

THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

Your 16-page guide to the Caribbean's most idyllic holiday destination



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About this supplement

There are few places on Earth that offer a combination of desert island isolation and international glamour; rare wildlife and sumptuous hotels; and of splendid relaxation and exhilarating pursuits. And that's before we get to the miles of powder-sand beaches and sapphire seas.

The Cayman Islands offer a holiday on which you can dine, shop and relax in style in between indulging in rewarding adventures.

With regular flights from the UK to Grand Cayman with British Airways, you will be in the Cayman Islands before sundown.

So why not come soon and enjoy the Caribbean's most idyllic destination?

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BANK ON A GREAT TIME

THREE IDYLLS
Grand Cayman and its sister isles are true Caribbean jewels, says Diana McAdam

Going to visit your bank manager, then?" suggests a friend, when I mention where I am going. Indeed, most people associate the Cayman Islands with one of two things: offshore banking or diving.

But this reputation does this remote British Protectorate in the Caribbean Sea a huge injustice. As anyone who has visited these alluring, sun-drenched islands knows, as well as some of the world's most spectacular dive sites, Grand Cayman and her smaller sisters Little Cayman and Cayman Brac have an enormous amount to offer as a holiday destination.

All international visitors land on Grand Cayman, where they are met not just by rum and reggae but by a cosmopolitan cocktail of Miami glamour, Caribbean charm and a dash of old-school eccentricity – tradition still applies here and everything closes on Sundays, with no exceptions.

The islands' glitziest address is Seven Mile Beach (it's actually 5.5 miles long), which is also where you will find glossy villas

such as the Caribbean Club and gleaming resorts such as the Westin Casuarina.

For effortless luxury, the obvious choice is the 365-room Ritz-Carlton, which opened in late 2005 and stretches from Seven Mile Beach right across to the North Sound. Its developer, Canadian-born Michael Ryan, who describes himself as "Caymanian by inclination, not birth", is currently building a spectacular new development called Dragon's Bay, which promises glamorous shops and restaurants.

Many holidaymakers never stray from Grand Cayman's multiple attractions (whatever you do, don't miss a helicopter tour with the irrepressible Jerome Begot – "Zeesees, ow you say, my orifice," he announced with a roguish twinkle, as we hurtled in a roller-coaster swoop towards the mouthwash blue waters) and there is certainly plenty to keep you occupied.

However, once you have exhausted Stingray City – "the world's greatest 12ft dive" – enjoyed a Cayman mudslide at Rum Point, shopped till you've dropped in the luxurious, tax-free malls and enjoyed a Hollywood sunset over the meltingly fresh tuna tartare in a stylish West Bay favourite such as the Caypsso Grill, it is worth making time to explore the island's less-visited side.

The quiet East End or North Side are perfect for sprawling in a hammock beneath a lofty palm and counting the sea's ribbons of blue. It is also where you will find the Mastic Trail, a 2.5-mile hike

through dense mangroves dripping with pendulous creepers, which as well as being a crash course in the diversity of Cayman's inland flora and fauna leaves you feeling virtuously exhausted.

There are other reminders of the days before Grand Cayman became home to nearly 100 nationalities, who were attracted to life on islands that are both the richest and safest in the Caribbean.

Driving east along the narrow coast road, past rambling, pastel-painted villas and tiny beachside cemeteries planted with scented

There's not just rum and reggae but a dash of old-school eccentricity

frangipani, you arrive at one of the most delightful attractions – Pedro St James, a beautifully restored former plantation house known as Pedro Castle. Set high on the cliffs in gardens dotted with cotton and mahogany trees, it was here that an end to slavery on the islands was declared in 1835.

When you have heard all you need to know about the Cayman Islands' history, the next stop could be little Bodden Town, the original capital whose topsy-turvy lanes are lined with white wooden houses, their wide verandas hung with bright bougainvillea.

Here, Denise Bodden, a descendent of one of the island's

first settlers, will show you the Mission House, a slice of perfectly preserved Caribbean history that offers an insight the missionaries' hardships in paradise. "They nearly died of fever and famine but their faith sustained them," she says. The food and wine on offer in Cayman is so exceptional that even the faithful risk falling to over-indulgence.

After stopping to lunch on conch stew or one of the old island delicacies, try spending afternoon surrounded by nature in the 65 acres of the Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park. Wander vibrant paths while green Cayman parrots screech overhead. Here you will find sky flowers, birds of paradise orchids and the vivid peeling of the red birch – known locally as the tourist tree – all for attention.

End the day at the Blue Iguana Recovery Program, a remarkable project that is built in the park and has saved the micro-dinosaurs from extinction. You can even adopt one, and you won't be able to take it home. And remember to check your car for rogue iguanas heading home, as the creature are notorious for sprawling in parked vehicles.

Although it is hard to tear yourself away from Grand Cayman's glossy attractions worth visiting its two sister islands which are completely different but equally as fascinating.

Touching down on the 10 square miles of Little Cayman



after enjoying the spectacular views on the 40-minute flight over is like being let into a delightful secret. With a population of just 150, here you will find the Bloody Bay Wall Marine Park, which is regularly voted among the world's finest dive destinations, and wildlife galore.

Rock iguanas amble placidly along the single road, and it is a

sanctuary for rare red-footed boobies, storks and frigate birds.

Cayman Brac is also a haven for wildlife but unlike Little Cayman, which is completely flat, it is celebrated for its craggy Bluff. This massive central limestone outcrop stretches the length of the island, rising up to 140ft at the eastern end, and includes several amazing caves

that are great fun to explore and are home to hundreds of bats.

It is also the most traditionally Caymanian of the islands and its tiny museum is the perfect place to learn more about the history of this absorbing region.

However you spend your time in the Cayman Islands, you can guarantee that you will wish you were there for longer.

A tantalising variety

TOP 10 Our pick of the many great experiences, both active and relaxing, that await. By Diana McAdam

1 Meet a dragon Visit Grand Cayman's Blue Iguana Recovery Programme at the Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park to see these fascinating reptiles, which are unique to Grand Cayman. Alternatively, follow the Blue Dragon Trail to the four corners of the island. Local artists decorated 15 larger-than-life sculptures, which have been placed around Grand Cayman as a permanent reminder of these amazing creatures and why it is important to save them from extinction.
www.blueiguana.ky

2 Go to Hell There really is a place called Hell, near the town of West Bay, which is covered in strange ironshore formations which can be viewed from special platforms. As well as the post office, from where you can send a letter from Hell, there is a gift shop where Satan greets visitors with such phrases as: "How the hell are you?"

3 Kayak at Kaibo Beach Jump on one of these easy-to-use craft (pictured right) for a trip around the fascinating mangrove wetlands, which form the basis of the marine food chain, act as fish nurseries and protect the land from storms. Then enjoy a cocktail at nearby Rum Point.
www.caymankayaks.com

4 Visit Stingray City There are actually two locations for the "city": an easy 10-12ft dive site and a nearby sandbar where you simply stand in waist-deep water while up to

100 of the huge (they can grow to more than 6ft across) but harmless southern stingray swim and feed around you.

5 Take a helicopter ride There is no better way to view the crystal-clear waters off Grand Cayman than by helicopter. The pilot will take you over Seven Mile Beach, Stingray

beachside restaurant, which serves authentic Caymanian cooking to locals and visitors

7 Spot a rare orchid The lovely Queen Elizabeth Botanic Park is a haven orchids. The ones to look out are the wild banana orchid, y is the national flower, and the very rare ghost orchid.
www.botanic-park.ky

8 Capture a castle Visit Pedro St. James known as Pedro Castle, a beautifully res three-storey plantation house set high on the c which was built in the 18th century. Various courthouses, jail and put pound, its story is told in fun 3D presentation.
www.pedrostjames.ky

9 Follow the Masti Trail On this natur walk across the ce of the island, try to spot of Cayman's five endem blues (the fifth is the gta blue iguana). These are t blue-throated anole chameleon, the butterfly Cayman Lucas's blue, the blue-flowered Cayman s; which is endangered, and tiny pygmy blue, one of t world's smallest butterfly
www.nationaltrust.org.ky



City or the whole island for a real bird's-eye view. www.caymanislandshelicopters.com

6 Enjoy a local delicacy Eat conch stew with fresh mango juice or other fresh-cooked delights at Miss Vivine's Kitchen in the East End. Vivine Watler's clapboard house is the backdrop for her charming

10 Snorkel by moonlight Turtles, reef sharks, parrot fish and ailer looking squid can all be seen swimming in the crystal-clear waters around Grand Cayman and many believe that the b time to see them is at night, shimmering against the wav sea fans, yellow tube sponge and maze-like brain coral.



Most people don't know where the Cayman Islands are.

Perfect.

The other side of the Caribbean.

Be honest, do you mind if your stroll along Seven Mile Beach is uninterrupted except for the occasional turtle? And if not everyone knows about the haute cuisine, luxury spas and 5-star accommodation will you really lose any sleep? Sometimes it seems, other people's ignorance can be your bliss.

www.caymanislands.co.uk

CAYMAN ISLANDS
Grand Cayman • Cayman Brac • Little Cayman

Nature park with botanical blaze of colour

BOLD BLOOMS

Tropical delights find expression at the Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park, writes Jane Owen

The slither of green cradled in the Caribbean Sea just below Cuba looks, from the air, too small to have a runway, let alone a botanic park full of endangered plants and animals. The Cayman Islands' wealth is renowned; its wildlife riches less so. Look closely as your plane descends over Grand Cayman's 75 square miles and you may even be able to detect the island's only hill, 60ft above sea level, where the Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park, commands views across ancient forest, mangroves and the twinkling sea beyond.

