

## TWIN ISLANDS

Turks  
and Caicos

By Brette Sember

The Turks and Caicos Islands can make all your tropical dreams come true, with sumptuous beaches and just enough activities to keep you moving between beach naps.

## PROVIDENCIALES

A stay on Provo is all about the glorious 19-kilometre soft white sand Grace Bay Beach, frequently named best beach in the world. You'll definitely want to enjoy the beach from a lounge chair and in the water, but for a new perspective, see it with a dog's eyes. Potcake Place in Saltmills Plaza is Provo's dog rescue, where potcakes, mixed breed dogs, are given a chance at a forever home. They have a special program where you can take a dog out for an afternoon beach walk. If you fall in love (and you just might), they can arrange to fly the dog home to you. While you're walking your pup, watch for the gelato man, who pulls a cooler down the beach in the late morning/early afternoon, shouting "Homemade gelato!" His popular alcohol-infused treats will cool you off. A visit to Turks and Caicos must involve conch (head to Da Conch Shack for cracked conch),

but the Caribbean queen conch is nearly endangered. The Caicos Conch Farm in Leeward Settlement is working to change that by sustainably farming conch in offshore pens. Take a tour, see conch at different life stages, and touch a living one (you won't believe how long its body really is). The farm is also developing a fish farming program to expand their reach. The gift shop is a great place to buy sustainably-raised conch shell, but be sure to comply with island regulations (none can leave the island between July 15 and October 15 and, at other times, only three shells per person are allowed).

## GRAND TURK

It's just a short domestic plane ride to Grand Turk Island, or you can take a ferry from Salt Cay. Start your visit here by combining old and new when you see the functioning Grand Turk Lighthouse by Segway. The lighthouse is more than 150 years old and the only one in the country. It isn't open to tourists, but the soaring cliffside ocean view will be all you need to see from this vantage point. The site is filled with wild donkeys hoping for a snack or a scratch on the head. Bring carrots and you'll make some friends.

For even more history, explore the salt industry, which used to be the main money-maker on this spit of land. The Hawkes Nest Salina (near the cruise centre) still has the giant salt ponds where ocean water was directed and gradually dried so salt could be harvested. Although the business has long since dried up (so to speak), you can scoop up a handful of salt to sample. After you see the expansive flats where water was raked and dried, stop in at The Salt House in The White Gold Building in Cockburn Town where a free small museum explains the importance of the industry, the role of slaves, and the methods used.

Explore the history and heartbeat of the islands with a visit to a salt salina, conch farm, and an afternoon at the beach with a furry friend.



GRAND TURK LIGHTHOUSE, GRAND TURK



WHITE SANDS AND TURQUOISE WATERS OF GRACE BAY BEACH



CONCH SALAD