

Southern Bahamas Itinerary

Trip Preparation Information

THE VESSEL

The *M/V Caribbean Explorer II* comfortably accommodates 18 passengers in 9 double staterooms, all of which have private bathroom facilities and most of which have queen-sized beds. The semi-enclosed, air-conditioned salon on the upper deck includes dining tables, TV, VCR, CD/DVD, video library and lounge area; a large sundeck with lounge chairs is aft of the main salon. The vessel's boutique is located on the main deck. The large dive deck is equipped with a bathroom, individual gear lockers, camera table with low pressure air hose, recharging station, air and nitrox filling stations, tank racks, and a separate fresh water rinse for both scuba and underwater camera equipment. There are two sets of stairs accessing the dive platform, where two in-water ladders hang for easy access to and from the water. The *Caribbean Explorer II* is also equipped with a satellite telephone for incoming and outgoing calls worldwide.

DIVING

The weather in the southern Bahamas is fairly consistent year-round. The temperatures range from the 70's (F) or higher in the winter months to the low 90's during the summer, with nearly constant sea breezes. Water temperatures range from a low of about 72°F in winter to a high of about 82°F in summer. There is normally little appreciable current at the sites we visit, and visibility is generally between 75 and 150 feet. Most divers are comfortable with a 3 mm wetsuit in summer and a 5 mm wetsuit with hooded vest in fall, winter and spring.

DIVING LOGISTICS

The majority of dives aboard our vessels are offered at scheduled times, up to 5 times daily. This is to allow adequate surface intervals, provide the option for guided dives on as many sites as possible, and allow the vessel to travel on schedule to different locations. It also permits us to offer the widest variety of dive sites possible.

MINIMUM AGE RESTRICTIONS

The minimum certifiable age for divers is 10 for most SCUBA certification agencies; normally, the agencies restrict 10 and 11 year olds to a maximum depth of 40 ft. Explorer Ventures therefore allows children as young as 10 years to participate in our trips, with the following restrictions:

1. All children under the age of 15 must travel and dive with their parent or guardian, unless undergoing active training with an instructor.
2. Our itineraries offer very few diving opportunities at depths less than 40 feet; diving opportunities for 10 and 11 year olds will be significantly less than those for older divers. For this reason, a minimum age of 12 for divers is strongly suggested.

SAFETY STANDARDS

To ensure your safety, we require the following of all divers:

1. All divers must be certified by an internationally recognized accrediting organization.
2. All divers must have logged at least one dive within the 12 months prior to boarding the vessel, or participate in a refresher course on board.
3. All divers must adhere to the buddy system, unless certified, equipped and adhering to standards for solo diving.
4. All divers must log in and out of the water with a member of the diving staff.
5. All divers must have a submersible console. In addition, a timepiece must be worn by at least one diver in a buddy team.
6. On night dives, a cyalume lightstick or marker beacon must be worn by each diver.
7. Decompression diving is not allowed under any conditions. The maximum allowed depth is 130' (110' on nitrox).
8. Diving activities must cease when the consumption of alcohol begins.
9. Please note that, due to a combination of staff and equipment logistics, insurance requirements and local diving regulations, neither rebreathers nor diver propulsion vehicles (DPVs) may be used aboard Explorer Ventures vessels..

WHAT TO BRING

Packing for a liveaboard trip is much easier than packing for a land-based vacation. The climate doesn't require much more than shorts, T-shirts, and swimsuits (you may consider slacks, dress shorts or sundresses for dinner ashore). In the winter months, a sweater, long pants and windbreaker for the evenings can be a good idea. Soft luggage is recommended as it takes up very little space when empty. Sun screens, sunglasses, a visor or hat is recommended. In case of rough weather or if you have a tendency towards seasickness, come prepared with motion sickness medications or Transderm patches from your doctor. If you have favorite CD's or DVD's, feel free to bring them.

All linens (including sheets, comforters, bath towels, hand towels, dive towels, and wash cloths) are provided on board.

If possible, pack your regulator, dive computer, mask, a swimsuit, change of clothes and toiletries in your carry-on bag. Having these few items with you will make an unexpected luggage delay far more bearable.

EQUIPMENT LIST

The vessel provides tanks, weights, and weight belts for your use. If you prefer to rent the rest of your equipment from us, we have all of the equipment that you will need. **Please indicate on your application form what equipment you will require.** Otherwise, the following items are the diver's responsibility:

- Certification Card (required to avoid a \$100 checkout fee for certified divers)
 - Diving Log Book (strongly encouraged; required for solo diving course)
 - Mask *
 - Snorkel *
 - Fins *
 - Booties (if you wear them)
 - Buoyancy Control Device (required) *
 - Regulator w/alternate air source *
 - Submersible pressure and depth gauges
 - (required) *
 - Underwater time piece (required)
 - Dive light *
 - For solo divers: pony bottle (or independent or isolated-manifold twin tanks), whistle, knife, compass and safety sausage or flag deployable from safety stop depth*
 - Dive computer (recommended) *
 - Wet suit (3mm to 5 mm)*
 - Hooded vest during winter months
 - Repair kit w/ spare parts
- * Available for rent on board

ARRIVAL

Please note that a passport is required of all visitors arriving in the Bahamas. A valid return or onward airline ticket is also required.

Delayed luggage issues on all airlines servicing George Town is a regular occurrence, and for this reason we recommend either (1) arriving a day prior to the vessel's departure and spending the night at a local resort or hotel, and/or (2) carrying all necessities for the week in your carry-on bag. Due to the vessel's itinerary, we are normally unable to wait to retrieve delayed baggage that arrives later than Saturday night.

