

## CAYMAN ISLANDS VISITOR'S GUIDE

Welcome to your Cayman Islands vacation! Here's some info that will help make your vacation more fun & hassle-free. Please feel free to contact us for more info, or if we can be of any assistance with your travel.

**CAYMAN ISLANDS** - Visitors to the Cayman Islands enjoy ah tropical paradise, but without the many hassles and inconveniences of traveling to a developing country. The Cayman Islands are located just 150 miles south of Cuba (only an hour flight from Miami). It is an English-speaking British Crown colony with the highest per capita income in the Caribbean. The government is extremely stable and the island is so safe that even the police don't carry guns. Grand Cayman has all the modern conveniences, yet it is different enough to feel like you're in another country. The Cayman Islands are on Eastern Standard Time year-round (they don't observe Daylight Savings Time). Electricity is 110 volt, 60 cycle, same as in the U.S.

**DOCUMENTATION**— Proof of citizenship is essential! U.S., Canadian and UK citizens must have one of the following:

- Valid passport. Expired passports are not acceptable.
- Certified government-issued birth certificate with raised seal, accompanied by photo ID.
- Naturalization documents accompanied by photo ID.

NOTE: US citizens will need a passport to travel to the Cayman Islands beginning Dec 31, 2006.

Citizens of certain countries also need a Visa. For a list of countries that require a Visa, please call. Airline tickets and documents must be in the same name (or you must carry additional documentation to explain any discrepancy, such as a marriage certificate). No vaccinations are required. PLEASE be sure that you are carrying correct documentation - you will not be able to board your airplane without it.

**FLIGHT INFO** - Airlines sometimes make last minute changes to flight itineraries. For this reason & for your own peace of mind, we recommend that you call your airline 72 hours and again at 24 hours for extra peace of mind prior to departure to reconfirm your flight times and flight numbers in each direction. International flights require check-in at the main airline ticket counter (NOT the gate!) at least 2 hours prior to departure. The departure tax from the Cayman Islands is included in the price of your air ticket.

**ENTERING THE CAYMANS** - When you check in for your flight, or on the plane, you'll be given a Cayman Islands Immigration Card. Complete both the top & bottom sections before you land. As you clear immigration, you'll show this and your proof of citizenship to the agent. He or she will keep the top part, you'll keep the bottom: store it in a safe place, since you'll need it to leave the country. Lost paperwork can be remedied, but at considerable hassle. If you lose your Immigration Card, get to the airport several hours before departure, and ask airline or immigration personnel what to do. You'll also complete a customs declaration form (one per family). Carrying any contraband - like guns, drugs, pornography, or fruits and vegetables - is a very bad idea. Cayman has very serious laws regarding their import.

**TRANSPORTATION**— For those staying on Grand Cayman, we recommend renting a car (if you're comfortable driving on the left!). There are several rental agencies across the street from the airport. The rates are very reasonable (about \$25/day + tax and collision insurance). If you are staying on Seven Mile Beach, it is not necessary to have a car. Taxis are available and there is a daily bus service which runs from 6 am until midnight depending on the route and the day of travel. The bus fare also depends on the route and varies between CI\$1.50 to CI\$3.00 per person. If you are staying on Cayman Brac or Little Cayman, car rental is not necessary as the islands are quite small.

**WEATHER** - Balmly breezes all year, with rare cold snaps (60s - br!) in the dead of winter. Highs April-November: 90s, December-March: 80s. Lows usually in the 70s. Light jackets are a good idea in the winter.

**LUGGAGE** - Most airlines enforce a 3 bag limit (two checked, one carry-on) for international flights. Checked bags are usually limited to 50 or 70 pounds each. Remember to pack depth gauges in your carry-on bags. Pack lightly — Cayman is normally informal and tropical. There are a few nicer restaurants on Grand Cayman, so pack accordingly. Some items to remember: several swimming suits, mostly t-shirts, shorts and casual resort wear, comfortable shoes, flip flops, sunscreen, sunglasses, hat, insect repellent, and windbreaker or light jacket.

**MONEY**— Credit cards are widely accepted throughout the islands. The Cayman Islands Dollar (CI\$) equals US\$1.25 or, the US dollar equals CI \$.80. There are ATMs on Grand Cayman in town and along West Bar Road, but none on Little Cayman and Cayman Brac. Tip as you would in the U.S. Of course, tipping depends entirely on the quality of service you receive. Waiters and bartenders get 15-20% of the bill. Dive boat crew, about US\$10 / trip. Your hotel maid will appreciate a few dollars or so per day, left in the room upon departure. If you're pleased with the service, consider tipping a bit extra.

**CRIME**— Very rare in the Cayman Islands — the policemen don't even carry guns. But take sensible precautions... as you would anywhere. Don't leave valuable lying around, and don't flash large amounts of cash in public. Your hotel has a safe-deposit service for your valuables - take advantage of this, for your own peace of mind.

**EATING AND DRINKING**— Of course, fresh seafood is heavily featured at many restaurants. Their West Indian heritage is reflected at many restaurants with lots of influence from their North American cousins. Ethnic restaurants are popular including Italian, Greek, Chinese and Indian, just to name a few. There are also sophisticated European-style restaurants with world-class chefs. Many places feature live music and gorgeous ocean views. The water is safe to drink — just like in the U.S.

