

RESIDENT TRAVELER: BLUE WATER BLISS

BY LISA LOVERRO



Turks and Caicos is home to some of the best beaches and bluest waters I have ever seen...and I've been everywhere. Just a short flight from the east coast of the US, the islands offer a barefoot elegance where sand and surf becomes your playground while high-end properties ensure a perfect getaway.

This was my first trip to the island of Providenciales, one of the many islands comprising the Turks and Caicos. While on the island I was hosted by the Ocean Club Resort (www.oceanclubresorts.com) located along the stunning 12-mile stretch of powdery white shoreline known as Grace Bay Beach. The Ocean Club operates two properties here: Ocean Club and Ocean Club West, less than a mile apart and within a fifteen

minute walk on the beach from each other. Stay at one and use both facilities! The staff is friendly, the atmosphere relaxed, and the pools, crystal blue.

The property houses condominium style suites, including studios and larger three-bedrooms units. The suites are basically apartments complete with kitchens and large, screened-in balconies; a welcome change to non-screened terraces. The on-site spa at the resort, Spa Tropique, is very small, although the treatments were wonderful. If you're into golfing, the Provo Golf Club is nearby, and for divers the on-site dive shop can arrange for excursions.

For dining, the Cabana Bar and Grille at Ocean Club is outdoors, just off the beach and perfect for breakfast, lunch or dinner.

Be sure to try the conch fritters, or anything containing conch, as it's pretty much the staple here on the island! Charming, quiet and casual, Seaside Cafe at Ocean Club West serves breakfast, lunch and light dinner. They'll even prepare a dinner on the beach for you, the perfect way to enjoy the Caribbean's balmy evening winds. The fine dining option at the resort is Opus Bar and Grille. I was pleasantly surprised at the level of sophistication with not only their dishes but their extensive wine list as well. It offers indoor and outdoor dining serving meats and local seafood.

The island itself is chilled-out to the max, and while there are many options when it comes to water activities (it's surrounded by a 200-mile coral reef), there is not much in terms of "on land" activities. If you want to take a break from the hot sun, take a tour of the Caicos Conch Farm where an islander will take you through the conch's life cycle. In November they hold the world's only Conch festival and it's a great time to visit the island. Sailboat charters are also available for a perfect sunset cruise or a visit to Little Water Cay, an uninhabited cay with two trails, mangroves and home to thousands of rare rock iguanas.

All in all, the Turks and Caicos Islands will never disappoint you should you decide to visit. And if you are not hypnotized by the blue hues of the incredible water and the white powdery beaches, you're sure to be enchanted by the service and elegance of the Ocean Club Resort.

Photos Courtesy of Ocean Club Resort