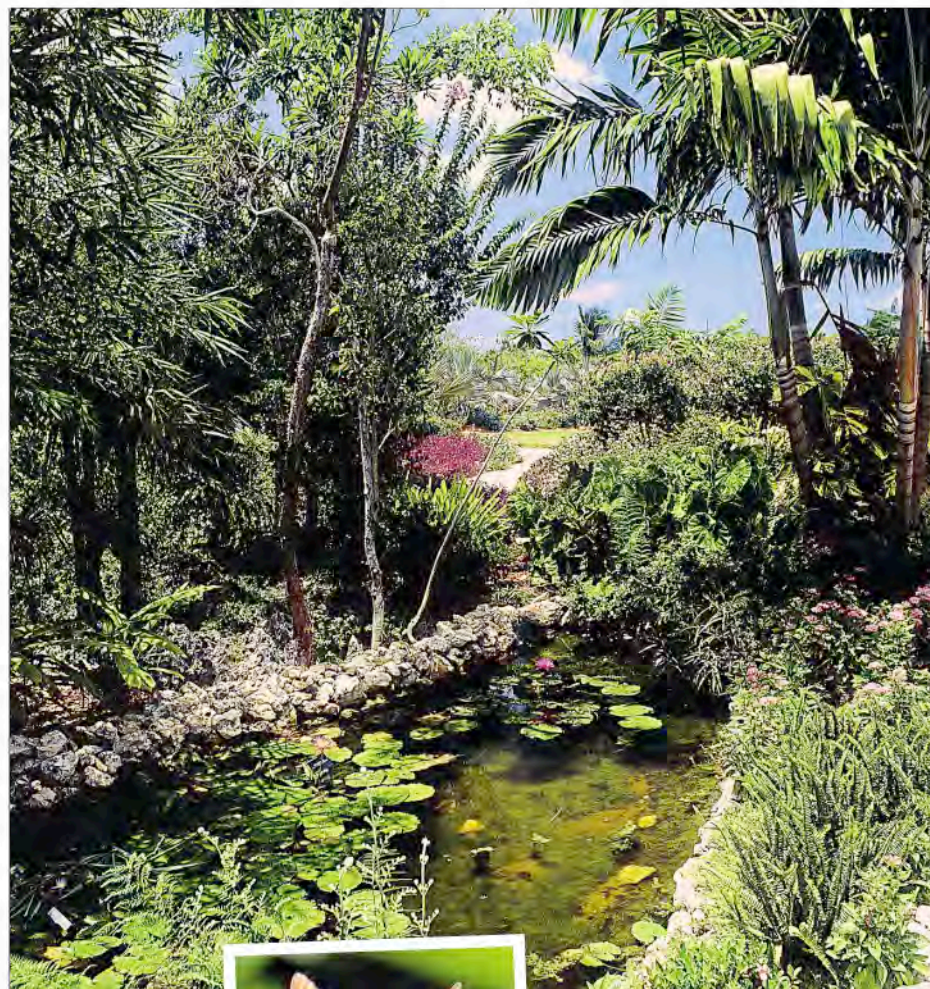
Most of the islands' 650 different plant types can be found in this centre of biodiversity, and its eminent conservation and research work, led by curator Andrew Guthrie, is matched by the loveliness of the park, which has been designed to please and entertain. If you plan ahead, Andrew himself, or one of his colleagues, will personally guide you around this botanical cornucopia.

Woodland includes mahogany, gourd trees and palms which conjure a jungly feel, with stringy grey Spanish moss dripping from the canopy and orchids studding the branches. Some are tied in place by the island's Orchid Society. Others, such as the delicately scented purple and white wild banana orchid – the Cayman's national flower – grow of their own free will.

Beyond the orchid garden, the palm-fringed lake at the centre of the park has just been renovated and the gazebo there provides the perfect shady spot from which to watch black-necked stilts, American coots, blue-winged teals and rare West Indian whistling ducks.

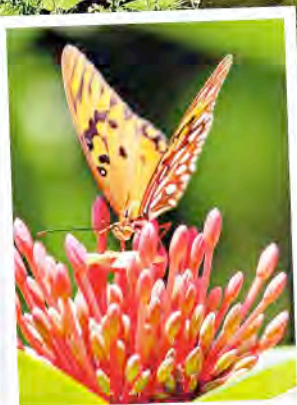
Wildlife is all-pervasive. I watched a blue iguana strolling along the wooden verandah of the iconic Cayman House in the Heritage Garden. The scene, minus the iguana, will be familiar to anyone who saw the Cayman Islands' Chelsea Flower Show garden a couple of years ago in the Grand Pavilion.

That garden was supposed to include the island's rare ghost orchid, but Dutch customs confiscated the plants on their way to Chelsea due



to red tape and never returned them. Other botanical showstoppers for February and March are *Heliconias* and the stunning jade vine *Strongylodon macrobotrys*, with its dazzling panicles of emerald green flowers.

Then there is birthwort, or *Aristolochia grandiflora*. Its dangling purple-green flowers are extraordinary – and so suggestive that I include them in my "Erotic Garden" talk. More acceptable sensuality comes from *Stephanotis*, jasmine and frangipani, whose mingling scents pervade the park.



Capturing the imagination: the islands' sub-tropical flora and fauna are at their best at Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park on Grand Cayman

The frangipani is a food source for one of the least plausible creatures I have ever seen. It is a *Pseudosphinx tetrio* (moth) and its plump, long body is striped black and yellow with a red head and black tail. When I visited the gardens in November, I came across one making its way towards a frangipani. As I reached for my camera, the creature vanished – into the mouth of a critically endangered lizard, the blue iguana.

In search of more subtle colour schemes I headed to the Floral Colour Garden, which presents a living colour wheel of possibilities for gardeners from myriad greens to the waving pink tubes of *Tabebuia*

heterophylla (pink trumpet tree the lipstick tree or *Anatto*, with heart-shaped leaves and rose-lil flowers. Its hairy red seed pods contain one of the oldest known food colourings in their orange

The importance of sustainable planting is reinforced by the Cay Wildlife Connection, an organisation that campaigns for Cayman residents to use native, or feral, plants in their gardens. These p feed and support more than 50 types of butterfly plus several including such rarities as the white shouldered bat *Phyllos falcatu*

Cayman islanders' passion for wildlife finds eloquent expression the Mastic Trail, a winding two-nature walk through dry, sub-tropical forest and black mangr wetland. The walk demands sto shoes thanks to the unforgiving ironshore forest floor, which loo as if a primordial soup has been petrified at boiling point, leavin

The creature vanishes into the mouth of a critically endangered blue iguana lizard

bubbled stone and jagged wave deep grey rock.

At least the birds never have worry about it. The Grand Cayn parrot, a jolly green bird with re cheeks and a squawk that wou make Long John Silver feel at f is one attraction here. Others in the West Indian woodpecker a Caribbean dove – only ever see undisturbed areas. And then th are butterflies, lizards, frogs, he crabs, iguanas and termites.

The fauna is housed, fed and shaded by trees including royal palms, silver thatch palms and t bullhoof, or bauhinia. Each bum on the bauhinia's stem is a para *Ptilostyles* plant which is related the world's largest flower – the strange, speckled *Rafflesia arn* weighing up to 24lb.

I glance at a wild banana orch snugged into the arms of a rou barked whitewood tree and wou yet again, why some people wh come to Cayman never shift fr the white sands and clear blue t of Seven Mile Beach. That's the problem with the Cayman Islan they have too much to offer.

● *Writer and broadcaster Jane Owen is helping to raise awareness of threats to West African rainforest. See bakagarden.wordpress.com*

HERITAGE GARDEN BRINGS CAYMAN TO CHELSEA

Walking around the Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park's 65 scented and tranquil acres, as parrots swoop overhead and the air hums with dragonflies, the glitz and glamour of Seven Mile Beach seem a long way away. The Heritage Garden – which won the Cayman Islands a silver medal for its first-ever Chelsea Flower Show exhibit in 2008, is a highlight of the park.

Planted in a style known locally as a sand garden, it has been designed around a circa-1900 restored wooden cottage. Perhaps most fascinating are the many species it features that were fundamental to the diet, nutrition and medical welfare of the islanders.

As well as the ever-present native frangipani, delicately scented jasmine and vivid bougainvillea, there is a glorious display of old-fashioned red

and pink roses, introduced in the 19th century for ornamental reasons. Periwinkles nestle alongside the drought-tolerant *Alamanda* as well as essential crops such as cassava, sweet potatoes, breadfruit and mangoes.

The specially created medicinal garden contains many of the plants upon which Caymanians once depended and these were also needed as antidotes to the less hospitable native plants

such as maiden plum, lady hair and the sap-blistering and misleadingly attractive manchineel.

For its second Chelsea Flower Show exhibit, the Botanic Park helped to design a fantastic and colourful garden that had a backdrop of Little Cayman's Bloody Bay Wall Marine Park, and which ingeniously used plants to mimic the corals and seaweeds of the undersea reefs. To the delight of everyone, the

garden was awarded a gold medal, which just goes to prove that even if you are not a keen gardener, the Botanic Park can show you a different side of Cayman Islands.

● www.botanic-park.ky
 DIANA McAD





NIGHT'S GOLDEN GLOW FOLLOWS THE DAY'S RAYS

MARINE LIFE If you enjoy aquatic adventures then prepare to be wowed, writes Jane Owen

Stingrays only sting if they are frightened or angry, according to our Caymanian guides. But what am I supposed to do if I am frightened? Or, to be more precise, terrified?

The guides who have brought us to Stingray City, just off the coast of Grand Cayman, tell us that the fish will only "bite or suck" us if they think we're squid chunks. As a 6ft long stingray hurls its silky wet body out of the water to meet me at eye level, I feel as vulnerable as one of the squid pieces being handed out from the safety of the boat.

Though I am not normally disposed to screaming, its friend is swimming up my back, while its extended family circles in the sapphire waters. And I am screaming. A lot.

Tourists are not allowed to feed the stingrays and, anyway, there's no need to. They may be wild but, since the Eighties when Caymanian fisherman first started taking visitors out here, the fish know that they may get the odd squid lunch if they hang around the boats.

I climb back on to the boat where the guides are pointing to two orange starfish, the size of dinner plates, on the seabed.

"Neptune's bling," they say. We start laughing and gradually the delicious terror of the stingray encounter ebbs away.

Chugging back to shore, the boat judders to a halt beside mangroves where an iguana stares, motionless, from the upper branches. Their green and orange markings make them melt into the green and orange foliage but, the more I look, the more of these strange creatures I can see.

The mangroves hide even more intriguing secrets in their roots and I decide to explore them with the help of Marnie Laing's mangrove snorkelling tour. This gentle-mannered conservationist is dedicated to protecting the mangrove's ecosystem and to educating the world about these undervalued offshore treasures.

"Move slow and look low," she says, as our group of three climbs from the boat that she and husband Danny run into a quiet lagoon surrounded by mangroves.

Suddenly we are suspended in a watery light of subtle greens, yellows and misty whites. This light has the otherworldly quality of an English bluebell wood in spring, but here we are underwater, with

seagrass waving its long fingers at the exquisite white outlines of the jellyfish that swim below us. Marnie picks one up and gently flips it over. The complex lacework of its tentacles is beautiful – although these, she warned us in the boat, are the bits that sting.

An angel fish moves through the grass ahead of us, followed by a parrot fish and a few tiny

Nothing could have prepared us for what lay in store in the moonless night

pipe fish. Mostly, the fish stay in the protective mangrove roots, which we drift gently towards, letting our eyes adjust to the relative darkness.

Some of the black roots are studded with bright orange and purple sponges, others with more subtle greens, greys and muted yellows. I have been a keen reef diver for years, but this secret forest makes coral reefs look gaudy. I dash enthusiastically about from one dazzling sight to another.

My only disappointment was that I failed to spot a seahorse, which provides me with an excellent excuse to return to this alluring underwater world.

Mangroves support and shelter a huge diversity of marine and wildlife, which is why Marnie and others are working to protect them. And red mangroves are key to another of the Cayman Islands' extraordinary wildlife attractions: bioluminescence.

Created by natural organisms, bioluminescence occurs all over the world, but rarely in such concentration as it does in a particular bay in Cayman. Micro-organisms here produce so much light that anything that disturbs the water – including boats and people – appear to be haloed in it.

