





ABOARD AND ASHORE

## An island hopping itinerary

WRITTEN BY MIRIAM CAIN

What's half the fun of being on an island? Hopping on and off it, of course – making the Bahamas the ideal cruising ground. With more than 700 islands, cays and islets at your fingertips, there is an abundance of fun to be had.

**F**rom visiting friends nearby, and exploring the inland sights, to fishing from the comfort of your yacht and taking in the Hollywood-worthy locations – in the Bahamas you'll truly be spoilt for choice. Often the various islands are just minutes from each other, so exploring the area on a yacht is like a glimpse of heaven. Here, we give you a breakdown of the region's highlights – and top tips from those in the know.

The most popular cruising grounds in the Bahamas are found in the district known as the Exumas. Don't let the moniker 'popular', however, make you think they're crowded. They're anything but. The island chain comprises some 365 islands, cays and islets, so there is plenty of space to find privacy even during the peak cruising season.


Start your journey by boarding your yacht in the vibrant capital Nassau and cruise towards the Exumas to the south, where you'll find exotic wildlife and spectacular beaches. Over the next few days you'll glide from idyll to idyll as you relax on board. First stop, Allan's Cay. Made up of three islets, this is a quiet haven of unhurried calm. "Take the tender to Leaf Cay and feed bananas to the local family of wild iguanas before returning for your first evening on board," recommends charter broker, Cristabel Nye.

**IMAGE** Extend your cruise to the southern islands of the Exumas, spending a few days ashore at the exclusive private island of Over Yonder Cay



THE 44.2M (144') *AT LAST* IS AVAILABLE TO CHARTER IN THE BAHAMAS THIS WINTER SEASON FOR UP TO 11 GUESTS, PRICES START FROM \$135,000 PER WEEK.





“With her shallow draft and waterjet propulsion, *At Last* is uniquely suited to the shallow cruising grounds of the Bahamas and guests are able to take advantage of all the archipelago has to offer”

Captain Vincent Lauro, *At Last*

Being located so close to Florida and the shipping channels, the islands have history and culture aplenty, with each one enjoying a distinct personality and appeal all of its own. On the larger islands you'll find quaint restaurants and bars, golf courses, and boutiques. While the smaller isles, remote and unspoiled, offer luxuries that money can't buy. Sampling a bit of both worlds is the ideal combination.

Captain Vincent Lauro aboard the 44.17m (145') *At Last* recommends an exclusive Exumas itinerary to include ample opportunities, from fine dining, vibrant culture, luxurious spas to amazing snorkelling and scuba diving, fishing, and watersports. “Each island is unique and every day guests can experience something new,” says Captain Lauro. “With her shallow draft and waterjet propulsion, *At Last* is uniquely suited to the shallow cruising grounds of the Bahamas and guests are able to take advantage of all the archipelago has to offer.”

On the second day you will discover Compass Cay, a natural paradise with 15 beaches to explore, the most spectacular being the mile-long Crescent Ocean Beach. Here, Cristabel recommends throwing hot dogs to the nurse sharks that swim around the shallow waters, and then diving in to swim with them. Admittedly, that's not an activity for everyone. So, “The less adventurous of the charter party can go with the crew on the tender and bonefish in Compass Cay Marina.”


You can spend the evening berthed in Compass Cay Marina, then take the tender around to the spectacular horseshoe beach on the east side. From here, take the tender across to cruise the archipelago of mangroves known as Shroud Cay. If you manage to catch high tide, this is the place to try the famous Mangrove Run aboard a jet ski. Once back on board, cruise to Staniel Cay.

“The hub for cruising in the Exumas, Staniel Cay, is the place to fish and I would recommend that any itinerary should consider including fishing, be it bonefishing or deep sea, either for the novice or the experienced. The waters off the east coast of the island are a mecca for mahi mahi, wahoo, tuna and marlin,” says charter broker Agnes Howard. “The 38m (126') motor yacht *Le Montrachet* is the ideal yacht for cruising the Bahamas and offers an extensive array of water toys for all kinds of watersports activities, including a 35' Marlin tender in tow, rigged for fishing.”

Staniel Cay is also the best base from which to discover Thunderball Grotto, of James Bond fame. The grotto is a hollowed-out island that, tides permitting, is ideal for swimming and snorkelling among the dazzling plethora of colourful fish.

