Turks and Caicos
Country Orientation Guide

2009-2010
DISCLAIMER

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# Table of Contents

Disclaimer.......................................................................................................................................................1

Welcome..........................................................................................................................................................3

NSU Emergency Contact..................................................................................................................................4

Passport Issues...............................................................................................................................................5

Weather Information.......................................................................................................................................6

Central Intelligence Agency-The World Factbook............................................................................................6

TSA Travel Tips..............................................................................................................................................7

Useful Phone Numbers....................................................................................................................................8

Lost & Found..................................................................................................................................................8

US Department of State - Tips for Traveling Abroad.......................................................................................9

U.S. Customs Restrictions – What You Cannot Bring Back With You.........................................................10

Country Overview..........................................................................................................................................11

Banking...........................................................................................................................................................11

Communication..............................................................................................................................................12

Documents Needed.........................................................................................................................................12

Electricity........................................................................................................................................................12

Emergencies...................................................................................................................................................12

Holidays..........................................................................................................................................................14

Safety...............................................................................................................................................................14

Time Zone.......................................................................................................................................................14

Transportation................................................................................................................................................14

Water.................................................................................................................................................................14

Academic System..........................................................................................................................................15

Overview.......................................................................................................................................................15

K-12..................................................................................................................................................................15

Higher Education..........................................................................................................................................15

Etiquette...........................................................................................................................................................15

Cultural Orientation......................................................................................................................................15

Business Practices.........................................................................................................................................15

Tipping............................................................................................................................................................16

References.......................................................................................................................................................17
Welcome
Dear Colleagues,

Thank you very much for accepting to teach in Turks and Caicos!

The Office of International Affairs (OIA) at the Fischler School of Education and Human Services has prepared this country guide to provide you with basic and general information on the country you are about to visit.

This guide is intended to help you prepare for your trip. As you travel in the country, please let us know if you find that there are details that need to be added or changed so that we can keep our guides updated. Although we have tried to make it as comprehensive as possible, all of us know that our world moves very rapidly and changes happen everyday; however, we have tried our best to include all of the details you need to make sure you are comfortable in your new environment.

This information has been compiled with the help of the Office of Strategic Initiatives and Global Enterprises for Academic Development (SIGEAD), and the contribution from the OIA team members and our Field Associates and Regional Liaisons around the world. To all of them, and to you, thank you very much for helping these programs become as successful as they are today, and as a result, for making a difference in our students' lives, wherever they are located.

Have a wonderful experience and please be sure to meet with us upon your return so we can discuss your experience and solicit your input for future cohorts. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be any assistance to your prior to your departure, or while you are teaching.

Bon voyage!

Anthony DeNapoli, Dean of International Affairs
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NSU Emergency Contact

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Travel Office Numbers

Travel Office 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. 954-262-8888

Travel Office (ONLY after contacting airline or hotel directly) 1-800-809-8858

There is a charge of $20 if you contact this number.
Passport Issues
A passport is an internationally recognized travel document that verifies the identity and nationality of the bearer. A valid U.S. passport is required to enter and leave most foreign countries. Only the U.S. Department of State has the authority to grant, issue, or verify United States passports.

The Passport Services Office provides information and services to American citizens about how to obtain, replace or change a passport.

To obtain a passport for the first time, you need to go in person to one of over 9,000 passport acceptance facilities located throughout the United States with two photographs of yourself, proof of U.S. citizenship, and a valid form of photo identification such as a driver’s license.

Acceptance facilities include many Federal, state and probate courts, post offices, some public libraries and a number of county and municipal offices. There are also 13 regional passport agencies, and 1 Gateway City Agency, which serve customers who are traveling within 2 weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. Appointments are required in such cases.

You will need to apply in person if you are applying for a U.S. passport for the first time:

- If your expired U.S. passport is not in your possession;
- If your previous U.S. passport has expired and was issued more than 15 years ago;
- If your previous U.S. passport was issued when you were under age 16;
- Or if your current valid U.S. passport has been lost or stolen.

