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SEA Change

A new collection of vacation villas in the Bahamas' idyllic Abaco Islands invites discerning travelers to rest and reset in style.

By Kristin Detterline

o matter how long you stay in Abaco, Bahamas, you'll spend plenty of time considering the color of the Sea of Abaco. Sometimes the tepid waters appear crystal blue with glimmers of turquoise; others, they're an electric aquamarine with swirls of emerald green. When the lighting is exactly right, you may even spy flashes of pink as the waves gently tug at the powder-sand beaches. Up close, the kaleidoscopic colors fade away, revealing water so clear you can see to the bottom.





Marsh Harbour. Roughly 200 miles east of Florida, Abaco is a 120-mile chain of islands known for its scenic boating, championship golf courses and colonial landmarks-not to mention the now Instagram-famous swimming pigs.

Exclusive Resorts' presence in the Bahamas adds to its impressive roster of getaways. The luxury destination club has more than 370 multimillion-dollar vacation homes across six continents where its high net worth members can stay. There are also personalized services such as Exclusive Resorts' Vacation Ambassadors, who work alongside members to strategize every aspect of their trip; and The Source, an online portal that chronicles details like flight times, dinner reservations and grocery lists so there's a stocked Mama's Catering, which prepares a medley of conch dishes—take vacationing to the next level.

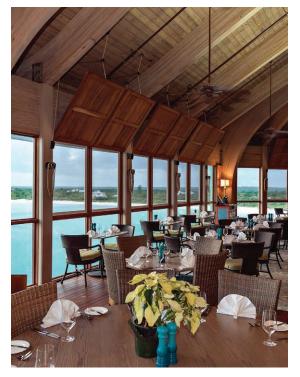
Each of the five Exclusive Resorts villas has four bedrooms plus four full baths and one halfbath, with breezy open floor plans and amenities such as a media room with a billiards table for entertaining. Oversize decks are lined with couches and chairs to unwind with a book or to kick back after taking a dip in the plunge pool. And when it's time to get back to the beach—private massage by the water, anyone?—a sandy path carved through the island's dense beachfront verdure winds right back to that Tiki hut umbrella.

Exclusive Resorts shares its property with the The Abaco Club on Winding Bay. The gated private



Clockwise from left: With more than 3,000 square feet, each villa has four bedrooms and four full baths with in-home amenities, including private chef dinners and beachside spa treatments; the 18-hole golf course is situated along the Sea of Abaco; Bahamian favorites like conch stew and guava cake are must-try dishes at The Abaco Club's scenic restaurant, The Cliff House.





club is home to what's been called one of the finest golf courses in the Bahamas for its picturesque 18-hole Scottish-style links, and its 2-mile stretch of beaches are lined with candycolored cottages. There are tennis courts and a fitness center, but not surprisingly, kayaking and paddleboarding are the main attractions during the day. The Abaco Club has two restaurants: open-air beach bar Flippers and formal dining room The Cliff House, which is named for its high perch above Winding Bay. Request a windowside table for the most dramatic ocean views and sample Bahamian specialities including the seafood cioppino. If you miss the sunset, don't worry—a spectacular second show takes place after dark, when the pitch-black sky reveals a tangle of brilliant stars.

There are countless activities worth exploring beyond the resort, from bird-watching and museum hopping to swimming with pigs, deep-sea fishing and scuba diving. A sailing excursion is the best way to experience

the Abacos' natural wonders. Shearwater's (sailtheabacos.com) Bruce Ost, who goes by Captain Bruce, and first mate, Renee Zantay, are not only skilled sailors but also consummate party hosts of Ost's well-appointed 57-foot custom catamaran. You'll depart for your nine-hour sail from Mangoes Marina, a short drive from The Abaco Club. Once aboard—and with Zantay's signature cinnamon-dusted Painkiller cocktails in hand—you'll cruise the islands, making stops along the way to glimpse the colorful fish that inhabit Mermaid Reef during a snorkeling excursion or to check out nearby watering holes like Grabbers or Nippers on Great Guana Cay. You'll sail back into Mangoes Marina just after sunset, as Ost—who in a former life toured with Aerosmith—sings and plays guitar.

Ost, along with vacationers and residents such as personal driver and lifelong Bahamian Matthew Taylor, is dedicated to preserving and protecting the island's gorgeous landscapes and prismatic waters through fundraisers and community projects for the next generation of visitors. Taylor sums it up best when he says it's because "the world needs a place to rest." You'll rest easy in the Abaco Islands. Memberships are available for 10- and 30-year terms with one-time initiation fees and annual dues, exclusiveresorts.com