

We hear you scoff. "Come on, are the beaches that terrific?" Well come on down, as yes they are—blue water, fine sand for strolling—just be prepared when showing photos to friends as they'll ask the same question. Take this Inside Scoop when you go; it's full of tips.

travel: delighting in the spirit of adventure • a vacation from home to explore places that are not your home • knowing life is different, knowing this is a joy of travel • enjoying the journey, not just the destination • a privilege best used with patience, humour and curiosity • fun • coming home with great tales •

Almost "in" Canada
Since 1917 there've been efforts to formally affiliate the T&C with Canada. In 1974, an MP submitted a Private Member's Bill in the House of Commons to annex them, one reason being to keep Canadian tourist funds "in Canada." The idea resurfaced in 1987 and 2004, regrettably to no avail. But, it let us dream...

Your Counsellor
Our knowledge and experience help turn dreams into first-rate vacations. Ask your counsellor about any details, including:
• airport information/transfers
• hiring local travel services
• the range of water sports.

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A Maritime Travel Company

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Inside Scoop: Turks & Caicos

Know before you go: travel isn't just your destination, it's also the journey

While there's much more than its 230 miles of beaches to discover, you don't want to discover you should have planned ahead for such benefits as seat selection and space on excursions. Helpful tips:

- Be realistic: we know you want value for money in balancing choices and amenities with your budget. No matter what, aim to relax and enjoy. Special requests are requests only for oceanview room upgrades.
- Check with your cell phone provider for a package. Internet access is available.
- Electrical service: 110-120V standard plugs.
- The US dollar is the official currency; ATMs are common and banks (with Canadian banks) change money (take your passport). Log the dates you'll be away with your bank and credit card companies. Use small bills in markets and cafés.
- Most restaurants allow casual clothes such as shorts but wear dresses or nice slacks for more formal dining and cover up in town.
- The islands observe Daylight Saving Time, in the Eastern Standard Time zone; 1hr back from Nova Scotia, the same time as Ontario, 2hrs ahead of Alberta.
- Take biodegradable sunscreen and hats. Tropical, warm and sunny most of the year with little rain, the high season is generally November to May. Temperatures then average 80-84F/27-29C; an average year has 350 days of sunshine, so the low season is also a terrific time to go (some nights anytime can be a bit chilly so take a light jacket or sweater).
- Most restaurants and resorts charge an 8% to 15% service fee that's pooled for workers—if you leave an additional tip, that's to go to your server. Check the fee first. Since eating out can add up, consider going to a market or store and get food for a picnic.
- We strongly recommend LeGrow's Travel's medical and cancellation/interruption insurance.

Above all, travel with a positive attitude—patience and a spirit of adventure will carry you through any experience!

Pack Strategically

The world is overrun with black bags: put coloured tape or ribbon on your luggage to spot it quickly. Put your name outside and inside and remove old tags. In your carry-on, pack valuables such as jewellery, over-the-counter and prescription drugs in original containers with a list, dosage and doctor's phone number. Pack most liquids/lotions/gels in checked bags (inside plastic bags)—due to carry-on restrictions, the maximum size container is 100ml(3.4oz). All must fit in 1 clear/resealable plastic bag of no more than 1 litre. You may take baby formula, food or milk for a child aged 2 and under (0-24 months). Also pack pen/notebook, hand wipes, munchies (no fruit, meat or veg). Also permitted as carry-on, laptops, cell phones, disposable razors, canes, nail clippers. Most hotels provide hair dryers. You can't take on corkscrews or sports gear. Check

www.catsa.gc.ca/home and your airline for restrictions.



The two groups of islands—the third largest coral reef system in the world—are actually in the Atlantic Ocean, not Caribbean Sea, home to some 40,000 residents. While natives are called "Belongers" and might speak a dialect (Creole), English is widely spoken and many expatriates from all over the world live there (sure, go ahead, fantasize). With 9 main islands, 2 are private (you can dream): most visitors go to **Providenciales** (Provo) and/or **Grand Turk**.

There's a lot of wandering to do: visitors can tour a nature preserve on **North Caicos** and tourist attractions, caves and the old homes on **Middle Caicos**. Ideal for divers, **South Caicos** is also a birders' delight. **East Caicos** has an abandoned town to stroll and gorgeous beaches while **Salt Cay** (2.6sq miles/6.74sqkm) offers visits to its old salt industry and humpback whale sightings; if you go, ensure you adhere to the tour's and islands' whale watching etiquette.

Your Airline

Sign up online for the airline(s) email/text flight notifications as your flight could be delayed. Transport Canada advises, "Travellers should arrive at the airport earlier than usual, exercise patience and **contact their airline for further information on their flight(s)**." Airline staff are on duty some 2-3hrs prior: due to staffing/security, check-in closes 1hr before departure. If late, you're not entitled to board (or a refund). Unless booked ahead, seats are first-come first-served. **Check-in and carry-on baggage**, check with your airline as size/weight restrictions vary. **Entry & Departure:** You must have a valid passport www.cic.gc.ca/english/passport/index.asp. Keep a separate photocopy of all travellers' ID pages with your records or snap a cell photo.



