

Created by: Debra C. Argen

Abaco, Bahamas

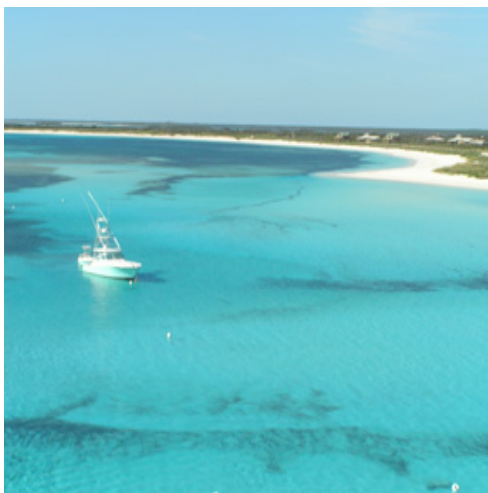
Do you ever imagine escaping to an island paradise; dream of strolling along sugary-soft white sandy stretches of pristine beaches, scuba diving, fishing for marlin, golfing, sailing, being pampered with Spa treatments? I discovered that this fantasy is actually a reality at [The Abaco Club on Winding Bay](#) in the Bahamas.



On an extremely cold, blustery pre-winter day in mid-December 2005, Edward F. Nesta and I blissfully left the hustle and bustle of New York behind, and flew to sunny Fort Lauderdale, and the next morning, boarded The Abaco Club's luxurious Fairchild Merlin IV-C 12-seat turbo prop private plane, settled back into our comfortable tobacco-colored leather reclining seats, put on our Sennheiser headphones, had breakfast and relaxed for the 1-hour flight to Abaco, Bahamas to experience life at [The Abaco Club on Winding Bay](#).

Eight minutes before landing, we passed a string of small islands, where the emerald water was so crystalline that I could see the reefs below the surface of the water from the window of the plane, and then the topography started to change to marshland. We landed at Marsh Harbour, where we waited in the private VIP lounge, to pass through customs. Marsh Harbour is the largest town on Abaco, and is the only place on the island that has a traffic light. As we rode the short distance from the Marsh Harbour airport to The Abaco Club on Winding Bay, our driver filled us in on the history of the Bahamas and The Abacos.

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The Bahamas, a 100,000 square mile archipelago, consists of 700 islands, including uninhabited cays and even large rocks, and has a population of 305,000. It is a wonderful getaway with its close proximity to the United States, has year-round tropical weather, and is easily accessible by commercial, charter or private plane, as well as by boat. English is the official language of the Bahamas, the currency is pegged to the United States dollar making currency conversion unnecessary, there are modern medical facilities, it is the perfect location for weddings with its minimum residency requirement of one day in order to qualify to be married in the Bahamas, and there is no income, corporate or inheritance tax making it very desirable for investors.

The Abacos is one of the Out Islands, a 120-mile stretch of islands, located approximately 170 miles east of the Florida coast on the northwestern side of the Bahamas. Abaco, with its population of 13,000, is a world away from the capital city of Nassau, with a population of over 179,000. The Ministry of Tourism has been promoting travel to the outer islands, and Abaco is now the # 4 destination for tourism. The government plays an active role in protecting its wildlife, and nature enthusiasts have the opportunity to see the endangered Abaco Parrot (*Amazona leucocephala bahamensis*), which is the symbol of Abaco; as well as a small herd of 13 rare and wild horses on the island.



Abaco offers the opportunity to do everything or do nothing at all; there are regattas, there is fabulous fishing 3-6 miles offshore for blue and white marlin and mahi mahi, you can spearfish for grouper, or search for rock lobster under the rock shelves, there are annual marlin and bone fish tournaments that take place from May until August, visitors can snorkel or scuba dive along the third largest barrier reef in the world and boasts having the clearest waters in the world with visibility of over 200 feet (61 meters), you can golf, or just simply sway in a hammock and enjoy a tropical drink.

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Junkanoo, a marvelous celebration that looks like Carnival in Brazil or Mardi Gras in New Orleans, is held on Boxing Day (December 26) and New Year's Day, combines culture, high-energy music, pulsating dance rhythms and elaborate costumes, and should be on visitors' 'must-experience' list. Visitors to the Bahamas at other times of the year can experience Junkanoo at the Saturday Junkanoo schools, and guests at The Abaco Club on Winding Bay can experience Junkanoo every Saturday evening at the Clubhouse. (Read about Junkanoo in the [Events](#) section.)