One of the few who knows where to find Cayman's brilliant natural phenomenon is a young Caymanian called Tom Wating, whose company, Cayman Kayaks, runs tours to search for this haunting glow.

Nothing could have prepared us for what lay in store in the moonless night. As our four kayaks paddle into Bioluminescence Bay, the mood is quiet and expectant, we start to leave shimmering gold trails

and every time our paddles dip into the sea, they light up.

I have read accounts of bioluminescence being green or blue but this looks gold, yellow or even white. Maybe Cayman bioluminescence is different. Who cares – it's beautiful.

Tom jumps in the water, performing gold-spangled somersaults below us. Fish scatter this way and that, leaving shimmering trails in their wake. Tom's head, sparkling in the eerie light, pops out of the sea as he attempts to explain the basic chemistry of the phenomenon we are witnessing.

His commitment to Cayman wildlife runs deep, which is why he founded Research of Bioluminescence in Cayman last year. ROBIC's goals are simple: to research and conserve Grand Cayman's bioluminescence and cut the amount of ambient light on the island – not only to reduce fossil fuel emissions, but also to improve conditions for all nocturnal creatures.

Tom's gentle campaigning is part of a growing enthusiasm for conservation that is opening up a whole new dimension for visitors who come to these exquisite islands.

Possibly the best job in the world

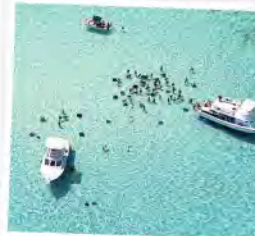
There are few people in the world whose job and life I truly envy but Jerome Beggs, Cayman's helicopter pilot extraordinaire and occasional scrum-half at the local rugby club, definitely heads that list.

This thought occurred to me as I gracefully pulled out of a heli-dive and jauntily zoomed along Seven Mile Beach before gently coming to a hovering halt above Stingray City. Jerome's favourite steel band tink in our headphones and below lay the ocean, in at least 15 shades of blue. I was speechless at the beauty of it. "Welcome to my office," said the pilot. "Not so bad for a bloody Frenchman, eh?"

I'm not quite sure who was flying the 'copter at this point but if Jero was happy, I was happy. And he was full of nuggets. "See that ribbon of black water on the edge of the sandbar? I call it the black finger. The water drops from three to 18,000ft right there. Divers say it is like falling off a mountain."

Jerome first encountered helicopters at the age of seven when he was asked to draw one at school. He now uses that drawing as the logo for his helicopter company in Grand Cayman. He rose to become the world acrobatic champion before deciding that, of all the places in the world he fancied living, Grand Cayman ticked the most boxes.

He organises every conceivable trip for tourists, from the traditional island tour to visits to remote sandbanks where you might be set down at sunset with a bottle of champagne. Later that afternoon,



with the sun beginning to dip and your correspondent murdering his first rum punch of the day, Jerome ventured 150 lonely miles out into the Western Gulf in his single rotor helicopter to deliver a vital spare part for a floundering cargo ship.

Since Haiti's earthquake there, it has been working round the clock helping the international aid effort there. Occasionally he gets a call from what he politely calls "my British friends" in Afghanistan.

He won't be drawn, but as the British Special Forces already has some of the world's top pilots in its ranks, it must be pretty specialised stuff. Jerome to be called in.

"From the age of seven I wanted to enjoy the natural world from above and the challenge of those special jobs that are worth doing. Some say I have the best job in the world, and they are not wrong."

● Cayman Islands Helicopters:
www.caymanislandshelicopters.com

BRENDAN GALLAGHER



WEDDING BELLS RING IN BLUE-SKY PARADISE

TAILOR-MADE With so many idyllic settings in which to tie the knot, all you just need to do is 'I do', writes Thea Darrice

Jo Anne Brown, owner of Celebrations, planned her first wedding for 120 guests on Grand Cayman in 1996 and since then has overseen more than 800 weddings. A conversation with Miss Jo, as she's known, makes it hard to imagine why anyone *wouldn't* want to get married in the Cayman Islands.

We drink rum punch at the Caribbean Club's bar and watch the sun set over the blue waters of the Caribbean Sea, while she summarises what makes the Cayman Islands so special.

"Anything is possible here. You can marry on a long stretch of untouched white sandy beach, in a quaint chapel, a majestic church or at a luxury resort. The food is great, the weather is perfect – who could resist?"

A look through Miss Jo's portfolio demonstrates the point beautifully; her weddings range from intimate, torch-lit beach barbecues to exclusive hire of Grand Cayman's most luxurious hotels. But whatever your taste or budget there are apparently no limits to her creativity, or the potential offered by these islands.

The Cayman Islands were first sighted by Christopher Columbus on his final voyage in 1503 and since then the islands' indigenous creatures have had to share their home with pirates, shipwrecked sailors, refugees from the Spanish Inquisition and plenty of other interlopers.

Grand Cayman is now home to more than 94 different nationalities and only half of the residents are of Caymanian descent – giving the Caymanians a refreshingly accepting attitude towards foreigners.

Whereas the Caribbean has earned itself negative publicity due to the pack-'em-in formula that some of its resorts apply to weddings, in the Cayman Islands resorts have adopted a "one wedding a day" policy to ensure the bride and groom have a stress-free and personal experience.

These three, mostly flat jewels lie in the north-west Caribbean and are formed by large coral heads covering the peaks of a vast underwater ridge, known as the Cayman Trench. Grand Cayman is the largest at 76 sq miles; Cayman Brac and Little Cayman are located 89 miles east of Grand Cayman and are 14 sq miles and

Hitched in style: barefoot bliss, above; and bespoke attention to detail, from flowers to wedding breakfast, right

FIND OUT MORE

Turquoise Holidays is a Cayman Islands bridal specialist. To find out more about creating your dream wedding and honeymoon in this Caribbean paradise, call Johanna on 01494 678400 or visit www.turquoiseholidays.co.uk/caymanislands

10 sq miles respectively. Grand Cayman is the more sophisticated of the three Islands, with clusters of five-star hotels and villas spread along the popular Seven Mile Beach – where some of Cayman's most beautiful weddings take place – but it doesn't take long to drive out to delightfully traditional parts of the island with Cayman-style cottages overlooking the sea, if that's what you prefer.

There is the option of exclusive hire of one of the many relaxed restaurants such as the Lighthouse, which offers fresh fish cooked by the wonderful Chef Remy and is overseen by the inimitable Captain G.

At the most northern tip of the island is Rum Point. Adored by locals as well as visitors for its wonderful beaches and tall pine trees, it lends itself beautifully to an outdoor, shabby-chic style of wedding.

For something slightly grander, and closer to the capital of George Town, Pedro St James (lovingly referred to as Pedro's Castle), was the birthplace of democracy in the Cayman Islands. The driveway is flanked by mango and mahogany trees and the "castle" itself is a beautiful reconstruction

incorporating the foundations of the original building dating back to 1780. Its impressive shuttered windows and sweeping balconies perfectly reflect its importance in Caymanian politics.

Weddings here can take place under the gazebo or in the courtyard, where grounds are planted with pineapple and banana trees along with traditional medicinal and vegetable gardens.

Cayman Brac, the furthest east of the Islands, is more rugged, making it popular with walkers and nature lovers. With its numerous hiking trails, more than 20 species, grand pirate caves to explore some of the most impressive dive sites in the Caribbean, there's plenty here for adventurous and active couples.

Honeymooners in search of one of the best diving locations in the Caribbean instantly drawn to the sunken Russian warship, the Captain Keith Tibbetts.

Little Cayman, with its population of only 100 (two of whom are currently attending school there), is the smallest of the Islands. Its desert-island ambience, combined with the culinary talents



of Cordon Bleu-educated Gladys at Pirates Point, make it ideal for smaller, more low-key ceremonies.

Along with a wedding aisle crafted from pink and white conch shells and an abundance of candles, there's delicious food, most of which is sourced from the islands. Ingredients such as conch, fresh mango, papaya and coconut are transformed in Gladys' kitchen into dishes your guests will remember long after their sun has faded.

Only a 40-minute flight away, Little Cayman is also a perfect refuge for newlyweds who have taken their vows on Grand Cayman and would prefer a relaxed, low-key honeymoon. With its 12 beachfront bungalows set against a stunning Caribbean Sea backdrop, the Southern Cross Club is an enchanting example of bohemian, barefoot elegance.

One of the many benefits of marrying, or indeed honeymooning, on the Cayman Islands is the many activities on offer.

As Miss Jo points out, these make a great ice-breaker for guests as well as offering an opportunity to explore more

of the Islands. The spectacular reef teems with marine life, making snorkelling and scuba diving immensely popular, along with a visit to the legendary Stingray City, where you will be shown how to stroke a stingray while chest deep in the water.

For those guests who prefer non-aquatic activities there are cookery classes, helicopter tours, hiking trails (including the rugged Mastic Trail), rum tastings, spa activities and a visit to the Blue Iguana Recovery Program to choose from.

Alternatively, there are also 70 miles of sugar-white beaches on which to relax and appreciate the view with a cocktail in hand, while Miss Jo and her team conjure up your perfect wedding day.

Miss Jo offers one final tip for those tying the knot on the Islands.

"Use authentic Cayman touches to make your wedding stand out. Whether you have a rum cake as a wedding cake, a local steel band or welcome drinks served in a coconut shell, there is always something here you can incorporate into your special day to make it an experience both you and your guests will always remember."

Find your own slice of marriage heaven on Grand Cayman...



COTTON TREE

This secluded cluster of four luxury cottages nestles on a rarely visited stretch of coast in West Bay. Each cottage is fresh and contemporary, with modern amenities, and has two double bedrooms – each with an en-suite bathroom.

Staff are friendly, there's a daily maid service and a library of books, music and DVDs complemented by an eclectic selection of art and artefacts from around the world. The vibrant gardens are filled with butterflies and the spa pavilion is discreetly placed among the sea grape trees, and makes a welcome retreat from the sun, with shutters opening on to the azure sea.

Cotton Tree truly lends itself to a smaller wedding party, seated around the romantic white gazebo, where couples can take their vows looking out to sea.

THE RITZ-CARLTON

A favourite with celebrities and gracefully set in 144 acres of land stretching from sea to sea (the Caribbean to the North Sound), the Ritz-Carlton can cater to most tastes, though it's ideal for a dash of old-school Hollywood glamour.

Couples can choose between getting married barefoot on the beach, in the wedding gazebo surrounded by tropical flowers,

by the grand staircase or in the ballroom, which is perfect for larger weddings. Anything goes here – one couple recently created their own temporary nightclub for after-dinner dancing, complete with a personalised emblem. Staff are respected for their wonderful service and the on-site wedding planners can meet your every request to help create a truly bespoke and memorable wedding day.

Silver Rain, the chic La Prairie Spa, occupies 20,000 sq feet of the hotel and is not to be missed for some pre-wedding pampering.

