



# 7 days in The Caymans

In shipping circles, most people's knowledge of the Cayman Islands is limited to the name found underneath "George Town" as the port of registration on the stern of vessels. But these islands offer far more than just a name.

BY JOE PEARCE AND JEREMY CHANNON

**T**HE CAYMAN ISLANDS are a particularly well-known jurisdiction in yachting and shipping circles – but by name only. So what of the Cayman Islands themselves? Located south of Cuba and west of Jamaica, the islands were discovered in 1503 by Christopher Columbus, who originally named them "Las Tortugas" after the numerous sea turtles.

The country consists of three islands – Grand Cayman, Cayman Brac and Little Cayman – which are world famous among scuba divers. Grand Cayman is a popular day stopover for the large American-based cruise ships plying their trade between the Florida and South and Central American coastlines.

Those who visit generally return as the climate is pleasant and the people are warm and welcoming. The sparkling, warm crystal-clear waters combined with fantastic shallow reef coastline offer some world-class diving and snorkeling opportunities. Many popular sites are accessible directly off any of the numerous white sandy beaches.

## DAY 1 {GEORGE TOWN, GRAND CAYMAN}

Grand Cayman is the largest of the islands and the hub for business and tourist activities. The International Airport is located here, which offers connecting flights to both the sister islands of Little Cayman and Cayman Brac. Most yachts begin their trip here.

Yachts up to 150 feet can dock in George Town, or, alternatively, anchor just off town. Anchor zones are in sandy areas in 50 feet of water about 1,000 yards off shore. Use the tender to get in and out with no problem; journey times to and from the yacht are short.

After picking up the guests, relocate to Seven Mile Beach, just off George Town. Anchoring here overnight provides guests great access to all the hotels and beach bars. Tenders can zip in and out and land guests on beach locations in front of the Ritz-Carlton and Hyatt hotels without any problem. It's possible to dance the night away in Grand Cayman at the active nightspots, but be aware that on Saturdays everything shuts down at midnight. (Playing loud music and dancing is prohibited on Sunday, a day of rest and family activities.) A popular Friday night scene is drinks at the lobby bars at the Ritz-Carlton.

## DAY 2 {SEVEN MILE BEACH, GRAND CAYMAN}

More than 40 dive sites are located just off Seven Mile Beach and along the western shoreline. Easy diving is only minutes from the yacht. A shore agent can provide PADI-certified dive instructors and guides (if required) to help guests explore the underwater world.

An attraction is Boatswain's Beach, home of the Cayman Turtle Farm. The large park on the northwest tip of Grand Cayman is geared to both adults and children. Breeding tanks house the magnificent green sea turtles, which grow to weigh as much as 600 pounds and can live for more than 70 years. Touch tanks and snorkeling lagoons allow visitors to get up close and personal with the sea turtles.

## DAYS 3 & 4 {CAYMAN BRAC AND LITTLE CAYMAN}

After a couple of days in Grand Cayman, head to the Sister Islands – Cayman Brac and Little Cayman – 85 miles away. Your agent can obtain a rotation number from Customs in Grand Cayman that allows you to cruise all the Cayman Islands without having to clear in and out each time.

Both islands boast great dive sites and are very quiet and private.



Day 1: George Town

Bloody Bay Wall on the north shore of Little Cayman offers some of the most spectacular diving with more than 50 dive sites along a vertical drop of 6,000 feet. The water is so clear that you can see right into the deep.

Anchor overnight in the marine parks on either the west or north sides of the islands. Drop the hook only in clear, sandy areas.

Get a glimpse of local wildlife – Little Cayman has a resident indigenous Little Cayman Rock Iguana population estimated at 2,000. An entertaining activity for guests is to hire bicycles and to head out with fruit to feed them. The iguanas can generally be found at certain spots, known to the locals, along the roads. The iguanas themselves grow to a good three feet in length, but are not dangerous. Signs painted by local artists, erected in 1995, caution motorists to watch out for iguanas along the main coastal road.

