

## Quick facts

The alluring turquoise waters of the Turks and Caicos Islands feature a vast, thriving coral reef ecosystem and lots of walls. Whether you're looking for breathtaking walls or wrecks, scuba diving in the Turks and Caicos is both accessible and impressive. Just south of the Bahamas, the Turks and Caicos are actually 40 different islands and cays, but just eight are inhabited.

The Columbus Passage, a 35-kilometre/22-mile-wide channel, separates the Turks Islands from the Caicos Islands. This deep passage is a water highway for migrating fish, rays, turtles, dolphins and Humpback whales from January through March. Providenciales, known as Provo, is the most developed island with a wide range of accommodations, restaurants, and amenities. A large portion of the coast is protected by the National Parks Ordinance, which results in pristine dive sites with abundant marine life.

Grand Turk is the capital island and is a popular stop for cruise ships and tourists alike. But, the main attraction here is diving. With protected reefs dropping well past recreational dive limits just offshore, it's easy to see why this is a diver's paradise.

**North West Point** – Just off Provo, this wall starts at 11 metres/35 feet and plunges to more than 900 metres/3000 feet. With a collection of different dive sites, this area is full of hard and soft corals, schools of barracuda, horse-eye jacks, lobster, crabs, angelfish, and numerous other species of fish.

**West Caicos** – West Caicos is an uninhabited island southwest of Provo known for its pristine walls and frequent pelagic visitors. Offering several amazing dives, the walls here are covered with barrel sponges, staghorn corals, and the occasional giant orange elephant ear sponge. Grunts, snappers, groupers, and schools of blue tangs all call this area home.

**Grace Bay** – On the north side of Provo, protected by a long barrier reef, the marine life in Grace Bay is spectacular. Dive sites here consist of small walls with deep coral canyons that start at 9 metres/30 feet and drop down to 30 metres/100 feet. Groupers, barracuda, grunts, snappers, turtles, and pregnant reef sharks are commonly sighted.

**French Cay** – A small inhabited island south of Provo, French Cay has 2000-metre/6000-foot vertical wall drop-offs all around. Eagle rays, schools of reef sharks, sea turtles, nurse sharks, and moray eels are frequently seen. Occasionally, manta rays, hammerheads, and humpback whales swim by.

**Salt Cay** – Located in the Columbus Passage, Salt Cay is a top spot for viewing humpback whales as they migrate to their Dominican breeding grounds during winter months. But, there's much more to this area, including the wreck of a British warship, caverns, and incredible walls.

**Grand Turk** – The Columbus National Marine Park, with around 25 dive site moorings, makes for some spectacular wall dives. At the southern end, you can experience eel gardens at Chief Ministers but there are also sites featuring hard corals, nurse sharks, Nassau groupers, yellowtail, triggerfish, turtles, razorfish, batfish, flying gurnards and more.

## **When to go**

With an average of 350 days of sunshine annually, Turks and Caicos is a great place to dive year-round. Average air temperature ranges between 29-32°C/85-90°F with trade winds that keep the climate comfortable. The islands seldom experience trouble with hurricane season, which runs from June through October. The warm water around the islands averages 28-29°C/82-84° F in summer and 23-26°C/74-78 °F in winter.