

CAYMAN FOOTPRINT

GIVING BACK TO THE ISLANDS

Beyond the palm-fringed beaches and tranquil seas of the Cayman Islands is a destination with sustainability and conservation at its core. Discover how to help Cayman remain a Caribbean paradise for generations to come

With jewel-like waters, white beaches and world-class diving and dining, the Cayman Islands is the epitome of a tropical escape. But what about the environmental cost of getting here? Caring for the planet is more of a consideration than ever in 2020, so it's important our holidays don't leave a lasting footprint on the destinations we visit. Fortunately, Cayman has a range of options for visitors who want to give something back. With its own National Trust to protect the environment and wildlife, this British Overseas Territory in the Caribbean is dedicated to ensuring the impact of tourists is as positive as the memories they take away. From volunteering with blue iguanas to learning about coral health, there are plenty of ways to get involved. And it needn't feel like work — eating at one of the sustainable restaurants or assisting with the Blue Iguana Recovery Program can help keep Cayman the paradise it is today. Here are a few ways to help:

1 Wildlife watch

Witnessing a turtle as it's released into the wild is unforgettable, especially since these beautiful creatures are considered Cayman's original inhabitants — and the reason why Christopher Columbus named the islands 'Las Tortugas'. Now, thanks to conservation efforts, more than 31,000 yearlings have been released onto the islands' white-sand beaches. Just as memorable is the blue iguana, a majestic lizard that's Grand Cayman's largest native land animal. They're well protected, and through the National Trust's volunteering programme, visitors can spend a few hours at the Blue Iguana Recovery Program, helping with feeding and food collection, pen cleaning and light maintenance.

2 Local produce

From surf shacks serving conch fritters to Michelin-starred restaurants offering langoustine and Dover sole, the Cayman Islands has it all. Increasingly, restaurants are sourcing ingredients from independent producers, with an emphasis on sustainability and farm- or boat-to-table eating. At The Brasserie on Grand Cayman, owners King and Lisa secure their own sustainable fish supply, provide organic eggs and recycle food waste in the chicken coop. The honey for their glazed pumpkin comes from the restaurant's 50 bee hives, and coconuts come from their own plantation. Vegans and vegetarians are well catered for in Cayman and can fill up on meat-free curries and truffle potatoes at Vivo, or jerk tofu at Bread & Chocolate. Coincide a visit with the Cayman Cookout, the foodie event of the year held every January on Grand Cayman.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:
Leatherback turtle; local vegetarian dish, Cayman Cabana restaurant; palm-fringed beach Grand Cayman

3 Coral planting

With 365 dive sites, crystal-clear waters and abundant marine life, the Cayman Islands are considered one of the best diving spots in the world. Visitors can experience the world's best 12ft dive site at Stingray City, the beautiful Starfish Point and the 20ft Bloody Bay Wall at Little Cayman to witness strawberry and orange vase sponges, sharks, barracudas and eagle rays. But the health of coral reefs is vital to the continued upkeep of this unique underwater attraction, and the Central Caribbean Marine Institute has established dedicated coral planting initiatives on all three islands: Little Cayman, Cayman Brac and Grand Cayman. Visitors can donate, attend educational lectures or even experience a virtual 'live dive' at the cinema, where they can watch as scientists at Little Cayman demonstrate their work to restore and protect coral reefs.

Essentials

British Airways flies to the Cayman Islands four times a week, or daily via Miami. Return prices start from £623 per person. ba.com

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