

travel

Briland in the Sun

Harbour Island—aka Briland—is one of the most enchanting spots in the Bahamas.

Harbor Island is known for its pink sand beaches—and a gracious British Colonial ambiance.

Some might consider Harbour Island, off Eleuthera, the best of the Bahamas, for it falls right in the middle of the development spectrum: It isn't the over-commercialized tourist trap of Paradise Island, but it doesn't have the somewhat-user-unfriendly vibe of Out Islands like Bimini.

Harbour Island, shortened by natives into simply "Briland," is the kind of place where you can really lose yourself—in the best way possible. The Sturm und Drang of the mainland quickly fade, replaced by slightly pink sand beaches, colorful beachside cottages and hospitable natives (a sign on the dock welcomes you to the "island of friendly people"). It's the kind of place where you might see Donna Karan dancing on a table at a local bar (really) or where you might meet a former IBMer running a tiny public library.



Sometimes referred to as the "Nantucket of the Caribbean," Harbour Island is about 3 miles long and 1.5 miles wide; it can be traversed on foot, but most islanders and visitors prefer golf carts. The island's main settlement, Dunmore Town, once the capital of the Bahamas, takes its name from the Eighth Earl of Dunmore, governor of the Bahamas in the 18th century.

Martinlee Grant, member of the island's historical society, offers a fascinating tour of the island's points of interest. Highlights include St. Catherine's Cemetery, named after a tourist who drowned in the ocean in 1900; St. John's Anglican Episcopal church, the oldest in the Bahamas, created by Parliament in 1768; and the 66 steps, a stone stairwell carved by the first prisoner of Briland as punishment.

That storied history, in part, helps distinguish Harbour Island from the rest of the Bahamas.

"We are rich in history, rich in tourism and rich in spirit," Grant says.

An integral part of the island's history is Pink Sands resort, a 20-acre hideaway first opened in the 1950s. Its 25 cozy cottages, nestled among its lushly landscaped grounds, have long played host to celebrities and high-end clientele looking for a private respite. Another huge draw is its namesake pink-tinged beach (so colored from the shells of dead protozoa), dubbed by *Condé Nast Traveler* as "quite



From top: the exterior of a cottage at Pink Sands; the dramatic lobby bar.

+ If You Go

GETTING THERE: Flights to North Eleuthera airport from Miami and Fort Lauderdale are about an hour long and are offered by Continental Connection and American Eagle. Upon landing, take a taxi (about \$5 a person; don't be afraid to negotiate down if drivers offer high prices initially) to the Harbour Island water taxi (\$5 per person). After a five-minute ride, take another taxi (\$5 per person) to Pink Sands. It's about 15 minutes from the airport to the resort and should cost about \$15 per person.

Note: Taxis are typically unmarked vans at the airport or docks, and drivers will approach you.

DINE: Try Bahama Bayside Café (Bay Street) for traditional Bahamian fare or Sip Sip (Court Road), named after the Bahamian phrase for "gossip," for an eclectic mix of international cuisines.

SHOP: Blue Rooster (King Street) has a gorgeous variety of on-trend jewelry, while Dilly Dally (King Street) offers CDs of island music, handmade souvenirs and more.

DANCE: Take your shoes off to dance on the sand floor at Gusty's (Coconut Grove); groove to some Michael Jackson at JJ's (Nesbit Street), owned by a University of Georgia alum and a Bahama native; and end up at Vik Hum's (Nesbit Street), the island's top late-night spot.

possibly the finest beach in the world."

The property has new management (two co-owners are Manalapan residents) and undergone a drastic revamp. The public spaces and cottages, decorated by Biba founder Barbara Hulanicki, have been refreshed and modernized, while the Blue Bar on the beach has been expanded into a full-service restaurant serving fresh sushi and other Japanese fare. (You may recognize chef Pascale Burrows from his time at Sushi Rok in West Palm Beach).

The Garden Terrace offers an American-meets-Caribbean menu as well as indoor and alfresco dining—but opt for the terrace if the weather is right. At night, candles cast shadows on the surrounding trees and overhead canopy, while music wafts softly from hidden speakers. It's an intimate, magical experience where you might just lose yourself. And that's the point.

—Chelsea Greenwood