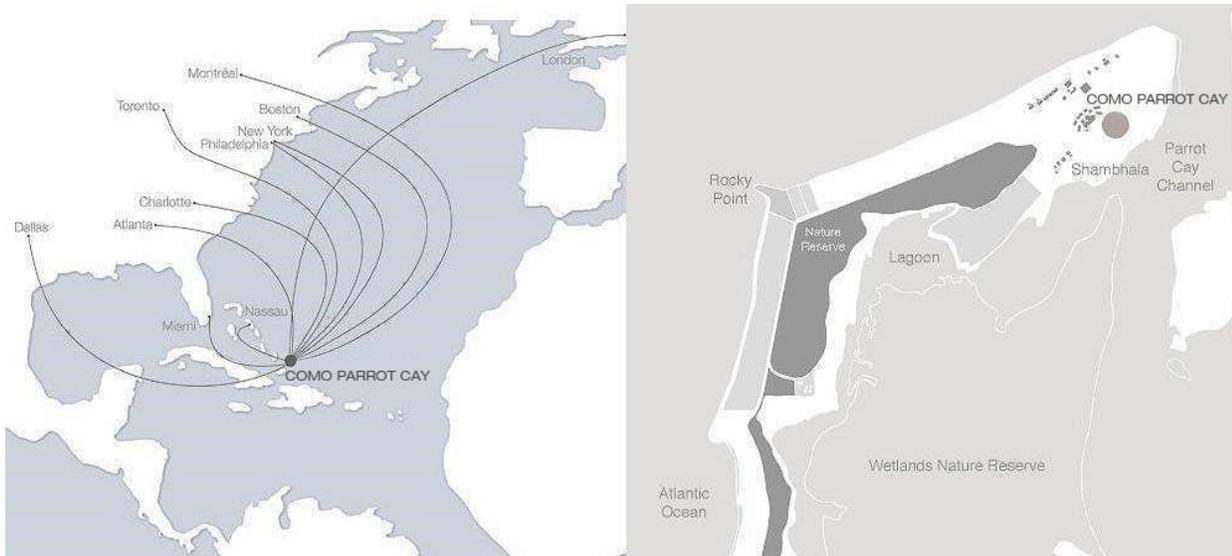




Vital Statistics: COMO Parrot Cay, Turks and Caicos Islands

Address:	COMO Parrot Cay PO Box 164 Providenciales Turks and Caicos Islands British West Indies
Tel:	+1 649 339 7788
Email:	parrotcay@comohotels.com
Website:	comohotels.com/parrotcay
Opening Date:	December 1998
Managing Director:	Taparahi Tibble
Interior Designer:	Keith Hobbs, United Designers, London
Architect:	Rolf Rothermel of Rothermel Cooke, Providenciales Main building and hillside accommodation Pool area Restaurant and bar COMO Shambhala (first phase) Gym Two beachside villas Three cottages Guest jetty Keith Hobbs Beach villas Cheong Yew Kuan Rocky Point and COMO Parrot Cay's Estates
Location:	Turks and Caicos Islands, British West Indies



Getting there:

- American Airlines (from Miami, New York (JFK), Charlotte, Boston, Philadelphia and Dallas)
- Delta Airlines (from New York (JFK) and Atlanta)
- United Airlines (from New York (Newark), Chicago and Houston)
- Air Canada (from Toronto and Montreal)
- British Airways (from London)
- Bahamasair (from Nassau)
- West Jet (from Toronto and Montreal)
- Jet Blue (from New York and Boston)

These airlines service Providenciales International Airport, 15-minute drive by private car and a 30-minute sea journey to COMO Parrot Cay

Accommodation:

72 rooms and villas, including:

- 26 Garden View Rooms
- 14 Ocean Facing Rooms
- 5 COMO Suites
- 6 One-Bedroom Beach Houses with plunge pools
- 3 Family Beach Houses with private pools
- 5 Two-Bedroom Beach Houses with swimming pools
- 2 Two-Bedroom Villas with swimming pools
- 1 COMO Villa (three bedrooms with swimming pool)
- 10 COMO Private Estates



COMO Parrot Cay Estate comprises a small rental pool of privately owned villas (some with adjoining guest villas), separate from the main resort accommodation. Every villa has its own private pool, as well as direct access to the beach.

