

# The idyllic Exuma chain

## Islands become the hot new place to invest and live

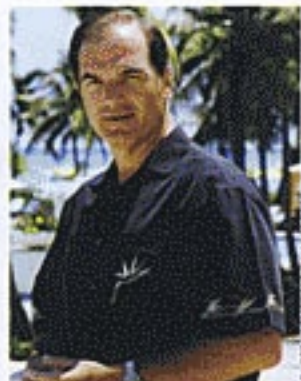
By Jessica Robertson

Over the years, George Town, Exuma has been referred to as a “sleepy fishing village”—a place where yachtsmen stopped during peak season for provisions and a bit of company while making their way through the chain of 365 islands.

On the surface, not a lot has changed. But delve a little deeper and you soon realize that the Exuma capital and its surrounding settlements are undergoing a major economic transformation.

Unofficially, Exuma’s population has exploded from just 3,600 to about 5,700 in recent years. Every able man and woman who wants to work can and, in many cases, they have a number of jobs from which to choose. Along the length and breadth of Great Exuma, homes are being completed or added onto and new ones are being built. Taxi drivers have traded in their beat-up station wagons and are now taking visitors around in Escalades and stretch limousines.

Things are changing faster in Exuma than the surrounding ocean changes from one brilliant shade of blue to another. The island is attracting affluent visitors from all over the world, and most who are familiar with the island and the changes taking place point to the multi-million dollar Emerald Bay Resort development project as being the catalyst for the change.



Kevin Clemente, CEO, Emerald Bay Resort

### Emerald Bay Resort

A 25-minute drive away from George Town, this 475-acre property overlooking magnificent crystal-clear waters has changed both the face and economic landscape of Great Exuma.

In addition to its natural beauty, Great Exuma’s location, just 130 miles southeast of the Bahamian capital of Nassau, made it an ideal choice, says CEO Kevin Clemente.

“The accessibility of the airport made it a very unique opportunity. Typically, a site like this has accessibility issues, so that if you’re going to make the kind of investment that we’ve made here, you’d be very concerned about whether you could

## Taxi drivers have traded in their beat-up station wagons and are now taking visitors around in Escalades and stretch limousines

actually get the people here who would support it,” he explains.

To date, the developers have pumped about \$375 million into the project and, once completed, Clemente says they will likely have invested close to a billion dollars.

Emerald Bay Resort is perhaps best known for the ultra-luxurious, yet tastefully understated, five-star Four Seasons Resort Great Exuma, nestled among perfectly manicured lawns and overlooking the tranquil Emerald Bay. Its 183 guest rooms have attracted a new breed of visitor to the Exuma Cays—one who can appreciate the quaint look and feel of a Family Island, but still expects first-class service and amenities.

The Emerald Bay Marina has extended the cruising range for boaters with a Florida base by 500 miles. In fact, many of the completed slips have already been sold and mega-yachts up to 208 feet long have utilized the state-of-the-art amenities. Owners now call Exuma their home base.

The upscale community also boasts a European-style spa and a Greg Norman-designed golf course with views so spectacular they make it difficult to



Evening falls at Four Seasons Resort Residences

concentrate on the next shot. The addition in May 2006 of the island’s first casino added a new entertainment option for visitors and guests.

### Home away from home

For those who feel a short visit to Exuma, no matter how glorious, simply isn’t enough, choosing Great Exuma as the location for a second, third or even fourth home is becoming increasingly popular.

For American residents in particular, proximity and accessibility are strong selling points. Both American Airlines and Continental offer regularly scheduled 90-minute flights out of Miami and Fort Lauderdale, and in 40 minutes, passengers can arrive in George Town on one of the many daily flights departing from Lynden Pindling International Airport in Nassau. Many homeowners fly in on their personal jets and say having a customs facility in George Town makes the commute a breeze.

**choosing Great Exuma as the location for a second, third or even fourth home is becoming increasingly popular**