THE CARIBBEAN CLUB

With its three-bedroom, three-bathroom luxury ocean-front cabanas overlooking the snow-white sand of Seven Mile Beach, this one's for couples who want to push the boat out. The condo-style hotel offers world-class on-site dining at Ristorante Luca, or private in-villa dining. Enjoy late-night poolside cocktails, play golf, scuba dive or practise your tennis serve. Kitchens can be fully stocked upon request.

QUEEN ELIZABETH II BOTANIC PARK

Opened by Queen Elizabeth II in 1994 this park (see page 4) has flourished into an oasis of fragrance and colour for Cayman parrots and

the rare blue iguanas. It is famous the only place in the world that the ghost orchid can be found.

The tropical gardens sprawl across 65 acres and can cater to any size wedding. The Heritage Garden features a quaint Caymanian cotta with an authentic "sand garden", while the irresistibly romantic Flor Colour Garden makes a perfect setting for a wedding reception.

As you walk along a shaded path the floral display begins with pink and slowly melts through the spectrum until you reach an open space of grass that leads to a white gazebo over-looking sun-soaked lily ponds.

UNDERWATER WEDDINGS

Finally, for couples after a wedding with a difference, underwater dive weddings in the warm, clear water surrounding the Cayman Islands are growing increasingly popular. Companies can arrange a private boat charter to a shallow location where an aisle can be created for the bride from pink and white conch shells, an ancient anchor doubles as an altar and blackboards are provided for the bride and groom to write their vows on.

The Cayman Islands boast some of the world's finest marine life and reefs so expect some surprise witnesses.



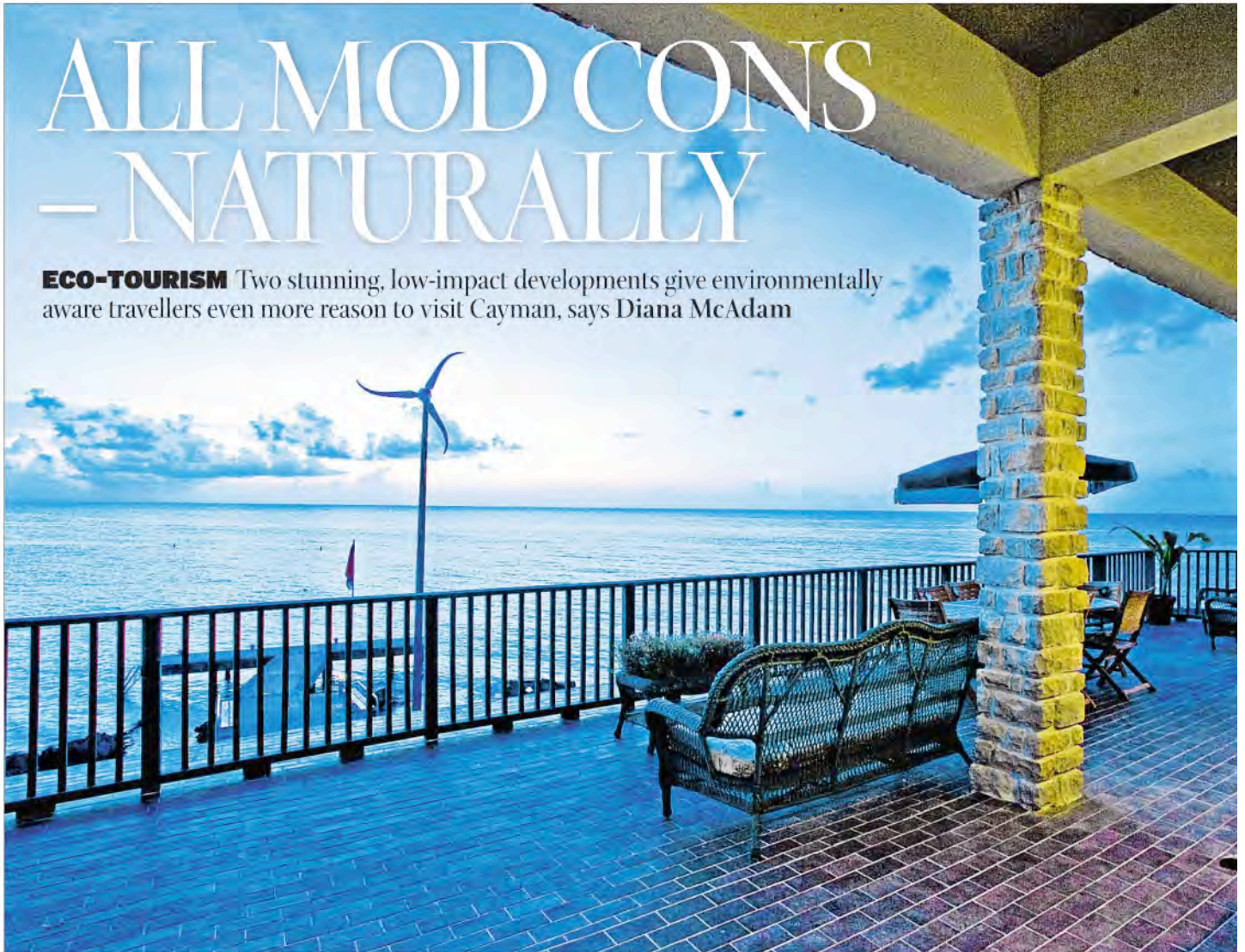
Tie the knot: at Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park or in a beach gazebo at the Ritz-Carlton, top

...and hop away on honeymoon

It's just a 40-minute flight by Twin Otter plane to the ultimate honeymoon paradise, Little Cayman – a coral cay almost undiscovered by the world. After a wedding with family and friends on Grand Cayman, what more could a couple ask for than to escape to this paradise island? Eighty-nine miles from its big sister, three tiny "barefoot luxury" resorts will cater to your every whim, from a moonlit picnic dinner on the beach to a private fishing or bespoke snorkelling trip. Enjoy.

ALL MOD CONS – NATURALLY

ECO-TOURISM Two stunning, low-impact developments give environmentally aware travellers even more reason to visit Cayman, says Diana McAdam



In recent years, Caymanians have recognised that the best way to attract visitors is to preserve their islands' natural beauty and invest in high-end, low-impact tourism. The International Ecotourism Society estimates that more than two-thirds of American and Australian travellers and an incredible 90 per cent of British tourists prefer to choose a destination that is environmentally aware – and supports both local communities and building from sustainable materials – over one that is not.

Grand Cayman has two such developments, both stunning and designed specifically to appeal to those who favour conservation over ostentation.

Stephen Broadbelt, the driving force behind one of them, is also a founding partner of dive operator Ocean Frontiers and the Compass Point Dive Resort, and is closely involved with many of the island's green initiatives.

"The dive market definitely favours a destination that manages its natural resources properly," he says. "Divers appreciate that our boats use biodiesel instead of petrol and that we have created 297 man-made moorings, which

protect the reefs by preventing 50,000 potentially damaging drops of an anchor per year. We also plan to add 68 more dive sites so we can rest the most popular ones."

Steve's development, the Cayman Diving Lodge, a 24-suite luxury resort in the island's East End, is due to open later this year.

"It's a beautiful site, right on the ocean, close to a sandy beach but away from the crowds, which is what the green consumer is looking for," he says. "Designing it has taken us on an incredible learning curve because there are always new innovations coming out using green technology, which mean that it is becoming increasingly easy to combine luxury and sustainability."

"Going green used to mean roughing it," he says. "But now it's possible to generate enough power through solar and also geo-thermal technology to run essentials such as incredibly efficient, very low-impact air-conditioning. You can even get a green elevator now, which generates its own power on the way back down."

"It does make construction more expensive but done

properly, eco-tourism is more economically viable and creates a development with a longer life."

From the deck of Lighthouse Point, a luxury dive development that opened last year on the island's North West Point, there are stunning panoramic views of the waters around Grand Cayman.

Owned and designed by Nancy and Jay Easterbrook, the three-quarter-acre site includes nine luxurious apartments, a restaurant and a dive centre. The 40ft dock leads directly to a healthy reef featuring mini walls 30ft-60ft deep, so everything is on the doorstep.

"We chose a site on the ironshore [the rugged rock coral that forms the islands' base] because we wanted to make it Caribbean in style and give it a nautical theme but to build to a category five hurricane rating," says Jay, who is the project's engineer, architect and designer.

The Easterbrooks used recycled or sustainable materials and theirs was the first wind-power permit to be approved on the islands.

Walking through the airy apartments, it is clear that Nancy and Jay's years of planning and close attention to detail have paid



The dive market favours any destination that manages its natural resources properly

off. Each of the two-bedroom, two-bathroom units has brass fittings, a solid wooden interior and all the mod cons of a luxury complex, except that these are powered by solar and wind energy (there is also a grid tie-in to ensure there is an uninterrupted supply).

For Nancy, owner and founder of Divetech, one of Cayman's foremost dive centres, building something that combines diving, first-rate accommodation and green living is dream come true.

"A project like this is not something you take on lightly.

It adds significantly to build costs, which are already high because land is at a premium on an island this small and all the materials have to be imported."

"But it has been worth it. I'm the first building in the Caribbean to be awarded a platinum rating under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) system," she says, bursting with pride. "What we have achieved here is unique."

Over on Little Cayman, the smallest of the three islands, sustainability has been a guiding principle for many years. It is hoped that the whole island, which has a population of just 150, only got electricity in 1985 and is virtually car free – could one day become a Green Globe certified destination.

As well as being the location of the Bloody Bay Marine Park, one of the world's most pristine marine eco-systems and renowned among the world's finest dive sites – it is the sanctuary for a plethora of wildlife including iguanas, rare red-footed boobies and frigate birds.

Little Cayman is also home to the Central Caribbean Marine

Survival comes out of the blue

WILDLIFE The world's rarest iguana is being coaxed back from the brink. By Diana McAdam

It is difficult to describe exactly how extraordinary Grand Cayman blue iguanas are in the flesh. Coming face to face with one on a tour of the Blue Iguana Recovery Program (BIRP) – or, if you are incredibly lucky, in the wild – really is like meeting a dinosaur.

Once Grand Cayman's largest land creatures, these giant lizards can grow up to 5ft in size and live for more than 60 years. They vary in colour from grey to a vivid blue – their colour intensifies in response to heat and during the mating season – have red eyes and black feet with long claws.

According to Fred Burton, BIRP's director, as well as being highly intelligent, blue iguanas possess acute hearing and colour vision, have highly evolved senses of taste and smell, and enjoy complicated social lives.

Their closest relative is the brown iguana, which lives on Grand Cayman's sister islands Little Cayman and Cayman Brac, and is in turn a sub-species evolved from the Cuban iguana.

The BIRP facility, which is located in Grand Cayman's Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park, contains about 100 caged blue iguanas of varying ages and 40 adults of breeding age. Pairs are selectively mated, as the aim is to keep the gene pool as broad as possible.

