

DESTINATION



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Turks & Caicos Islands



Eco-Conscious Luxury



Written By
Evangelia Jardine

At the heart of the archipelago that makes up the Turks and Caicos Islands is a pair of green isles where farms flourish and ancient cave systems offer a glimpse into the lives of the native Lucayans who resided there thousands of years ago.

A birdwatcher's delight, the islands of North and Middle Caicos are home to a variety of birdlife that seek refuge in the ponds and wetlands here, from flamingoes to pelicans, ospreys to herons.

Here, the wildlife outnumbers the people, with the population estimated at fewer than 3,000—the majority of which live on North Caicos, and of which fewer than 300 call Middle Caicos home. There are no high-density hotels, no swanky restaurants. At night, the stars shine bright with no light pollution to obscure them. Here, the star of the show is Mother Nature.

Natural, largely untouched environments such as these are becoming harder to come by as global development pushes forward every year. And in 2023, they're also exactly what many travelers are in search of.

According to the latest report by market research company IMARC Group, the global ecotourism market size reached \$152.5 billion in 2021 and is projected to reach \$334.4 billion by 2027—a growth rate of 14.5% over a five-year period.

A form of tourism that involves responsible travel to natural areas, ecotourism focuses on environmental conservation and improving the well-being of locals.

And that's good news for places like Dragon Cay Resort, a low-density resort comprising quaint cottages at Mudjin Harbour—a scenic beach with an impressive dragon-like rock formation off the shore from which the resort derives its name—on Middle Caicos.

"The destination itself is a very eco-conscious destination," says Jennifer Bohmann, Marketing Director for the resort. "Very low build, everything is spread out. The focus is on the beauty that is Middle Caicos."

A popular place for snorkelling, kayaking, hiking, cycling and more—the focus at Dragon Cay Resort



and on the Twin Islands in general is “getting back to nature,” Bohmann says.

“It’s getting away from the Jet Skis and the power boats. (It’s) a much more quiet and serene and eco-friendly vacation.”

Likewise, the private island resort of COMO Parrot Cay, which opened in 1998, offers travelers complimentary access to kayaks, standup paddleboards, windsurfing equipment and Hobie Cats for exploring the high seas in a way that doesn’t require fuel.

Back on land, guests can explore the low-density resort’s 1,000 unspoiled acres via scenic trails on foot or by bicycle. Not only do the resort’s paths offer some peaceful sightseeing of the island, but they lead to the hotel’s own coconut and banana grove. At COMO Parrot Cay, much of the food served on property is sustainably sourced, whether it’s grown locally on the lush island or caught fresh from the sea.

The growing trend of travellers in search of eco-conscious offerings has also influenced the design of newer developments in Turks and Caicos, including the newly opened Rock House Resort on the north shore of Providenciales.

Here, to reduce the use of single-use plastic water bottles, guests are provided with complimentary reusable bottles that can be topped up at free water refill stations around the property. Meanwhile, the resort is completely PVC-free—even the room keys are crafted from bamboo.

Set on a dramatic limestone cliffside, the resort’s architects prioritized the preservation of the wildly alluring natural setting when designing the hotel. As a result, Rock House is built directly into the cliffside, with leftover limestone materials repurposed in the wraparound feature walls of the resort’s homes nestled into the landscape.

The developers also established an on-site nursery during construction to protect the local flora throughout the building phase and avoid the importation of foreign plants. Once construction was completed, the native plants and trees were replanted around the property.

Because the truth is this: Turks and Caicos is home to some incredible local plantlife, from the delicate local Encyclia orchids to the towering mahogany trees. From a sustainable standpoint, preserving the local landscape is a must for developers in the islands to create a natural and authentic experience that is truly Turks and Caicos.

And that’s no secret to John Fair, Managing Director, Developer and Manager of The Strand—one of the latest luxury developments in Turks and Caicos currently under construction and set to open on Cooper Jack Bay in 2023.

As part of The Strand’s commitment to sustainability, the development has partnered with the Colorado-based Butterfly Pavilion—a nonprofit invertebrate zoo—to transform the community into a pollinator sanctuary through the preservation of local flora and thoughtful landscaping that incorporates nectar-producing plants native to the islands.

Meanwhile, The Strand team has incorporated raw elements such as natural limestone and sustainably harvested wood into the design of each home, while solar power and smart technology will be integrated throughout the property.

“We feel it’s necessary that we not only give back to the community and preserve the environment, but also help our residents lead a more sustainable life as well,” Fair says.

Indeed, today’s trends in ecotourism open up a world of opportunity for Turk and Caicos as a unique family of islands that prides itself not only on its natural beauty, but also on its fierce protection of the islands’ most precious jewels—from the wild mystique of Mudjin Harbour on Middle Caicos to the pristine sandy shores of Grace Bay on Providenciales—and everywhere in between.

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thestrandtci.com
1720 691 7169
sales@thestrandtci.com
Providenciales, Turks & Caicos Islands