



PORT EXPLORER & SHOPPING GUIDE

George Town GRAND CAYMAN

GENERAL INFORMATION No great historic events ever took place on these islands. There is no gold to be picked from the land or pearls to be found in the water. There is no oil to be pumped from the sea. There is nothing here which ever rocked or changed the world. However, over the past three centuries there has been one thing in the Caymans, often exported, highly sought after, prized and respected...but first; what about the islands themselves?

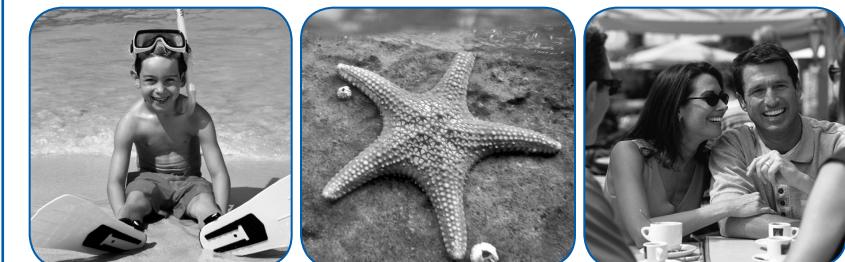
They are a group of three islands; Cayman Brac, Little Cayman and Grand Cayman. Discovered accidentally by Columbus, they were covered with sea turtles, iguanas and crocodiles. They were first explored by Sir Francis Drake and first settled by a soldier from the army of Oliver Cromwell. The Caymans were a fabled refuge for pirates and privateers and a re-supply station for European ships sailing the Spanish Main. The islands came under official British rule in 1670 with the signing of the Treaty of Madrid.

Today, with its capital of George Town, Grand Cayman has a population nearing 40,000. It is a premier Caribbean getaway with stunning beaches, unrivaled scuba diving, world class shopping and a center for off-shore banking and business. But again, none of these things, as wonderful as they are in part or in whole, are as valuable as the one treasure which over the past generations has continually come from these islands...the Caymanian sailors. Eagerly sought by navy and merchant shipping, their skill, reputation and value to the islands was matched only by the Caymanian women who through prayer and diligence maintained hearth, hope and home while watching and waiting for their sons, husbands and fathers to return safely from the sea.

HISTORY On May 10, 1503, on his fourth and final voyage to the New World, strong winds blew Captain Cristoforo Colombo (Columbus) from his charted course. He was the first European to see and log these "turtle covered rocks". Turtles, strong winds and heavy seas would fill many chapters in the book of Cayman lore. In the late 18th century, in what would become forever known as the Wreck of the Ten Sail, Caymanians forever sealed their reputation as daring and accomplished men and women ... courageous to the point of self sacrifice.

English Captain John Lawford stood at attention before superior officers of the British Royal Navy. A Court Martial had been convened aboard the HMS Success anchored in Port Royal, Jamaica on April 1, 1794. Captain Lawford must have been relieved as the verdict of the court was read; "Not guilty...acquitted on all counts of negligence and dereliction of duty."

Two months prior, on the storm swept night of February 8, 1794, Captain Lawford rushed from his cabin out onto the deck of his ship, the HMS Convert. He was in command of a swift and maneuverable Royal Navy frigate. His orders were to protect and escort a large convoy of fifty-eight British merchant vessels sailing from the Caribbean back to England. From one of the ships in the convoy a cannon distress signal had just been heard. Moments after Captain Lawford reached the wave soaked deck, from high in the main mast a lookout yelled "Breakers ahead and close!" How could this be? The convoy was supposed to be in open waters. It was now too late to maneuver. The gut wrenching sound of shattering planks and the splitting of heavy timber beams suddenly mixed with the howling wind, stinging rain and pounding surf. The HMS Convert had violently run upon a jagged coral reef, the same reef which to this day envelops the southeastern coast of the island of Grand Cayman.

