

# Overview of Cayman Islands

Renowned for beautiful beaches, excellent diving, and offshore banking, the Cayman Islands is made up of three islands situated between Cuba and Jamaica, only a 90-minute flight from Miami. Grand Cayman is the largest and most developed of the islands and the location of the capital, George Town. It is hard to believe that among the buildings that line George Town's harbour are more than 500 banks making up one of the world's largest offshore financial centres.

It was not until 1670 that the islands came under British rule, and remain a British territory to this day. The Queen's picture is still displayed proudly, but the US exerts a lot of influence over what it considers its backyard.

For years the islands were a base for pirates who delighted in the remoteness of Grand Cayman. A bonus was the island's absolutely flat topography, which ensures that its profile is practically invisible against the horizon, making it the perfect hideaway for nefarious characters.

While some people are still looking for a safe place to hide their treasure, these days most visitors to the Cayman Islands are after a relaxing getaway. The Islands are a beach paradise with great swimming, snorkelling, scuba diving, fishing, and other watersports.

Little Cayman and Cayman Brac are 70 miles (113km) northeast of Grand Cayman and are much smaller and even more relaxed than the main island. Visitors don't come to these islands in suits; the little business that goes on revolves around diving and catering for the world's best bone-fishing.

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## Key Facts

**Language:**

English is the official language. Spanish is also widely spoken.

**Passport/Visa:**

All visitors are required to hold sufficient funds for their intended period of stay in the Cayman Islands, as well as a return or onward ticket and the documents required for further travel. Tourist visas can generally be extended for stays of up to six months. It's recommended that passports be valid for six months after the intended period of travel.

**Currency:**

The Cayman Islands dollar (KYD) is the official currency, which is divided into 100 cents. It is fixed to the US dollar at US\$1.20. Currency can be exchanged at the banks, bureaux de change and many hotels. Banks are open Monday to Saturday. US dollars are accepted as payment in most establishments and are the preferred currency for exchange. ATMs are widely available and major credit and debit cards are accepted.

**Electricity:**

Electrical current is 120 volts, 60Hz. American style two-pin plugs are standard.

# Travel to Cayman Islands

## Overview

The most popular things to do in the Cayman Islands revolve around sun, sand, and blue water, meaning the destination is, unsurprisingly, a watersports paradise. Around Grand Cayman alone there are more than 150 scuba diving sites, and the coral reefs are celebrated for their health, despite the overall degradation of coral in the Caribbean.

The islands are also a prime destination for fishing and the resorts offer all the usual fun recreational sports. Lounging on the beautiful beaches is another favoured pastime. Indeed, many claim that Seven Mile Beach on Grand Cayman is the best beach in the Caribbean.

Colourful and rare wildlife is found in abundance in the Cayman Islands, both in the water and on land. Little Cayman, the least visited of the islands by tourists, thrives with visiting red-footed boobies. Dive sites such as the aptly names Stingray City are home to surprisingly friendly stingrays that are a delight to snorkel with, while Boatswain's Beach on Grand Cayman is home to the famous Cayman Turtle Farm.

Landlubbers can visit the historic sites of George Town and Pedro St James Castle, or walk through Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park. The rainy season, from May to November, staves off tourist crowds and is a good time to soak in the Cayman attractions despite a bit of rain.

## Climate in Cayman Islands

In general, the weather in the Cayman Islands is good all year and the trade winds ensure it doesn't get too hot. The peak tourist season runs between December and April. The rainy season runs from May to November and visitors are advised to keep an eye on weather reports in the days before arrival, as this is also hurricane season. Many regard the wet season as the best time to visit the Cayman Islands as room rates are cheaper, the beaches are less crowded, and the rain comes in short, sharp bursts that don't usually impact too much on holiday fun.

## Health Notes when travelling to Cayman Islands

There are no specific health risks associated with travel to the Cayman Islands and food and water are generally considered safe. No vaccinations are required, but vaccination for hepatitis A is recommended and travellers should always be up to date on vaccinations for MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) and tetanus-diphtheria. Dengue fever has been reported in the Caribbean region and insect protection measures should be taken. There are three well-equipped hospitals on Grand Cayman, two in George Town and one in the Eastern part of the island; a smaller facility on Cayman Brac can handle most routine medical problems. Serious illness or injury may still require evacuation, so visitors should take out adequate travel health insurance to cover the possible need for an air ambulance. There is a decompression chamber available in the Cayman Islands.

