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## I AM GOING TO THE BAHAMAS

[www.ipyoa.com/forum/10-bahamas/3719-i-am-going-to-the-bahamas/](http://www.ipyoa.com/forum/10-bahamas/3719-i-am-going-to-the-bahamas/)

When going to the Bahamas, there are a few decisions you need to make before you can plan your routes. These three decisions are:

- #1. Will I be going to the Abacos or to the Exumas and beyond?
- #2. Will I run only in daylight hours and anchor or dock?
- #3. Will I run overnight 24-36+ hours?

Note: PDF at bottom of post for download and saving

Note 2: Updated and edited Oct 2021

We have done all three options above, so allow me to outline these decisions.

### #1. I am going to the Abacos.

Leg 1 Great, this was our first decision and trip into the Bahamas back in 2012. We combined this decision with running only daylight hours and anchoring or docking each night. This was a great introduction to the Bahamas. Our route was from Miami, Government Cut, (now we use Biscayne Channel at No Name Harbor) to West End on Grand Bahama Island. There we docked at Old Bahama Bay Marina where it was an easy walk around the harbor to customs and immigration. We spent the night at the dock and enjoyed sandwiches and drinks at the pub on-site and then departed the next morning.

Leg 2 was from West Bay north through Indian Key Cut and then onto the banks for a beautiful sail on the calm clean waters out to Great Sale Cay. This is a full day and eventually, we had to motor sail to complete this 50 nm leg by sunset. But, we did make it in plenty of time, at 5.5 to 6 knots. There are several anchorages on Great Sale Cay and you pick the one that works best, depending on the winds. We have used them all over the last three years.

Leg 3 is from Great Sale Cay to Green Turtle Cay where we go into the northern sound called White Sound where the famed Green Turtle Club is located. We love this place! You can anchor, but it might take you a few times to get a good set. It is known for challenging anchoring. We anchor most of the time. You also can take a dock here and then enjoy the Club as well. We never miss this stop. At this point, you will really feel as if you made it into the Bahamas because you have! It is peaceful, beautiful, and wonderful. Some make this their destination! But don't get stuck here, because there is sooooo much more to discover!

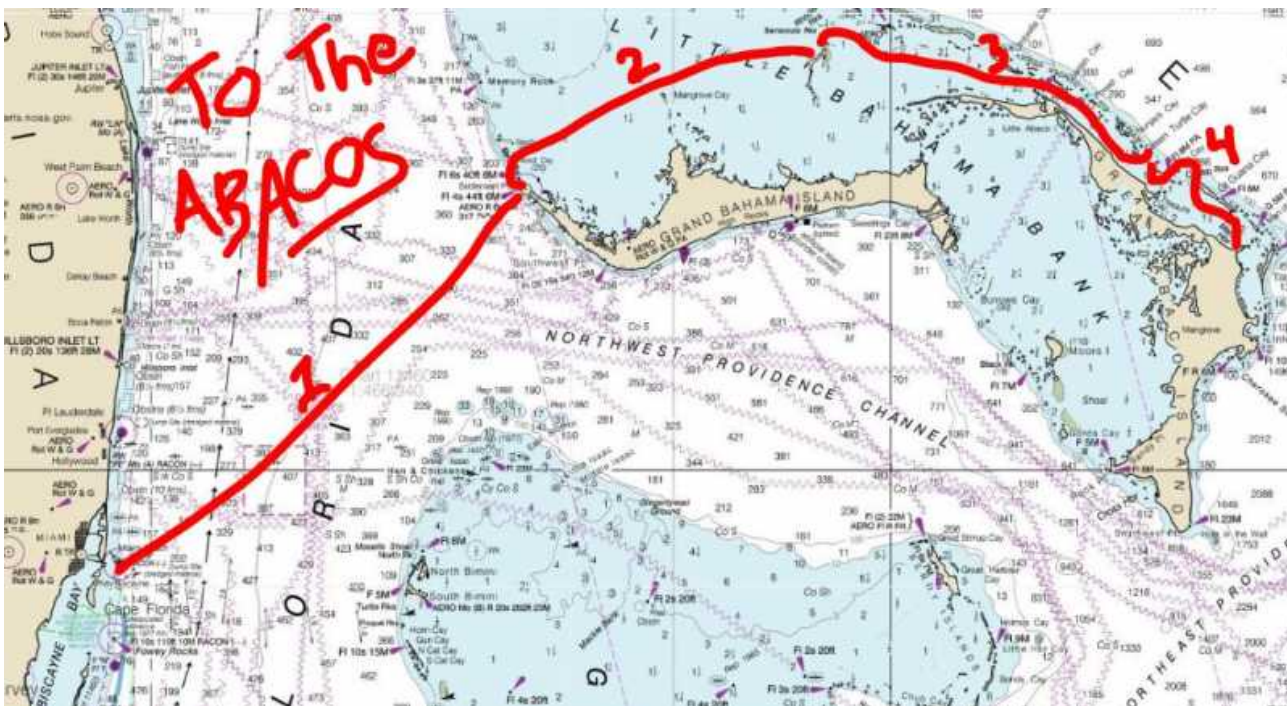
Leg 4 and the destination is Marsh Harbor. But the challenge is THE WHALE. Yes, you need to transit your first cut and it is at Whale Cay. From Green Turtle, you need to head south then out to sea just north of Whale Cay then you pass the ocean side of Whale Cay watching the ocean swells break high into the air as they crash onto the Whale. Then on the other side, you enter Ship Channel and pass into the Sea of Abaco.....ahhh....you made it. NOW, you are on the protected Sea of Abaco where you will find great sailing and many beautiful destinations.