A healthy female can lay anything up to 24 eggs in a single clutch – although the average is closer to 10 – and the programme currently has a rate of successful hatchlings running at 90 per cent.

Visitors can even sponsor their own giant blue lizard. Portsmouth Football Club, also known as "The Blues", recently adopted a four-year-old female who they have called Pompey.

BIRP was launched in 2002 to protect the blue iguana, which is currently the most endangered iguana in the world. Although they inhabited the island for around three million years with no natural predators, there are now thought to be only 10-25 left in the wild thanks to a massive increase in the number of rats, cats, dogs and cars (iguanas like to sunbathe on



paved roads and are frequently run over). Add to this list the fragmentation of their natural habitat due to land development and it is not surprising that numbers have reached such a critical level.

"Historically, they would live in the bush and would bury their eggs where the bush meets the beach – right where the roads were built on the island," explains head warden John Marotta. "They are solitary animals and a roaming male would have a territory of about 30 acres, a female only one or two."

"The breeding season lasts from the end of February to the beginning of May and the eggs take 10 weeks to hatch. Here, we make sure that we know where

Lounge lizard: blue iguanas are in the habit of sunbathing on hot Tarmac – road deaths are partly to blame for the decline in their numbers



the females have laid so that we can dig the eggs up and incubate them."

It was recently announced that 200 acres of government-owned, dry shrubland in the east interior of Grand Cayman has been set aside to aid the work of the BIRP.

"Ultimately, we are aiming to have at least 1,000 free-roaming animals in the wild," explains John. "At that point they will go from being critically endangered to endangered and the wild population we have released will be self-sustaining."

Today, thanks entirely to the Blue Iguana Recovery Program's success, these unique creatures really do have a future.

● www.blueiguana.ky

BLUE IGUANAS AT A GLANCE

- The Grand Cayman blue iguana is the most endangered iguana in the world. There are only 10-25 left in the wild.
- They can live for more than 60 years.
- They eat flowers and fruit and need soil for their nest.
- They have thick, scaly skin, strong teeth and jaws and powerful digging claws.
- They lie in the sun to get warm, changing from grey/blue as they do so. The blue colour also intensifies during the mating season.



Blue wonder: stunning views (top and below) from Lighthouse Point, a luxurious, sustainable new dive development

Institute, a non-profit reef research facility that publishes the *Green Guide to the Cayman Islands*, which explains how we can help to preserve the islands' marine environment.

Peter Hillenbrand, chairman of the institute, is a passionate conservationist who describes himself as a "fish hugger". He also owns the island's gorgeous Southern Cross Club, which has been operating for more than 50 years. With just 15 beautifully renovated beachside suites, it is the epitome of barefoot elegance. It was also one of the first resorts in the Caribbean to reduce its carbon footprint and adopt green practices.

"Eco-tourism is about using the natural resources of sunshine and wind power, it's about sewage and land management and making as little impact on the environment as possible," says Peter. "But it's also about education. Simply raising the issue creates awareness."

"We are doing the right things now and hopefully other islands in the region will follow our lead. The biggest mistake we could make as a tourist destination is not to follow it through."



HIGHLIGHTS FOR NATURE LOVERS

The Cayman Islands are said to have more plant and animal species even than the Galapagos. This natural wealth is best seen at the Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park and along the Mastic Trail on Grand Cayman, and all over Little Cayman and Cayman Brac. Tours by the Cayman Islands National Trust can be arranged by visiting www.nationaltrust.org.ky

ORCHIDS

The wild banana orchid, the national flower, is one of the islands' 26 orchid species, five of which are not found anywhere else. They include the exquisite ghost orchid – the rarest in the world.

TREES

The national tree is the silver thatch palm. The mango bears the most plentiful fruit, with 65,000lb harvested every season.

ANIMALS

The islands boast 57 species of butterfly and nine bat species, as well as the blue iguana, the rarest iguana on Earth. A shy resident is the agouti, a rabbit-sized rodent. The national bird is the Cayman parrot (left). Little Cayman, in particular, is a favourite with birders who come to spot red-footed boobies, frigate birds, West Indian whistling ducks, egrets, snowy egrets, herons and many other species.

MARINE LIFE

Gorgonian, barrel and tube sponges and other colourful formations, make the experience extraordinary for even the most seasoned diver. Cayman is synonymous with stingrays, which vibrate up to your hand at Stingray City. Other marine life often associated with the Cayman Islands are sea turtles – the most popular land attraction is Boatswain's Beach Turtle Farm.

The Cayman Islands have some of the most strict marine conservation laws in the Caribbean, put in place to protect coral, sponges, sea fans, fish and all other forms of sea life by means of replenishment zones, environmental zones and no-diving zones.

FULL-ON FLAVOURS OF THE ISLANDS

CUISINE Cayman is a melting-pot of different cultures and the evidence appears in all its glory on the plate of Jane Milton

The Cayman Islands, covering 76 square miles or so, has a population made up of nearly 100 different nationalities – each of which has contributed to the rich food heritage of the islands.

Whether your preference is for European, native or Japanese food, in fine dining or casual family-style restaurants or beach bars, Cayman can offer you an impressive array of choice.

The Lighthouse at Breakers is a typical example, where you can eat Italian-style seafood and enjoy incredible ocean views with warm Cayman hospitality.

Giuseppe, the proprietor, is a very friendly Italian and Remy, his head chef, hails from Goa. Their menu offers local dishes such as carpaccio of conch and Cayman conch fritters, Sicilian-style snapper fillet with a fresh tomato relish and a Caribbean seafood grill of lobster, shrimps and mahi mahi.

Remy hosts weekly cookery demonstrations where he cooks and feeds about eight guests all seated at his special table just outside the main kitchen.

There is a strong Cuban influence apparent on the menu at Hemingway's on Seven Mile Beach. It's the perfect setting for a romantic meal and a night-time stroll back along the sand, when even late at night the sea is still warm. Try the Havana rum and coconut shrimps, crab cakes or the signature paella – the last inspired by Ernest Hemingway's fascination with bullfighters.

Native Cayman dishes are widely offered, of course, but Corita's Kitchen in George Town has an impressive range of traditional Caribbean dishes with a distinctive Caymanian flavour, including stew pork with peppers and ginger, barbecue chicken, conch (pronounced *conk* locally) fritters and Cayman-style mahi mahi in a sweet sauce for lovers of fish. The main dishes are all served with fried plantain, dumplings and rice and peas.

Corita has been cooking for islanders for more than 40 years and she is still enthusiastically

introducing delicious new dishes to her impressive repertoire.

West Bay is home to one of Grand Cayman's newest, smartest eateries. Osetra Bay is a contemporary outdoor restaurant and bar with a leaf-thatched canopy to offer shade from the hot daytime sun. Perfect for lunch or dinner and with a well-stocked bar for drinks, it has a superb tapas menu offering dishes such

by the Queen for her contribution to island life. She works on her menus with her chefs, finding inspiration in her frequent travels abroad. She offers one set menu each evening but lots of options within it. Many of Gladys's guests return again and again – and it's easy to see why.

Back on Grand Cayman, Eric Ripert at Blue at the Ritz-Carlton creates a fine dining experience with some great tasting menus, giving diners the chance to try red snapper, crab, mahi mahi and cobia all in one evening – perfect for those who can never decide. This is the island's only American Automobile Association Five Diamond restaurant.

As with many of the restaurants on the Cayman Islands, respect for marine life is uppermost in the chefs' minds and Eric works with Seafood Watch to ensure that his choices for the menu do not impact negatively on fish stocks.

If you are interested to know more about one of Cayman's most unusual local beverages, Seven Fathoms Rum, then I recommend a tour of the distillery in George Town. This rum is the only spirit in the world to be aged in the sea, at seven fathoms deep, and during the tour your guide will explain exactly how it is crucial to the unique flavour.

What they will never tell you is where the barrels are tucked away, but they do say it's somewhere very discreet in the light of the thousands of divers who visit the Islands each year.

At the end of the tour, visitors are offered an opportunity to sample the rum in a tutored tasting. It is distinctive and has a rich, buttery flavour. Tours can be arranged for small numbers of people and staff are relatively flexible about when they run, so can usually accommodate anyone who turns up on spec.

There are so many restaurants and endless opportunities to eat like a king on the islands that it is only really possible to scratch the surface of what's in store here. The Cayman Islands leave you spoilt for choice because they really do have something of quality to offer everyone.



This rum is the only spirit in the world to be aged at sea – seven fathoms deep

as Vietnamese pork balls, crisp oyster skewers and *arancini* (rice croquettes).

Just a short stroll from Osetra Bay is Morgan's Harbour, looking out across the tranquil North Sound. The menu focuses mainly on fish and the chef's ceviche claims to be the island's best. The Sunday barbecue here has a very relaxed atmosphere attracting locals and visitors alike for a lazy afternoon of food and wine.

On Little Cayman (population 150), Pirate's Point Resort offers gourmet dinners for residents and also non-residents when space allows. Cordon bleu-trained Gladys Howard, the inimitable dive master and has been recognised



Food of love: veteran chef Corita, left: dining at dusk, top, Captain Herman's Fish Fry, bottom r



LEARN TO COOK LIKE A LOCAL

Wherever I go in the world, my photos from the trip are rarely of beautiful vistas or tourist attractions. Instead, they are of the local food markets, street food sellers and the dishes I ate. Food helps me to understand a culture and get closer to its people.

On a recent trip to the Cayman Islands, I ate a lot of native food and visited the flourishing Saturday morning farmers' market. Caymanian food has both British and African influences, but the evolution of its cuisine has been nudged along by an abundance of locally grown ingredients and the teeming resources of the Caribbean Sea (though much of the latter is now protected by marine legislation). Keen to learn more about the food and people, I decided to take a cookery class.

On Grand Cayman, the Cayman Islands National Trust runs classes led by local people – including a baker – who are keen to pass on their knowledge and keep the traditional native dishes alive. Such events often see them share with the trust's guests their family recipes for dishes such as papaw heavy cake, conch fritters, fried land crab and local bush teas.

Classes have no more than 10 pupils in them, so there is plenty of opportunity to sample the dishes, ask questions and hear stories about life on the islands from local Caymanian people.

On Little Cayman I was lucky enough to meet Gladys Howard, who runs Pirates Point Resort. Gladys describes her guests in two words: divers or relaxers. As a relaxer, I felt very guilty enjoying a sumptuous three-course dinner and then a lavish Caymanian-themed buffet lunch the following day.

Gladys, a home economist, came from Texas to live on Little Cayman in 1986 and run Pirates Point. Now in her seventies, she abounds with energy. I joined her for a morning cookery class which began with a tour of the island in her pick-up truck to forage for fruits and herbs – both on the open road and in other islanders' gardens.

We chatted on the way about local dishes and getting supplies on to the island for the meals she



Spice of life: cooking takes on new flavours

cooks for guests. We even had time for a quick visit to the school and its two pupils.

Our haul included a rosemary-like herb, some green papaya and another long, thin glossy leaf which she called *culantro*, with a similar taste to coriander. We used these in a wonderful Asian-style salad we had for lunch. All this in the space of a single morning – unmissable.