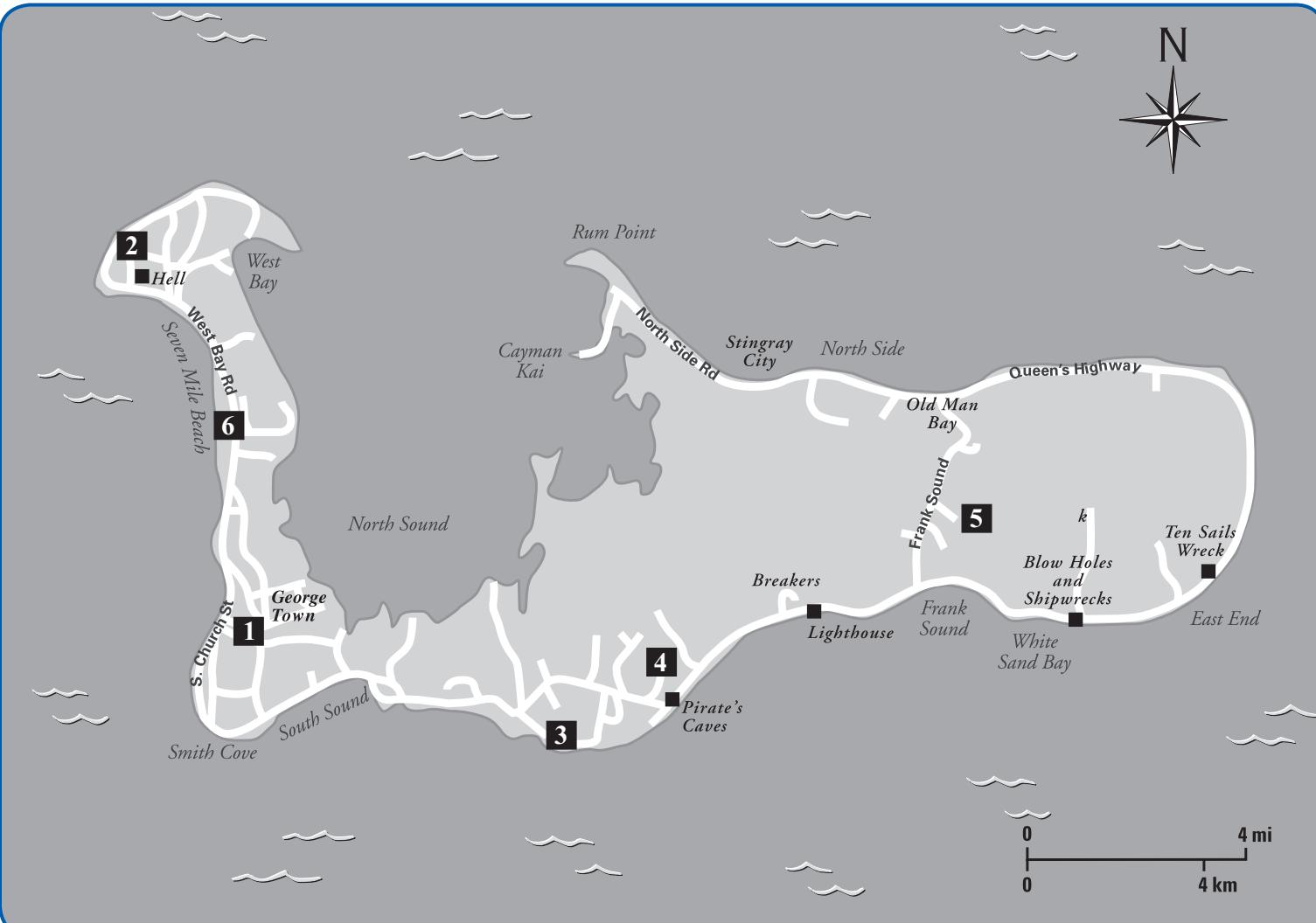


Men were thrown helplessly about the ship. The Convert was not alone. Nine other ships of the convoy, as lemmings to their doom one rapidly following the other, ripped themselves to splinters upon the shallow coral bed. If anyone thought it would become "Every man for himself." they would be mistaken.

Above the power of the storm and pounding of the waves it will perhaps never be known how the few men and women living along the eastern coast of Grand Cayman heard the desperate cries of shipwrecked sailors. But hear them they did. On that dark night and in that terrible storm, merchant seaman together with sailors and officers of the Royal Navy, more than four hundred British lives, hung precariously in the balance. And on shore, who would understand better than another sailor the immediate danger and face it with selfless determination? Time after time the men of the Cayman Islands rowed from the shore and back. Strong, callused hands like leather grasped the

oars. Their backs bowed under the strain as they manned their small boats through the dark and churning sea. They were guided only by the sound of desperate men calling for help.

There is an apocryphal story still told today that in grateful recognition of the bravery of the Caymanians, for their rescue of all save eight from over four-hundred doomed sailors, King George III forever exempted the islands from paying taxes to the Crown. This is a warmly sentimental yet inaccurate yarn which, even if true would matter little to these brave people. Today or from generations past, the historic character of Caymanians will testify with quiet conviction that all men upon the deep should act as brothers if one be in danger and in need... and all women are sisters who toil and wait in prayer for their men far away to come home. For Caymanians understand ... no amount of gold from the earthly treasury of a mortal king can ever redeem the life and soul of a single sailor lost to the depths of an angry sea.