*To obtain more information on obtaining a passport please visit

[http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/first/first_832.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/first/first_832.html)

*To renew an existing passport please visit

Weather Information
For weather information on specific countries please visit:
http://worldweather.wmo.int/

Central Intelligence Agency-The World Factbook

The World Factbook provides valuable geographic and demographic information. For more information on individual countries, please visit:

TSA Travel Tips

Make Your Trip Better Using 3-1-1

**3-1-1 for carry-ons =**

- 3 ounce bottle or less (by volume);
- 1 quart-sized, clear, plastic, zip-top bag;
- 1 bag per passenger placed in screening bin.

One-quart bag per person limits the total liquid volume each traveler can bring. 3 oz. container size is a security measure.

**Consolidate** bottles into one bag and X-ray separately to speed screening.

**Be prepared.** Each time TSA searches a carry-on it slows down the line. Practicing 3-1-1 will ensure a faster and easier checkpoint experience.

**3-1-1 is for short trips.** If in doubt, put your liquids in checked luggage.

**Declare larger liquids.** Medications, baby formula and food, breast milk, and juice are allowed in reasonable quantities exceeding three ounces and are not required to be in the zip-top bag. Declare these items for inspection at the checkpoint.

**Come early and be patient.** Heavy travel volumes and the enhanced security process may mean longer lines at security checkpoints.

**TSA working with our partners.** TSA works with airlines and airports to anticipate peak traffic and be ready for the traveling public.
Useful Phone Numbers
Sources of information include:

U.S. Dept. of State Travel Advisory: tel. 202-647-5225 (manned 24 hr.)

U.S. Passport Agency: tel. 202-647-0518

U.S. Centers for Disease Control International Traveler's Hotline: tel. 404-332-4559

Lost & Found

Be sure to tell all of your credit card companies the minute you discover your wallet has been lost or stolen, and file a report at the nearest police precinct. Your credit card company or insurer may require a police report number or record of the loss. Most credit card companies have an emergency toll-free number to call if your card is lost or stolen; they may be able to wire you a cash advance immediately or deliver an emergency credit card in a day or two. To report a lost or stolen

**American Express** - To protect your information, you can only report a lost or stolen card by calling American Express Customer Service at 1-800-992-3404. Outside the United States call, collect 336-393-1111.

**Diners Club** - Call Diners Club Customer Service at 1-800-234-6377. Outside the United States call, collect 702-797-5532.


If you need emergency cash over the weekend when all banks and American Express offices are closed, you can have money wired to you via **Western Union**. Call tel. **1-800-325-6000**

If you need emergency cash over the weekend when all banks and American Express offices are closed, you can have money wired to you via **Western Union**. Call tel. **1-800-325-6000**


Identity theft and fraud are potential complications of losing your wallet, especially if you have lost your driver's license along with your cash and credit cards. Notify the major credit-reporting bureaus immediately; placing a fraud alert on your records may protect you against liability for criminal activity. The three major U.S. credit-reporting agencies are **Equifax** (tel. **800-766-0008**; www.equifax.com), **Experian** (tel. **888-397-3742**; www.experian.com), and **TransUnion** (tel. **800-680-7289**; www.transunion.com). Finally, if you have lost all forms of photo ID, call your airline and explain the situation; they might allow you to board the plane if you have a copy of your passport or birth certificate and a copy of the police report you have filed.
Here are some quick tips to make your travel easier and safer:

- **Register so the State Department can better assist you in an emergency**: Register your travel plans with the State Department through a free online service at [https://travelregistration.state.gov](https://travelregistration.state.gov). This will help us contact you if there is a family emergency in the U.S., or if there is a crisis where you are traveling. In accordance with the Privacy Act, information on your welfare and whereabouts will not be released to others without your express authorization.

- **Sign passport, and fill in the emergency information**: Make sure you have a signed, valid passport, and a visa, if required, and fill in the emergency information page of your passport.