● Cookery demonstrations from the Cayman Islands National Trust: www.nationaltrust.org.ky
 Pirates Point Resort cookery classes, email Gladys Howard: piratept@candw.ky

JANE MILTON

Feast your ears and eyes on this...

CULTURE The warmth of the islands and the people inspire creativity on every level, as Shane Aquart explains

There are close to 200 registered artists and several hundred musicians practising their craft in the Cayman Islands. This is a vibrant and eclectic "artscape" driven by high disposable income among the local population and a head-spinning diversity of different nationalities – 98 of them at the last count – each with its own artistic vision.

Add influential national arts authorities and strong local arts societies to the mix – plus a constant stream of new faces among visitors to the islands – and it's easy to see why this little corner of paradise enjoys such freedom of expression.

Cayman has a population of close to 50,000 people, some of them globally famous such as Iggy Pop. They are handsomely served by a National Gallery, a National Museum, National Trust, a Visual Arts Society, a National Cultural Foundation, a Drama Society, a National Choir and Orchestra and numerous galleries, fairs, clubs, festivals and associations all directed at the improvement of arts and culture. It's clearly a place that's culturally rich and artistically diverse.

As a visual artist living and working on the islands, I find the light quality, mood and strength of patronage provide an easy environment in which to be creative. It's no coincidence that my work is bright and full of rich colour and whimsy; all reflections of the life around me. Cayman is the type of place – bathed in warmth in every sense – that makes art happen.

For the visitor to Cayman, this means there is a splendid variety of organisations devoted to protecting the Islands' heritage – all of them offering things to see and do.

The National Trust protects buildings and sites of national interest and significance, such as the ancient dry forests of the Mastic Trail and the centuries-old Mission House.

The National Cultural Foundation works to preserve and engender arts that are culturally important to Cayman, both historical and modern. These include the preservation of Miss Lassie's house; the recording of the music of celebrated Caymanian fiddler Radley Gourzong;



It's easy to see why this little corner of paradise enjoys such creative freedom

and the production of *Rundown*, an annual comedy revue, to name but a few.

Miss Lassie, who passed away in 2003, was what's known as an "intuitive" painter. At the age of 62 she had what she described as a visionary experience and from that point was driven to paint the religious images that were bouncing around in her head.

Like many intuitives, Miss Lassie painted on anything and everything she could lay her hands to, including all over the walls and windows of her house and even the refrigerator. Since her death, an effort has been made to preserve Miss Lassie's house. It is now destined to be a museum with an annex earmarked for use to house the National Gallery's "mind's eye intuitive art centre" for community education.

At the National Museum, collections

devoted to both natural and cultural heritage offer a dive respite from the sun.

The National Gallery is a focus for the visual arts and hosts eight temporary exhibitions local and international artist each year, plus foreign film and evening discussion panels.

The Drama Society performs at the Prospect Playhouse, a dedicated troupe of amateur actors, while the Visual Arts Society has a constant flow of classes and art exhibitions. But beyond the plethora of authorities and societies, the still more to entice the traveller including private establishments such as the Guy Harvey Gall. Regarded as the world's pre-marine wildlife artist, Dr Har has made his home in the Cayman Islands.

Workshops, public spaces, coffee houses, bookstores, restaurants and places such as Camana Bay and the Ritz Cafe offer ever-changing outlets for expression, from poetry to comedy and live music of every possible hue. There's even an although with the recent death of Stanley Panton this particular form of the arts is currently looking for a new patron.

On top of this are all the festivals, the most high profile of which is a three-day jazz festival in December, last year starring singer Alicia Keyes. In February alone, we have Art@Govern and the Cayman Arts Festival, following hot on the heels of the Cayman Culinary Festival, a guest appearance by well-known American chef and author Anthony Bourdain, of *Kitchen Confidential* fame.

Gone is the cliché of a backwater island with dated habits. Cayman is a vibrant, World country with a strong of law, a high standard of living higher per capita income than either the US or Britain and culturally and socially significant amenities to match.

Better still, it has the bustling cosmopolitan variety of city all boxed up in a town charm – set in idyllic, sun-kissed Caribbean localities

● Shane Aquart lives in the Cayman Islands and is an author of crime novels under the name Mic Shane.

Sound and vision: visits of the music festivals, or browses Cayman Market, i





DEEP BLUE BLISS

DIVING AND SNORKELLING Tim Ecott dives the marine park at Bloody Bay on Little Cayman

The flat blue surface gives no sign of what lies beneath. The water is a dark mirror, so calm that our boat is barely moving, tied up to one of the permanent mooring buoys in Bloody Bay Marine Park. I am with four other divers from Little Cayman's Southern Cross Club and we are about to visit The Great West Wall.

We are being briefed by Mike, our Dutch divemaster who has come to Cayman via the Seychelles and the Red Sea. His well-worn but trusty buoyancy jacket has been underwater more times than the rest of us put together. After talking us through his plan for how far we will swim along the reef, he ends with a cheery grin and the order: "Let's get wet!"

I step off the dive platform at the back of our boat and bob to the surface to adjust my mask before descending. Below me there is a patchwork of white sand, dotted with lumpy outcrops of coral.

When everyone is ready, we descend slowly and I am immediately startled by the clarity of the water around us. I have been here before and am instantly reminded why Little Cayman remains my favourite Caribbean diving destination. The island is

tiny, just 10 miles long and about a mile wide. Blossom Village comprises little more than the supermarket and the post office, and the airport is still a grass strip with very little in the way of a terminal.

Life on Little Cayman can crack on at quite a pace if you do two or three dives every day. Making time to cycle up the road to the Booby Pond Nature reserve to watch the red-footed boobies squabble with the frigate birds over their fish catch or hitching a ride up to Point of Sand to snorkel off the perfect beach are favourites, but it is the fish I really come to see.

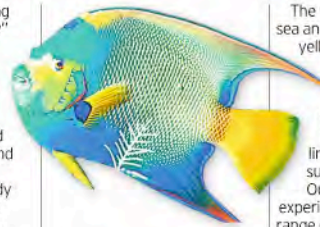
Most of the accommodation here is geared towards divers, whether it's at the Southern Cross Club, the Little Cayman Beach Resort or Gladys Howard's uniquely atmospheric Pirate's Point lodge. One of the best things about the island is that most people are here for the same reason – to explore the sea.

As I sink towards the reef, which is no more than 30ft below the surface, I spot one of my old friends – the Nassau grouper. The grumpy, downturned mouth and tiger-stripe pattern on its flanks are unmistakable. They are also among the largest fish here and many of them have

learned to follow divers as they swim along the reef wall. They aren't being "friendly" exactly, it's more that they like to use us as camouflage and dart out from behind our shadow to swoop down and snack on some of the smaller fish caught unawares.

Nearer to the reef there are bright red squirrelfish with enormous dark eyes, and a yellowtail damselfish. The latter has fluorescent light blue spots along its body and a dark vermilion anal fin, telling me that this is a juvenile. The adults are less flamboyant, becoming pale yellow all over and far less noticeable. Fortunately, the grouper is not following me now and the damselfish is safe.

I can potter about on the reef top for a long time, but Bloody Bay offers the constant thrill of combining the shallow reef with its famously sheer wall dives. There is little warning of what lies over the lip of the coral plateau but swim over the edge and there is nothing but blue space. The reef plummets thousands of feet into the abyss, one of the deepest parts of the entire Caribbean Sea. Using the reef as a reference point, I sink slowly downwards. This is why Bloody Bay is so special.



What lies beneath: clockwise, Doc Poulson wreck; a dazzling display of soft corals; one of the 'locals'

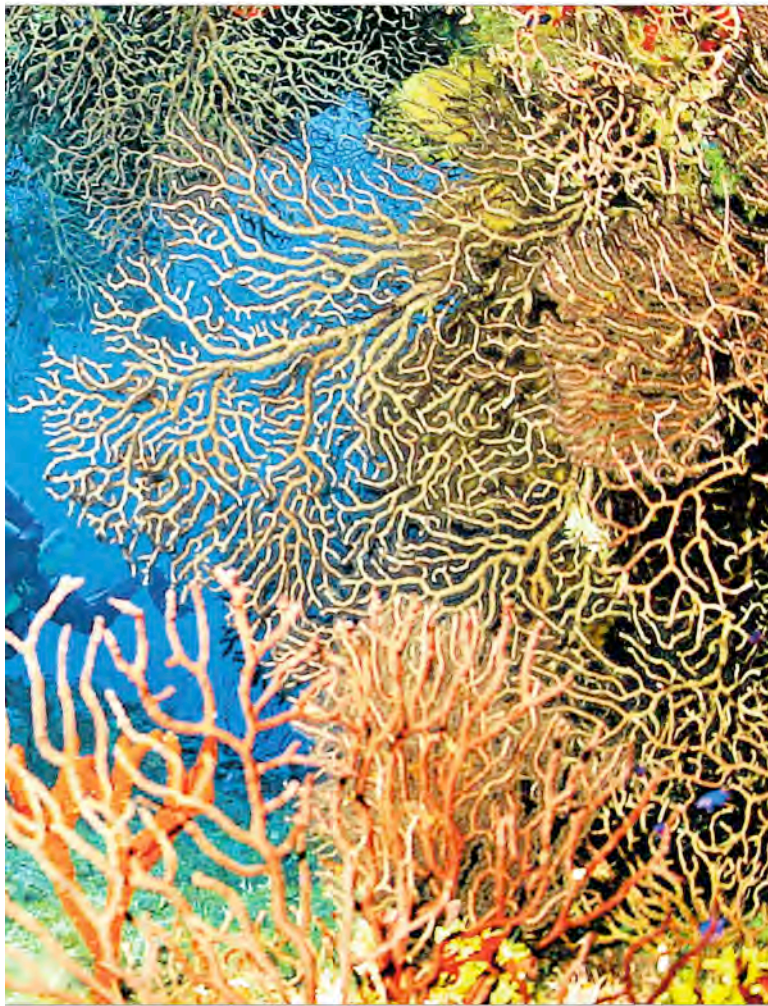
The wall is covered in sponges, sea anemones and coral in shades of yellow, black and brown. There are yellow, copper-coloured sea anemones and pale pink barrel sponges in many giant laundry baskets waiting to be filled.

I spy a small arrow crab, all spindly limbs like a daddy longlegs with a surreally long snout.

Our group of divers is an orderly but experienced enough to stay within safe range of one another, but each intent on observing the life on the wall at a sedate pace. Watching marine life is just the same as looking for game on an African safari: slower you move, the more you see.

After almost an hour, we return to the boat. A well-camouflaged shape catches my eye at the edge of the reef. It is a bahawskbill turtle, no more than a foot long. Calmly going about its business, it sifts through the coral for something to eat before heading to the surface to breathe. And I must follow.

