. It's just a hop, skip, and jaunt away, yet off the beaten path. Several airlines schedule nonstop flights from the East and Southeast United States, so it may be possible for you to take off from your home turf after breakfast and take on the surf by lunch.

Vacationing in this under-the-radar oasis is invitingly uncomplicated in unexpected ways. For starters, its *official* currency is—surprise!—the U.S. dollar. And you pay no sales tax.

Plus, it is charmingly sleepy. There are no stoplights. Nor fast-food chain restaurants.

And Provo (its local nickname), while the most populated of the Turks & Caicos' eight inhabited isles, has only about 30,000 residents. In other words, it is blissfully crowd-free.

Here, 6 wake-up-call reasons to stretch your arms around Provo.



# M

MAGRINO

Susan Magrino Agency  
352 Park Avenue South, 13 FL  
New York, NY 10010  
212.957.3005  
www.smapr.com

## 1. GO BAREFOOT ON A MOST BEAUTIFUL BEACH

Grace Bay Beach—12 miles of cashmere-soft sand—gently slopes into H2O that shimmers in myriad hues of blue, which together paint a luminescent sea-canvas. This generously wide beach on Provo's 17-mile-long North coast is free and public, so no matter which accommodation you check into, you can always laze away your days on this shore. From the same spot (photo above), I once greeted the sunrise and then, a dozen or so hours later, gazed at the sunset simply by turning my head.



## 2. STEER A STRAIGHT LINE TO COMFY STAYS

Most hotels, villas, condos, restaurants, stores, and **bars** are dotted along Grace Bay Beach, which makes navigating your **way** around convenient. It is hard to get lost, even when renting a car, because there is one main highway, with just a few other service roads leading off and on it.

Lodgings are fashioned in all sizes and styles, from casual to posh. The latter describes the trendy, sophisticated **Gansevoort**, with its open-air-pavilion vinyasa flow yoga class and **spa** menu. All-inclusive **Beaches** is particularly popular with families—splashy-happy with its 45,000-square-foot waterpark; supervised kids' programs for toddlers to teens (who are treated to an adolescent-only disco called Liquid); and **Sesame Street** characters who cavort at breakfast.



Susan Magrino Agency  
352 Park Avenue South, 13 FL  
New York, NY 10010  
212.957.3005  
www.smapr.com

Lushly landscaped [Ocean Club](#) and [Ocean Club West](#) (photo above) are a 20-minute stroll apart. (A shuttle bus loops between them as well.) Guests who stay at one resort enjoy privileges at the other. These ultra-relaxing, all-suite properties, with large free-form pools, are spaciouly ideal for families and girlfriend getaways, because each unit is designed with enclosed balcony or porch, fully equipped kitchen, washer/dryer, living room, and dining [area](#). And many include multi-bedrooms. The low-key Cabana Bar at Ocean Club schedules a weekly roster of kick-it-up cuisine—such as an outdoor slow cooker that smokes mango-flavored ribs—and occasional seafood soirees lit with tiki torches on the sand. Its restaurants amply satisfy, too: the award-winning [Opus](#) at Ocean Club, with its roster of rums, snazzy grilled whole fish, and talented musicians who entertain under picturesque trees; and the *al fresco* [Seaside Café](#) at Ocean Club West, where the dishes are a yummy medley of Caribbean, East Indian, French, and Thai recipes. Well-run, with plenty of staff smiles, [Ocean Club Resorts](#) feels like a welcome tropical home away from home.

Elegant, all-suite [Grace Bay Club](#) also has two key areas: The Hotel (for guests ages 12 and up) and The Villas (for all ages), which orchestrate junior activities at its [Kids Town](#). Float in its stress-relieving infinity pool. Recharge at the Anani [Spa](#), with its Exotic Lime Ginger Salt Glow (exfoliation scrub) and Coconut Milk Ritual Wrap (skin-softening treatment). Relish its gourmet comfort food at [Krave](#) and the Carib-Euro fusion restaurant [Anacaona](#), where tables are tiered under open-air palapas. Cheers!