- **Leave copies of itinerary and passport data page**: Leave copies of your itinerary, passport data page and visas with family or friends, so you can be contacted in case of an emergency.

- **Check your overseas medical insurance coverage**: Ask your medical insurance company if your policy applies overseas, and if it covers emergency expenses such as medical evacuation. If it does not, consider supplemental insurance.

- **Familiarize yourself with local conditions and laws**: While in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws. The State Department website at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html) has useful safety and other information about the countries you will visit.

- **Take precautions to avoid being a target of crime**: To avoid being a target of crime, do not wear conspicuous clothing or jewelry and do not carry excessive amounts of money. Also, do not leave unattended luggage in public areas and do not accept packages from strangers.

- **Contact us in an emergency**: Consular personnel at U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad and in the U.S. are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to provide emergency assistance to U.S. citizens. Contact information for U.S. Embassies and Consulates appears on the Bureau of Consular Affairs website at [http://travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov). Also, note that the Office of Overseas Citizen Services in the State Department’s Bureau of Consular Affairs may be reached for assistance with emergencies at 1-888-407-4747, if calling from the U.S. or Canada, or 202-501-4444, if calling from overseas.
U.S. Customs Restrictions – What You Cannot Bring Back With You

Some items may not be brought into the U.S., or may only be brought in under certain restrictions. For information on U.S. customs regulations and procedures, see the Customs and Border Protection booklet “Know Before You Go,” available at http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg.

Customs and Border Patrol Top 10 Travelers Tips

1. Have all required travel documents for the countries you are visiting, as well as identification for re-entry to the U.S.
2. Declare everything you are bringing in from abroad, even if you bought it in a duty-free shop. This merchandise is also subject to U.S. duty fees and other restrictions.
3. Be cautious when buying something from a street vendor. Keep in mind that the merchandise may be counterfeit and/or unsafe and you might have to surrender it to U.S. Customs and Border Protection when you get home.
4. Know that the things bought abroad for personal use or as gifts are eligible for duty exemptions. If you are bringing them back for resale, they are not.
5. Know the difference between prohibited merchandise (such as ivory, tortoise shell products, absinthe, and counterfeit items) and restricted merchandise.
6. Be aware that many foreign-made medications are not FDA-approved, and you cannot bring them into the U.S. Also, when traveling abroad, bring only the amount of medication you will need during the trip.
7. Do not bring any Cuban-made products into the U.S., not matter where you purchased them.
8. Do not bring any food into the U.S. without first checking to see if it is permitted. Also, any and all live birds and bird products, whether for personal or commercial use, may be restricted and/or quarantined.
9. Understand that CBP officers can inspect you and your belongings without a warrant. This may include your luggage, vehicle, and personal searches, and is meant to enforce our laws as well as protect legitimate travelers.
10. Read our helpful brochure, “Know Before You Go,” before traveling. Print copies may be requested online, or view the web version at www.cbp.gov under the Travel section.
Country Overview

The beautiful Turks and Caicos Islands are situated 575 miles southeast of Miami and 39 miles southeast of Mayaguana in the Bahamas. Covering 193 square miles of the Atlantic Ocean, Turks and Caicos Islands have one of the longest coral reefs in the world, making it a premier diving destination.

The islands were part of the UK's Jamaican colony until 1962, when they assumed the status of a separate crown colony upon Jamaica's independence. The governor of The Bahamas oversaw affairs from 1965 to 1973. With Bahamian independence, the islands received a separate governor in 1973. Although independence was agreed upon for 1982, the policy was reversed and the islands remain a British overseas territory.

One of the most valuable possessions of the islands are the white sandy beaches, which in total cover 230 miles and are complimented with crystal clear waters. The islands are relatively flat but depending on the island, the terrain can vary from sand dunes to lush green vegetation. There are eight major islands: Salt Cay, Grand Turk, South Caicos, East Caicos, Middle Caicos, North Caicos, Providenciales and West Caicos. The people on the islands are known for their friendliness. East Caicos and West Caicos are uninhabited.

