

Welcome to Andros!

Andros Island, at 104 miles long, is the largest in the Bahamian archipelago. At the same time, it is one of the less developed. There are no cities, towns are few, and there is a distinctive small town atmosphere.

This Sites and Sights guide was designed to help our groups plan out their Andros experience so as to make the most of their time on the island.

This guide is separated into LAND and SEA sites and specialized sites will be denoted with a star (★). Each site description will include:

Travel Time: average amount of time from Forfar Field Station to the site. This may vary based on road conditions and weather conditions. Please do not underestimate travel time – the island is quite large.

Site Time: the approximate amount of time a 20-student group spends at a site. However, these times vary widely and the group leader and the group determine the amount of time at a site.

Subjects: Each location will highlight a specific subject area so sites can be chosen to cater to each group's areas of interest.

Point(s) of Interest: tells you about the location and what you may want to see and do including the focuses of each site (science, history, culture etc.)

In some instances, we have specified a maximum number of people for a particular site. This is to prevent the overexploitation of some of the more delicate areas. In general, limitations pertain where visibility is quickly reduced or space is limited. Also, please note the following:

- 1. Due to distance, we typically run each trip in a single direction—either north or south—for land and boat trips. This minimizes time spent driving, and allows you to see the most in a day.**
- 2. A group travels together. We do not split a group up to go in different directions (there are exceptions for researchers).**
- 3. You make the plan. Use this Guide as a starting point but feel free to do something not listed in this Guide. Just ask! One of the greatest benefits of the Forfar experience is the flexibility.**

The **Land** and **Sea** sections are divided into North, Nearby, and South trips and the starred **specialized** sites (★) indicate trips generally taken by researchers or college groups since they are further away and/or more specialized. The typical program is 2 north land days, 1 south land day and 3 boat days, an example of days schedules can be found under each heading.

For information on diving sites, please see the **Forfar Diving Guide**, available from International Field Studies (IFS).

We will do everything we can to include what you want, but we are at the mercy of the weather, tides, local holidays, as well as the pace of the group. Group leaders will confer with the director the night you arrive at Forfar to confirm or reorganize your proposed plan. Please remember when you plan your trip that strict itineraries may not be possible. Do not expect a rigid schedule once you get to Forfar.

LECTURE TOPICS

Most groups have evening educational presentations. Some leaders choose to lead their own, some combine theirs with what the Forfar staff offers, and some rely on the Forfar staff exclusively. The diverse staff offers several lectures, activities, and labs. The standard lectures include:

- Orientation (mandatory and done on evening of arrival)
- Fish
- Coral
- Invertebrates
- Botany
- Geology
- Birds
- History and Culture of Andros

Laboratory lessons are also available. These are good ways to fill rainy days or further examine the sites you visit. Some options are listed below, but don't hesitate to introduce your own labs. Forfar has lab equipment, call to find out if we have what you need.

- Sand/Sediment Analysis
- Plankton Tow
- Goniolithon Lab (Cryptic Invertebrates)
- Lion Fish Dissection

Forfar can provide staff and materials when needed for any lessons and labs you plan for your group, just let us know how we can help.

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Sites by Location: NORTH LAND

Typical North Land days include three or four sites. Bear in mind that the northern sites are further away from Forfar than the southern sites. We typically do not run half days north.

Red Bays Road

Travel Time: 90, (combine with visit to Red Bays)

Site Time: 1 hour, including stop at Jungle Pond

Subjects: Botany, Birds, Geology

Points of Interest:

- The drive to the west side of the island takes you through pine yard, coppice, swash and tidal flat communities. Groups often stop to observe and discuss the landscape and the particulars of each plant environment and do some birding on the way.
- The western tidal flat features the geological quandary that is dolomite being formed and raises all manner of interesting geological questions.
- ★ **Jungle Pond:** This unusual site is a filled in blue hole with immense red mangroves and dense bromeliads and orchids. It is an extraordinarily unique spot and is very sensitive, so we ask that groups just look in, unless doing research.

Red Bays (*Red Bays usually takes one full north land day*)

Travel Time: 90 minutes

Site Time: 1-2 hours

Subjects: History and Culture, Botany,

Points of Interest:

- Henry Wallace, a Rasta woodcarver, makes beautiful wood carvings from mahogany, horse flesh and cedar.
- Almost everyone in Red Bays does some kind of straw weaving,
- There are a wide variety of fruit trees and vegetables, as well as people knowledgeable in bush medicine making it a great stop for botany.
- Otis Marshall sells his sponges and artwork, as well as, talks a bit about how the sponging works on Andros.
- Visit the sponge dock on the west side of the island. One of the only places to see some of the west side of the island by land.