● Tim Ecott is the author of *Neutral Buoyancy: Adventures in a Liquid World* (Penguin £9.99)



THE TOP 10 UNDERWATER EXPERIENCES IN CAYMAN

1 Bloody Bay Wall, Little Cayman

This protected marine area at the western end of Little Cayman remains one of the Caribbean's most spectacular dive sites. Crystal visibility and a seemingly endless drop-off are the unique features of this wall, decorated with giant sponges, gorgonians and local reef fish.

2 Keith Tibbett's Wreck, Cayman Brac

This 330ft former Russian frigate was deliberately sunk at the edge of an underwater canyon in 1996. Home to more than 100 species of marine life, this is an exciting deep dive.

3 Compass Point, Grand Cayman

Located at the less populous East End of Grand Cayman, Compass Point offers wall diving and the chance to snorkel and dive some of the Caribbean's healthiest reefs where colourful parrot fish, elegant stingrays and tubular trumpet fish will keep you company.

4 Grouper Grotto, East End, Grand Cayman

Fissures in the reef and a mixture of tunnels and swim-through channels identify this interesting dive site, where the local populations of Nassau grouper can be found. This is an easy shallow dive with a good range of reef life.

5 Wilderness Wall, Cayman Brac

The southern side of the Brac offers similar diving to the



Spoilt for choice: a stellar choice of dive sites awaits

neighbouring sister island, Little Cayman. Wilderness Wall has the characteristic deep drop-off into the blue, but has crevices and sand chutes where turtles, horse-eye jacks and snappers hide. Yellow tube sponges and giant brown barrel sponges add to the other-worldly atmosphere.

6 Point of Sand, Little Cayman

This uninhabited beach is one of the prettiest in the islands. Set at the eastern tip of Little Cayman, it offers excellent snorkelling, with regular turtle sightings on the reef – though check the currents before venturing too far offshore.

7 Nancy's Cup of Tea, Jackson's Bay, Little Cayman

This shallow dive at the eastern edge of Jackson's Bay allows divers to explore coral heads and

gullies along the reef top, as well as the large coral pinnacle join to the deep wall by a narrow swim-through. Angel fish, mor eels and groupers are among residents here.

8 Dive with a Researcher Central Caribbean Marine Institute

Experienced divers who want to learn more about marine life have the chance to sign up for the "Dive with a Researcher" programmes run by the CCMI on Little Cayman. You can help study coral and invertebrates in the company of leading scientists during the summer months, while staying at the institute. More details at www.reefresearch.org

9 The Kittiwake, Seven Mile Beach

April this year will see the creation of a brand new dive site. The 250ft USS Kittiwake, a former navy patrol vessel, is being sunk in the shallow water off the northern end of Seven Mile Beach, Grand Cayman. There, she'll rest in about 60ft water, where corals and fish congregated to create an artificial reef. See below for more detail.

10 Stingray City, North Sound

Often referred to as the world's best 12ft dive, Stingray City is a shallow sand bar where snorkellers and scuba divers congregated to interact with placid southern stingrays. Non-swimmers can do this trip too – the stingrays congregate in as little as 3ft of water to be hand fed.

LEARNING TO DIVE

Wherever you stay in the Cayman Islands, you are never far from the beach or a dive centre. Boat excursions to offshore dive sites are available on all three islands and dive centres will usually collect you from your hotel or guest house and drop you back there after a day's diving.

Cayman's warm sea temperatures – between 78F and 85F (26C-29C) – take much of the stress out of learning, making it possible to dive with the minimum of equipment. With no rivers running into the sea, and a lack of pollution, the Cayman Islands also boast some of the clearest waters in the world. Visibility can often exceed 130ft. Cayman's dive sites are also generally free of strong currents, making them a good choice for beginners.

Learning to dive can be a fun family adventure too, with courses available for children aged 10 years or more, while those as young as eight can get a taste of diving with the fun PADI Bubblemaker experience in a resort swimming pool.

The majority of dive centres will use the internationally recognised PADI (Professional Association of Diving Instructors) system of teaching. Combining some classroom training with swimming pool sessions, and finally your instruction in the sea, the programme allows anyone in reasonable health to learn to dive in just a few days.

Some tourists prefer to speed up the process (and increase the time they can spend in the water) by taking a "referral course" in the UK with a local dive centre and completing their training once they arrive.

Several dive centres in Cayman also allow you to begin your course over the internet using "e-learning" modules, saving you time in the classroom once your holiday has begun.

● **Further information about PADI and a list of accredited dive centres can be found at www.padi.co.uk**
For a full list of Cayman Islands dive centres visit www.caymanislands.co.uk

New Kittiwake site set to enthral

The tax-free status of the Cayman Islands actually dates back to 1794, when a convoy of English merchant traders sailing home from Jamaica was blown on to the treacherous reefs off Grand Cayman's East End.

Ten ships were wrecked but the passengers and crew were saved, prompting a grateful George III to grant Caymanians freedom from tax in perpetuity. So it is fitting that more than 200 years later, a wreck is set to further enhance the islands' dive industry.

Over the past months the USS Kittiwake, a 2,000-ton decommissioned US navy vessel, has been deep-cleaned and stripped of all hazardous materials in preparation for her sinking off Grand Cayman's West Shore in June this year, where she will become a dive attraction and artificial reef.

The first American ship to have been sold to a foreign country expressly for this purpose, she is the second major vessel to be sunk off the islands. A decade ago, the MV Captain Keith Tibbetts, a spectacular 11ft battered Cold War relic built in the Soviet Union for the Cuban navy, was scuttled off Cayman Brac.



All aboard: the USS Kittiwake is set to become an artificial reef

Today, this communist cadaver rests 10 fathoms deep on a soft bed of sand and is an eerily peaceful sanctuary for delicate corals, vivid sponges and dazzling tropical fish.

Since its sinking, violent storms have broken the Russian frigate in two, leaving the foredeck listing at a drunken angle and jagged entrails strewn across the seabed.

However, if anything, this and the wreck's accelerated state of

decay only add to its ghostly allure. Algae lines the dim corridor and once-proud bridge, while weed feathers the rusting bow rails and decks the silent cabins. Shadowy creatures shelter in every crook and crevice, while giant-eyed silver squid hover like alien craft by the massive gun turrets and tiny sea horses canter into the gaping mouths of former missile launch tubes.

It is hoped that the Kittiwake

will prove to be similarly attractive to both human and marine life and relieve the burden on the island's most popular

"The Kittiwake used to sail these waters so has ties with islands," says Nancy Eastert who has spent seven years planning the multi-million-dollar project. "Also, she's a submarine rescue vessel, which is cool for divers as she includes a decompression chamber and a diving bell."

The scheme is part of an ongoing collaboration between the Department of Tourism, Department of the Environment and the private sector to preserve the natural treasures of the Cayman Islands.

The Cayman diving industry now 50 years old but, thanks to this conservation programme and the two undersea walls that surround Grand Cayman – part of the Cayman Trough, which reaches depths of more than four miles – there is little evidence of the dead and damaged reefs that have become a sad reality for many other of the world's top dive destinations.

DIANA McJ



TREATS IN STORE FOR

FAMILY FUN This trio of exquisite islands offers hours of entertainment for all ages, writes Susan Ward-Davies, after

It's 8am and I am the only person on "our" beach, a narrow ribbon of white that curves round a glass-like bay. A few egrets pose elegantly in the water and pelicans perch on wooden jetties, waiting for the flying fish that occasionally arc out of the water. There isn't a sound.

But this isn't some deserted Robinson Crusoe island; it is the tax haven of Grand Cayman, which I'd imagined to be all supersized cruise ships, duty-free shopping malls and offshore banking facilities.

True, the beach here is flanked with luxury rental villas, ours included, many with their own speedboats – our neighbour even has a seaplane – but even though it was half term, most were empty.

Low season here is from April to December, which meant that we practically had the whole bay to ourselves – especially first thing in the morning.

We're a group of five parents and six children aged between two and 10 sharing Emmanuel,

a five-bedroom house with a pool, right on the beach. It takes about 30 seconds to get from my bed to the warm sea and about 10 to reach the pool, via the French doors to our bedroom.

You need to wake early, preferably by 9am if you're looking for manageable heat, while in the sun of the afternoon you definitely want to be ensconced either in a hammock under a palm tree or enjoying an air-con-cooled siesta indoors.

Emmanuel is in Cayman Kai, on the quiet, northern side of the 22-mile long island. At the western end is Seven Mile Beach, where you stay if you want big hotels, bars and restaurants. Cayman Kai, all sleepy bays and simple beach bars, is even better for families.

There are no hotels but plenty of self-catering rentals ranging from quaint, two-bedroomed, fan-cooled cottages with rocking chairs on the porch to grander villas with pools, air conditioning and big American-style kitchens. To take the sting out of

feeding for yourself, you can take advantage of a local food delivery service: caymanshoppers.com. Place your order from the UK and a stocked fridge will be waiting on your arrival. And for a real treat, Catering Cayman will come and prepare a slap-up dinner for you.

If you want to go out, the Kaibo

For a real treat, Catering Cayman will come and make dinner for you

Yacht Club offers low-key "action" with a few tables in the sand, occasional bands and simple bar food such as conch fritters and home-made burgers.

It feels totally safe here, so even at night the children can run around on the beach with parents close by. Nearby is Rum Point, a slightly bigger bay with a

restaurant, souvenir shop and water sports outlet where you can rent jet skis.

It's only when we venture in to the capital George Town that we get a taste of how the other tourists live. There is something cutely Legoland-ish about Grand Cayman's capital, which boasts more than 500 banks and a harbour dwarfed by cruise ships.

We take a trip in the Atlantis Submarine and Observatory. The Cayman Islands is one of the top scuba-diving destinations in the world and the spaceship-esque sub offers a snippet of underwater life without getting wet.

Around £60 buys you a 30-minute, 100ft-deep trip inside the sub and we enjoy the novelty of having a fish-eye view of the deep and its denizens, even though the children are anticipating edgier thrills such as sharks nudging the portholes.

You get an even better sample of Cayman's colourful marine life while out snorkelling. We take a boat out from Rum



Highway code: iguanas have right of way; and, clockwise from bottom left, the turtle sanctuary; water erupts from a blowho snorkellers; the Atlantis submarine; canoeing through mangro

Point and pass a peaceful half-hour or so gliding over beautiful coral formations that flicker with a rainbow of fish.

Once the children are confident in the water, we head over to Stingray City, where our captain throws handfuls of squid into the water to prompt the regular

invasion of giant stingrays. We are surrounded in minutes. I'my distance but the children squeal delightedly at their so skins and are encouraged to touch them, no matter that s are up to 6ft across.

More tranquil is our half-hour canoe ride through the

Meet Grand Cayman's pretty little sisters

HAPPY HOPPING Don't miss the opportunity to visit Little Cayman and Cayman Brac, writes Diana McAdams

The distinct character of Grand Cayman's little sisters, Little Cayman and Cayman Brac, make them a must-visit, especially as both are only a short flight away.