- Island Villa (four bedrooms)
- Point House (three bedrooms)
- Dhyani House (three bedrooms)
- Lucky House (three bedrooms)
- Rocky Point (three bedrooms)
- Love Pumpkin (three bedrooms in the main house)
- The Sanctuary (three bedrooms in the main house and two four-bedroom guest villas)
- Tamarind Guest Villa (two bedrooms)

Room Facilities:

King-size beds
Air-conditioning
Ceiling fan
Private sundeck (some accommodations include loungers; Garden View and Ocean Facing rooms have balconies with daybeds)
Dining table (in suites, beach houses, villas and Estate)
Direct dial telephone with voicemail
Hairdryer
Bathrobes
Electronic in-room safe
Private Bar
Shower
Bathtub (Suites, Houses, Villas and Estates)
Complimentary Wi-Fi
Satellite TV
Complimentary coffee and tea-making facilities
Yoga mat
Complimentary flip-flops
COMO Shambhala bathroom amenities

Guest Services:

24-hour duty manager
24-hour medical assistance (resident nurse)
Concierge services
Travel and tour assistance
Airport transfers
COMO butler service (included with two-bedroom Beach House accommodation and above)
In-room dining



Laundry and pressing (no dry cleaning) Babysitting (on request and by arrangement) Play by COMO
Private chef (on request and by arrangement)
CD, DVD and book loan library
Internet access throughout resort and in public spaces

Restaurant: 'Lotus' poolside restaurant (for lunch and dinner), serving a light lunches and Asian cuisine for dinner
'Terrace' restaurant (for breakfast and dinner), serving modern Italian cuisine

Bar: COMO Beach Club open daily from 11.00am
Terrace Bar open from 6.00pm

Dining Options: Breakfast, lunch and dinner, with all-day dining and COMO Shambhala Cuisine menus also available

Guest Wellbeing: COMO Shambhala Retreat

Treatments: Asian-inspired holistic therapies developed by COMO Shambhala. Includes reflexology, Ayurveda, massage and Guinot anti-ageing facials

Spa facilities: 9 treatment rooms including private cottages and pavilions with Japanese baths, showers, changing rooms, and verandas
Spa infinity pool and sun deck with outdoor shower
Private yoga studio and yoga pavilion
Pilates hut for consultations and private
Pilates studio steam rooms and sauna (separate male / female)
Outdoor Jacuzzis (unisex / female)
Fitness retreat with weights and cardio equipment
Pool
Ayurvedic studio

Outdoor Activities: Yoga and Pilates retreats led by world-renowned teachers
Running trail
Biking
Eco-adventures
Kayaking
Hobie Cat rentals and catamaran sailing
Off-island diving (all levels)



COMO
PARROT CAY

Snorkelling
Waterskiing
Windsurfing
Deep-sea fishing
Island tours

Other facilities:

65 by 81sq ft infinity edge pool (20 by 24sq m)
30 by 81sq ft adults only pool (9 by 24sq m)
Two floodlit tennis courts
Resort boutiques
COMO Shambhala Retail Shop
Play by COMO (Kids Club)

Room Rates:

To view rates, please visit comohotels.com/parrotcay

Direct Reservations:

Tel:

+1 649 339 7788

+1 877 754 0726 (toll-free)

Email:

res.parrotcay@comohotels.com

GDS Access Code:

Private label chain code **CV**

Sabre 55026

Galileo/Apollo 30069

Amadeus PLS915

Worldspan 1915



Resort Synopsis: COMO Parrot Cay, Turks and Caicos Islands

In December 1998, COMO Hotels and Resorts – the name behind COMO Cocoa Island in the Maldives, as well as city hotels including COMO Metropolitan Bangkok and COMO Metropolitan London – opened its first private island resort in the Turks and Caicos. The landmark opening of COMO Parrot Cay brought COMO's vision of privacy and stylish beach living to the Caribbean.

The Turks and Caicos are located in the northern Caribbean, an archipelago of eight principal islands and more than 40 smaller cays, of which COMO Parrot Cay is one. The islands are positioned some 575 miles (925 kilometres) southeast of Miami, which is a 90-minute flight away. International flights land in Providenciales, the main island, a 30-minute speedboat ride to the resort.