The Tourism industry gives Turks and Caicos its main revenue. In addition to this, the islands are also a major offshore financial center. There is a small traditional fishing industry that continues throughout Turks and Caicos. On the islands of Providenciales and Grand Turk, you will find International style hotel accommodations; each one has its own unique set up and surroundings. Native dishes are served along with international cuisine, you will find this at most of the restaurants. More casual and serene accommodations can be found on the other islands and smaller cays.

Banking
Banks - Branches of the First Caribbean International Bank (tel. 649/946-2831) and Scotiabank (tel. 649/946-4750) are at convenient and central locations on Provo (Leeward Hwy.) and Grand Turk (Front St.). -- First Caribbean (connected to the PLUS ABM network) has 24-hour ABM
service at the main branches of its bank in Provo and Grand Turk. Scotiabank (connected to Cirrus) has ATMs at its main locations on Provo and Grand Turk and two additional ATMs in Provo, one in the Ports of Call shopping center on Grace Bay Road and the other next to the Graceway IGA on Leeward Highway (all open 24 hr. a day).

**Currency** -- The U.S. dollar is the official currency.

**Communication**

**Language** -- The official language is English.

**Internet** - Most resorts and hotels have some sort of Internet access. You can also access the Internet at TCiOnline Internet Café (Ports of Call shopping center, Provo; tel. 649/941-4711) or CompTCI (Suzy Turn Plaza, Provo; tel. 649/941-4266; www.comptci.com). Prices are around $10 an hour.

**Postal Service** - The Provo Post Office and Philatelic Bureau is located downtown at the corner of Airport Road. It is open Monday to Thursday from 8am to 4pm and Friday from 8am to 3:30pm. The Grand Turk Post Office is located on Front Street in Cockburn Town. It is open Monday to Friday from 8am to 4pm.

**Telephone** - The country direct dialing code is +1 followed by 649. The outgoing code is 011 followed by the relevant country code (e.g. 01144 for the United Kingdom). Public phones operate with phone cards.

**Documents Needed**

All Americans traveling by air outside of the United States are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. This requirement will be extended to sea travel (except closed-loop cruises), including ferry service, by the summer of 2009. Until then, U.S. citizens traveling by sea must have government-issued photo identification and a document showing their U.S. citizenship (for example, a birth certificate or certificate of nationalization), or other WHTI-compliant document such as a passport card for entry or re-entry to the U.S. Sea travelers should also check with their cruise line and countries of destination for any foreign entry requirements. Visit the British Embassy web site at [http://www.britain-info.org](http://www.britain-info.org) for the most current entry information, including any visa requirements.

**Electricity**

The electric current on the islands is 120 volts, 60 cycles, AC. European appliances will need adapters.

**Emergencies**

**Emergencies** -- Call tel. 911 or 999 for an **ambulance**, to report a **fire**, or to contact the **police**.
Embassies & Consulates - Americans living or traveling in the Turks and Caicos are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department’s travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within the Turks and Caicos. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located next to the McDonald’s Restaurant on Queen Street in downtown Nassau, and may be reached Monday-Friday at telephone (242) 322-1181; after-hours (242) 328-2206; fax (242) 356-7174. Embassy web site is http://nassau.usembassy.gov. Office hours are from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Friday (except for U.S. and Bahamian holidays).

Hospitals Hospitals/Medical Facilities -- Medical facilities are available but limited in the Turks and Caicos. There is a small public hospital on Grand Turk and a private clinic on Provo, which has a hyperbaric chamber. Most serious medical problems require medical evacuation by air from the Turks and Caicos to the United States.

The Turks and Caicos Islands do not have a pathologist to perform services in cases of death. Medical Examiners from neighboring countries visit the island regularly to provide this service. It can take up to two weeks for the Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands to release the remains of the deceased under normal circumstances, and severe weather during the hurricane season could delay the process even more.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC’s web site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization’s (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Pharmacies/Drug Stores - There are two full-service pharmacies: Grace Bay Pharmacy, located on Dolphin Drive between Grace Bay Road and the Leeward Highway (tel. 649/946-8242), and Island Pharmacy, in the Medical Building on Leeward Highway in Providenciales (tel. 649/946-4150).