PLACES OF INTEREST

PLACES OF INTEREST There are a number of exciting ways to view the colorful and abundant marine life in the waters around Grand Cayman. Simi-submersibles like the Nautilus, the Seaworld Observatory and the Cayman Underwater Observatory, as well as the fully submersible Atlantis Submarine all give visitors the opportunity to get a glimpse into the beautiful underwater universe of the Caribbean.

Stingray City and Dolphin Cove provide guests the chance to swim and interact with gentle Southern Rays and playful bottlenose dolphins. Certified SCUBA divers are probably already aware of Grand Cayman's reputation as one of the most spectacular dive sites to be found anywhere in the Caribbean.

1 The **Cayman Islands National Museum** is housed in a charming colonial period building at the corner of Shedden Road and Harbour Drive. Visitors can browse through a collection of over 8,000 items and artifacts which relate the island's natural and cultural history. In front of the museum the Cayman Island flag is raised daily to the trumpet of a conch shell.

2 The **Boatswain Bay Turtle Farm** is a breeding, conservation and research site where visitors have the opportunity to see, touch and learn about the beautiful sea turtles which call the Caribbean home.

3 The **Pedro St. James Historic Site** is a carefully restored setting overlooking the blue Caribbean. Pedro's Castle is nestled in a tropical park which is a tranquil place to stroll and explore. This site is the first National Landmark of the Cayman Islands.

4 **Bodden Town** was once the capital and most populated settlement in the islands. Once home to brigands and pirates the town has many lovely buildings dating to the English Colonial period.

5 The **Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park** is the Cayman Island's most beautiful tropical park. Her Majesty dedicated the site in 1994. The garden has a gorgeous collection of tropical flowers, plants and trees all interlaced with walking paths and lakes.

6 **Seven Mile Beach**, with the new Tiki Beach area, is one of the most beautiful in the Caribbean. Along with fine white sand, swaying palms and the calm azure blue sea, there are plenty of water sports available as well as full facilities. If you want to spend a day at the beach...and not just any beach...this is the place.

SHORE EXCURSIONS To make the most of your visit to George Town and surrounding island we suggest you take one of our organized Shore Excursions. For information concerning tour content and pricing, consult your Shore Excursion Brochure or contact the Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, be advised to take with you only necessary items and secure any valuables onboard.

LOCAL CUSTOMS Bargaining: Prices are generally fixed in stores and shops.

Tipping: A 15% service charge is added to most restaurant and bar bills.

Dress: Going topless at local beaches is not practiced in the Cayman Islands. Casual wear (as opposed to just a swimwear) is best when browsing the shops of George Town.

LOCAL CUISINE AND DRINK SPECIALTIES It is not surprising that seafood is so popular in the Cayman Islands. Conch Ceviche is a favorite throughout the Caribbean. It is prepared with cilantro, red onions, avocado and fresh lime juice. Conch Stew and Conch Fritters are also very tasty. With a quick look at a map it is easy to understand why Jamaican "jerk" cooking is enjoyed in the Caymans. Turtle meat has long been a staple in the Caymans. The turtles are bred and grown locally rather than hunted in the wild. In fact the local hatcheries annually release hundreds of turtles into the Caribbean. With turtle meat in plentiful supply visitors can enjoy trying some of the local turtle soup or turtle steak.

If the Cayman Islands have a celebrity chef (or two) then it might just be Robert and Carlene Hamaty. From what apparently began as an old family recipe passed down from mother to daughter, one cake, one

oven and one bite at a time, Carlene and Robert's Tortuga Rum Cake has gone from being served friends to being ordered by people around the world. The cakes have become the island's largest export.

A wide variety of rum can be found in the Cayman Islands. Among the local favorites are Tortuga Gold Cayman Islands and George Town Harbor Distillery's Seven Fathoms.

SHOPPING The main shopping area in George Town is along the waterfront. Many of the stores are Duty-Free. In addition to souvenirs, shoppers will find perfumes, jewelry and watches from all the famous international designers.

LOCAL CURRENCY The official currency of the islands is the Caymanian dollar (CI\$ - KYD).

POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE The main Post Office in George Town is located at #14 Edward Street. In the northwest corner of the island is a place called Hell; so named because of the wicked rock formations. This is actually a rather popular destination due in no small part to the local post office/gift shop & curio emporium. Visitors to Hell have a laugh sending cards and letters back home with the local postmark.

Dial the following access numbers to use a personal calling card:

AT&T: 1.800.225.5288

MCI: 1.800.888.8000

TOURIST INFORMATION A Tourism Information Center is located directly in middle of the Cruise Ship terminal, with an additional office located next to the Customs and Immigration Department on the pier.

TRANSPORTATION Taxis and car rental are available at the pier.

USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES English is the official language of the Cayman Islands.