## DAY 5 {NORTH SOUND, GRAND CAYMAN}

Once back on Grand Cayman, either return to anchorages on Seven Mile Beach or move around to the North Sound, where you can find Stingray City – which probably tops the list of must-do activities for any visitor to Grand Cayman. Stingray City is a shallow stretch of water located just inside the reef of North Sound where Cayman fishermen traditionally congregated to clean and gut their catch, attracting the stingrays. These days, regular meals come courtesy of visitors as much as the fishermen – the spoiled stingrays have been hand fed for more than 20 years now.

The North Sound is also the home of the largest protected saltwater lagoon in the world. Get the guests moving and having fun – the average 10-foot depth makes the lagoon ideal for wakeboarding, water skiing and tubing. Drop the jet skis and bring out the snorkel gear to give guests the perfect opportunity to explore the North Sound reef, which reaches to the surface (entry to the North Sound itself is only possible through the designated channels).

## DAY 6 {GEORGE TOWN, GRAND CAYMAN}

For the fishing enthusiast, deep sea fishing is a great option at this location. If you don't tow your own boat, an agent can arrange sportfishers and small center consoles that can be chartered with a captain for a perfect day or half-day out. Trips out to the 12 Mile Bank are popular with locals and tourists alike where there is every chance of catching one of the many gamefish that frequent those waters, including wahoo, dorado, tuna and, of course, marlin.

An alternative to a water-based activity is to make an excursion by tender or car to Rum Point on the eastern end of the island – driving enables guests to see some of the island itself. Jerk stalls dot the road on the way out and serve up delicious, authentic Caribbean cuisine with genuine spice. Rum Point is a popular spot to relax and hang out; it's infamous for its "mudslide" cocktails.

## DAY 7: {GEORGE TOWN, GRAND CAYMAN}

Pass the last hours prior to guest departure with their favorite Cayman activity: a beach day or more fishing and diving. The defining point about the Cayman Islands is that one can really do as much or as little as one chooses. ★



Day 2: Turtle at Boatswain's Beach



Days 3 & 4: Diving



Day 5: Stingray City

TRISTAN RELLY

### Agent

Recommended agent is Pro Yacht, tel: 345.945.4676, [www.proyacht.ky](http://www.proyacht.ky)

### Currency

The Cayman Islands has its own currency (the Cayman Islands Dollar) but U.S. dollars are accepted at all locations. The exchange rate is fixed at CISO.82 to US\$1.00.

### Customs/Immigration

The shore agent should be provided with all the guest and yacht information at least a week before arrival to allow booking the yacht in for clearance with customs and immigration. This also enables the shore agent to have all the paperwork ready so when the yacht arrives, it's a quick process to clear in both yacht and crew.

### Helicopters on board

If the yacht has its own helicopter, the shore agent can help make the necessary arrangements with the Cayman Islands Civil Aviation Authority to clear in to be ready for when the guests arrive.

### Inter-island travel

There is a plane charter company (Island Air) and a charter helicopter (Cayman Helicopters) if guests wish to remain based in Grand Cayman and prefer to take a 30-minute flight between the islands instead. [islandair.ky](http://islandair.ky); [www.caymanislandshelicopters.com](http://www.caymanislandshelicopters.com)

### Provisioning and Supplies

Due to the Cayman Islands proximity to the American mainland, most supplies and provisioning requests can be obtained within 24 hours.

### Resources

Tourism Authority guide: [www.caymanislands.ky](http://www.caymanislands.ky)  
Sting Ray City: [www.cayman.org/divesite/stingray.htm](http://www.cayman.org/divesite/stingray.htm)  
Boatswain's Beach: [www.boatswainsbeach.ky](http://www.boatswainsbeach.ky)

### Tides

The Cayman Islands are fortunate to only experience a maximum tidal range of 18 inches during the year. There are negligible currents and the seas are flat and calm for 95 percent of the year.