Arriving at Marsh Harbor from Green Turtle is an easy day, and this is our usual run. You could stop off at Great Guana or Man O War but we like to get to Marsh Harbor, drop a hook, and visit with all the cruisers. Welcome to the Center of the Abacos. You made it.

In Abaco, you will explore places like Hope Town, Man O War, Great Guana and Nippers, Treasure Cay, Tahiti Beach, Pete's Pub, and many more. Use your cruising guides to discover the Abacos. This outline is intended to be about the primary routes in and out.

Coming home from Abaco, we run the same trip back, except we have a new twist. We enjoy breakfast at Green Turtle Club, checking the internet once last time for weather and noting the currents at the Ft. Pierce Inlet for the next several days. Then we stow the dinghy, take off the motor, and head for Great Sale Cay where we anchor once again. There we enjoy our last Bahamas swim and then go to bed for a rest around 6 pm. We get up at midnight, up anchor, and head for White Sand Bank, running the banks all night long. Daybreak happens as you exit the banks into the ocean and head out to the Gulf Stream. Our target from Great Sale Cay is the Fort Pierce Inlet, 115 nm from Great Sale. We arrive at the inlet around 3-4 pm, head into the inlet to the ICW, turn south then under the bridge and turn east and anchor behind the condos. At that point, we call Customs with our LBO# and we are checked back into the USA via phone. Welcome home! You did it. Bahamas and back.

Here is a chart of that route.



NOAA Chart Viewer here

[www.charts.noaa.gov/OnLineViewer/11013.shtml](http://www.charts.noaa.gov/OnLineViewer/11013.shtml)

## #2. I am going to the EXUMAS but no overnight trips.

We did this in 2014 because the buddy boats we were running with did not want to do any overnight passages. That is just fine, we can run day trips all the way to Georgetown.

Leg 1, Again, leaving from the Miami area, we used Biscayne Bay Channel and we exited at first light.

Our destination was Bimini, a close 48 nm away! WOW that will be easy. Well, like all these trips, you need to deal with the Gulf Stream where it will make its own weather due to the warmth of the water. Our weather router, Chris Parker, was saying it was not a good time to go, but we also use [www.PassageWeather.com](http://www.PassageWeather.com) and it looked OK to us, so we went. The crossing was fine, we had one rain squall, no winds, flat seas, and we pulled into Bimini and docked at Brown's wharf by 3 pm. As predicted, the next day, the front arrived and there was no way we could move on. We were "stuck" in Bimini for 3 days and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves! The front passed and on Day 4 we could leave.

