

## VISITOR INFORMATION

### Highbourne Cay

Highbourne Cay is dedicated to protecting the delicate ecological balance of marine life that surrounds the Cay. Snorkeling from a dinghy offers visitors the opportunity to enjoy the natural beauty and diversity of Highbourne's underwater environment in a non-intrusive way. The sketch (see overleaf) locates prime snorkeling areas near Highbourne's shores. 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**

- 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 Highbourne 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.
- 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. Remember: the Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park stretches for 22 miles between Wax Cay Cut and Conch Cut and is a land and sea protected no-take zone.

#### **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.
- Dinghy moorings are not provided and the seabed is not suitable for anchoring your dinghy near most reefs. 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 Highbourne Store) to help navigate and take a working portable marine radio with you. Please notify Highbourne Cay on channel 71 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

## Highbourne Cay dinghy destinations and snorkel sites

**1 SW Allen's & Leaf Cay** Visit rare Marine Rock Iguanas at their protected sanctuaries on both SW Allen's and Leaf Cay. Coral heads just north of two rocks between the cays are convenient but subject to strong tidal current

**2 Flat Rock Reef** (24.45.45N 76.49.80W) Coral reef along the western shore of an unnamed cay that is best reached in calm weather.

**3 Barbara's Reef** (24.45.10N 76.50.00W) A large coral head just below the surface is marked by a dinghy buoy. The reef is east of the second large rock NE of Leaf Cay. The reef has abundant marine life and is best visited in calm weather.

**4 Chub Rock/Octopus Garden** Chub rock is visible at low tide and provides a focal point to start a drift snorkel on an incoming (rising) tide. The reef is subject to strong tidal currents an hour after low tide.

**5 Highbourne Rocks** (24.43.20N 76.50.10W) A vast area of coral heads and soft coral that stretches about a mile west from this waypoint. The area is subject to modest current and this reef is an excellent drift snorkel with abundant marine life.

**6 Highbourne Reef** The reef just west of Highbourne Cut runs 20 feet deep and is frequently visited by dive boats. The depth and strong tidal current limits visits to scuba.

**7 Oyster Cay Reef** The small cove on the NE side of Oyster Cay offers a convenient area to snorkel in calm weather. Caution is advised due to very strong tidal currents at either end of the cay and frequent boat traffic.

**8 Elkhorn Reef** (24.44.10N 76.48.50W) An excellent reef off the eastern shore of the cay that can be visited only in very calm weather.

**9 Staghorn Reef** (24.43.80N 76.48.50W) An excellent reef off the eastern shore of the cay that can be visited only in very calm weather.

**10 Stromatolite Reefs** The eastern shore of the Cay is also home to stromatolite reefs, the oldest form of life on earth, dating back 3.5 billion years and thought to be extinct until discovered in the Bahamas in 1983. Best viewed from the beach. Ask for research brochure prepared by the University of Miami.

