



You say you're in the market for a warm Caribbean getaway, with great beaches, friendly faces, not too far from home but not overrun with tourists either? Andros could be exactly what you're looking for.

Andros is the largest island in the 700 islands that comprise the Bahamas and is just 170 miles southeast of Miami. It's also probably the least known, with most travelers flocking to the more touristy destinations in Nassau. But it's precisely because Andros is the least explored of the Bahamas' 700 islands, it is also the most unspoiled and interesting.

The Spaniards called the island "*La Isla del Espiritu Santo*" (the island of the Holy Spirit) and after just a few days you'll feel like your spirit has been renewed and you are ready to take on the world.

Off the east coast is the third largest barrier reef in the world called the *Tongue of the Ocean*. A twelve-foot water will suddenly drop to 6,000 feet, so the abundance of marine life and coral gardens has made this an increasingly popular site for divers. But you don't need to be an expert to enjoy diving here. You can try anything from shallow water, wreck and blue hole dives to dramatic wall dives off the Tongue of the Ocean.

It has also come to be known as the bone fishing capital of the world. Novice and professional anglers come from around the world to cast their lines and try to catch the elusive fish. Deep-sea fishing is also a popular sport.

Land lover? Because of an abundance of mangrove trees and a hardwood forest, bird watching is a popular past time and an experienced guide should be able to help you find many of the 120 species living here. There's also a dense tropical rainforest full of wild animals (some locals still occasionally go on wild boar hunts).

Plantation ruins and other remnants of Central Andros' past provide insight into its' history and include the *Old Government Administrative Building and Jail House* (home to the island's first Post Office, Court House and Commissioner's Office), old school buildings built in the 1930's, *Whym's Plantation* (ruins from the late 1800's), *Pody Road* and the *Chamberlain Sisal Plantation*, old wells, *Twin Lakes Farm*, and the cemetery (which sits in the sea and reveals coffins during low tide).

There are also the *Native Colony Ruins*, notable for their representation of the old Bahamian style of architecture. There are also abandoned ghost towns and supposedly treasure-filled caves to explore.

And if your favorite sport is shopping, there are craft festivals, church fairs and outdoor markets to bargain for some of the local treasures. Straw products and woodcarvings are a great buy in the *Red Bay* and the *Fresh Creek* areas. And don't miss the *Androsia* factory in *Andros Town*. Androsia is the name for colorful Batik designs only found here and made into garment designs.

But one of the main reasons to come to Andros are its' beautiful, sometimes totally uninhabited beaches. Tiny and charming villages dot the pristine coastline and make this one of the most amazingly unspoiled vacation spots in the world and in the Caribbean in particular. BN

GETTING THERE:

Part of the attraction of Andros is its' unspoiled beauty and because there aren't hoards of tourists, it is a little bit more time consuming to get there than say, Nassau. But it is definitely worth the extra trouble. There are four airports serving Andros: San Andros, Andros Town, Mangrove Cay and Congo Town. (Keep in mind that Andros consists of two islands, not connected by a bridge.) The following are options for scheduled flights from South Florida:

Yellow Air Taxi (888-YELLOW-4)

Continental Connection (954-266-3000)

Lynx Air (888-596-9247)

From Nassau: **Western Air** (242-377-2222)

Bahamasair (242-339-4415)

WHERE TO STAY:

Andros Lighthouse Yacht Club & Marina (242-368-2305) \$110-\$140, a favorite with the boating crowd.

Small Hope Bay Lodge (800-223-6961) \$175-\$209, the premier diving and fishing resort.

Kamalame Cay (242-368-6281) \$740-\$940, one of the most exclusive resorts in the Bahamas, with a fantastic spa right on the water.

Emerald Palms Resort (800-824-6623) \$185-\$495, laid back, beach front charm.

Tiamo Resort (242-357-2489) \$275-\$295, an ecologically friendly lodge.

WHERE TO EAT:

There're lots of great places to eat, but for authentic Andros fare, try **Hank's Place** (242-368-2447). You don't need a reservation and the fresh seafood-conch chowder, fritters, grouper, snapper and many delicious chicken dishes make the trip to Fresh Creek well worth it. While you're there try a yummy pink rum drink called the "Hanky-Panky."

WHEN TO GO:

In September through May, the temperature on the Island averages 70 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit; the rest of the year is warmer, with temperatures between 80 and 85 degrees. You can use US dollars in the Bahamas and remember that all travelers arriving by plane are now required to have a valid passport.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Go to www.Bahamas.com.

A BONE-FISHING PARADISE

If you've never tried bone fishing before, why not try it for the first time in paradise? *Kamalame Cay* is one of the few places in the Bahamas that offers *Certified Orvis* guide service. The guides make it simple for first time bone fishermen. The guide has you do a sample cast for him so he can see how close he needs to get you to the fish. The fish can be difficult to see in the beginning, but the guides have a keen eye for them. When they spot them, they tell you the location — "11 o'clock; 1 o'clock; 3 o'clock!" position the boat, let you know how much line you should be casting, and when to drop the fly into the water.

Once you've gained a little experience, you'll have the option of getting out of the boat and wading on the flats. This is more challenging, but very enjoyable. The water is beautiful, and it has a different feel when you catch one standing in the water.

Even people who have never picked up a fly rod before are likely to catch fish on a first trip! Even if you don't catch a thing, the scenery is breathtaking, the aqua blue water is crystal clear and the sand is a brilliant bright white.