Captain Todd Lee aboard the 56.38m (185') *My Seanna* has been cruising in the Bahamas for over 15 years and believes that the cruising grounds of





## “The Caribbean and especially the Exumas, are the perfect place to experience *Solis*. She was designed and built specifically with nature in mind”

Captain Olof Templeman, *Solis*

The Exumas are some of the best in the world. “The pristine turquoise seas of the archipelago, along with the islands’ secluded bays and white sandy beaches make for a perfect charter,” says Captain Lee. “For a fine dining restaurant in the Exumas the Stanial Cay Yacht Club is amongst the best; whilst the Chat ‘n’ Chill bar on Stocking Island is a great local venue where you can experience island life at its best.”

Charter broker Suzette McLaughlin has also sampled some of the activities on offer. “The potential of the Bahamas as a charter destination is all too often overlooked,” explains Suzette. “The vast cruising area is easily accessible from both Europe and the Americas and offers some of the most pristine tropical waters and an incredible range of experiences.” Suzette recommends cruising aboard the 63.5m (208’4) *Lioness V*. “The outside lounging areas on board *Lioness V* are outstanding,” says Suzette. “From the elevated pool area to the inviting soft sunbathing cushions on the sun deck, to the large swimming platform and abundance of water toys, she is the perfect yacht to relax and have fun on.”

Another highly recommended yacht available in the Bahamas this winter is the 58m (190’3) *Illusion V*. She boasts a long list of water toys that all come out

when anchored off Big Major’s Spot and Warderick Wells Cay – the best place in the archipelago for all manner of watersports. The latter is home to brilliant coral reefs and exotic marine life that are part of the Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park – a 35-mile long nature sanctuary with numerous cays, islets, and unspoilt beaches. Charter broker Tina Montzka has experienced the Bahamas dives sites and snorkelling hotspots first hand. “There are many highlights for divers and snorkellers throughout the island chain,” explains Tina.

Still within the Land and Sea Park, Hawksbill Cay offers rolling hills, beautiful beaches, great snorkelling and diving. Further north, lying directly off Highbourne Cay is a drop off that faces the Exuma Sound – a vertical wall teeming with fish. If deep sea fishing captures your imagination, a trip can easily be arranged. While those left behind can still enjoy the marine life from more shallow waters, as there are plenty of rays to spot in the port of Highbourne Cay. From Highbourne Cay you can also cruise back to Eleuthera and enjoy the sights once you’ve disembarked. Or you can extend your cruise to the southern islands of the Exumas, spending a few days ashore at the exclusive private island of Over Yonder Cay.



1. THE 58M (190'3) *ILLUSION V* IS AVAILABLE TO CHARTER IN THE BAHAMAS THIS WINTER SEASON FOR UP TO 12 GUESTS, PRICES START FROM \$350,000 PER WEEK.
2. THE 38.4M (126') *LE MONTRACHET* IS AVAILABLE TO CHARTER IN THE BAHAMAS THIS WINTER SEASON FOR UP TO 10 GUESTS, PRICES START FROM \$59,500 PER WEEK.
3. THE 34M (111'7) *SOLIS* IS AVAILABLE TO CHARTER IN THE BAHAMAS THIS WINTER SEASON FOR UP TO 8 GUESTS, PRICES START FROM \$120,000 PER WEEK.
4. THE 56.4M (185) *MY SEANNA* IS AVAILABLE TO CHARTER IN THE BAHAMAS THIS WINTER SEASON FOR UP TO 12 GUESTS, PRICES START FROM \$300,000 PER WEEK.
5. THE 63.5M (208'4) *LIONESS V* IS AVAILABLE TO CHARTER IN THE BAHAMAS THIS WINTER SEASON FOR UP TO 12 GUESTS, PRICES START FROM \$425,000 PER WEEK.



ABOARD AND ASHORE

## Desert island idyll

WRITTEN BY MIRIAM CAIN

For a thoroughly exciting yet relaxing experience, mix up your cruise around the islands to combine gourmet dining, diving, fishing, and golf with plenty of relaxation on board or on shore on your very own deserted island, Over Yonder Cay.

**T**his once remote fishing outpost has been developed, in an eco-friendly way, into a 72-acre island estate featuring luxurious villas, a golf course, marina and a pavilion. What's more, the island generates over 95% of its energy needs from natural elements including the wind and sun – of which there is plenty. So much, in fact, that the island currently produces more energy than is required to service the four villas and their hot tubs, fire pits and ample entertainment, fitness and water sports facilities.

