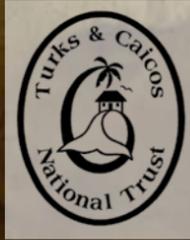


# EXPLORE THE ISLANDS

with the **Turks & Caicos National Trust**

by Mark Parrish



The National Trust plays a vital role in safeguarding the cultural heritage of the Turks & Caicos Islands (TCI). During your stay you should visit at least one of the captivating sites that the Trust is custodian of. Your support is greatly appreciated and you are invited to take a step further and become a member or Friend of the National Trust. It is easy to do at [www.tcnationaltrust.org](http://www.tcnationaltrust.org). Among other benefits, members can take advantage of complimentary access to all the heritage sites where both guided and self-guided tours are available.

The Turks and Caicos National Trust is a non-profit organization run by a small but dedicated group of staff and a volunteer council. It contributes to youth education and ensures that many of the key historical and environmentally important sites are held in trust for present and future generations of the TCI, and that these are accessible for the enjoyment of all. This includes a number of the 18th century cotton plantation sites such as Cheshire Hall on Providenciales (located adjacent to the hospital), Wade's Green Plantation on North Caicos, and Haulover Plantation on Middle Caicos. The charming limestone buildings and the shaded wall lined roads belie the harshness that the loyalist refugees would have faced when they arrived on these shores in the 1790s to start a new life. Not to mention that much of the hard work was done by the slaves that accompanied them and whom ultimately inherited the islands becoming the Turks & Caicos Islanders of today.

The Rock Iguanas are indigenous to the TCI but their numbers are under threat from land development and predation from feral cats. Little Water Cay, which is a small island adjacent to the east end of Providenciales, is one of the iguanas' strongholds and this sanctuary is carefully managed by the National Trust. Many of the water-sports operators include a visit to the beautiful island as part of their tours and your entrance ticket is a crucial aspect of the nature reserve's conservation funding. The Trust has installed raised walkways and carefully marked trails to ensure no damage is done to the underground iguana burrows and feeding them is strictly forbidden. Ask your operator to stop by the visitor's centre on the south side of the island where there is also a small gift shop.

The Conch Bar Caves on Middle Caicos are arguably the most dramatic of the sites that the Trust manages. To find the caves drive past the turn off to the village of Conch Bar and follow the dirt road a short distance past the old airport. Guided tours with reputable tour providers or with staff from the National Trust take you deep into the interior of this limestone behemoth. No helmets are required and lights are provided but solid foot wear (i.e. not flip flops) and steady legs are essential. If you prefer to stay nearer the sunlight you can take an easier stroll around the large cavernous entrance of the cave and admire the multitude of stalagmites and stalactites on grand display.



© Mark Parrish

Rock Iguana on Little Water Cay

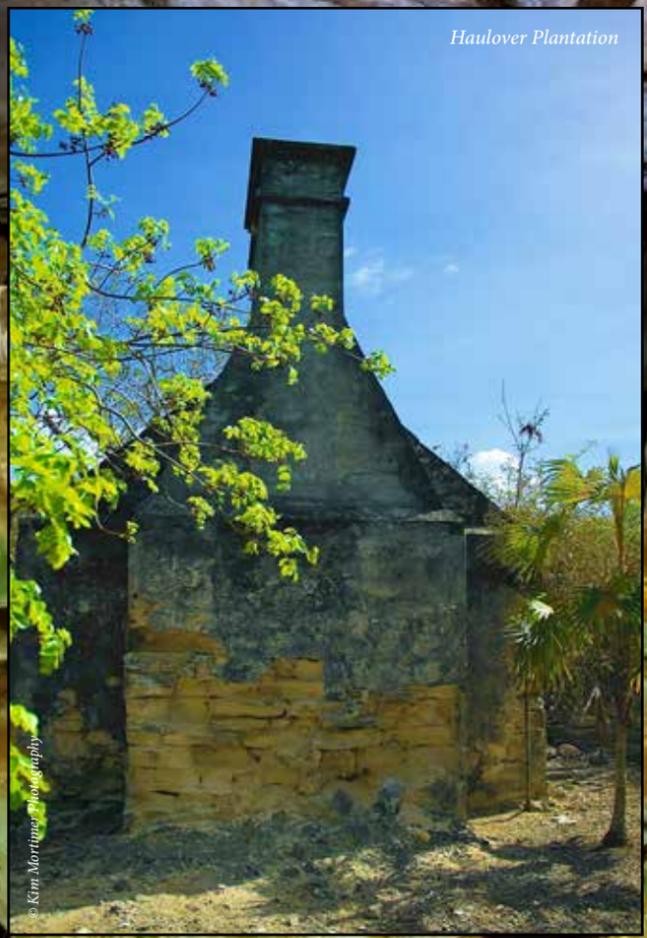


Trust Council and staff at Cheshire Hall



© Mark Parrish

Conch Bar Caves



Haulover Plantation

© Kim Martinez Photography

The Trust has also set up some great walking trails known as 'field roads' across the Caicos Islands. The routes include numbered markers that correspond to interpretive trail cards. The 'Bird Rock Point Trail' near the Conch Farm on Providenciales makes for a wonderful early morning or late afternoon walk as it winds through the native woodland and pops out onto a breezy ridge overlooking the ocean. Look and listen for a variety of birdlife and enjoy the fragrance of the frangipani and wild orchids. The most famous and spectacular walk in the Turks & Caicos is the historic 'Crossing Place Trail' on Middle Caicos. It can be picked up either at the cliff top at Mudjin Harbour or at the trail sign outside Daniel's Café in Conch Bar. There are also a number of other field roads on North & Middle Caicos that can take you through varied vegetation to beautiful inland ponds or around the plantation sites.

All heritage site tickets, island maps and field road trail cards are available at the National Trust's sales office & shop located at the North Caicos ferry dock on Providenciales or at their headquarters downtown in the Butterfield building. The excellent and inexpensive 'Birds of the Turks & Caicos' book and local handcrafts are also available at both locations.

Remember to use your common-sense when exploring the wilderness of the Turks and Caicos Islands. Bring water, good footwear, and wear a hat. Please also be respectful of the historical sites, vegetation, and wildlife. 'Take only pictures and leave only footprints' are good values to follow. The Turks and Caicos National Trust needs your help to achieve its goals. Please purchase tickets to visit the different heritage sites and ensure that you use a tour operator that does the same. To learn more about the work of the National Trust and to become a member visit [www.tcnationaltrust.org](http://www.tcnationaltrust.org).