

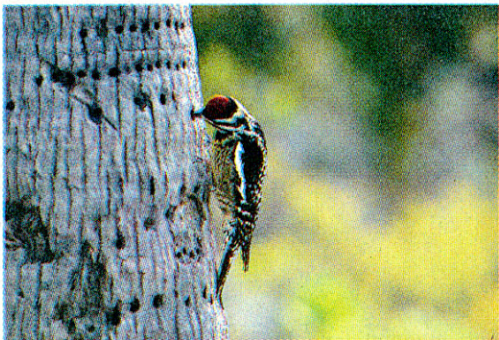


Tuesday: Pick of the week
Wednesday: CLOSE-UP on Burlington, Vt.
Thursday: Travel talk with Tom
Friday: From the Travel desk

Travel

BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE OCTOBER 22, 2006

C A R I B B E A N



On Eleuthera in the Bahamas, a yellow-bellied sapsucker is at work, but all else is play, be it on the private beach among the 28 acres of The Cove resort or exploring the island in your hat and slip-on shoes. Kirk Aulin, 12, shows his catch from snorkeling with his brother Jake, 9. Their father, Kirk D. Aulin, is the resort's managing director.



PHOTOS BY TED GARTLAND/GLOBE STAFF

SLOW AND SUNNY MODE LEAVES YOU FREE TO SAVOR LIFE ON ELEUTHERA

BY CANDACE JENKINS • GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

ELEUTHERA, Bahamas — Eleuthera is a slender wisp of land shaped like a mermaid's tail to the south, and topped by a scattering of small islands and coral reefs to the north. In between are roughly 100 miles of serenity.

What draws people to Eleuthera? Although it is only 20 minutes by air from the regional hub of Nassau, the answer is not bright lights, brand-name high-rise hotels, or large-scale resorts. Those kinds of facilities don't exist here. Nor are there strip malls, chain stores, traffic, or stoplights.

Instead, we found a slower pace and a focus on simpler things. As Kirk D. Aulin, managing director of The Cove resort, says, "Eleuthera is a place to get your life back."

The island has been lightly touched by the modern era and much of its character reflects its history. Eleuthera was claimed and settled by English religious pilgrims in the mid-17th century who named it after the Greek word for "freedom."

It was the first permanent European settlement in the Bahamas, but the population was small until the late 18th century, when Loyalist exiles fled the southern United States after the American Revolution. They established large pineapple, cotton, and citrus plantations, while small-scale agriculture, fishing, and boat-building sustained little villages established by freed slaves.

Today, Eleuthera is dotted by a

ELEUTHERA, Page M6



SOURCE: ESRI JOAN McLAUGHLIN/GLOBE STAFF

AIMING FOR AN EXTREME, GETTING LESS AND THEN MORE, WINGING IT ON LOS ROQUES

BY DAVID ARNOLD • GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

LOS ROQUES, Venezuela — I have always had a soft spot for pelicans.

The birds make an art of nonchalance, in the blink of an eye veering from glide to attack mode to pierce the ocean's surface with the muffled ZZZUMP of a wingless missile. Then, with chins tucked in, it's back to the business of looking self-important and disengaged.

But as I sit frustrated on this knoll overlooking a corner of Caribbean paradise known as Los Roques, I conclude I need some insight. From pelicans.

Los Roques is an archipelago of 52 mostly uninhabited islands in a national park in the Caribbean's outer orbit of tourism, about 80 miles north of Caracas, Venezuela's capital. I had come here to learn how to kiteboard, an extreme sport that allows a kite-powered rider to skim across the ocean's surface on something akin to a snowboard.

An international kiteboarding school with an outlet here had assured me this was THE place to learn the sport. But two days into my weeklong mission, I have concluded that the particular island used by the school is far from ideal for novices. Pedestrian beach traffic and an offshore reef provide precious little room for error. In a

LOS ROQUES, Page M4



Pelicans flock midair and dive for dinner off Los Roques, Venezuela.

DAVID ARNOLD FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Between the birds and the beaches — good food

► ELEUTHERA

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dozen or so villages separated by large tracts of undeveloped land and connected by Queen's Highway, a narrow, lightly traveled, two-lane road. At the southern end, the fishing village of Tarpum Bay is noted for its colorful Bahamian cottages, old stone dwellings, and picturesque St. Columba's Anglican Church.

Mid-island is dominated by Governor's Harbour, the capital and second-largest settlement. It boasts Eleuthera's only movie theater, one of its few banking facilities, and the largest grocery store we came across.

Dunmore Town on Harbour Island, just east of Eleuthera's northern end, is by far the largest and most varied settlement. Laid out in 1791, it is noted for its unspoiled historic atmosphere with narrow roads lined by quaint buildings and colorful tangles of bougainvillea, hibiscus, and oleanther.

Tourist accommodations on Eleuthera comprise modest bed-and-breakfasts and inns and a small number of more elegant resort hotels and beach clubs.

We stayed at The Cove, a 28-acre resort framed by two sheltered inlets near the northern end

of the island. The centerpiece of the complex is a one-story building that contains the check-in area, a gift shop, and comfortable sofas for reading and relaxing.

