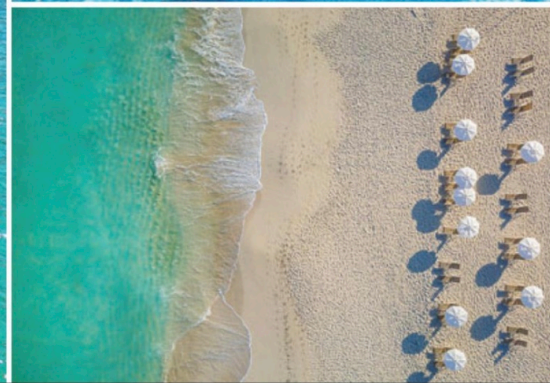


Passion for Providenciales

Privacy is the new luxury on a honeymoon to the gleaming Turks and Caicos.



BY DOUG WALLACE

THE SKY, THE SAND, THE SEA – it’s a winning trifecta, the simplest of ingredients, the cornerstone of the best, most relaxing honeymoon imaginable. And among the dozens of islands and cays of the Turks and Caicos, you’ll find these soothing elements set within myriad permutations of a thousand shades of blue.

This British territory, two sets of tropical islands separated by the Turks Island Passage, sits at the south end of the Bahamas, just north of the Dominican Republic. Nine inhabited islands play host to about 1.5 million visitors each year – and you could join them.

“Beautiful by nature” is more than just a clever marketing slogan here, it is a reality. The cerulean waters, soft trade winds, white sand, limestone cliffs and tropical dry forest create an idyllic environment, as if you were walking in a postcard. The sun shines an incredible 350 days of the year.

While hundreds of tourist brochures make mention of their pristine beaches, Turks and Caicos can actually mean it. The marine scene is unparalleled and the beaches beyond extraordinary, particularly Grace Bay Beach on the island of Providenciales, where most of the nation’s top resorts are congregated. Little wonder: this five-kilometre stretch of sand is continually voted the best beach in the world in the TripAdvisor Travelers’ Choice awards – no rocks, no seaweed, no pollution. Taken with its neighbours Leeward Beach and Bight Beach, the strip is just over 11 kilometres. A barrier reef about 1.6 kilometres offshore keeps the waters safe and calm.

Home base is heavenly.

Off to the quiet side, on what is the roomiest section of Grace Bay Beach, away from the family all-inclusives and personal watercraft sits your honeymoon home base, the new Wymara Resort and Villas. A stretch of umbrellas the colour of the sand couldn’t be more inviting and there is seemingly never a lineup for chairs – just pick your spot and the towels appear.

The Canadian-owned Wymara, part of the Leading Hotels of the World collection, turned the pandemic down-time into a productive \$10 million renovation. A modern, beach-chic feel draws a younger clientele into the 90 rooms and suites, all with large bathrooms, luxe amenities, roomy seating and stocked kitchens. Honeymooners settle into quiet, private cabanas on the beach or around the 650-square-metre infinity pool, which looks out to the sea beyond. The resort’s Caribbean-forward Indigo is the number-one restaurant in town, as is the weekly beach barbecue, which brings everyone together

Photography courtesy of: (top left, below right) Visit TCI.com, Doug Wallace (top right)



on the sand for fried fish, smoked brisket, grilled lobster and live music.

Those looking for more privacy, a bit more space or a few more bedrooms, opt for the Wymara Villas on the south side of the island on Turtle Tail Bay, an ever-growing string of palatial multi-bedroom, multi-level luxury apartments. Astoundingly, the water is even more aqua over here.

Providenciales has a plethora of other Grace Bay luxury, with honeymoon-worthy elegance and service to be found at a number of storied resorts, including The Palms, The Shore Club and The Ritz-Carlton. Just off-island, the upscale seclusion of Parrot Cay, Pine Cay and Ambergris Cay also yields a wealth of papery and privacy for special-occasion celebrants.

Which way to the beach?

Recreation in Turks and Caicos is undoubtedly all about the water – and we don't mean just staring out to sea, although that's fun, too.

The scuba diving is splendid beyond words, the coral reefs and marine life truly vibrant and the excellent visibility a welcome plus. The variety, too, is special, with adventurers able to choose from beach diving, cruise diving, wreck and reef diving – all available within a very short distance of each other. There are plenty of little nooks and crannies to go snorkeling in as well, with the equipment easy to procure, most often from your resort itself.

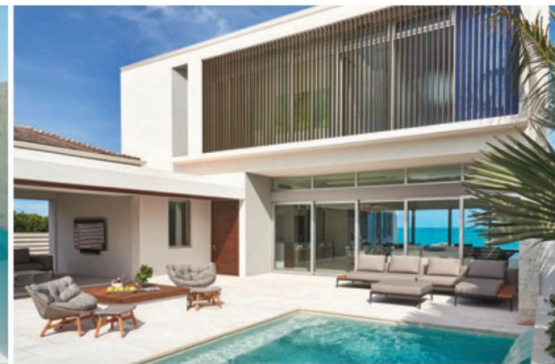
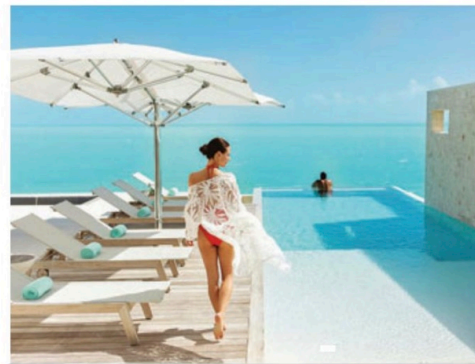
Boat charters will take you out to fish the wide-open sea or wind you around the coastline with a drink in your hand. Whale-watching from December to March draws boats to the

passage between the Turks and Caicos islands to see humpbacks gracefully making an annual migration to their winter breeding grounds farther south.

Parasailing? For sure. Paddling of all kinds can occupy a relaxing few hours, too. Active visitors can also take lessons in kite-surfing, kite-boarding and wind-surfing, as well as waterskiing and wake-boarding.

With sub-winging, a rider is pulled at slow speeds underwater by a boat, holding onto a small,

winged board, surfacing for air when need be. Another new watersport quickly catching on is electric foil surfing, which combines surfing with kite-boarding. Here, an electric motor and hydrofoil wings pull your board out of the water as your speed increases. And for the truly adventurous, flyboarding may be something to add to the to-do list. This is a jetpack experience that sends you a few metres above the waves with a water propulsion system you control with your feet and legs. Who knows? This could very well be your new thing.



Photography courtesy of Wymara Resort