The Turks and Caicos have been largely saved from high-rise construction. The region came relatively late to tourism compared to elsewhere in the Caribbean. This has protected the islands' natural integrity.

The topography of COMO Parrot Cay slopes up from the ocean towards a 49 foot (15 metre) -high ridge along the centre of the island. The landmass covers about 1000 acres. It has 3.23 miles (5.2 kilometres) of white-sand beaches, including a mile-long stretch on the west side (this is the resort's principal beach).

One mile south lies Rocky Point, an outcrop concealing more curls of sand. This is where COMO Parrot Cay's Estates are located, encompassing the largest villas, which are owned by private individuals but let and managed by the hotel.

On the quiet, east side of the island you will find the wellness centre, COMO Shambhala Retreat at COMO Parrot Cay, which overlooks mangroves and wetlands rich with birdlife. There are 175 species, including ruby-throated hummingbirds.

Much of the island remains undeveloped, given over to cactus and thickly entwined scrub. The ocean is warm, and the beaches softly shelving. Tides are weak and shore-side currents are gentle. What makes this sea so extraordinary is its uncanny shade of turquoise.

The resort itself is made up of a principal building – whitewash with coral-pink roofing – set back from the beach on raised ground. This is where the reception is located, in addition to the concierge, the resort shop, Terrace restaurant and bar, the library, a business centre, game room, TV room, pool table and private veranda.

An accommodation wing on one side of this central building houses 14 Ocean Facing rooms, five COMO Suites and 26 Garden View rooms which open onto a gently sloped lawn. All have terraces and are generously sized, with the smallest double measuring 538 square foot (50 square metres). A tennis court lies between the Main Building and the beach.



Some 657 feet (200 metres) closer to the beach are the beach houses and villas. They comprise of six One-Bedroom Beach Houses – all of which have plunge pools - and three Family Beach Houses (two bedrooms), five Two-Bedroom Beach Houses, two Two-Bedroom Beach Villas, one three bedroom COMO Villa and our headline, three-bedroom Island Villa. These are low buildings just steps from the sand, all with private pools and spacious decking areas.

The resort's main pool is behind the beach – infinity edged, measuring some 5,490 square feet (510 square metres), flanked by cream teak sun loungers and two Indonesian- style thatched bales at each extremity. Lotus restaurant, COMO Beach Club and the watersports centre are positioned near the pool. Adjacent to these facilities is the COMO Beach Club featuring large deck fronting the beach and ocean and an adults only infinity pool (2, 430 square feet / 219 square meters).

The interior is designed by Keith Hobbs, whose company United Designers was also responsible for COMO Metropolitan London. The warm, contemporary look with a colonial-style finish is achieved with soft white cottons covering chairs, cushions and four-poster beds. Further design motifs include teak furnishing, timber tiles in natural off-white colour and Indonesian loungers. Windows are shuttered, and bathrooms are white tongue-and-groove with wooden surfaces.

In-room facilities are decadent in their detail. Guests can choose between air-conditioning and overhead ceiling fans. Beds are dressed in the finest Italian linens. Other facilities include flat screen TVs with satellite channels and private bars. In addition, guests can take advantage of complimentary Wi-Fi Internet access.

COMO Parrot Cay Estate complement the resort's main accommodation. This project is a collaboration between COMO Parrot Cay and private owners, who place their properties, which are designed and built by COMO Parrot Cay, in a rental pool. They are landscaped to maximise privacy, and have commanding views of the ocean. Each is configured around a pool and has substantial private decking. Interiors share a pared down aesthetic, combining the neutral colours of sun-bleached oak and pale Caicos stone with white cottons.

COMO Parrot Cay Estate are made up of 10 private houses, some with additional guest bungalows and houses. Island Villa, a three- bedroom villa features two ocean facing bedroom opening to the large pool deck and beach and one garden room side. Point House, a three-bedroom villa features a high ceiling, black lava stone pool, and has direct access to the beach next to the "Rocky Point" landmark.

On the other side of this landmark, Dhyani House, Lucky House and Rocky Point House are three identical estate complexes, featuring guest bedrooms on each side of the living area, and a separate master bedroom. All these rooms are ocean-facing with direct beach access.

Love Pumpkin main house (three bedrooms) is featuring one oversize detached master bedroom and two guest bedroom on each side of the ample interior with Balinese-influenced



design, all opening to the pool deck with beach access.