Get Packing Checklist and General Planning & Packing Tips at www.legrowstravel.ca/inside-scoops

Your sense of adventure & humour!

Diving?

If going on adventures or excursions, talk with your counsellor as when you book from home, besides needing less cash on site, you can budget in advance and booking in guarantees you spots with reputable tour companies we've checked out. If you plan to go on active adventures, make sure your insurance covers such activities. Underwater activities involving self-contained breathing apparatus are not covered unless you hold an open water diving certificate.

Many people assume because they're signing up at a destination to be "certified," they'll be insured, but that's not true. Before going, prepare, take the world's Professional Association of Diving Instructors open water diver course www.padi.com at your local diving centre.



Websites and emails in blue are hyperlinked; just click!

Canadians: Emergency? The High Commission of Canada in Jamaica serves T&C <https://travel.gc.ca/assistance/embassies-consulates/turks-and-caicos-islands>. Or contact Global Affairs 613-996-8885 (collect if needed) sos@international.gc.ca, <https://travel.gc.ca/assistance/emergency-assistance>.

Where "So Much To Do" Meets "So Little Time"

Although the islands are less populated than other destinations (a great thing), there are still plenty of activities in this Caribbean jewel. Golf, fishing, snorkelling and diving are extremely popular among vacationers. Scuba divers, swimmers and those who enjoy water sports will discover rich underwater spectacles with gorgeous reefs, coral walls and an extensive aquatic ecosystem—all creating the perfect setting for exploration. Dive shops and other places that offer scuba and snorkel gear rental are located throughout or you can bring your own.

Summer is the best time to snorkel and dive with warm sea water temperatures and more underwater sightings of manta rays and aquatic life (avoid kicking sand with fins as that can smother coral). Dive sites and shipwrecks off the shores of the renown **Birch's Lookout, Northwest Reef** and waters off **Blue Hills** are the resting places for sunken ships. Scuba diving sites off **West Caicos** include breathtaking coral reefs and underwater rock walls with various coral species. **Grand Turk** is known for some of the best wall diving in the world as a wall of coral runs parallel with the entire island, starting in just 25 to 45ft of water. The islands are also considered one of the best destinations for sport fishing with marlin, sailfish and barracuda, with numerous fishing charters available throughout the islands. Tennis is popular; most large resorts have courts, some with instruction by their tennis pro. Courts can be rented at **Provo Golf & Country Club**; its 18-hole lush course is one of the best in the Caribbean, also home to exotic birds in a tropical environment. Take the family to **Turks & Caicos Miniature Golf Course** (Provo). Grand Turk hosts the 9-hole **Waterloo Golf Club** course. Provo is best for department store and boutiques, while **South, Middle and North Caicos** are great places for goods made by local artisans and those special finds.

From the **Tourist Etiquette Guide**: dispose all trash and cigarette butts properly (also avoids trash blowing into the ocean) and stay on walkways instead of on sand dunes, don't feed wildlife or touch coral (it's a living animal). Swim within swim zones, 300ft of shore. Fishing (including catch/release) is illegal in parks and reserves. It's illegal to take coral, sand, shells from protected areas. Many shops sell conch shells and derivatives: you require a permit if you aim to take more than 3 conch shells and/or derivatives home the worlds largest Conch Festival is in November).

It's Always Event Time

It's unlikely you'll get bored of beaches, but check out the raft of annual and seasonal events. You'll find festivals at <http://caribya.com/turks.and.caicos/events.and.festivals>—find a Fish Fry, a music festival or the intriguingly named **Who Cares Wahoo Tournament** (all day fishing). Maybe the **Kite Flying Competition** in Provo? April's **Salt Cay Splashdown Days** is 3 days of family events. May's **Cinco de Mayo** Mexican festival or the **Windvibes Kiteboarding Tournament, South Caicos Regatta, North Caicos' Extravaganza** street festival or **Fools Regatta** day of family activities at Children's Park (Provo). August sees the **Middle Caicos Day** beach party. In December, **Museum Day** is held, also **Salt Cay's Thyme Xmas Tree Ornament Competition**. If lucky enough to be here when the clock hits midnight on New Year's Eve, go outside for the famous **Junkanoo Jump Up**: islanders have celebrated this annual event since the 16th century (when slaves were given a day off with their families...). Talk to your counsellor about rental cars (take your Canadian license) as some resort have limited parking so offer complimentary transportation to nearby attractions. The islands' official website www.turksandcaicotourism.com.

When Leaving

Don't buy or accept anything suspect or that may be taken from you. Know your limits and exemptions, www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/travel-voyage/bgb-rmf-eng.html such as on duty free alcohol and tobacco.

Our 24/7 Emergency Service

We constantly survey airlines, local tour companies and hotels to ensure they meet our customer service standards, so don't let a problem ruin your holiday. Nearly all issues can be handled quickly on site—first seek help from the venue's local staff. Otherwise, call our Emergency Travel Service at **1-888-551-1181**. Deposits are non-refundable and non-transferrable.

Schedule changes can occur and airlines and tour operators have the right to change flight and/or tour times, alter, combine services or substitute accommodations. Your counsellor will work with you to ensure you receive information as soon as possible and ensure satisfaction. See your brochure and ticket terms and conditions.

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