**NOTE:** We now prefer to go into South Bimini and check-in at the airport. South Bimini has floating docks inside a calm lagoon and you can also ride a ferry across to North Bimini. Since you ran before a front, you usually have to wait out weather a day or two, so South Bimini is far better. No current to deal with.

Leg 2 is from Bimini to the Northwest Channel, which is the end of the Bahama banks. We ran to within a mile or two of the NW channel, then we turned south and moved 1-2 miles off this course to drop anchor in 10-15 feet of water. We anchored there for the night., leaving cabin lights on to be sure we were visible.

Leg 3 We picked up anchor after breakfast and headed through the NW channel (no buoys) and into the Tongue of the Ocean. The destination is West Bay on New Providence Island, the island Nassau is on. Note: in 3 years, we have not gone into Nassau, we decided to avoid it as that is not what we are looking for in the Bahamas. So, we run these routes avoiding that harbor. West Bay is a great anchorage as long as there are no west winds. Since you are running a front, the winds should be SE, S, SW, W a little, then NW and N for the blow. This is a good spot to be anchored. There is a park on the southern side and trash disposal.

NOTE: You can also run for Nassau harbor if you are looking for a dock. But we prefer to anchor and then keep pushing east.

Leg 4 We departed West Bay and pressed on East to Highborne Cay. The nice aspect of this route over the Nassau route is that you avoid the Yellow Bank of coral heads. This route runs you south of this bank.

Highborne Cay, welcome to the Exumas. Here you will anchor off the west side of the cay. In the AM, if you need to, you can move into the harbor for fuel and water. There will be no more good stops for this until Georgetown. So, we fuel up here again.

At this point, you begin your run south down the Exuma Chain of Islands, as slowly as you like, stopping at Norman's, Shroud, Warderick Wells, Cambridge Cay, Big Majors Spot, Black Point, Staniel Cay, Farmers Cay, and Georgetown. If you want to get to Georgetown quickly, you can go from Highbourne to Black Point in one day, and arrive at Georgetown the next day.

Welcome to the Exumas. Use your cruising guides and Explorer Charts to discover the most beautiful place in the world. Not to miss Warderick Wells and Cambridge Cay in the Bahamas Land and Sea Park!

Here is a picture of this route





NOAA Chart Viewer Here

[www.charts.noaa.gov/OnLineViewer/11013.shtml](http://www.charts.noaa.gov/OnLineViewer/11013.shtml)

### #3 I am going to the Exumas and will run overnight

This is the fastest way to the Exumas.

Again, we start at Miami, look at your charts and draw a line from Miami to the NW channel. You will see this goes directly between GUN CAY and NORTH CAT CAY, so we run that Cut.

Leg 1, Miami to Northwest Channel, and onto Morgans Bluff to check-in. This route we departed from Miami, No Name Harbor at daybreak, set a course for the Gun Cay / Cat Cay cut, making it around 3-4 pm. Once onto the Bahama banks, where it is usually calm, we made dinner, enjoyed the sunset over our stern, and pressed on for the NW channel.

All night over the banks will have you navigating the NW channel around 2-3 am. We ran this during a thunder storm and lightning but no winds! Odd.