The Sanctuary comprises a main house with three bedrooms (including an infinity pool on the upper level, overlooking at the ocean) and two four-bedroom guest houses. This estate is nestled within lush tropical gardens on ten-and-a-half acres of pristine, west-facing beachfront. Large windows in each property frame the island landscape and the turquoise sea beyond. Interiors of warm woods and cool limestone provide a contemporary backdrop to a unique collection of eclectic furniture, art and ornaments from around the world, reflecting the elegant taste of the home's fashion-designer owner, Donna Karan. The complex is ideal for hosting large events of up to 40 people.

Facilities in all these privately owned estates include king-size or twin beds, air conditioning, ceiling fans, satellite televisions, direct dial telephones with voicemail, and stand-alone outdoor showers. Fully equipped kitchens feature toasters, espresso machines, ovens, stovetops, microwaves, dishwashers, full-size refrigerators and substantial dining areas. Services available include daily maids and private COMO butlers.

Guests of COMO Parrot Cay Estate also have full access to the main resort and its two restaurants, with menus devised by COMO Hotels and Resorts' Executive Chef. Private chefs can also be arranged to cook for you in your residence.

Lotus Restaurant is an easygoing al fresco poolside eatery with open kitchens serving lunch and dinner. COMO Beach Club, adjacent to Lotus, offers Caribbean classic cocktails during the day, and a lively atmosphere by night, featuring our mixologists' specials. The Terrace Bar has exceptional views overlooking the island and ocean, whilst the Terrace Restaurant offers outdoor and indoor tables, where breakfast, dinner, and an all day dining menu is served.

Guests can also benefit from COMO Shambhala Cuisine, designed to maximise energy and wellbeing with the use of raw foods rich in living enzymes, vitamins and sea minerals. This special menu features little salt (when necessary, Celtic sea salt is used), no dairy (as an alternative, tofu is blended with aioli to create a yoghurt), and unprocessed honey in place of sweeteners. It avoids fats, using organic olive oil instead of butter. Fish is nearly always steamed, and the only meat that appears on the COMO Shambhala menu is organic chicken. There is no calorie counting, although dishes are conspicuously light, from the soya bean, pumpkin and Swiss chard patties with tofu aioli and tabbouleh salad, to the vegetable hot pot with silken tofu and udon noodles. Healthy desserts include an organic carrot cake with vanilla yoghurt sorbet.

But it is not just cuisine that caters to guests' wellbeing. COMO Parrot Cay's award-winning COMO Shambhala Retreat offers yoga, Pilates and related treatments. The retreat buildings fit appropriately within their context, incorporating nature into the spa experience so that guests feel connected. It is a supremely peaceful location, with views over the island's wetlands towards the North Caicos channel.



Facilities on the island include a 538 square foot (50 square metre) infinity pool that faces the leeward side of the island, a 1,292 square foot (120 square metre) yoga bale aired by natural breezes, and nine treatment rooms. The holistic centre also includes an outdoor Jacuzzi garden, two yoga and Pilates studios that guests can take over for one-on-one tuition, and a large fitness center overlooking the ocean and surrounding wetland, featuring Life Fitness equipment. There are also two double massage rooms and Japanese baths, where couples can enjoy their treatments together.

Asian-based therapies range from shiatsu to Ayurvedic detox programs. Recommendations are made on a consultative rather than prescriptive basis, allowing therapists to respond to each guest on an individual basis. In addition, COMO Shambhala Retreat at COMO Parrot Cay hosts regular consultants including Susan King, an intuitive counsellor based in London. An Ayurvedic doctor is also permanently in residence.

Yoga enthusiasts can take part in retreats led by world-renowned teachers, where five hours of daily practice are combined with healthy COMO Shambhala Cuisine and a full range of holistic treatments. The simplicity of each day lets clients empty their mind of all other concerns — seamless service and attention to detail ensures guests can focus on the reason for their coming to this uniquely soulful place, whether it is to learn yoga for the first time, or to deepen their existing practice.

