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The Out Islands of the Bahamas — the term refers to everything except the Commonwealth's two most urbanized islands, New Providence and Grand Bahama — are also called the "the Real Bahamas" because of their laid-back feel.

This off-the-beaten-path part of the Bahamas, however, encompasses nearly 99% of the country's islands: Andros alone is bigger than New Providence (home to the capital, Nassau) and Grand Bahama combined. The major difference is a lack of casinos, duty-free shops, mega-resorts and cruise ships.

"Nassau has the banks, bankers, casino and big resorts. The Out Islands are quieter, and people choose them for quieter lifestyles," says Virginia Damianos, a third-generation Bahamian and vice president of Damianos Sotheby's International Realty in Nassau.

The Out Islands are grouped into several main clusters: the Abacos, Exumas and Eleuthera. Other notable Out Islands include Andros, Bimini and Cat Island. Each has its own flavor: According to Damianos, boaters head to the Abacos, anglers to Bimini, divers to Andros, but with the omnipresent turquoise sea, "everywhere, water is the thing."

International buyers have made the Bahamas famous as a tax dodge, but most American second homes here are bought for love. "Generally the Out Islands are less," says Damianos. "The least expensive waterfront condo in Nassau would be \$375,000, and on Abaco it would be \$300,000."

The largest upcoming development is PGA Village, a \$200 million golf community opening next year on Cat Island that has a mix of residential offerings and is a sister property to the PGA's headquarter community in Florida (pgavillage.com).

With hundreds of islands, the region is also popular for private island ownership. According to Damianos, celebrity island owners include Johnny Depp, Nicolas Cage and Faith Hill.



Bahamas Ministry of Tourism

Take the plunge: Long and narrow Eleuthera is ringed with sandy beaches and a rocky coast. Like all the many Out Islands, second-home living revolves around the water.

A look at three Out Islands

- ▶ **The Abacos:** This 120-mile-long barrier island chain is anchored by Great and Little Abaco and appeals to boaters. Most waterfront properties have private docks. Inland condos start at about \$180,000. The Abacos also contain two of the area's priciest developments: Ritz-Carlton's Abaco Club on Winding Bay (cottages from \$1.4 million) and the new Baker's Bay, which will have a mix of houses, cottages, condos and a golf course.
- ▶ **Andros:** The Bahamas' largest island also is the least developed. The outdoor playground draws eco-travelers and divers. It has the world's third-largest barrier reef and a renowned undersea abyss, the Tongue of the Ocean. "Kamalame Cay is a private-island resort just off the coast," says real-estate agent Virginia Damianos. Large houses on 1-acre waterfront lots are priced from about \$1.5 million. (kamalame.com)
- ▶ **Eleuthera:** Eleuthera has miles of white and pink beaches, plus rocky bluffs along one side. "It is very quiet and beautiful and spread out, not for a type-A person," Damianos says. Just off Eleuthera is Star Island, a high-profile new 35-acre private-island community with a "green" eco-focus from top to bottom. Lots are for sale from \$400,000, and condos are starting to be built (starislandbahamas.com).



Best for

Diving, sailing, fishing – plus peace and quiet.

Claim to fame

Andros is known as the bone-fishing capital of the world.

Don't miss

Mail is still delivered to the Out Islands by boat from Nassau, and scheduled mail boats carry passengers in the no-frills manner of another era.

Getting there

The main Out Islands are all served directly from the USA, mostly from Florida. You can fly from Nassau.

Tourism information

myoutislands.com



Kamalame Cay

On the market: This new beachfront house is on 96-acre Kamalame Cay, a private-island resort off Andros. It has more than an acre of waterfront land and nearly 300 feet of beach.

High-range price: \$1,650,000

- ▶ **Bedrooms:** 2
- ▶ **Bathrooms:** 2
- ▶ **Size:** 1,400 square feet
- ▶ **Features:** Two octagonal buildings are linked by an open path. Each building has a master bedroom suite with oversized soaking tub, ocean views and wrap-around deck. The resort includes a spa, restaurants and numerous sporting activities.



Damianos Sotheby's International Realty

On the market: This new house is in the Treasure Cay waterfront community of Abaco, which has 3½ miles of beach, a marina, shops and restaurants. It comes fully furnished.

Low-range price: \$595,000

- ▶ **Bedrooms:** 3
- ▶ **Bathrooms:** 3
- ▶ **Size:** 2,900 square feet
- ▶ **Features:** Tiled kitchen with custom cabinets and granite counters, large covered porches, heated and unheated pools shared with nine other homes, rental income possible.