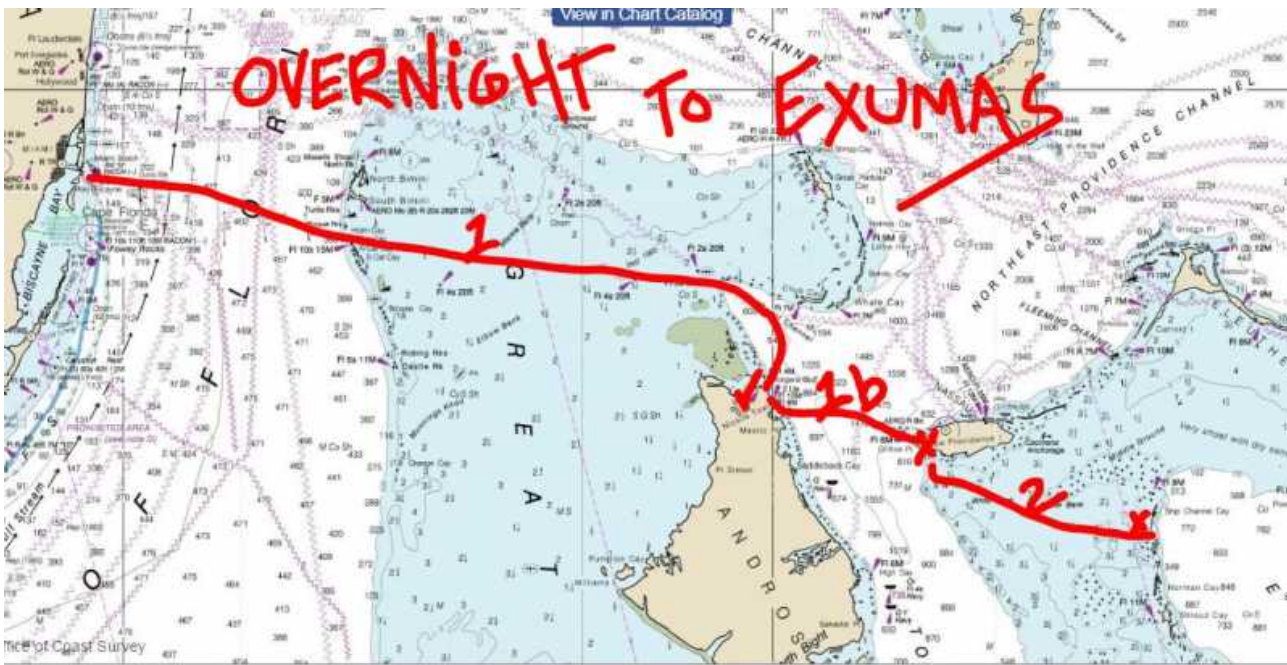
From NW channel we turned south for Morgan's Bluff on Andros. We arrived at Morgan's around 4 am and decided to stand off and wait for daylight. Good decision, as all the charted markers were missing. We motored into the harbor and dropped the anchor around 7 am. Next, we rigged the dinghy motor, ran into the inner harbor, and called the Customs and Immigrations Office. We had a pre-activated Bahamas (Batelco) SIM card, so our phone was live upon arrival. The Customs and Immigration Officers were to arrive at 9 am, then 10 am, 11 am, 12 noon and at 1 pm, they finally arrived. It was a Saturday and that seemed to explain the delay. We checked in and immediately departed as there is not much there to see. We pressed on to West Bay, on the island of New Providence, arriving by sunset. Our plan had been to check in at 9 am and easily make West Bay in good light. Arriving at any Bahamas cut or anchorage at low light is more difficult because you cannot read the water. But, we were 36 hours from Miami and we were checked in, and anchored in West Bay. THIS is the fastest way into the Exumas.

**NOTE:** We no longer use Andros and Morgans Bluff. We now prefer to push straight for Nasauu or better yet, the fine marina on the SE corner called PALM CAY MARINA. You can run straight thru Nasauu Harbor and out the SE corner, then turn NW back to PALM CAY MARINA. This is what we prefer.

Leg 2, Run West Bay to Highborne Cay and anchor.

Welcome to the Exumas.

Here is a picture of this route



NOAA Chart Viewer

[www.charts.noaa.gov/OnLineViewer/11013.shtml](http://www.charts.noaa.gov/OnLineViewer/11013.shtml)

## Exiting the Exumas to Abacos

We have made this run two times, in 2013 and 2014

We returned from the southern Exumas to the Warderick Wells area to wait for a good weather window to sail over to Rock Sound, Eleuthera. This is an easy 30 nm crossing and usually one of the best sails in the Bahamas. You wait for a south wind and then sail NE for Eleuthera, dropping the anchor in Rock Sound. This is a fantastic harbor, we have spent days here on anchor waiting for our weather.