It was Christopher Columbus who first spotted Cayman Brac and Little Cayman – which lie a little less than 90 miles east-north-east of Grand Cayman – when his ship was blown off course in 1503.

He named them Las Tortugas because of the huge number of turtles he spotted on the islands.

They were rechristened the Cayman Islands by Sir Francis Drake, who landed on them during a voyage in 1585-86.

He took the word "caymanas" from the Carib name for crocodiles after spotting large crocodilians that lived on both Little Cayman and Cayman Brac. But by the late 19th century, these reptiles had been hunted to extinction.

During the heyday of piracy, rugged Cayman Brac was used as a haven as it had freshwater wells and bountiful food. The swashbuckling pirates have long gone but the pristine reefs and clear, deep, offshore waters – protected by strict conservation laws – remain the treasures that make Grand Cayman's little sisters so special.

The Brac, which is generally considered to be the most traditionally Caymanian of the islands, is known for "the Bluff", a massive central limestone outcrop that rises steadily along the length of the island. It has the most rugged terrain of the three islands and an abundance of wildlife and native plants, including one known as the dildo cactus.

Divers flock to the many wrecks that are sunk off the island, including a 300ft-long former Russian frigate that has been rechristened the MV Captain Keith Tibbetts after a well-known Cayman Brac politician.

The Brac also appeals to walkers, climbers and fishermen and several bat-filled caves can be found around the island, including Rebecca's Cave, which contains the grave of a young girl lost in the great 1932 hurricane and is a Cayman National Heritage Site.

Little Cayman, with a population of 150, is the smallest of the three islands, just five miles from Cayman Brac. It's also a wildlife paradise. Giant iguanas and rare red-footed boobies roam freely and the pristine beaches are usually deserted. It is also completely flat, which somehow adds to the air of total relaxation.

Little Cayman is, however, most celebrated for the incredible reefs and walls of its Bloody Bay Marine Park and for the transparency of its waters, which make swimming, diving or snorkelling an unforgettable experience.

Turtles, sharks, parrot fish and groupers glide through the brightly coloured coral gardens, a sure sign of healthy reefs.

The island is also home to the Central Caribbean Marine Institute, a non-profit organisation that has Prince Edward as its patron and which works to protect the Cayman reefs and to promote both marine and environmental conservation.



EVERYONE

renting a villa on a deserted Grand Cayman beach

mangroves. Tom, who leads our tour, finds upside-down jellyfish and giant starfish to amuse the youngsters and explains the coastal ecosystem in a way that fascinates them. They love the novelty of paddling around in a kayak on the warm water.

We spend longer at Boatswains Beach, a well-organised marine park and turtle sanctuary where you can easily while away a whole day watching sharks swimming in the free-form pools and learning about the turtles.

There are more wildlife encounters at the Blue Iguana Recovery Program, a captive breeding facility that aims to protect the remaining 200 or so blue iguanas left on the island. It's fun and informative, but do take sunhats.

For me, the best is saved until last – a 50-minute hop on a 20-seater plane to a long coral cay floating in an iridescent blue sea and peppered with pretty clapboard cottages.

With its population of 150 and 2,000 iguanas (who have right of

way), Little Cayman is like a miniature Eden.

The island has a whimsical "last outpost" feel, with its tiny airstrip, handful of small hotels and B&Bs and just one school – where the headmistress, Miss Veronique, has only two pupils.

We drive to one end of the island and picnic on a perfect white beach. Although Little Cayman is close enough for a day trip from Grand Cayman, a few days here in a tiny cottage would be heaven.

On our last day in Cayman, there is just time for a final walk along the deserted beach, where we sit on the jetty watching the pelicans while the giggling children try to scoop up fish in their plastic buckets.

As a farewell treat, we take a quick whizz around the island in a helicopter, swooping down over Stingray City and all the other places we'd seen.

I can't quite believe how much we packed into a week. And did the children enjoy it? It's a loud "yes!" all round.

TRAVEL FACTS

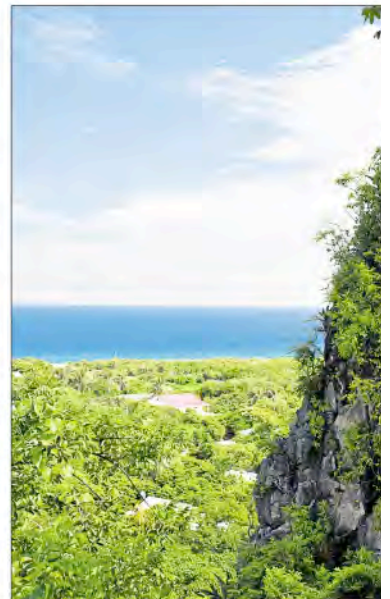
Susan Ward Davies stayed in the five-bedroom *Villa Emmanuel* in Cayman Kai, on Grand Cayman. There are about 100 villas, cottages and apartments available to rent in the Cayman Islands, ranging from one to six bedrooms, costing from £125 per night/£878 per week; www.caymanvillas.com

Little Cayman Beach Resort, costs from £627 for a week; www.littlecayman.com

Boatswain's Beach, Grand Cayman; www.boatswainsbeach.ky

Cayman Shoppers; www.caymanshoppers.com

Catering Cayman will come to your villa and prepare meals; www.cateringcayman.ky



Small but perfectly formed: from top, tiny Owen Isla the Bluff on Cayman Brac and a dock on Little Cayman



Something for everyone: Alicia Keys performs at Cayman jazz fest 2009; fabulous food is on the menu during Taste of Cayman; and swash your buckle during Pirates Week



IT'S COLOURFUL CARNIVAL TIME

ISLAND FUN IN THE SUN Enjoy great hospitality, food, music, dancing and colourful parades during Cayman's fabulous festivals and events

Like much of the Caribbean, the Cayman Islands are famous for their colourful festivals which celebrate the country's culture, heritage, food and arts, along with some fabulous sporting and musical events.

Thanks to Cayman's compact size and the ease of travelling around, planning a holiday around any of these events and entering into the local spirit is a joy. Here is a pick of the best in 2010...

JANUARY

Taste of Cayman; Cayman Cook Out at the Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman

A double whammy for food lovers. Taste of Cayman is a showcase of island talent, held at Camana Bay on Grand Cayman. Simultaneously, the Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman, hosts a long weekend of gourmet heaven featuring demonstrations, lunches, dinners and events not only by the Ritz-Carlton's top chefs but by some of the leading lights in the culinary and wine world. Now in its third year, this is a must for serious foodies.

www.caymanislands.ky/cayman_cookout



FEBRUARY/MARCH

The Orchid Show at the Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park

A must for green-fingered orchid lovers. Held over a weekend in February or March.

www.botanic-park.ky

APRIL

Cayfest

The Cayman Islands National Festival of the Arts is Cayman's finest showcase of local talent, with a month-long eclectic mix of visual arts, music, theatre, dance, fashion design and culture.

Batabano

A colourful Caymanian street carnival for locals and visitors, April 25-May 2.

www.caymancarnival.com

NOVEMBER

Pirates Week

Cayman's most famous festival. Music, street dances, costumes, games, food and drink, "pirate invasion", Kids' Day, glittering parade, sports events,

heritage days and fireworks! It's 11 fun-filled, festive days in the sun with something to keep everyone amused from November 10-21.

www.piratesweekfestival.com

DECEMBER

The Cayman Islands Marathon

One of the most civilised 26 miles you can run! Be inspired by photos from last year's half and full marathon on the website, and sign up for this year's on December 5.

www.caymanislandsmarathon.com

Cayman jazz fest

Alicia Keys stole the show at Cayman jazz fest 2009, which is rapidly becoming known as the Caribbean's most sophisticated jazz festival with headline acts from all over the Caribbean. Held this year from December 2-4.

www.caymanjazzfest.com

UK CALENDAR

Come and see us! Here are some key events at which the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism will be appearing in 2010:

MARCH 27-28

London International Dive Show

JUNE 17-20

Taste of London

OCTOBER 8-10

The Designer Wedding Show

OCTOBER 30-31

Birmingham Dive Show

TRAVELLING TO THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

British Airways operates direct scheduled flights on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays from London Heathrow to Grand Cayman on a 767 aircraft with a three-class service (World Traveller, World Traveller Plus and Club World).

Alternatively you can fly via the US through various points along the east coast with any transatlantic carrier from the UK. Cayman Airways, the national carrier, operates jet services between Grand Cayman and the following cities: Miami, Tampa, Chicago, Washington DC and New York in the US; Kingston and Montego Bay in Jamaica; Havana, Cuba; and La Ceiba, Honduras.

Cayman Airways also operates a service from Grand Cayman to Cayman Brac and Little Cayman.

TOUR OPERATORS

Airmiles

0844 49 333 49

Aquatours

020 8398 0505

Barefoot Traveller

020 8741 4319

BAWay

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Best At Travel

020 7849 4130

Caribbean Expressions

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Caribbean Hotels

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Caribbean Select

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Caribtours

020 7751 0660

Crusader Travel

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Destinology

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Dial A Flight

0844 811 4444

Dive Sportif

01273 844 919

Dive Worldwide

0845 130 6980

Divequest

01254 826 322

Eden Collection

01244 567 000

Elegant Resorts

01244 897 999

Expedia.co.uk

0871 226 0808

Go Fishing Worldwide

020 8742 1556

H2O Dive Travel

01273 90 69 90

Holidays by British Airways

0844 493 0756

(package holidays)

0844 493 0787 (flight and accommodation)

Holidays Please

0845 365 6565

ITC Classics

01244 355 300

Kenwood Travel

020 7749 9220

Kuoni Travel

01306 742 222

Lastminute.com

0871 222 5970

Luxury Holidays Dire

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Netflights.com

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Premier Holidays

08444 937 531

Pure Luxury Holiday:

0844 493 0020

Scuba Safaris

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Seasons in Style

01244 202 000

SN Travel

0844 844 0696

Snooba Travel

0870 162 0767

Thomas Cook Signat

0844 871 6650

Travelocity

0870 273 3273

Tropical Sky

0870

9079 605

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Experience the beautiful Cayman Islands from £1,639 per person including flights from London Heathrow. Stay for five nights at the five-star Ritz-Carlton Grand Cayman, in a stunning Garden View room. Located on Grand Cayman's Seven Mile Beach, the hotel offers a range of outstanding restaurants, the nine-hole Greg Norm, designed Blue Tip golf course, a Nick Bollettieri ten programme and La Prairie Silver Rain spa.

This exclusive offer also includes return domestic flights to Little Cayman. Here, you'll spend two nights at the Southern Cross Club in an oceanfront bungalow, equipped with private bath, air-conditioning and outside deck (some have private outdoor showers). Experience world class diving at fishing, take a kayak to uninhabited Owen Island or simply unwind with a cocktail on the white coral sa

To book your Cayman Islands holiday, call Turquoise now on 01494 678400 or visit www.turquoiseholidays.co.uk/caymanislands

Prices based on two sharing. Subject to availability. Restrictions apply.