★ **Atala Coppice**

Travel Time: 25 minutes

Site Time: 1 hour

Subjects: Botany

Points of Interest:

- Named for the endangered *Atala* Hairstreak butterfly that makes its home in the area. The short hike through this pocket of coppices seems like tropical rainforest with its bromeliads and orchids, banana holes, and freshwater ponds.

★ Owen's Town

Travel Time: 75 minutes

Site Time: 1-2 hours

Subjects: Birding, Herpetology, History and Culture

Points of Interest:

- The site of the once-prosperous lumber mill and worker housing of the Owens-Illinois Lumber Company, Owen's Town was abandoned in 1974 when the lumbering ceased. Now the ruins are home to birds, reptiles, and plants who quickly reclaiming the site.

Charlie's Blue Hole

Travel Time: 1 hour

Site Time: 1 hour

Subjects: Geology

Point of Interest:

- This easily accessible blue hole is only 1/4 mile off the main road, 10 minutes past the San Andros Airport. A good freshwater rinse and a lovely place to swim.

Morgan's Bluff and Cave; Regatta Beach

Travel Time: 75 minutes, combined with combined with north trip

Site Time: 45 minutes

Subjects: History and Culture, Geology

Points of Interest:

- This 65ft bluff is the highest point on Andros. A short walk up to the cliff face takes the group to a beautiful view of the ocean and reef.
- The legend goes that notorious pirate Captain Henry Morgan buried his treasure in the cave below Morgan's Bluff. Take a half hour to look at stalactites, stalagmites, and a group of small bats (seasonal). This cave is easily accessible, and fun to walk and crawl through (plenty of space for larger groups).
- Regatta beach is a lovely spot for shelling, lunch, and watching the boats in and out of the largest port on Andros.

★ Bat Cave:

Travel Time: 75 minutes

Site Time: 2 hours

Subjects: Geology

Point of Interest:

- This spelunking trip has several tight squeezes and a lot of bat guano, but the caverns and bats are more than worth it. To minimize impact, we prefer to limit group size to 10 people at a time through the cave.

Money Point

Travel Time: 90 minutes, combined with north trips

Site Time: 2 hours (must be at low tide)

Subjects: Invertebrates

Point of Interest:

- A road through a mangrove swamp takes you to our favorite tide pooling area at low tide. The students can flip over rocks to find an array of invertebrates including sea stars, snails, shrimp, lobsters, and crabs.
- A perfect place for an in-the-field invertebrate talk.

Nicholl's Town

Travel Time: 90 minutes, combined with Morgan's Bluff

Site Time: 1-2 hours

Subjects: Coral, Fish, Geology, History and Culture

Points of Interest:

- Coconut Grove is one of the best snorkeling sites on a calm day, and a great place for lunch. This fringing reef area is accessible from the shore. The beach is a good walk and has excellent shelling.
- The Nicholl's town beach has a fossilized reef from the Pleistocene epoch, which is great place for an in-the-field geology talk.
- Sly fox is a great place to stop for take-away or a cold drink at Nicholls town beach.
- Conch Sound Blue Hole is an oceanic blue hole only 50 feet offshore. See huge spadefish and a shipwreck. (Allow 1 more hour for this snorkel.)

<p>North Land Day 1 (Red Bays Day) 8:00- Breakfast 9:00- Depart Forfar 10:20- Arrive in Red Bays, begin tour of settlement Noon- Lunch in Red Bays 1:00-Continue tour 3:30-Leave Red Bays 5:00-Return to Forfar 6:00- Dinner 7:00-Lecture</p>	<p>North Land Day 2 8:00- Breakfast 9:00- Depart Forfar 10:30- Arrive at Money Point and go tide pooling Noon- Lunch at Regatta beach 1:00-Visit Morgan's Bluff and Cave 3:30-Visit Charlie's Blue hole 5:00-Return to Forfar 6:00- Dinner 7:00-Lecture</p>
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Sites by Location: SOUTH LAND

Typical south land days include three or four sites. Half days can include two sites.

Church's Blue Hole

Travel Time: 90 minutes, combined with Fresh Creek

Site Time: 1 hour

Subjects: Geology, Birds, Botany

Point of Interest:

- The largest blue hole on the island, Church's is 440ft across. There is an exhilarating 15ft jump into the water and a pavilion for relaxing.
- As part of Blue Hole National Park, Church's is well kept up by the Bahamas National Trust so there are plenty of nature trails and birding.

