



The gorgeous beaches and turquoise waters of Harbour Island in the Bahamas

SPACE. WATER. SAND.

WHEN THAT IS ALL YOU NEED

BY CAROLYN O'NEIL | PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF ELEVEN EXPERIENCE ([HTTPS://ELEVENEXPERIENCE.COM/](https://elevenexperience.com/))

On this tiny island, it's water, water everywhere and every view a classic Bahamian beauty.

Casually sophisticated Harbour Island is one of the small but lively Out Islands of the Bahamas. It's one of the oldest Bahamian settlements and was once the capital. This Caribbean jewel is only three miles long and a half mile wide, with charming Dunmore Town its only village. Quaint streets lined with colorful colonial-style buildings hark back to the days of British rule and lead the way to the island's legendary pink-sand beaches and turquoise waters.

Of course, the crystal clear Bahamian waters are the main focus of activities; these include snorkeling, swimming, kite surfing, fishing, or just cruising along in a guide-driven skiff with a cold beer in hand.

Tours past pretty pastel cottages, historic churches, and beautifully landscaped resorts will be on island time—the only way around is via golf carts. Don't forget to drive on the left, and don't be surprised if you see other carts festooned with birthday or wedding balloons. Harbour Island is known as a destination for family celebrations, and many have been vacationing here for generations.

If you don't have a yacht, getting to Harbour Island requires a short cruise across the glistening harbor via water taxi from Eleuthera Island. The tiny North Eleuthera Airport services nonstop flights from major gateways such as Miami and Atlanta.



Eleven Experience adventure specialists lead fishing trips on the saltwater flats.

At Home in the Bahama House

One of the loveliest and most welcoming places to stay on Harbour Island is the elegantly restored Bahama House. An intimate hotel with eleven plantation-style suites surrounding a bougainvillea-filled courtyard and a coral stone swimming pool, the main building was originally a shop for schooner builders in the 1800s. Guests can step back into the island's storied history here while enjoying the lavish touches of a modern hotel.

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Your Day, Your Adventure

The real vacation treasure lies within the unique guided experiences led by the expert staff of the Bahama House, one of the luxury adventure lodges operated by Eleven Experience. Personalized itineraries for daily adventures are a specialty here and whether you've got fly-fishing for bonefish or swimming with sea turtles on your Bahamian wish list, they've got the speediest boats and the best local insight. Feeling extra adventurous? Experience manager Richard Bullard will take you on a tour of neighboring Eleuthera Island and lead you to a freshwater-filled limestone cavern called Sapphire Hole, so named because it glows a brilliant blue in the sun. As he did as a boy growing up here, he jumps in and then yells for you to follow. Or you can join lodge manager Giorgia Ravilli, a marine biologist, on a snorkel hunt to identify varieties of starfish around the harbor.

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Bahama House sits on a small hill in town with a fabulous view for sunset photos. But, if you want to while away the afternoon on that famous pink sand, not to worry—the resort has a private beach area equipped with chairs, umbrellas, towels, sunscreen, and YETI coolers (filled with beer, water, and chilled wine). The beach enclave is moments away by golf cart or a short walk. There is also a selection of games and beach toys to choose from, including lacrosse sticks. Grab a beach chair and an ice-cold local beer and stay awhile!



Bahama House bonefishing guide Patrick Roberts

Bahamian Cuisine

Whatever you choose to do each day, Bahama House executive chef Nikoya Lightbourne (one of the youngest executive chefs on Harbour Island and the only female one) is ready to whet your appetite with enlightened culinary experiences inspired by the taste traditions of her native country. Her Bahamian banana pancakes with sausage and lobster eggs Benedict are breakfast favorites. Lunch on the wide covered veranda might be stone crab tacos with mango salsa or blackened red snapper with confetti jasmine rice. And at happy hour, when guests gather to mingle at the Tiki Bar and sip a Goombay Smash or a refreshing gin and tonic, Chef Niki presents nightly “après” snacks—think shrimp ceviche, conch fritters, and guacamole with plantain chips. If you see pineapple on the menu, viemagazine.com/article/eleven-experience-bahamas/

such as Chef Niki's pineapple galette for dessert or pineapple skewers garnishing your piña colada, know that this delicious treat is fresh from the pineapple fields on Eleuthera.

Evening Stars on Harbour Island

When the setting sun dips into the harbor and the tree frogs begin to sing, the star-filled night comes alive. Chic restaurants and open-air bars fill with the animated conversations of guests who crave Harbour Island's local seafood and live music.

The Bahama House serves dinner upon request, but when guests want to plan a night on the town, the concierge can make reservations at popular spots such as Dunmore House, Rock House, and The Landing. Ready to dance under the stars? Don't miss the festive nightlife scene at Gusty's Bar and Daddy D's Nightclub. You'll probably see half the people you met on the island that day.

Or relax with a rum toddy on your private terrace at the Bahama House. In a few more hours, your dreams about Chef Niki's banana pancakes will sweetly come true again.