Leg 1 Heading north out of Rock Sound, we make a full run for Current Cut, covering all of Eleuthera in one day. The other harbors are OK, but we feel it is better to see Governor's Harbor, the Glass Window, and Hatchet Bay by renting a car from Dingle Motors in Rock Sound and seeing the island by a car while your boat is safe in Rock Sound. Then, after touring all of Eleuthera, sail for Current Cut. The passage through Current Cut is one to be studied. Follow the Explorer Chart waypoints and time the current carefully. Transit the Cut and then anchor on the north side of the sandy beaches.

Leg 2 From Current Cut, we take a short run-up to Spanish Wells. This is a must-visit harbor especially if you can get there when the lobstering fleet is coming home at the end of March. There is good



anchoring outside the harbor or we take a dock inside. Spanish Wells is interesting.

Leg 3 From Spanish Wells or from Royal Island Harbor, you set up for the 50 nm sail north to Abacos. This is also one of those dream ocean sailing days. Your course is basically north and the winds are east. So it is beam reaching day, all day. Then at the end of the day, you need to navigate a cut and get into the Abacos. We usually come into Little Harbor Cut and then sail north to drop anchor behind Lynyard Cay. Welcome to the Abacos, you made it!

Now you are in the Sea of Abaco and you can move up to Hope Town and rest there, and then over to Marsh Harbor where you will reconnect with all your cruising buddies. You have seen the Exumas and arrived in the Abacos. Great job!



NOAA Chart Viewer

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### Resources we use:

Charts We Bought and Use

Explorer Charts #1

Raymarine C-map NTs

Navionics on a Samsung Tablet for reference and quick distances

iPad Garmin Blue Charts, they use the Explorer Chart Data  
NV Charts, the "copies??" of the Explorer Charts in digital format for laptops

### **Books**

Guide to the Abacos by Steve Dodge  
Waterway Guide to the Bahamas  
The Exumas Guide by Steve Pavlidis

### **Websites**

[www.PassageWeather.com](http://www.PassageWeather.com) for sea state, wind, rain, GFS NAM  
[www.BarometerBob.org/](http://www.BarometerBob.org/) Abacos network  
[www.CaribWX.com/](http://www.CaribWX.com/) Chris Parker for weather services  
[www.BTCbahamas.com](http://www.BTCbahamas.com) for cell phone help in the Bahamas  
[www.MrSimCard.com](http://www.MrSimCard.com) to buy a BTC SIM card before you go, if you are tech savvy

### **SSB Resources**

Cruiserheimers Net at 0830 and 1700 check-in, 8.152 MHz or alternate 8.164 or 8.146  
[www.bigdumboat.com/network.html](http://www.bigdumboat.com/network.html)

### **Software We Use**

OpenCPN free charting [www.opencpn.org/](http://www.opencpn.org/)  
NOAA Charts [www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/mcd/Raster/index.htm#software](http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/mcd/Raster/index.htm#software)  
Gmail for email  
Google Calendar to manage our cruising plans

### **Apps We Use**

PDAnet+ Free HotSpot tool for Droid phone (iPhones root required) [pdanet.co/](http://pdanet.co/)  
RainDAR for rain radar, free, search your apps store or play store

### **Devices We Use**

Unlocked GSM Quadband Android Samsung phones  
SPOT to place a pin on a map of where we are. This also emails our location to family and friends  
[www.Spotwalla.com](http://www.Spotwalla.com) where we build archive travel maps via our SPOT

### **Our Blog with years of Google Maps and Data**

[www.IslandSpirit.us](http://www.IslandSpirit.us)

Hayden and Radeen on IP 35 Island Spirit





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**Hayden Cochran**

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[IslandSpirit35.blogspot.com](http://IslandSpirit35.blogspot.com)

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