Maidenhair Coppice

Travel Time: 25 minutes, combined with south trip

Site Time: 1 hour

Subjects: Botany, Geology

Points of Interest:

- Maidenhair was once a cultivated area and has since grown into a beautiful place for a leisurely hike. Named for the maidenhair ferns that grow there, the trail is a loop that winds its way through an incredible diversity of plants and banana holes, as well as, a small freshwater pond.

Cousteau's Blue Hole

Travel Time: 60 minutes, combined with Maidenhair

Site Time: 1 hour

Subjects: Geology

Points of Interest:

- Back along the logging roads is one of the deepest blue holes on the island. The algae mats and rock formations make for an eerie snorkel. Jacques Cousteau is reported to have lost a video camera in the depths of this hole. (350 feet deep)

Rainbow Blue Hole

Travel Time: 25 minutes driving and a 20 minute walk from road

Site Time: 1 hour

Subjects: Botany, Geology

Points of Interest:

- The hike back passes through coppice and scrubland and ends at a beautiful inland blue hole. Little is known about it, including the depth, which is estimated to be 150 feet. Mosquito fish will come nibble on your toes and there are caverns to explore with a mask and snorkel.

Hub Cap Blue Hole

Travel Time: 30 minutes driving and a 15-minute walk from road

Site Time: 1/2 hour

Subjects: Geology

Points of Interest:

- This hole is of interest to those studying blue holes or the life in and around blue holes. It is more than halfway filled in and supports a large population of mosquito fish and pupfish. It has two neighboring holes, which are completely filled in. (Depth uncertain)

Fresh Creek

Travel Time: 35-45 minutes

Site Time: 2 hours

Subjects: History and Culture

Points of Interest:

- Just south of Fresh Creek is the Androsia Batik Factory and store. Established in the late 1960's, its fabrics are now distributed worldwide. Take a tour to see the process of fabric decorating, batik some clothes, or go shopping at their factory store.
- Lighthouse Club and Marina is a good place to snorkel the creek, see passing boat traffic, and see some relics of Andros' pirate history.

Somerset Beach

Travel Time: 60 minutes, combined with Fresh Creek

Site Time: 1-2 hours

Subjects: Invertebrates, Fish, Coral

Point of Interest:

- This beautiful white sand beach stretches for several miles. Not only is it one of our favorite lunch spots, there is a red mangrove swamp, tidal flats, and a driftwood forest. Excellent shelling, birding, and snorkel the hard-to-find offshore blue hole.

South Land Day

8:00- Breakfast

9:00- Depart Forfar

10:00- Arrive Fresh Creek

Noon- Lunch at Somerset Beach

1:00- Depart for Church's Blue Hole

4:00-Leave for Forfar

5:00-Return to Forfar

6:00- Dinner

7:00-Lecture

Sites by Location: AROUND FORFAR

Stafford Creek

Travel Time: the creek is 5 minutes, walking

Subjects: Fish, Botany

Points of Interest:

- Start at the Stafford Creek Bridge and snorkel the mangroves all the way back to Forfar. At night, you can see tarpon and sharks swim under the bridge.
- Check out Archie's Blue Hole, a small blue hole just north of the creek and east of the road (18 feet deep).

Blanket Sound/ Big Pond

Travel Time: 5 min walk to Big Pond (0.3 mi), 5 min drive to Blanket Sound (1.1 mi)

Points of Interest:

- Mt. Hope Baptist Church holds service Sundays at 11:00 a.m. (Blanket Sound)
- Highway Pentecostal Church holds service Sundays at 11:00 a.m. (Big Pond)
- A walk across sand flats leads you through a mangrove forest to the former Blanket Sound School and old Forfar campsite. Great for birding and shelling.
- Merlie's Straw Shop sells meals, ice cream cones, candies and souvenirs.
- Across the street from Merlie's is Annie's, where she sells straw work, as well as, other crafts.

Sites by Location: CENTRAL SEA

Typical central boat days include Geology, snorkeling, and lunch on Pigeon Cay and one or two other sites. Half days will include one or two sites.

Pigeon Cay

Travel Time: 30 minutes

Site Time: 4 hours

- Pigeon Cay has a nice grass bed to practice with gear and then move on to a fringing reef that circles the island. Pigeon is home to many species of invertebrates, corals, and schools of fish.
- Between May and July, least terns nest on the east side of Pigeon and in the freshwater pond in the center of the islands are herons, rails, and other waders.
- The geology walk around Pigeon is a Forfar classic as the geology of the cay it is a microcosm of Andros. Many of the processes that happen on a geologic timescale happen much more quickly on Pigeon so these processes become more understandable to students.