If you're staying on Little Cayman or Cayman Brac, there are few dining options outside those at your resort — you will, however, enjoy a wide variety of foods served buffet style at Little Cayman Beach Resort and Brac Reef Beach Resort!

**PROBLEMS** - Staff at the hotels and dive shop will be able to help you resolve almost any problem that comes up. If you're unhappy with your hotel room for any reason, tell the front desk or manager, and ask them to resolve the situation. For serious situations, emergencies, or assistance with problems you can't resolve locally, call us at Bay Adventures (Miami) at 305-981-0050. **IMPORTANT:** if you believe you are being charged unfairly for something, get a receipt and the name of the person who insists on payment — otherwise there is no recourse for getting your money back!

**COMMUNICATIONS** - You can direct dial from your hotel room to the US. Hotels will add a long distance surcharge, so check first. Many travelers return home to huge unexpected phone bills. Most US cell phones will work from all of the Cayman Islands. Here are some useful phone numbers. From the U.S., direct-dial 1-345 plus the numbers below:

- Cobalt Coast Resort (tel) 946-5656 (fax) 946-5657
- Sunset House (tel) 949-7111 (fax) 949-7101
- Little Cayman Beach Resort (tel) 948-1033 (fax) 948-1040
- Brac Reef Beach Resort (tel) 948-1323 (fax) 948-1207

### **WHEN NOT DIVING...**

Check with your hotel for to make arrangements for land activities on Grand Cayman. Popular activities include:

- Take an island tour. Several companies in George Town offer island tours ranging from local culture and heritage to nature trails and eco-systems. The Great Cayman Outdoors Experience is a full day tour that combines horseback riding along the beach, a submarine adventure, shopping for eco-crafts and a nature tour.
- Go to Hell! This tiny town is located on the rugged northwestern coast. Buy some souvenirs from Hell at the gift shop (where the proprietor wears red cloths and horns) or send a postcard from Hell complete with a "hell" postmark.
- Visit the Turtle Farm. This is the only self-sufficient turtle farm in the world. You'll see hundreds of turtles ranging from tiny hatchlings to huge adults weighing hundreds of pounds.
- Go bowling at the Stingray Bowling Center located along Seven Mile Beach. They have ten lanes with computerized scoring, satellite television, video arcade, pro shop and a snack bar.
- Rent a car and drive around the island on your own. Rentals are inexpensive (about \$25/day plus tax and insurance). The southern and eastern coasts are much more rugged than civilized Seven Mile Beach. The shops and restaurants are replaced with local towns and scenic vistas. Before heading out of town, stop by the National Trust of the Cayman Islands for copies of historical walking tours and other information. They are located off Old Courts Road and Eastern Ave. (949-0121).
- Visit Pedro St. James, the oldest building in Grand Cayman (located along the southern coast). Very little has changed since Englishman William Eden and his slaves lived here in the late 1700s. Walking through the house and grounds will take you back to that plantation life-style era.
- Visit the Cayman Islands National Museum (located in the heart of George Town facing the ocean) to learn about the island's history.

### **AND A FEW MORE SUGGESTIONS -**

- Be at the airport 2 hours before departure time.
- Remember to reconfirm flights by calling your airline before departure.
- Have your proof of citizenship documents handy.
- Know where your money is at all times.
- Register new cameras and other valuables with US customs before leaving the U.S.
- Essential medicines and irreplaceable items are best kept with you in carry-ons.
- An easygoing attitude and a smile are the most important things you can bring with you to the Cayman Islands.
- Your vacation begins the moment you walk out your front door. Enjoy!

Use our advice as a starting point for your own exploration, and you'll find that great sunsets, exhilarating diving, and the beautiful waters are only the beginnings of a great vacation.

## SCUBA DIVING TIPS

**DIVE GEAR** - tanks and weights are provided. You bring (or rent) the rest. Remember mask, snorkel, fins, regulator, BC, booties, slate, dive light, depth gauge, bottom timer or watch, computer/dive tables, camera and film, logbook and weight belt (without weights). A mesh bag packed inside your gear bag for traveling, can be handy for carrying and rinsing your gear. Bring extra: mask and fin straps, snorkel keeper, batteries. Ocean water temperature varies from about 74 in the winter to the mid 80s in the summer. A light tropical shorty or dive skin is great for summer and fall; you may want more thermal protection in the winter.

**REEF DIVING** – The reefs in Grand Cayman are not far off shore. There is diving on all sides – north, south, east and west....so no matter what the wind is doing, there is almost always calm water somewhere. The famous Stingray City is in the North Sound area. Most all dive shops offer weekly trips there (or sometimes several times a week depending on demand).

Cayman has some incredible wall dives. Normally a two-tank boat dive will consist of a deeper wall dive first, followed by a shallower reef dive. Shore diving is done all over the island. It is most accessible if you are staying at the Sunset House or the Cobalt Coast. You can access wall dives from shore at both these resorts. Scooters are also available at the Cobalt Coast for quick access to the wall.

They are very serious about reef preservation in the Caymans. They practice no-hands diving, don't touch and only take photos. Please also steam-line your equipment and clip your gauges to your BC. Remember that your group leaders and boat crews are there to help you enjoy yourself, so don't hesitate to ask questions, discuss problems, or make a request. Remember to stay well-hydrated for diving - drink lots of water during your entire trip.

**Have a great trip!**