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JUNE 2007 \$5.95



# THE RADAR TRAVEL

BY ELISE ANTHONY

Eleuthera's pink panorama

## PARADISE PROFOUND *Scavenger hunt for rock stars and pristine beaches along elusive Eleuthera*

Just across the road from the tiny yellow airport in North Eleuthera sits an equally unassuming gift shop and snack bar. "One of the best," the flight crew suggests. As jaded travelers, we ignore the advice. A mile away, the last cell signal flickered. No text messages. No v-mail. No news. Girl, interrupted. Sure, there are worse things than being unplugged in the Bahamas, but in this era of wired-up R&R with themed-to-the-max babymoos, mancations and fantasyscapes, relaxation has become its own casualty. Time to connect with nature...

**THE NAME GAME** First, a primer: "down" is north. "Up" is south. Home to jagged cliffs, turquoise waters and pink-speckled sandy shores, the subtle attraction to Eleuthera is what it's not. Not overbuilt. Not exploited. Not overpopulated. About 10,000 residents live here; it's a first-name basis kind of environ. There's Wallace, the barkeep at The Cove who makes a Goombay Smash like no other. The island bard, Rattie, can seduce with a ballad or scintillate with a naughty island fave. "Woe is me, shame and scandal in the family..." he teases. Oh, and here's Lenny, just down the road. As in Kravitz. The island's most notorious rocker has an Airstream parked on his beach. And Patti LaBelle has a cottage as well. Oh, and hordes of old (and new) money, but name dropping here is gauche. You're gonna need a car (there's not a chain rental agency), so barter at the airport or better yet, leave the driving to the experts.

**OUT IS IN** Of the 700 islands that comprise the Bahamas, the previously overlooked outer islands are drawing the adventurous and the well-traveled looking for privacy within the narrow, sickle-shaped isle of Eleuthera, one of the most beautiful islands within the Bahamian archipelago. But this is the Bahamas unplugged: Don't expect a golden coast paved with haute couture nor a bustling nightlife with Gucci-clad hipsters. Remember that gift shop? It's one of perhaps five on the entire 110-mile island. The Big Fish is, well, fish. Eleuthera is home to thousands of species of marine life and the beaches are pristine. The first Bahamian island to be colonized, Eleuthera's colonial villages and 18th-century houses are a sight to reckon, but change is a-comin': The old Club Med site is under new development by French Leave and rumors are circulating that Philippe Starck is working on a project. Exclusivity is big business.

**WELCOME TO THE TEX-HAMAS** In Gregory Town lies The Cove, a cozy resort with pristine white bungalows dotting the rocky shoreline. Refurnished and expanded into a contemporary chic style, the simply adorned retreat is co-owned by Dallasites Scott and Leslie Bumpas and former Texans George and Ann Hartley. ("It's the most expensive vacation of my life," quipped George, of buying and renovating the 1969-era property after the family friends did a vacay there several years ago.) Type A alert: The rooms are devoid of televisions, phones and clocks. It's on purpose, CONTINUED...

1. One of The Cove's bungalows. 2. Snorkeling made easy in The Cove's crystal-clear waters. 3. Eleuthera's rush hour.



...CONTINUED match. How hot is the place? Their residential development is already wait-listed. Instead, converge in the main clubhouse for communal *Lost* sessions and Internet surfing; and yes, even Lenny has dropped by for a game or two. Nosh on the casually elegant French-Bahamian fare of Chef Manny Perez (formerly of New York's Le Bernardin); at night, ply Rattie (pronounced *Rab-Tey*) with Wallace's coconut water and gin concoction until the naughty tunes roll. Two private beaches offer easy-access snorkeling, WiFi access (whew!), a heavenly view and a much-in-demand hammock. *What we like:* The naked silence. Can you hear the palm trees swaying now? *What you will like:* Reserve the Point House for a 240-degree view of the Caribbean, but either way, you'll still get the royal treatment via a 1:1 guest/staff ratio. (Manger Kirk Aulin's young sons aren't included in that tally, but they make for a swell fishing guide.) *The Cove*, 214.764.1400, or [www.thecoveeleuthera.com](http://www.thecoveeleuthera.com).

**NIGHT LIFE** It's not Bungalow 8, but hotfoot it to Elvina's in Gregory Town for very authentic jam sessions (read: it's a tiny, crowded wooden building with character) with surfer dudes and native islanders. Quaff ice-cold

Kalik and try the deep-fried turkey. A smile or two will get you into the stage act, if you play along, and yes, Lenny might drop in.

**HARBOUR ISLAND** Want *the scene*? Hop a water taxi for the two-mile jaunt to Harbor Island (or Briland to the locals) for the Hamptons of the 'Hamas and rent a golf cart to cruise for clubs. Party at the Rock House, a converted Catholic school cum celeb resort outfitted with an outdoor lounge, private cabanas, and gourmet fare or check out the Buddhist Caribbean flair of the Pink Sands. Go native and stop at the Queen Conch waterside stand for a sublime conch salad, a ceviche-style entree with a tangy blood-orange, lime and pepper sauce.

**GO DEEP** Leave a little offering behind at the makeshift surfer's shrine at Surfer's Beach—those Atlantic waters can be fierce, even with a tutorial. Nature is still king here: Bonefishing is the sport of anglers here, but the island's limestone formations are prime apartments for game and reef fish. The crystal clear, calm turquoise waters of the Caribbean host the region's best snorkeling and massive coral reefs—swim with the fishes at the shallow Pink House Reef (tunnels too!) or explore shipwrecks and ocean life at the Devil's Backbone. Just off Rock Sound is Inland Blue Hole, an inland saltwater lake favored by snorkelers. Wanna go really deep? Marine and terrestrial caves dot the island.

**ALL ACCESS** Even hitchhiking is *de rigueur*, but hire a taxi driver to explore a few out-of-the-way spots. Clamber up the 50-foot bluffs at The Cliffs, scout the pineapple fields and peek into the Hatchett Bay Cave (you'll need a guide and supplies). And the nooks around The Cove resort are going to look very familiar: most of National Geographic's *Sea Monsters: A Prehistoric Adventure* was shot there; the IMAX film releases this fall. Not far away, the island's most famous landmark has been ravaged by storms, but visit the window-shaped stone formation of the Glass Window Bridge where the churning Atlantic and calm Caribbean are barely divided. "We give you your life back," the natives say. And they're right; is it any surprise that Eleuthera is Greek for freedom? ■

*Ready to take flight? For travel details, see [www.myoutislands.com](http://www.myoutislands.com).*