Charter broker, Katie Macpherson, has experienced Over Yonder Cay first hand and believes that combining a stay at the private island retreat with a charter through the Exumas is the ideal holiday for those looking for some peace and privacy. “The service experience at Over Yonder Cay is akin to that found on board a superyacht – in fact the ethos of the owners is for the island to provide an ‘on land yacht’ approach to hospitality.” From fine cuisine and wine, to butler service (the island has a team of 30 staff for up to 28 guests) and well-being facilities, this island escape is the perfect location for guests wishing to spend a few days ashore before or after a cruise around the mesmerising Exuma island chain, or as an additional base for larger groups. The deep water marina is for exclusive use by the island's guests and can accommodate up to eight yachts up to 50-metres.

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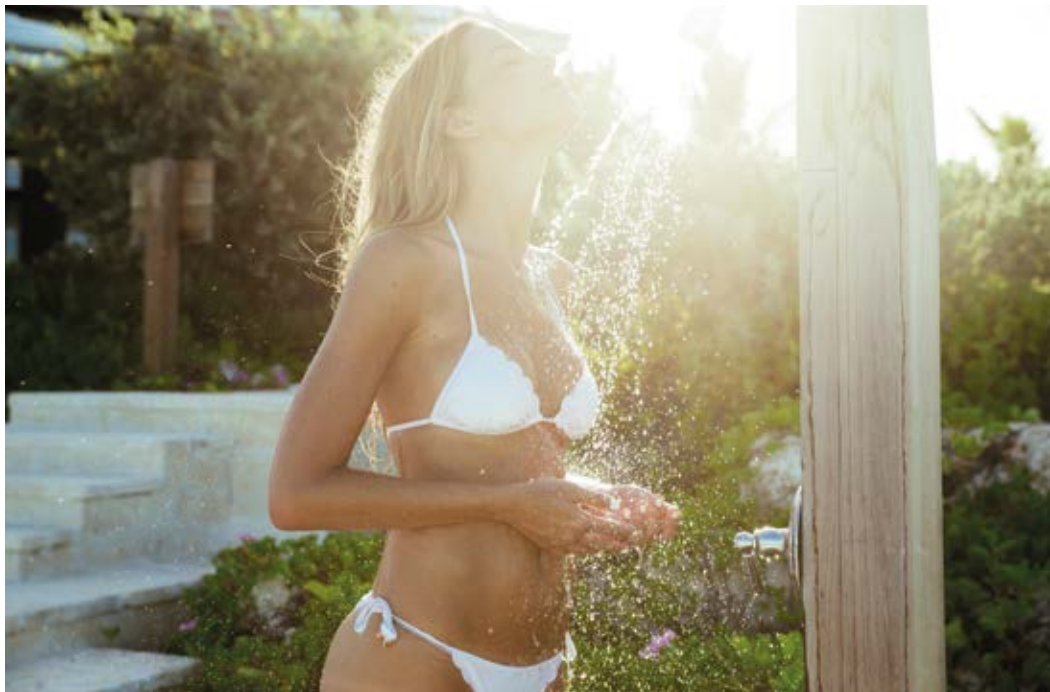
IMAGE Relax with friends and family on Over Yonder Cay in total privacy











IMAGES, TOP TO BOTTOM Each of the four individually designed villas is built to fit in with the natural surroundings; the beach club is the perfect place to gather for lunch, sip sundowners by the dip-pool or simply lounge under the shade of the palms and relax





IMAGES, TOP TO BOTTOM Larger groups can come together for a game of beach volleyball; there are four individually designed villas on the island, each positioned to take full advantage of the breathtaking views, sunrise, sunset and sea breeze





**ABOVE** The 72-acre island estate of Over Yonder Cay features luxurious villas, a golf course, marina and a pavilion **RIGHT** The exclusive private island resort is the ultimate relaxing retreat











**ABOVE** Soar above the turquoise waters and lagoons in a 9 passenger seaplane  
**RIGHT** The island escape is the perfect location for guests wishing to spend a few days ashore before or after a cruise around the mesmerising Exuma island chain







**RIGHT** An extensive wine list is available which includes a wide range of rare vintages









IMAGES, LEFT TO RIGHT Over Yonder Cay's unique nine-hole-par-three golf course takes you on an island-wide tour; from kitesurfing, windsurfing, wakeboarding and waterskiing, to sailing on the classic custom-built sloop and Lasers, guests can take advantage of the surroundings; take a guided tour of the area on the jet skis