Calabash Cay

Travel Time: 15-40 minutes, depending on the tide

Site Time: 1-2 hours

- Like Pigeon Cay, Calabash is a microcosm of Andros. There is excellent shelling, snorkeling in the mangroves and along the intertidal area, and birding over the island. People used to live on Calabash, and while the flora has taken over, the old stonewall dividing their properties still stands.

Dave's Patch Reef

Travel Time: 15-40 minutes, depending on the tide

Site Time: 1 hour

- A patch reef in the front of Calabash Cay with huge populations of fish and soft corals.

Blue Hole Cay Blue Hole

Travel Time: 15-40 minutes, depending on the tide

Site Time: 1 hour

- This is popular site for local spear fishermen for its schools of snapper and hogfish, and in the winter the surrounding sea grass beds are filled with spotted sea hares. This is a shallow snorkel with an easily disturbed bottom. It can also be accessed via foot from Forfar at low tide.

Central Boat Day	
8:00- Breakfast	1:00- Snorkel Dave's Patch Reef and
9:00- Depart Forfar	Blue Hole Cay Blue Hole
9:30- Arrive at Pigeon Cay for geology and snorkeling	5:00-Return to Forfar
Noon- Lunch at Pigeon Cay	6:00- Dinner
	7:00-Lecture

Sites by Location: NORTH SEA

Typical north boat days include three sites and lunch on Saddleback Cay. Half days will include one or two sites.

Rat Cay Blue Hole

Travel Time: 35-50 minutes, depending on tide

Site Time: 1-2 hours

- This is our favorite oceanic blue hole with really incredible fish and corals. The hole is surrounded by finger coral that grow up to the low tide line providing shelter for invertebrates like lettuce leaf nudibranchs and lobster.
- This site requires a bit of snorkeling skill to keep from damaging the site.

Turtle Reef

Travel Time: 30-45 minutes, depending on the tide

Site Time: 2-3 hours

- Another site on the barrier, Turtle has massive coral heads and while most are alive, there are relics of huge coral mounds that have been recolonized by algae and soft corals.

Three Sisters

Travel Time: 30-45 minutes, depending on the tide

Site Time: 1 hour

- A patch reef in the lagoon with a huge population of fish and soft corals.

Saddleback Cay

Travel Time: 30-45 minutes, depending on the tide

Site Time: 2-3 hours

- Saddleback has several different ecosystems including grass beds, mangroves, sand flats, and rocky intertidal areas. There is wading for sand dollars on the west side and snorkeling on the east.
- A typical lunch stop for north boat days, but an entire afternoon could be spent here too.

North Pass

Travel Time: 40-50 minutes, depending on tide

Site Time: 1 hour

- One of the passes through the barrier reef, North pass has an amazing array of corals and a lot of fish, shark and ray traffic.

North Boat Day

8:00- Breakfast
9:00- Depart Forfar
9:45- Arrive at Rat Cay Blue Hole
11:00 Arrive at Three Sisters Patch Reef
Noon- Lunch at Saddleback Cay
1:00- Snorkel around Saddleback
2:30-Snorkel Turtle Reef
5:00-Return to Forfar
6:00- Dinner
7:00-Lecture

Sites by Location: SOUTH SEA

Typical south boat days include three sites and lunch onshore at two-mile beach. Half days will include one or two sites.

Staniard Reef

Travel Time: 30 minutes

Site Time: 1 hour

- As part of the barrier reef, this site has a high diversity of coral; many of them quiet old, and even a rare hybrid species, fused-staghorn coral. This is also one of the coral collection sites for our coral propagation project.

Staniard Wreck

Travel Time: 45 minutes

Site time: 1 hour

- A rum-runner that crashed into the barrier drifted into the lagoon just off the coast from Staniard Creek is a home to schools of juvenile fish and is being colonized by corals and algae. Swim around the wheelhouse, engine block, and other debris to see first-hand how reefs are formed.

Tongue of the Ocean

Travel time: 45 minutes

Site time: 30 minutes

- A short way past the barrier the ocean depth drops from 30ft to as deep as 6000ft. It is fascinating to drop conch shells into the depths and see how long you can watch them fall, given the water clarity it is usually for quite some time.

South Pass

Travel Time: 45 minutes

Site Time: 1 hour

- This is an outer reef snorkel with a variety of environments and high diversity. May have slightly higher wave action than some of the more protected inner-reef snorkels. Like North Pass, there is plenty of fish traffic.

South Boat Day

8:00- Breakfast
9:00- Depart Forfar
9:45- Arrive at Staniard Reef
Noon- Lunch at Two Mile Beach
1:00- Snorkel Staniard wreck
3:30- Stop at Tongue of The Ocean
5:00-Return to Forfar
6:00- Dinner
7:00-Lecture