## Safety Notes when travelling to Cayman Islands

The Cayman Islands has a relatively low crime rate. Nevertheless, visitors are advised to take sensible precautions to prevent being the victims of petty crime. They should keep valuables in a hotel or other safety deposit box rather than leave them lying about, and should be aware of the risk of flooding during hurricane season (June to November). It's recommended that visitors follow local advice with regards to leaving the island in the event of an approaching hurricane.

## Customs in Cayman Islands

The culture of the Cayman Islands is a blend of American, British, and West Indian traditions. Churchgoing locals appreciate politeness and modesty, and visitors should remember that topless bathing and nudity is illegal. Beachwear is not acceptable off the beach.

## Duty Free in Cayman Islands

Travellers entering the Cayman Islands may bring in 200 cigarettes or 250g of tobacco, as well as one litre of alcohol duty free.

## Doing Business in Cayman Islands

The Cayman Islands are one of the principal financial centres in the world. The hub of business and banking is in George Town on Grand Cayman. Business dress within the financial industry is formal, but other businesses may have a more relaxed protocol. After hours meetings are usually fairly casual. Handshakes on introduction are followed by the exchange of business cards. General business hours are 8am to 5pm, while banks open at 9am and close at 4pm Monday to Friday.

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## Communication in Cayman Islands

The international access code for the Cayman Islands is +1, in common with the US, Canada, and most of the Caribbean, followed by 345. International direct dialling is available. Hotels and restaurants with free WiFi are widely available.

## Tipping in Cayman Islands

Most restaurants and hotels automatically add a 10 to 15 percent service charge to the bill, though a gratuity of the same amount is expected. At hotels, a 10 percent government tax is also usually added to the cost of rooms. Taxi drivers expect a 10 to 15 percent tip as well.

## Passport/Visa Note

All visitors are required to hold sufficient funds for their intended period of stay in the Cayman Islands, as well as a return or onward ticket and the documents required for further travel. Tourist visas can generally be extended for stays of up to six months. It's recommended that passports be valid for six months after the intended period of travel.

## Entry Requirements

### Entry requirements for Americans:

United States passport holders must have a valid passport or a government-issued photo ID, such as a driver's license, as well as proof of citizenship, such as an original or certified birth certificate. No visa is required for stays of a maximum of 6 months for tourists, or 10 days for business travellers. However, the length of visa-free allowance varies depending on the endorsement on the passport.

### Entry requirements for Canadians:

Canadian nationals do not require a passport for travel to the Cayman Islands providing they hold a government-issued photo ID, such as a driver's license, as well as proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate. Canadian citizens can stay in the Cayman Islands visa-free for a maximum of 6 months as tourists and 10 days as business travellers. However, the length of visa-free allowance varies depending on the endorsement on the passport.

### Entry requirements for UK nationals:

UK nationals require a valid passport or proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate or naturalisation certificate, accompanied by an official photo ID (e.g. driver's licence), for travel to the Cayman Islands. No visa is required for stays up to a maximum of 6 months for tourists, or 10 days for business travellers. However, the length of visa-free allowance varies depending on the endorsement on the passport.

### Entry requirements for Australians:

Australian nationals must have a valid passport beyond the period of intended stay. No visa is required for a maximum stay of 6 months for tourists or 10 days for business travellers. The length of visa-free allowance varies depending on the endorsement on the passport.

### Entry requirements for Irish nationals:

Irish nationals require a passport valid at least beyond the intended period of stay. No visa is required for a maximum 6 month stay for tourists or 10 days for business travellers. The length of visa-free allowance varies depending on the endorsement on the passport.

### Entry requirements for New Zealanders:

New Zealand nationals must have a passport valid beyond the period of intended stay. No visa is required for a maximum 6 month stay for tourists or 10 days for business travellers. The length of visa-free allowance varies depending on the endorsement on the passport.

### Entry requirements for South Africans:

South African nationals require a passport valid beyond the period of intended stay in the Cayman Islands. No visa is required for a maximum stay of 6 months for tourists or 10 days for business travellers. However, the length of visa-free allowance varies depending on the endorsement on the passport.

## **Tourist Offices**

Cayman Islands official tourism website: <http://www.caymanislands.ky>

## **Cayman Islands Embassies**

### **In the United States:**

British Embassy, Washington DC, United States (also represents Cayman Islands): +1 202 588 6500.

