

# *Atlanta Saltwater Sportsman's Club*

## Elbow Cay, Abaco Bahamas June 4-11, 2016



ASWSC made a trip to Abaco in 2010 and again in 2013. We're planning a 2016 return. With each trip we have learned a little more about what to take, what not to take, lodging, resource materials, and things to see. We will help you plan an adventure and vacation of a lifetime.

**Getting there by boat:** This is not a trip recommended for small single engine boats. Most insurance carriers will not insure a single engine boat under 25' for this area. Also keep in mind that weather can significantly affect gulfstream conditions so flexibility on both ends of the trip is required. You don't need to take your boat to make this trip. There are flights and rental boat programs available.

The tentative plan is to trailer the boats to south Florida on Tuesday, May 31. We will depart from south Florida on Wednesday, June 1, at daybreak. The exact route and dates will be determined at a later date when we have weather and sea conditions predictions, range and capabilities of the vessels crossing. We will typically take two days crossing to Elbow, first clearing customs at Walkers/Grand (about 110 nautical miles from Ft. Pierce), then the next day on to Great Guana Cay (another 75 miles). This gets us to Abaco with a little cushion to deal with any mechanical or weather issues and still get to the dock at Marsh Harbour to pick up our crews when they fly in on Saturday.

As we get closer to the date we will post south Florida lodging, marina, and truck trailer storage recommendations.

**Getting there by plane:** Delta now flies direct from Atlanta (ATL) to Marsh Harbour (MHH). Another option is ATL to PBI on Southwest then PBI to MHH on Bahamasair. If you want to use airline miles with another carrier you may be able to find routes through Miami or Ft. Lauderdale. Avoid flights through Nassau as most require an overnight stay due to the timing of the flights. Charter flights are also available from St. Augustine, New Smyrna Beach, and Ft. Lauderdale.

From the Marsh Harbour airport take a 10 minute taxi ride to the Elbow Cay ferry dock (about \$15) or to your rental boat. You won't need to call a cab, they will be lined up waiting for you. You can have your cab driver stop at the grocery store and wait for you for another \$10 plus tip (discuss rates with your driver first). You can coordinate to pick up your crew there or have them take the ferry. Albury's Ferry Service leaves Marsh Harbour every couple of hours up to 5:45 PM. The fare is \$17 one way. Most of the club will fly in on Saturday and out the next Saturday.

<http://www.alburysferry.com/aboutus.html>

**Rental Boats:** There are numerous boat rental options available. The Sea of Abaco is fairly well protected from Whale Cay down to Little Harbour. Rental boats are available from 18 feet up to 33 feet. A 20 Albury will handle anything the Sea of Abaco can dish out. If you plan to take a rental off shore, check with the rental operator about their policies. As an experienced operator with the safety of the club you will probably not have an issue. Rentals are not allowed to be used after dark; good rule for all boaters. There are several rental companies in Marsh Harbour, or you can take the ferry to Elbow Cay and have your rental operator deliver to your rental home or public dock. There is no fishing license requirement when using a rental boat.

Island Marine <http://www.islandmarine.com/>

Abaco Dorado <http://www.abacodoradoboatrentals.com/>

Sea Horse Boat Rentals <http://www.seahorseboatrentals.com/>

Cats Paw <http://catspawboatrentals.com/>

Waterways Boat Rentals <http://waterwaysrentals.com/>

Blue Wave <http://www.bluewaverentals.com/>

**Abaco Marina Facilities:** Sea Spray Marina, Elbow Cay. <http://www.seasprayresort.com/> Full service marina with slips with power and water; diesel and gasoline; laundry service; restaurant and rental cottages. Some rental homes have private docks, some are shared. Discuss with your rental agent. There are public docks that are free to use on a first come basis and are intended for smaller boats such as a rental boat. Dockage is available on Great Guana Cay at Guana Hideaways; <http://www.everythingguana.com/guana-hideaways-marina/>

**Lodging:** The club trip is scheduled in the peak of the high season. Make your reservations early! Hopetown Hideaways, <http://www.hopetown.com> or Elbow Cay Rentals, <http://www.elbowcayrentals.com> are probably your best bet. Rental homes from VRBO, <http://www.vrbo.com/vacation-rentals/caribbean/bahamas> is another option however most homeowners rely on one of the local real estate services for their reservations process. Abaco Inn, Hopetown Hideaway, Sea Spray, or Firefly are other resort options. <http://www.abacoinn.com> , <http://www.seasprayresort.com/>

We typically stay on the south end of the island but it's not a big island so nothing is too far away. I would not recommend the north end of the island if you plan on exploring south. Golf carts are not allowed in the settlement so staying north of the settlement means walking and/or two golf carts. Also be aware that some rentals are not accessible by road. These are in the area south of the lighthouse and east of Nigh Creek.