Meeting the *Caribbean Explorer II* is simple. Though transfers are not included in the package, if you are arriving on the day of departure you will be met at the airport by a local driver; if you have indicated you will be staying at a local hotel, arrangements will be made to pickup you up and take you to the vessel. Please contact the vessel if your travel itinerary has changed. The fare is approximately \$25 per person, plus a small additional charge for anything over 2 bags per person.

If you experience travel difficulties and are delayed, please contact the vessel directly and notify them (see Communications).

SAMPLE ITINERARY

Days aboard *Caribbean Explorer II* generally involve breakfast from 7 am to 8 am (cold breakfasts are available for late risers), followed by two morning dives, lunch at 12:30 pm, two afternoon dives, dinner at 6:30 pm, and a night dive. Island shore excursions will be arranged when possible for those interested.

Please note also that this itinerary is an example only, and will change depending on weather and logistics at the Captain's discretion. In particular, it is not always possible for the vessel to go to San Salvador in certain weather conditions.

Saturday:

1500 Guests board vessel
1830 Dinner (snacks or dinner available for those arriving on later flights)
2000 Captain's Briefing, documents, etc.
2100 Shore leave or simply relax aboard.

Sunday: George Town to Long Island

0500 Depart dock for 2 ½ hour transit to Long Island; breakfast on arrival.
0900 Begin diving schedule; 4 dives, possibly 5 depending on tide conditions and logistics.

Monday: Long Island to Conception

0600 Depart Long Island early morning for 1 ½ hour transit to Conception Island; breakfast on arrival.
0830 Begin diving schedule; 5 dives

Tuesday: Conception to San Salvador

0400 Depart early morning for 3 ½ hour transit to San Salvador; breakfast on arrival. 5 dives offered.

Wednesday: San Salvador

5 dives offered. Optional 2-hour island tour available.

Thursday: San Salvador to Conception Island to Long Island

2 dives at San Salvador, followed by transit at lunchtime to Conception Island. 3 dives offered at Conception. Evening crossing to Long Island after dinner and night dive.

Friday:

Dawn dive and morning dive, with departure for the trip back to George Town scheduled for lunchtime. Afternoon at leisure; dinner ashore, with night spent aboard vessel at dock.

Saturday:

0700/0830 Continental breakfast
0900 Depart the vessel.
Should you be leaving on an afternoon flight, feel free to leave your luggage on the dock alongside the vessel until you depart; we will watch over it.

Due to the necessity of readying the vessel for our next cruise, we must strictly enforce the 9 am departure.

MEALS

Evening meals usually consist of lots of fresh vegetables, rice, pasta, chicken, beef, turkey, pork, and fish. Breakfast is the usual fare of eggs, bacon, pancakes, French toast, muffins, danish and fresh fruits. Lunches vary from soup and sandwiches, burgers, pasta, assorted salads, and quiche. Homemade baked breads, cookies and brownies are offered between dives.

If you have any dietary restrictions or requests, please indicate so on your application form. Please note that specific brands of drinks, dressings and foods are often unavailable in the islands, and that it can be very difficult for us to find low-fat or soy products, fresh fruit, fish, and other items common elsewhere. While we will do our best to accommodate your requests, please be realistic and consider bringing some of your own foods if the lack thereof may constitute a health risk.

CURRENCY

The Bahamian Dollar (equivalent in value to the U.S. dollar) is the official currency; change is often given in US Dollars if requested, and both currencies are used interchangeably. Travelers' checks and most major credit cards are accepted widely throughout the island.

DEPARTURE

The vessel arrives in port around midday Friday. Passengers spend Friday night and have Saturday breakfast on board; there will be sufficient time to catch a flight out at any time on Saturday. If you have a flight on Saturday afternoon, you are welcome to leave your luggage on board the vessel until time to go to the airport. There is a departure tax, payable in cash, of US\$15 upon leaving.

ON BOARD CHARGES

Though all meals (except Friday's dinner), beverages, and much more has been taken care of with your trip payment, there are additional items which you may charge to your on board bill. These include retail items (shirts, scuba accessories, etc.), incoming and outgoing telephone calls, photographic and scuba instruction, rentals, nitrox and crew gratuities.

The bill may be paid at the end of the trip using Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Discover or cash. Personal or traveler's checks are not accepted on board, and we are unable to provide cash for credit card charges more than invoice amounts.

COMMUNICATIONS

You can be reached aboard the *Caribbean Explorer II* from North America via Iridium phone at 011.88.163.185.9097, or via cell phone at +1.242.524.0772. Outgoing calls may also be made on the satphone. **Please be aware that a charge is assessed for both incoming and outgoing calls.**

CREW GRATUITIES

Crew gratuities are not included in your package. The crew works very hard, 7 days a week and up to 12 weeks at a stretch, providing the best possible service for our guests. The industry standard for crew gratuities on dive trips (if of course you are happy with the service which you have received) is between 10% and 15% of the package price per passenger. Your generosity will be greatly appreciated.

PACKAGES INCLUDE:

- 7 nights/8 days aboard vessel
- 3 meals daily, plus between-dive snacks
- 5 dives daily
- Use of tanks, weights and belts
- All alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages

PACKAGES DO NOT INCLUDE:

- Airport transfers
- Friday evening dinner
- Rental, instruction and retail charges
- Crew gratuities
- Trip Cancellation Insurance
- Departure taxes (approximately US\$15)
- Bahamas Port Fee (US\$85) – payable on board
- Fuel Surcharge, if applicable – payable on board (check website for current amount)

Please feel free to call us if you have any questions - have a wonderful trip!

For Further Information Contact:

EXPLORER VENTURES
adventures in liveaboard diving

PO Box 310

Mills, WY 82644 USA

(800) 322-3577

Outside US/Canada +1.307.235.0683

+1.307.235.0686 FAX

Email info@explorerventures.com

www.explorerventures.com

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