### **In Canada:**

British High Commission, Ottawa, Canada (also represents Cayman Islands): +1 613 237 1530.

### **In the United Kingdom:**

Cayman Islands Government Office, London, United Kingdom: +44 20 7491 7772

### **In Australia:**

British High Commission, Canberra, Australia (also represents Cayman Islands): +61 2 6270 6666.

### **In Ireland:**

British Embassy, Dublin, Ireland (also represents Cayman Islands): +353 1 205 3700.

### **In New Zealand:**

British High Commission, Wellington, New Zealand (also represents Cayman Islands): +64 4 924 2888.

### **In South Africa:**

British High Commission, Pretoria, South Africa (also represents Cayman Islands): +27 12 421 7500.

## **Foreign Embassies in Cayman Islands**

### **American Embassy**

United States Consular Agent, George Town: +1 345 945 8173.

### **Canadian Embassy**

Canadian High Commission, Kingston, Jamaica (also responsible for Cayman Islands): +1 876 926 1500.

### **British Embassy**

UK Embassy in the Cayman Islands, George Town: +1 345 244 2434

### **Australian Embassy**

Australian High Commission, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago (also responsible for Cayman Islands): +1 868 822 5450.

## Currency

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## Port of Call - George Town

Grand Cayman, the largest of the three Cayman Islands, and its small but affluent port city, George Town, are known for lax offshore business regulations and a quaint but bustling tourist district flanked by stretching aqua beaches. Blessed with fascinating coral reefs and crystal clear turquoise waters, miles of sandy white beaches, and an amazing biodiversity of marine life, Grand Cayman is a popular destination with divers and holidaymakers alike. Ships dock at the capital port of George Town at either the north or south docks, both of which are conveniently located in downtown George Town. Key attractions in the vicinity of George Town include the Cayman Turtle Farm, the renowned Seven Mile Beach, which is actually only about five and a half miles (8.9 km) long, the Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park and the Pedro St James Castle with panoramic views from the nearby Great Pedro Bluff. Despite often accommodating up to six cruise liners at once, there is no docking pier and very limited anchorage in the small George Town Harbour. Cruise liners remain anchored or drifting just outside the harbour and passengers are ferried to Harbour Drive docks with long but regular tender rides. Many shops, bars, restaurants, and attractions are located just outside the docks and passengers will enjoy the endless duty-free shopping on offer.

### Shopping in George Town

Grand Cayman has quite the reputation for its remarkably low prices on duty-free designer goods, such as jewellery and watches from names such as Gucci, Cartier, Maurice Lacroix, and more. Caymania Duty Free on Cardinal Avenue is the place to go for perfumes, gemstones, and cosmetics, while fine china, leather, crystal, and liquor, especially rum, are also available at bargain prices. Governor's Square Mall is great for a spot of shopping while local crafts such as handcrafted jewellery, salvaged coins, and antiques can be scooped up for a song. A Farmers Market Cooperative is open Saturdays in the Lower Valley and focuses on local cuisine, rum, spices, and coffee.

**Best Buy:** Watches, rum cakes.

### Dining in George Town

Casanova by the Sea - local seafood with an Italian influence. Yoshi Sushi - authentic Japanese sushi. 1885 Restaurant - intimate restaurant with stunning views and gourmet food.

**Best Dish:** Turtle soup.

## Overview of the Attractions in Cayman Islands

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## Public Holidays in Cayman Islands

	2020	2021
<b>New Year's Day</b>	Mon. January 1	Mon. January 1
<b>National Heroes' Day</b>	Sat. January 27	Thu. January 25
<b>Ash Wednesday</b>	Mon. February 26	Sat. February 17
<b>Good Friday</b>	Wed. April 10	Tue. April 2
<b>Easter Monday</b>	Sat. April 13	Fri. April 5
<b>Discovery Day</b>	Sat. May 18	Fri. May 17
<b>Queen's Birthday</b>	Sat. June 15	Fri. June 21
<b>Constitution Day</b>	Sat. July 6	Fri. July 5
<b>Remembrance Day</b>	Sat. November 9	Fri. November 8
<b>Christmas Day</b>	Wed. December 25	Wed. December 25
<b>Boxing Day</b>	Thu. December 26	Thu. December 26