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Take the plunge: Long and narrow Eleuthera is ringed with sandy beaches and a rocky coast. Like all the many Out Islands, second-home living revolves around the water.

Bahamas Ministry of Tourism

Second homes: Own a slice of paradise in the Bahamas

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OUT ISLANDS OF THE BAHAMAS

Best for: Diving, sailing, fishing - plus peace and quiet.

Claim to fame: Andros is known as the bone-fishing capital of the world.

Don't miss: Mail is still delivered to the Out Islands by boat from Nassau, and scheduled mail boats carry passengers in the no-frills manner of another era.

Getting there: The main Out Islands are all served directly from the USA, mostly from Florida. You can fly from Nassau.

Tourism information: myoutislands.com

By **Larry Olmsted**, Special for USA TODAY

The Out Islands of the Bahamas—the term refers to everything except the Commonwealth's two most urbanized islands, **New Providence** and **Grand Bahama**—are also called the "the Real Bahamas" because of their laid-back feel.

This off-the-beaten-path part of the Bahamas, however, encompasses nearly 99% of the country's islands: Andros alone is bigger than New Providence (home to the capital, Nassau) and Grand Bahama combined. The major difference is a lack of casinos, duty-free shops, mega-resorts and cruise ships.

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"Nassau has the banks, bankers, casino and big resorts. The Out Islands are quieter, and people choose them for quieter lifestyles," says Virginia Damianos, a third-generation Bahamian and vice president of Damianos Sotheby's International Realty in

Nassau.

The Out Islands are grouped into several main clusters: the **Abacos**, **Exumas** and **Eleuthera**. Other notable Out Islands include Andros, Bimini and Cat Island. Each has its own flavor: According to Damianos, boaters head to the Abacos, anglers to Bimini, divers to Andros, but with the omnipresent turquoise sea, "everywhere, water is the thing."

International buyers have made the Bahamas famous as a tax dodge, but most American second homes here are bought for love. "Generally the Out Islands are less," says Damianos. "The least expensive waterfront condo in Nassau would be \$375,000, and on Abaco it would be \$300,000."

The largest upcoming development is PGA Village, a \$200 million golf community opening next year on Cat Island that has a mix of residential offerings and is a sister property to the PGA's headquarter community in Florida (pgavillage.com).

With hundreds of islands, the region is also popular for private island ownership. According to Damianos, celebrity island owners include Johnny Depp, Nicolas Cage and Faith Hill.

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