For those who enjoy outdoor pursuits, the islands' warm and unpolluted waters promise some exceptional experiences under the guidance of our team. The resort activities center is providing a large panel of non-motorized water sports activities: snorkelling, windsurfing, paddle boarding, including guided tour to explore the mangrove life; and excursions with the hotel boats, from beach drop-offs with castaway picnics to sunset cruise. Our preferred partners are conducting under water excursion with PADI certified instructor to explore some of the best diving site; fishing trips and on land adventures to discover the beauty of the surrounding islands.

Family activities are manifold, and are supported by an experienced team of activity leaders and babysitters. Play by COMO is the resort's unique approach to experiences and activities tailored for young children, which can also be enjoyed by the whole family.



ABOUT THE COMO GROUP AND COMO HOTELS AND RESORTS

Headquartered in Singapore, The COMO Group represents Christina Ong's unique vision of contemporary living. The COMO Group encompasses the hospitality collection known as COMO Hotels and Resorts, the international luxury fashion retailer Club 21, the award-winning wellness concept COMO Shambhala and the philanthropic COMO Foundation.

COMO Hotels and Resorts offers personalised luxury travel experiences through individualised service, commitment to holistic wellness and award-winning cuisine. Each hotel is developed in response to the destination it inhabits, including COMO The Halkin in London, COMO The Treasury in Perth, Australia, COMO Castello Del Nero, Tuscany and three COMO Metropolitan hotels in London, Bangkok and Miami Beach. COMO's resort portfolio encompasses COMO Parrot Cay in the Turks and Caicos, COMO Cocoa Island and COMO Maalifushi in the Maldives, COMO Point Yamu in Phuket, Thailand, and four COMO Uma experience resorts in Bali and Bhutan, including the newest resort, opened in 2018, COMO Uma Canggu.

COMO also manages COMO Shambhala Estate in Bali, in partnership with COMO's sister brand in wellness. This flagship wellness retreat offers an integrative and immersive restorative experience that enables real and lasting improvements to one's health. COMO Shambhala products, services, cuisine, treatments and spa facilities are available within every COMO hotel and resort.

Younger guests are also encouraged to enjoy COMO's renowned service, design, cuisine and approach to wellness, through Play by COMO. This approach is our way of delivering personalised family experiences. Play by COMO is available at COMO Maalifushi, COMO Parrot Cay, COMO Point Yamu and COMO Uma Canggu, with dedicated Play spaces available.

City Hotels: COMO Hotels and Resorts' urban properties include COMO The Halkin in London's Belgravia, the COMO Metropolitan hotels in London, Bangkok and Miami Beach, and a city hotel in Perth, Australia, called COMO The Treasury. All five hotels feature award winning chefs, a contemporary aesthetic and exceptional service.



Resorts: COMO's private resorts offer a range of water-based excursions, including fly fishing, paddleboarding, kayaking, snorkelling and some of the world's best diving and surfing. To this we add island adventures and cultural trips, such as bike rides and temple visits. COMO Point Yamu on the island of Phuket in Thailand combines contemporary style with dramatic views overlooking the Andaman Sea and the limestone stacks of Phang Nga Bay. The understated style and laid-back nature of COMO Parrot Cay in the Turks and Caicos, COMO Cocoa Island and COMO Maalifushi in the Maldives are underlaid by the exacting service that has become a COMO hallmark. World-class cuisine and holistic wellness treatments at our COMO Shambhala Retreats complete COMO's approach to a perfect beach holiday. The COMO Uma properties in Bhutan and Bali introduce the rich cultural heritage and local traditions that are unique to these dramatic destinations. Specialist guiding, treks and tours, physical activities and tailor-made programmes ensure memorable insights into some of the world's most pristine locations. The COMO Uma properties include COMO Uma Ubud in Bali's cultural heartland, COMO Uma Canggu on the island's south coast — complete with a new COMO Beach Club — and in Bhutan, tucked into two distinct Himalayan valleys, COMO Uma Paro and COMO Uma Punakha. All the Uma lodges incorporate local design and cuisine while providing an unmistakably COMO experience. Our latest addition to the COMO Group is COMO Castello Del Nero – a historic 740-acre estate dating back to a twelfth-century Tuscan castle. The estate has its own vineyard, bee hives and olive groves, which supply the hotel's restaurants, including Michelin-starred La Torre. COMO also provides powerful wellness experiences to guests at the hotel's COMO Shambhala Retreat.