Gastronomically, there is an abundance of delicious fresh seafood, including fish, shrimp, rock lobster, crab and conch (pronounced konk), with Bahamian dishes running on the spicy side; the wide selection of available fresh citrus and other tropical fruits find their way into the enticingly famous Bahamian rum punches, and the Bahamas makes its own beer, called Kalik.

The Abaco Club on Winding Bay designed by visionary Peter de Savary whose past and current partial portfolio credentials include the St. James Clubs, Stapleford Park, the Carnegie Club at Skibo Castle, Carnegie Abbey, Cherokee Plantation, Bovey Castle, and The London Outpost of Bovey Castle, opened on December 23, 2004, as an international private members club. Non-members can visit the club before considering applying for membership.



True to his style, and the fact that the man does love a challenge, Mr. de Savary transformed a jungle that was overgrown with non-native invasive plants, put in an irrigation system with five miles of piping, and created The Abaco Club on Winding Bay, a 520-acre sporting estate. With a keen eye on environmental

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concerns, he worked with specialists and removed the invasive plants to allow the natural vegetation to develop, created the first Scottish-style tropical links golf course designed by the legendary golf architects Donald Steel and Tom Mackenzie, added a clubhouse, a health spa with Elemis amenities, guest cabanas, as well as estate lots where members can purchase or rent homes, and did it all with inimitable de Savary style and elegance.

Having experienced [Bovey Castle](#) in Devon England I was well familiar with Mr. de Savary's attention to details, and he has indeed done his homework again so to speak, with the details of The Abaco Club on Winding Bay. The placement of every plant, every tree, every hammock, although carefully thought out and supervised, looks as if it has somehow always been there. In short, he has created a perfect natural environment that is just somehow better.



Edward and I took advantage of every minute of our island living at The Abaco Club on Winding Bay in Abaco, Bahamas, beginning with enjoying our luxurious cabana painted a tropical lilac, where we relaxed on our deck with views of the first fairway, (dreaming about a perfect day of golf). (Read about The Abaco Club on Winding Bay in the [Hotels and Resorts](#) section.)

We enjoyed soaking up the warmth and tropical sunshine, took long strolls on the sugary-soft white sandy beach, stopping occasionally to play in the surf and swim in the Sea of Abaco; went kayaking in a glass bottom kayak where we could see small fish swimming under us, and explored the property from our golf cart, sometimes forgetting that we needed to drive on the left-side of the road. (In the Bahamas, you drive on the left side of the road, but since its independence from the United Kingdom in 1974, most of the vehicles on the island have steering wheels on the left side).

We played the best rounds of golf of our lives, (sometimes even I have a great day of golf, especially when the only water shots are those of the breathtaking views of the sea, although the views really should count towards your handicap), and had incredible massages at the Spa, which were greatly needed after playing golf for two days in December. Read about golfing at The Abaco Club on Winding Bay in our [Events](#) section, and the Spa in our [Spas](#) section.

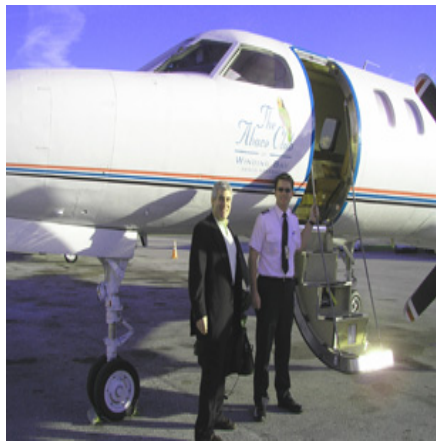
The natural beauty of the island was breathtakingly spectacular, as my camera whirled continuously as I photographed every exotic flora and every beautiful fauna; savored every delectable morsel of fresh conch fritters and succulent seafood, danced wildly to the island music, and of course, since we were in paradise, celebrated with a tropical rum cocktail or two, as we experienced absolutely glorious and most memorable sunsets.



Although we always try to leave no stone uncovered in our travel adventures, we did not get to experience horseback riding along the beach (although I did visit the stable where I petted and photographed the horses), go swimming in The Abaco Club on Winding Bay infinity pool, go deep-sea or bone fishing, go scuba diving, work out in their Fitness Center, or get in a match or two of tennis, but then again, there was only so much time, and so many hammocks that we had to experience!

Alas, our Bahamian adventure had come to an end, but we boarded The Abaco Club on Winding Bay's plane with many wonderful memories, as well as our golf scorecards to mark the occasion of playing on our first Scottish-style tropical links course.

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Please read our articles on **The Abaco Club** in the [Destinations](#), [Hotels and Resorts](#), [Chefs' Recipes](#), [Restaurants](#), [Music Scene](#), [Spas](#) and [Events](#) sections.

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