Susan Magrino Agency  
352 Park Avenue South, 13 FL  
New York, NY 10010  
212.957.3005  
www.smapr.com



### **3. SAVOR A TRANQUIL TERRAIN**

Many getaway islands boast majestic mountains and thick verdant jungles; Provo dazzles with a different sort of scenery. Its low undulating hills, blanketed with scrub and prickly pear cactus, may not at first seem dramatic, but soon you'll appreciate its singular horizon-line serenity that stirs soul-lifting contemplation. Visitors who return again and again often talk about being spellbound by Provo's landscape that is both calm and powerful, centering them and clearing their mind.

# M MAGRINO

Susan Magrino Agency  
352 Park Avenue South, 13 FL  
New York, NY 10010  
212.957.3005  
www.smapr.com



#### 4. UNCOVER A WORLD-CLASS WATER WORLD

Provo's allure goes beneath the sea's surface with dive sites, treasured by [Jacques Cousteau](#), that are among the very best anywhere. In places, the placid water allows visibility more than 100 feet. Its protected barrier reef, the length of Provo, features impressive vertical coral walls that attract kaleidoscopes of fish. Nearby, Northwest Point, West Caicos, and French Cay deliver reef sharks, stingrays, and sea turtles. Smiths Reef, rich with brain and fan coral, and Bights Reef, which has a marked underwater trail, are both in [Princess Alexandria's National Park](#). For dive excursions, Art Pickering's [Provo Turtle Divers](#) is a long-applauded expert provider, as is Fifi Kunz's [Caicos Adventures](#), which plans snorkeling trips to reefs and wrecks, and [Big Blue Unlimited](#), which also sets up kayaking and kiteboarding expeditions.

Sailboat and catamaran charters unfurl day trips to spy frolicking dolphins and explore uninhabited cays. A memorable time can be had on the sleek, 77-foot, gaff-rigged [Atabeyra](#) (photo above), run by Sun Charters, aboard which you can fulfill your sailor fantasies, by helping to hoist sails and helm the wheel, if you like. Or sit back and observe the restful azure expanse unfolding.



Susan Magrino Agency  
352 Park Avenue South, 13 FL  
New York, NY 10010  
212.957.3005  
www.smapr.com



## 5. GET WILD ABOUT ANIMALS

Accessible via charter boats or kayaks, [Little Water Cay](#) (photo above), aka [Iguana Island](#), is an islet that harbors hundreds of eye-catching rock iguanas, which are protected and studied by scientists. Meander on boardwalks through sandy areas and marshland as iguanas scurry and pose; cherish a revealing hour or two photographing these giant, quirky lizards in their natural habitat.

At [Chalk Sound National Park](#), an aquamarine lagoon at the south end of Provo, cast your attention on barracudas, lemon sharks, and bonefish, and marvel over flocks of fluttering herons, gulls, and terns. Camera at the ready again!

And horseback ride with [Provo Ponies](#), which lead excellent equine journeys along hushed dirt roads, trails, Long Bay Beach, and even into shallow ocean waves.

# M MAGRINO

Susan Magrino Agency  
352 Park Avenue South, 13 FL  
New York, NY 10010  
212.957.3005  
www.smapr.com



## 5. COOK UP A STEW OF CONCH FUN

A Caribbean diet staple, conch—a big spiral-shelled gastropod mollusk—is celebrated on Provo. That's not just an empty claim: Provo is home to the only place in the world that this seafood is farmed, the **Caicos Conch Farm**, which also offers an interesting tour of its grounds and a show-and-tell about the life-cycle of these creatures.

To chow down, head to the Blue Hills, a mostly residential **area**, where beachside *al fresco* **Da Conch Shack** (photo above) abides by the philosophy that food tastes better with your toes in the sand. At picnic tables, it serves tender cracked conch, delicious zingy ceviche, and Johnny fries (salted, spiced, and showered with black beans and local pepper gravy), along with much-talked-about **rum** fleets that the bartender is eager to describe in detail. What a wonderful **way** to spend a hang-loose afternoon! (Did you hear it's snowing back in the States?) Or go at night, when an ink-black sky is flung with twinkling stars. On Wednesdays after sundown, live music revs up.

This island even showcases an annual **Conch Festival**, now in its 10th year.

On Providenciales, quiet memories speak volumes.

For more vacation info, contact **Turks & Caicos Tourist Board**.