Wellness Destination: COMO Shambhala Estate in Bali is a sanctuary for holistic wellness. Expert staff are goal-oriented, relevant and realistic in their consultative approach. Each guest's individual needs and ambitions determine the programme of nutrition, exercise, therapies and activities, while facilities and tropical villa-style accommodation are impeccably appointed. All of this is set in a clearing, rich with flora and fauna, above Bali's beautiful Ayung River.

Follow our adventures on Instagram @comohotels or chat to us on our Facebook page.



ABOUT COMO SHAMBHALA

COMO Shambhala is an award-winning wellness concept developed as a sister brand to COMO Hotels and Resorts. The company is headquartered in Singapore under The COMO Group. Running as a thread through COMO properties worldwide, COMO Shambhala promotes a healthy way of living, learning and eating well. The pursuit of balance is central to the approach, the word Shambhala translating as 'peace' in Sanskrit.

The COMO Shambhala resort experience combines Asian-based therapies, nutrition, exercise and yoga with a results-driven agenda managed by experts in holistic health. Weight loss, anti- ageing and stress management can all be addressed while staying in a spectacular part of the world. Facilities are state-of-the-art and usually include yoga rooms, Pilates equipment, hydrotherapy and Ayurveda. The flagship retreat is COMO Shambhala Estate in Bali, an award- winning wellness resort.

The COMO Shambhala city wellness experience is attached to COMO's Metropolitan properties in Bangkok, Miami, Perth and London, as well as a stand-alone wellness centre with resident experts in Singapore.

COMO Shambhala Cuisine has been developed for those seeking better health through nutritious, low-calorie eating. Largely organic and often locally sourced, the cuisine replaces refined foods with naturally occurring sugars, and bad fats with nutritious nuts and oils. We also a COMO Shambhala cookbook, 'The Pleasures of Eating Well', published in 2016.

COMO Shambhala also produces a range of skin and bodycare products, COMO Shambhala At Home, made from all-natural ingredients. COMO Shambhala Active Living is the company's resort and activewear line, launched in 2007.



Key Biographies: COMO Parrot Cay, Turks and Caicos Islands

Keith Hobbs, Interior Designer (The Resort):

Keith Hobbs is the Chief Executive Officer and founder of United Designers, a London-based company of 50 people with a portfolio that includes internationally renowned hotels, restaurants, bars and clubs. With over 30 years experience in the industry, he is known for his pared-down, contemporary style. Hobbs also designed COMO Metropolitan London.

Cheong Yew Kuan, Architect and Interior Designer (Main House):

Cheong Yew Kuan divides his time between Bali and Singapore. Other projects include COMO Shambhala Estate in Bali and COMO Uma Paro in Bhutan. Formerly with Kerry Hill Architects in Singapore, his style is defined by a keen awareness of indigenous traditions, creating satisfying, sensitive volumes for modern living.



Beyond the Resort: Activities at COMO Parrot Cay, Turks and Caicos Islands

Beyond COMO Parrot Cay – which includes a comprehensive COMO Shambhala Retreat, as well as watersports centre offering kayaking, windsurfing and catamaran sailing – there are numerous excursions available, taking guests further into this archipelago of coral reefs.

Island Hopping and Eco-Adventures

Island hopping is a popular activity, involving trips to uninhabited cays, such as Iguana Island (home of the shy rock iguana) for snorkelling and impromptu barbecue-picnics. Here you can revel in the natural beauty of powder beaches and pristine shallow waters, and perhaps be fortunate enough to discover a snow-white sand dollar.

Boat charters include private sunset cruises and intimate secluded beach drop-offs. Guests can also go big game or bone fishing (catch and release is encouraged to help preserve these fragile islands). The resort can also arrange powerboat rides around the islands.

Specific excursions include exploring West Caicos, an uninhabited cay with some of the bluest waters in the island chain. Guests can snorkel coral reefs, do some cliff diving, hike to historic Yankee Town and the mysterious Lake Catherine. They can also visit French Cay, a small wildlife sanctuary lying on the edge of the wall about 32 kilometres southwest of Parrot Cay. If tidal conditions are right, it's possible to continue to West Sand Spit, a small sandbar which emerges at low tide on the edge of the Caicos Bank – an incredible natural phenomenon.