**Golf Cart Rentals:** Golf carts are the primary mode of transportation on the cay. Hope Town Cart Rentals (242) 366-0064 <http://hopetowncartrental.com/index.html> Hope Town Cart Rentals has a limited supply of 6-seaters available for \$370/wk + taxes, 4-seaters for \$300 per week. Island Cart Rentals (242) 366-0448 JR's Cart Rental (242) 366-0361

**Tournament Format:** TBD

**Club Contact:** Norman Bowen, 321-696-6431, [Norman.bowen@sprint.com](mailto:Norman.bowen@sprint.com)

Other important information and random thoughts:

- A valid US passport and photo ID is required for everyone going. A birth certificate and drivers license is no longer valid.
- Every boat should have a copy of The Cruising Guide to Abaco Bahamas by Steve Dodge. The guide contains waypoints and routes throughout all of Abaco; charts; photos; business directory and other very valuable information. <http://www.wspress.com/>
- Boats entering the Bahamas should have and fly a yellow quarantine flag until you clear customs. There is a required cruising fee: \$150 for boats under 30' and \$300 for boats 30 and over and covers departure tax for three people. There is a \$20 per person departure for each additional person. There is no departure tax for children under 6. You will also need to request a sportfishing permit (no additional fee).
- Returning to the US, the captain must call Customs and Border Patrol to get an entry number, then everyone on the boat must report together, with passports, to the US Customs and Border Patrol Point of Entry for a face to face interview and to clear back into the country. The Local Boater Option is a pre-register process to simplify the re-entry process; more to come.
- Check with your insurance company. Most boat insurance policies do not cover the Bahamas unless specifically stated. You may have to purchase a rider. Most companies will not insure a single engine boat under 25' at all.
- Renew your Tow Boat US tow insurance. There are two operators in Abaco.
- The Bahamian currency is based on the US dollar and US cash is accepted. Major US credit cards are accepted in most establishments but be aware your card company may charge a 3% or higher "international exchange" fee. Local merchants may also charge an additional fee for using credit cards.

- Pack light. Most air carriers limit baggage weight and charge hefty fees for over weight baggage. Bring half the stuff and twice the cash. There are markets on most cays that carry fresh breads, cheese, vegetables and frozen meats. The out islands only get delivery once a week so quality and quantity varies. Rum is cheap and beer is expensive (\$50/case); pack accordingly. The larger grocery stores are in Marsh Harbour. If you are flying into Marsh Harbour you may want to have your taxi driver stop at Maxwell's for provisions. Negotiate the rate before you stop. There is one market on White Sound and several in the settlement. Vernon's in Hope Town has homemade pies and bread daily.
- Packing for the boat. We have learned box wine packs better than bottles. Beer in cans is lighter than glass bottles. Put spices, steak seasoning, coffee, etc. in zip lock baggies to save space and weight. Bring extra zip lock bags. Vacuum bag and freeze steaks and burgers. We plan to only cook in two or three nights for dinner; steak one night and fresh caught fish the others. It's nice to have something on hand in case of bad weather. Bring easy side dishes like rice mix or pasta. We bring the Magma grill for a raft up cheese burger in paradise on an island beach for lunch one day and it's great for the steaks and fish. Breakfast bars, nuts, and trail mix pack well. None of the restaurants on Great Guana Cay serve breakfast. Frozen juice concentrate, or dry mix for rum thangs. Bug spray, sun block and duct tape.
- Bring snorkel and dive gear. Dive gear, tanks and snorkel equipment can be rented from Froggie's on Elbow or Dive Guana on Great Guana Cay. Do not combine fishing and dive trips. It is illegal to take fish with scuba so it is best not to have fish on a boat with scuba tanks.
- Bring flashlights and VHF radio. VHF is used in place of telephones by most businesses. Hail on channel 16 then switch to another channel. Channel use is different in the Bahamas. Use channel 11, 13, 14, 15, 68 or 69. Hailing a taxi on Marsh Harbour is on CH 06. Channel 72 is reserved for the Hopetown Fire Department. The Club channel will be 69.
- Most US cell phones don't work. AT&T may work with the right plan. WiFi is available at many homes and restaurants and Skype works well.
- The Cruisers Net. At 8:15 AM on VHF CH 68 The Cruisers Net broadcasts weather update and local happenings and announcements.
- Water is scarce in Abaco so please conserve. There are no natural springs or wells. Rain water is collected in cisterns and filtered for use or brought in by boat from the mainland which is very expensive. The water is usually okay for drinking, but bottled water is available at all of the markets (about \$25 a case).
- Handguns are permitted. The captain must report the make/model/serial number, and number of rounds of ammo. The gun must be secured and locked at all times – no exceptions. Penalties for violations result in jail time. The gun MAY NOT leave the vessel for any reason.
- Up to date information in regard to safety and security in the Bahamas can be found at the State Department web site, or by calling 1-888-407-4747.
- Pirated Goods are readily available in the Bahamas. These items are most often identified when the traveler by boat returns to the U.S. Being in possession of Pirated or stolen goods can result in fines and imprisonment.
- Read the links and forums listed. There is so much more that cannot be covered here.

#### **Links and Resources:**

<http://www.drralph.net/index.html>

<http://www.abacoforum.com/forums/index.php>

<http://www.alburysferry.com/>

<http://www.nippersbar.com/>

<http://www.grabbersatsunset.com/>

<http://www.flyislandwings.com/>

<http://flyairgate.com/>

<https://bahamasair.com/>

[http://www.rockybay.com/webcam\\_page.htm?wp=AI](http://www.rockybay.com/webcam_page.htm?wp=AI)

[http://www.windfinder.com/forecast/great\\_guana\\_cay\\_nippers\\_beach\\_bar](http://www.windfinder.com/forecast/great_guana_cay_nippers_beach_bar)

<http://barometerbob.org/>

[http://www.explorercharts.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=56&Itemid=53](http://www.explorercharts.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=56&Itemid=53)