Police – Call 911
Holidays
The following are official holidays of Turks and Caicos:
- January 1 – New Year’s Day
- March 10 – Commonwealth day
- March and/or April – Good Friday, Easter, and Easter Monday
- May 26 – National Hero’s Day
- June 16 – The Queen’s Official Birthday
- August 1 – Emancipation Day
- September 26 – Youth Day
- October 13 – Columbus Day
- October 24 – International Human Rights Day
- December 25 – Christmas Day
- December 26 – Boxing Day

Safety
Petty street crime does occur. Visitors should not leave valuables unattended in their hotel rooms or on the beach. Visitors should make sure that their hotel room doors are securely locked at night. In the Turks and Caicos, visitors may dial 999 or 911 for emergency police, fire, or medical assistance. In the Turks and Caicos, carrying illegal/undeclared firearms or ammunition is a very serious crime, as is possession of illegal narcotics.

Time Zone
The islands are in the Eastern Standard Time, -5 hours GMT. Daylight Savings Time is observed starting the second Sunday in March and ending the first Sunday in November.

Transportation
Air - The Turks and Caicos Islands have three International Airports, Grand Turk, Providenciales and South Caicos. All other islands have domestic airports except for East and West Caicos, which are uninhabited.

Taxi - Taxis are abundant throughout the islands. All fares are priced according to the distance traveled. It is always best to verify the cost to a particular destination before the taxi takes off.

Rental Car - In the Turks and Caicos, car rental services are rarely available on islands other than Providenciales and Grand Turk. However, there are plenty of companies willing to rent you a car in these two main islands.

Water
Government officials insist that the water in Turks & Caicos is safe to drink. Nonetheless, stick to bottled water, especially if you have a delicate stomach.
**Academic System**

**Overview**
Because residents are widely scattered among the island system consisting of the Caicos Islands and the Turks Islands, which are separated by the Turk Passage, the creation of a standardized education system offering equal access to all of the islanders has proved difficult. To counter this problem, several church groups, businesses, and individuals launched their own schools. Education is free and mandatory for children aged five to fifteen. Primary education lasts for six years. In the 1990s, the island nation launched the Primary In-Service Teacher Education Project (PINSTEP) in an effort to increase the skills of its primary school teachers, nearly one-quarter of whom were unqualified.

**K-12**
Turks and Caicos also worked to refurbish its primary schools, reduce textbook costs, and increase equipment and supplies given to schools. For example, in September of 1993, each primary school was given enough books to allow teachers to establish in-class libraries. In 2001, the student-teacher ratio at the primary level was roughly 15:1. Secondary education lasts for three years.

**Higher Education**
The Turks and Caicos Islands Community College offers higher education to students who have successfully completed their secondary education. The community college also oversees an adult literacy program. The Ministry of Health, Education, Youth, Sports, and Women's Affairs oversees education in Turks and Caicos.

**Etiquette**

**Cultural Orientation**
British Virgin Islanders place great importance on mannerly behavior. The right of individuals to privacy also is held dear, so that one should not call out a person's name from afar, nor inquire about another person's whereabouts or business. Among the older generation, friends of either gender may be addressed formally as "Mr.," "Mrs.," or "Miss" and among the younger generation, friends of either gender may be greeted with a generic "How?" or "Everything safe?"

**Business Practices**
A shirt and tie are required for the summer months; lightweight suits are normally worn at other times.
**Tipping**

Hotels often add 10% to 15% to your bill automatically, to cover service. If individual staff members perform various services for you, it is customary to tip them something extra. If you go on an island tour, water sports charter, or beach excursion, it is always a good idea to tip your guide 10% to 20%, depending on the level of service you receive. In restaurants, 15% is appropriate unless a service charge has already been added; if in doubt, ask. Tip taxi drivers 10% to 15%.
References