North Caicos' location directly across from Parrot Cay makes it an ideal destination to explore by both kayak and vehicle. Guests can paddle the tranquil waters of Bottle Creek, tour the plantation ruins and visit Flamingo Pond Nature Reserve. They can enjoy a delicious lunch in the home of local matriarch and accomplished chef, Susan Butterfield, and take time to walk around the picturesque village of Kew.

Kayaking is also popular – guests can undertake a four-hour eco-tour exploring the mangrove channels weaving up inside the nature reserve adjacent to Parrot Cay. Guests can look for marine and birdlife and learn about the tropical ecology. Single and tandem kayaks are available, with lessons provided.

Middle Caicos is the largest island in the chain, but despite its size only 300 people officially reside here. Guests can explore it on a full-day eco-adventure, following an invigorating mountain bike trail that covers about 24 kilometres. The route follows a rugged road through the hills and pinelands to the south and then loops back along an easier coastal road to the north. Time is taken to explore the impressive limestone caves near Conch Bar and to swim at the famed Mudjin Harbour.



Diving

The Turks and Caicos are considered among the world's top 10 diving destinations. Each dive trip is usually conducted with two staff (either both instructors or one dive master and one dive instructor). COMO Parrot Cay dive charters are with Big Blue (www.bigblue.tc), a local dive and eco-tour company which specialises in small group and private diving services, catering to all experience levels. Please note that divers are required to hold an International SCUBA license, although beginners have the option of arranging a resort or practice-dive with a private instructor.

Sites vary depending on the tides and weather conditions and can include wall diving, deep spur and coral diving. Grace Bay is popular for barrier reef diving. Spur and groove coral formations top a coral-covered slope down to about 36 metres, a favourite spot for large groupers, sharks and turtles. Northwest Point is Provo's famous wall diving area with spectacular visibility. The top of the wall starts at around 12 metres and drops off into the abyss. French Cay is a remote dot in the ocean that was once a pirate hangout and now a bird sanctuary. The diving there is some of the most pristine throughout the islands.

Families and Children: Play by COMO

At COMO Parrot Cay, we provide tailor-made activities for families. These range from shell painting and tie-dying T-shirts, to making kites or necklaces from fossilised shark teeth. Staff can also organise pirate scavenger hunts and sailing adventures along with castaway picnics around the island.



Destination Overview: COMO Parrot Cay, Turks and Caicos Islands

The Turks and Caicos Islands are situated 925 square kilometres southeast of Miami in the northern Caribbean. They cover 500 square kilometres of Atlantic Ocean.

The islands' name is derived from the indigenous Turk's Head 'fez' cactus; Caicos means 'string of islands.' It is contested as to whether it was Christopher Columbus or Juan Ponce de León who arrived first in 1592. The indigenous population were Taino Indians, followed by the Lucayans, who eventually became victims of Spanish enslavement. In the 17th century, settlers arrived from Bermuda, using slaves to develop cotton and sisal plantations. The land wasn't fertile enough, and the industry's death knell was sounded by a hurricane in 1813.

In 1766, the Turks and Caicos became part of the colony of the Bahamas, later annexed to Jamaica in 1874. In the 1970s, the islands were made a British Crown Colony. Inhabited islands include Salt Cay, Grand Turk, South Caicos, Middle Caicos, North Caicos, Providenciales, Pine Cay and Parrot Cay, which is the private island resort belonging to COMO Hotels and Resorts. East Caicos and West Caicos are uninhabited. The total population is between 30,000 and 35,000 residents.

Tourism is the islands' principal industry. However, they also function as an important offshore financial centre. Fishing still thrives.

The Turks and Caicos have the world's third largest coral reef system and over 370 kilometres of white sand beaches.

The Turks Bank is the name given to the two large limestone plateaus that root these islands. The deep offshore waters are important transit points for humpback whales (December to April), spotted eagle rays, manta rays (summer) and turtles. Tuna, wahoo and blue marlin also frequent these rich waters.

Coral walls in the Turks and Caicos are considered some of the best in the Caribbean. They include Grand Turk, West Caicos and Provo's Northwest Point. In addition, there are historic wrecks south of Salt Cay.

The salt ponds and inland marshes are favoured by a rich array of birdlife, including great blue herons, flamingos, osprey, pelicans, egrets, terns, frigates and boobies. There are now 12 cays designated as protected breeding grounds.



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