Postscript: Service Above and Beyond

The experience managers at the Bahama House know the lay of the land on Harbour Island. That includes access to important local cell phone numbers in case your airline mistakenly sends your luggage to Nassau instead of North Eleuthera. This happened to me, and the general manager of the Bahama House told me not to worry, that they'd make all of the necessary calls to local officials to get my bag delivered to the hotel as soon as possible.

Not missing a beat to get me through the afternoon and evening, a member of the staff took me shopping. I bought a bathing suit and a sundress at a cute little shop nearby called Dilly Dally. If I had booked an online vacation rental, I would have been doing all the legwork to locate my lost bag, complete with international calling charges and long hold times with the airline. Thankfully, I was a guest at the Bahama House. Like clockwork, my bag showed up at breakfast the next morning. This is another reason to value the expertise of hoteliers who are prepared to provide personalized service to their guests. Happily, the airline reimbursed me for the bathing suit and dress, which have become two of my favorite travel souvenirs!

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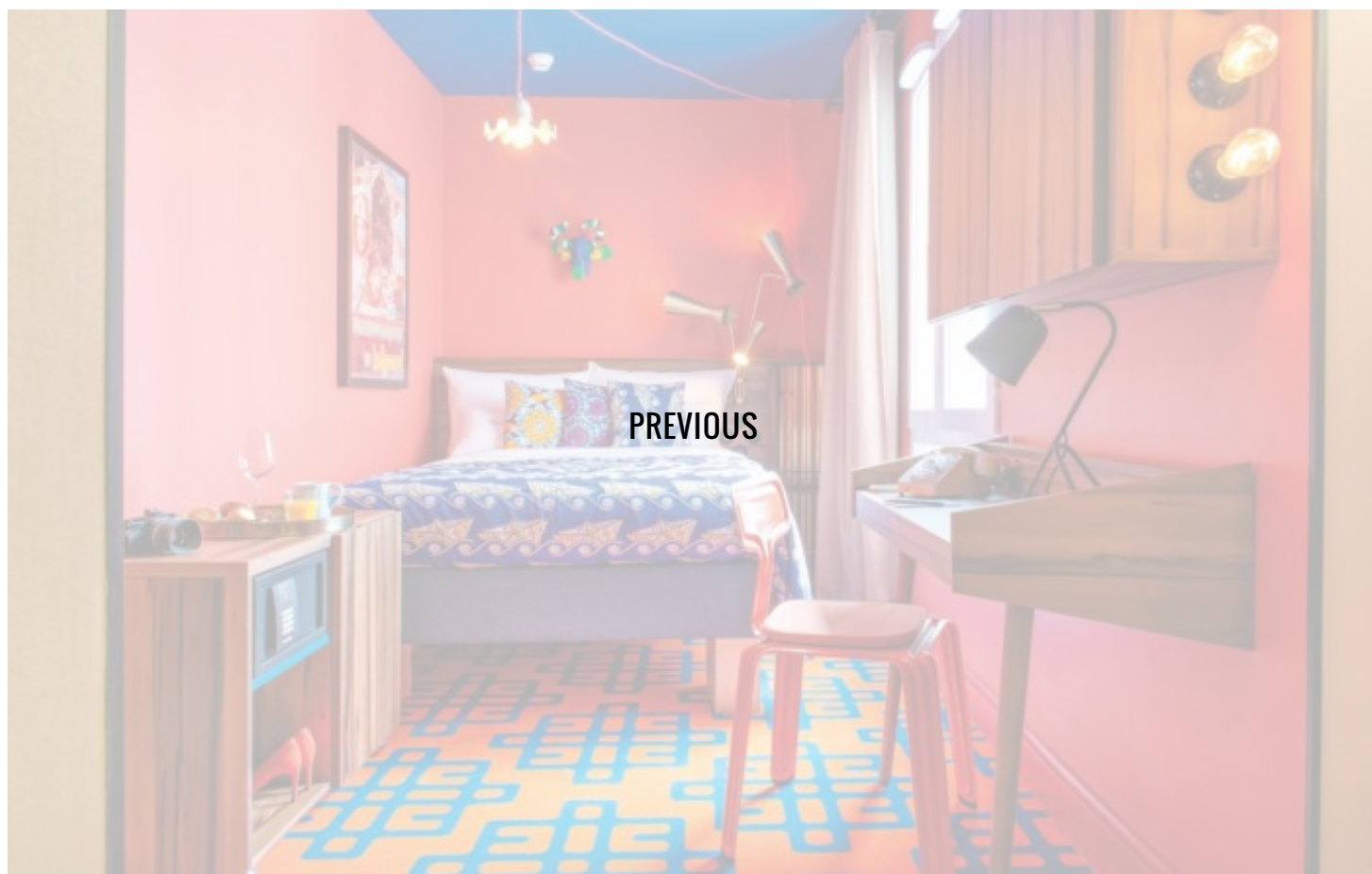
Carolyn O'Brien is an award-winning Atlanta-based food writer who specializes in culinary travel and healthy lifestyles. She believes that travel is the ultimate way to learn about the people of the world and cuisine is the most exciting way to learn about their histories and culture. Visit her blog at [TheHappyHealthyKitchen.com](https://thehappyhealthykitchen.com/) (<https://thehappyhealthykitchen.com/>).

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