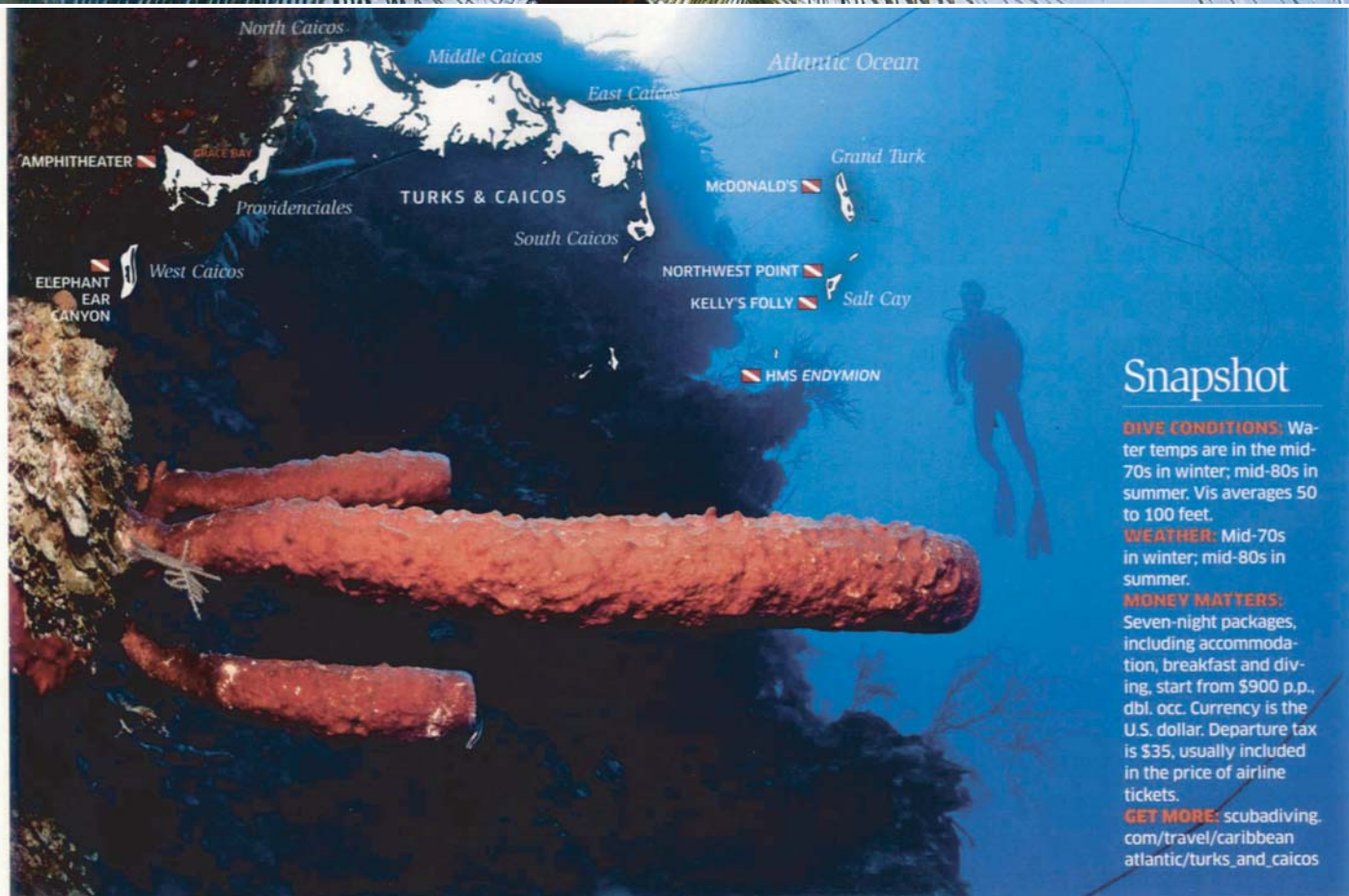


# SCUBA DIVING

THE MAGAZINE DIVERS TRUST  
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## Snapshot


**DIVE CONDITIONS:** Water temps are in the mid-70s in winter; mid-80s in summer. Vis averages 50 to 100 feet.

**WEATHER:** Mid-70s in winter; mid-80s in summer.

**MONEY MATTERS:** Seven-night packages, including accommodation, breakfast and diving, start from \$900 p.p., dbl. occ. Currency is the U.S. dollar. Departure tax is \$35, usually included in the price of airline tickets.

**GET MORE:** [scubadiving.com/travel/caribbeanatlantic/turks\\_and\\_caicos](http://scubadiving.com/travel/caribbeanatlantic/turks_and_caicos)

## Turks & Caicos

 The three islands generally visited by divers—Grand Turk, Salt Cay and Providenciales—have three distinct personalities, but share one trait: awesome diving. The Turks & Caicos archipelago consists of two island chains that sit atop two limestone banks separated by the 6,000-foot-deep Turks Island Passage. Six islands rise above the submerged Caicos Bank, including Providenciales and West Caicos. To the east are the islands of Grand Turk and Salt Cay.

Providenciales, commonly called Provo, is perfect for divers who like to play both above and under water; the island offers a wide array of resorts, restaurants and activities. On Provo's north shore, the 14-mile barrier reef bordering Grace Bay is one of three main diving areas on the island, as are Northwest Point, a national marine park off the west coast, and uninhabited out islands like West Caicos.

At least once a week, most of Provo's dive operators make the hour-long trip to West Caicos, 10 miles southwest of Provo. Here, divers find a dizzyingly steep drop-off. Choice sites include Elephant Ear Canyon, packed with tube sponges and black coral (though the giant elephant ear sponge for which it's named is long gone).

Provo's renowned Northwest Point offers more than a dozen sites including Amphitheater, which boasts a pageant of fish—parrotfish, clown wrasse, angelfish—plus chance encounters with Caribbean reef sharks.

On Grand Turk, one site, McDonald's, is named for the graceful coral arch on the wall's lip, a gateway to the site's showy drop-off. McDonald's is emblematic of the diving off Grand Turk—

shallow reefs that give way to a striking wall. Along the way, you'll encounter hawksbill turtles, good-sized Nassau groupers, healthy corals and mammoth sponges.

Tiny Salt Cay, eight miles southwest of Grand Turk, is home to only about 70 people. You can stay on Salt Cay and dive nearby sites or make the trip from Grand Turk if your operator is willing. Dive sites here include the HMS *Endymion*, a historic wreck 16 miles south of the island. Kelly's Folly, whose undulating coral gardens slope down to a precipitous drop-off, and Northwest Point, where black corals cling to the wall and tiger groupers hang out in cracks. "We have something very special here," Debbie Manos, of Salt Cay Divers, says. "And we hope that it will never change."

Between February and April, hundreds of migrating North Atlantic humpback whales pass in close range of Grand Turk and operators offer snorkeling encounters with the animals.

→ **GETTING THERE:** You'll fly into Providenciales (PLS); if you're headed for another island, you'll take a commuter flight. Nonstop flights to Provo originate in Miami and New York.