Half of the building is given over to a well-appointed dining

Eleuthera (freedom in Greek) was the first permanent European settlement in the Bahamas.

room that opens onto a broad terrace with swimming pool. Used for breakfast and lunch, sunning and gathering, the terrace offers extensive views of both coves and the ocean beyond. Sunsets over the west cove were often spectacular, with their red, pink, and purple hues reflected in the water.

Our room, which was quiet and comfortably furnished, was in a one-story, wood-frame building overlooking the east cove. The grounds offered numerous ham-



PHOTOS BY TED GARTLAND/GLOBE STAFF

Club Med may be gone from Eleuthera but this mid-island beach near Governor's Harbour is still called Club Med Beach.

mocks and comfortable lounges, and tiki huts on the beaches provided haven from the strong tropical sun.

Linen tablecloths combined with simple furnishings in the dining room created an informal but elegant atmosphere. Candles and ceiling fans added a touch of romance. All our meals were excellent, including a tasty appetizer of grilled asparagus and roasted beets on mixed baby greens with mustard seed dressing. Entrees included a superb grilled New York steak with green peppercorn dressing, red snapper, and Bahamian lobster tail served over coconut rice.

We found breakfast on the terrace to be friendly and informal, with guests filling their own coffee cups while waitresses brought the meals to table. Our favorites included a fruit plate (papaya, melon, apple, pineapple, and orange

or grapefruit), a Bahamian omelet stuffed with vegetables, and pancakes. Lunch on the deck offered a wide array of salads, sandwiches, grilled items, and desserts.

We devoted our first few days to sunning, relaxing, and activities at The Cove, where bicycles, kayaks, snorkeling gear, and tennis courts were all provided to guests.

Bird-watching was another pleasure. Species included the palm warbler, yellow-bellied sapsucker, smooth-billed ani, bananaquit, mourning dove, kingfisher, and great white egret. Most popular were the palm warblers on the terrace looking for handouts, and the sapsuckers busily drilling holes in palm trees near the beach or tucking their heads under their wings to rest. When we saw that even the birds took naps, we knew we were in the right place.

After a few days, we were energized and ready to explore the island, so our host arranged for a rental car.

On our first trip, we headed south to Governor's Harbour, where we sought the former Club Med beach, lauded in all of the tourist guides. What we found was a long, breathtaking expanse of powdery pinkish sand, backed by tall pine trees and lapped by clear aquamarine waters. Large waves breaking on a coral reef about 200 yards offshore added to the stunning effect.

Amazingly, there were only two other small groups walking the beach. We were the only ones who sat and swam. On the way home, we stopped at Island Gifts in Gregory Town where three small rooms were full of unique island-made gifts.

Another day we went north to Dunmore Town. Access is by ferry, which crosses in about 10 minutes. You are greeted by enterprising offers of rental golf carts, the primary mode of transportation. After some minimal instruction, we started up the hill from the harbor, passing through a postcard-perfect village with old wood-frame houses, churches, and shops, narrow lanes, and an abundance of flowering vegetation.

If you go . . .

How to get there

There are three small airports on Eleuthera, at the north and south ends and in the middle near Governor's Harbour. We traveled to Nassau, Bahamas, on a steeply discounted fare on JetBlue, then took Southern Air to Eleuthera. For more information, go to discover-eleuthera-bahamas.com/air-travel-to-eleuthera.html.

Where to stay

The Cove

Queen's Highway, Gregorytown
011-242-335-5142
800-552-5960
thecoveeleuthera.com
\$225-\$995 in season.

Dunmore Beach Club

Dunmore Town, Harbor Island
011-242-333-2200
877-891-3100
dunmorebeach.com
\$499-\$789 in season.

Bahama House Inn

Bed & Breakfast
Dunmore Town
011-242-333-2201
bahamahouseinn.com
\$160-\$195 in season.

Where to eat

SipSip

Dunmore Town
Court Road, overlooking Pink Sand Beach
011-242-333-3316
\$11-\$15.



Pierre Baptiste and Meredith Artley came from France to chill out on sunny Eleuthera.

Tippy's Atlantic Beach

Restaurant & Bar
Banks Road, overlooking Club Med Beach
011-242-332-3331
pineapplefields.com/restaurant.html
Expensive.

Resources

discover-eleuthera-bahamas.com
eleuthera.com/harbourisland

We were headed for the beach that forms the east side of the island. Another expanse of pink powdery sand and crystal-clear water, it is more heavily used than the isolated Club Med beach, though not crowded. Horses are available to fulfill your fantasy of riding on a beautiful beach. Lacking the offshore coral reef, breakers come directly to shore and make for excellent body surfing.

We reluctantly departed Eleuthera after eight days, feeling we had just begun to relax and

scratch the surface of what the island has to offer. We fell in love with the natural beauty, the outstanding beaches, and the island's character marked by tradition. Just as important, we appreciated the slowness and freedom from modern intrusions. All of this will draw us back to continue our leisurely inspection of this heavenly place.

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