

VISITOR INFORMATION

Exuma Cays Land & Sea Park

The Exuma Cays Land & Sea Park was established in 1958, becoming the first land and sea national park in the world. In the late 1980s the park was declared a "no-take" zone for the purpose of marine resource replenishment. As such, the Exuma Park has become a renowned conservation success story. Yachtsmen are asked to respect the park bylaws that govern visitation. The sketch (overleaf) locates great sites to visit on Hawksbill Cay. Before you start your dinghy and snorkeling adventure we ask that you read the guidelines below as following these will enrich your experience, ensure your safety and protect the marine environment.

Be a Good Steward—Respect our Environment

- Look but don't touch! Coral reefs can be thousands of years old, built by very slow-growing micro organisms. Please use caution when near reefs and please do not damage corals!
- Many of the reefs around Hawksbill Cay are very shallow, especially at low tide. These locations are included in this guide so visitors of all ages can enjoy their beauty. But it is critical that corals are not touched. Do not damage reefs with your outboard motor or anchor, do not kick corals with your fins while swimming, and please do not stand on coral heads.
- Park authorities have placed dinghy moorings at many of the locations on the sketch. Please use these moorings to avoid damaging the reefs with your anchor. It is OK for several dinghies to share the same mooring. If a dinghy mooring is not available, please anchor in the sand.
- Bleaching and green algae can be seen on many corals that are not constantly cleaned by tidal currents. Coral bleaching and algae growth are related to the warmer waters caused by global warming.

- Respect Bahamian fishing regulations and help preserve marine resources for future generations.

Snorkel Safely—Respect Tides and Currents

- Our most colorful reefs are cleaned twice a day by strong tidal currents. Snorkeling these reefs is safest with minimal current at either low or high tide.
- Display a dive flag and keep one person in your dinghy to rescue anyone who gets caught in the current.
- Inexperienced snorkelers may wish to swim with some type of flotation or use a glass bottom bucket from your dinghy to view underwater marine life.
- Use waterproof charts (available at the Ranger Station) to help navigate and take a working portable marine radio with you. Please call the Exuma Park on channel 16 if you encounter any problems.
- You will see a wide variety of marine life on the reefs: coral, tropical fish, conch, lobster, sting rays, barracuda and the occasional shark. Underwater cameras and waterproof guides are available at the Highbourne Store.

**Take only photos. Leave only bubbles.
Thank you for protecting the natural resources of The Bahamas.**

HIGHBOURNE CAY

Hawksbill Cay dinghy destinations and snorkel sites

Hawksbill Cay is located in the Exuma Park. It features numerous soft sand beaches on both the western and eastern shores of the cay. The waters along the northern shore and in the southern cove of the cay are very shallow and are best explored on a rising tide to avoid being stranded in your dinghy. Avoid very strong tidal currents in the cuts.

1 North Hawksbill Sand Bar At low tide you can walk a magnificent soft sand bar stretching across the end of the cay.

2 Smugglers Cave View from your dinghy as sharp rock edges allow only the very adventurous to enter.

3 Russell Ruins Beach A rocky trail leads to the ruins of the Russell Family Plantation (1785 to 1830). A fork in the trail leads to a beach on the eastern shore.

4 Ruins Rock Small coral heads near the visible rock offer a cool snorkel after a hike to the ruins.

5 Yacht Harbor Heads Several convenient coral heads are located between the northern yacht mooring area and the north end of the sandy beach.

6 Russell Rocks Reef Numerous coral heads are located on the south side of Russell Rocks. (28.10.00N 76.46.50W)

7 "Rocker" Point Coral Heads A series of coral heads, named after the last inhabitant, along the southwest shore.

8 South Hawksbill Cove This very shallow cove has a coral garden midpoint along its northern shoreline.

9 Pirates Cut (Slack tide only) Coral garden located in the narrow tidal cut between SE tip of Hawksbill and the large rock.

10 Little Hawksbill Cut (Slack tide only) A wide variety of corals along the shallow tidal cut north of Little Hawksbill Cay.

11 Eastern Shoreline Sandy beaches and numerous coral reefs await the experienced snorkeler on a very calm day.

