

# travel

## Cayman Life, Ritz-Carlton Style

“Seven Wonders” elevates island travel and resort living at The Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman to a luxurious new level, even by the hotelier’s impressive standards.

**A**s the descent into Owen Roberts International Airport in Grand Cayman (the island’s sole landing strip) begins, I eagerly anticipate the days ahead. Being my third trip to the island, I should know exactly what to expect—friendly locals, fabulous dining, stellar shopping and, of course, Seven Mile Beach. But what would the new lucky seven bring? One thing for sure: Five-star accommodations by way of The Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman, the most talked about resort on the island. Prior to Hurricane Ivan hitting the island in 2004, I previewed the property when it was no more than metal and concrete, so, needless to say, I was excited to experience the resort, its residences and all associated wonders—starting with the island itself.

Grand Cayman has garnered a reputation as being one of the safest, most affluent (it is a profitable off-shore banking center) and hospitable islands in the Caribbean. One of an island trio, it is the largest and most populated, occupying about 76 square miles, while its sister islands—Cayman Brac and Little Cayman—are significantly smaller in size. Originally named “Tortugas” for the vast number of the island’s native sea turtles, Grand Cayman is still a tortoise-friendly oasis. Many swim and roam freely or live in protection at Cayman Turtle Farm. With spectacular natural beauty, recreation options and sites to see, it is easy to understand why Grand Cayman is one of the Caribbean’s most visited islands.

Surrounding the Caymans is an amazing coral reef system, which creates not only a colorful barrier, but also perfect conditions for sport fishing, diving and snorkeling. Continually named among the top five destinations in the world for the latter two activities, Grand Cayman boasts 250 different dive sites with a myriad of shallow reefs, majestic walls, wreckage, unrivaled ecosystems, aquaculture and underwater views only found in its tropical paradise.

Not too far off the coast of Grand Cayman is one of the island’s most famous shallow dive sites: Stingray City. Known as the “world’s best 12-foot dive,” more than two dozen tame stingrays swim through the water, allowing visitors to stroke their silky skin. While some might find this an iffy proposition, once the initial squeamishness passes, it is one of the most peaceful encounters a person will ever have. A catamaran trip is a great way to explore this popular spot. If you’re not up for scuba diving but want a bit



The Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman is ideally situated on beautiful Seven Mile Beach.



of a challenge, consider trying SASY (Supplied Air Snorkeling for Youth) and SASA (Supplied Air Snorkeling for Adults). Invented by Wayne Hasson, Cayman resident and owner of the Cayman Aggressor (a live-aboard boat), the apparatus looks like the real deal, consisting of a life vest, small scuba tank and regulator. I have not tried it personally, but it looks fun. Surface skimmers should check out “The Aquarium.” Popular and appropriately named, it is an amazing place to snorkel.

Another of Grand Cayman’s many draws is Seven Mile Beach—famous as the backdrop for the shoreline seduction scene in *The Firm* starring Tom Cruise. This long stretch of white sand is one of the most beautiful beaches in the entire Caribbean. It is the

perfect place to enjoy an early-morning power walk or a romantic late-night stroll without interruption.

But the Cayman Islands offer much more than the gentle splendors of sun, sand, surf, scuba and snorkel. Some of the more popular land activities include cricket, horseback riding, golfing and spending. George Town, the capital city of Grand Cayman, boasts fine Caribbean cuisine and high-end retail. Whether it is scavenging for coveted fine diamonds or a new Omega watch, the island’s duty-free shopping puts the urge in splurge.

Once you’ve fallen in love with Grand Cayman, consider a permanent stay. A Ritz-Carlton Residence makes it a tempting offer. Indeed, little expense was spared on building efforts, with

travel



A diver's dream, Grand Cayman boasts 250 dive sites.



At Stringray City, more than two dozen tame stingrays swim through the water, allowing visitors to stroke their silky skin.



Seven Mile Beach is one of the best beaches in the Caribbean. It is ideal for travelers looking for a nice beach to walk or run on.

an impressive \$500 million funneled into resort and residence construction. Situated on the most sought-after spot on Seven Mile Beach, owners of these prime oceanfront homes enjoy breathtaking views of perfectly hued waters, miles of shoreline, carefree days and evenings, an enviable amenity package, and the at-a-moment's-notice service for which the Ritz is rightfully famous.

The Residences at The Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman, range from 2,400 square feet to 20,000 square feet. Floor plans are available with two-to-six bedrooms, all very well appointed with luxury

finishes, spacious rooms, a professionally-equipped chef's kitchen and at least two private terraces with fantastic views of the Caribbean Sea. Price tags start at a cool \$2.9 million, topping off at \$44 million. A limited number of residences are still available for purchase.

In addition to claiming a top-quality property, the benefits of ownership essentially are endless: 24-hour room, concierge and valet service; a fully equipped business center; dial-a-chef and housekeeping twice daily; private elevators; and a stocked refrigerator/pantry full of guest favorites prior to their

arrival home. Dread unpacking? Not to worry, since they do that, too—exactly as you like it.

Those who appreciate total carefree living (and they wouldn't be in Grand Cayman if they didn't) should opt for "Endless Service," a program that allows owners to enjoy their residence without the hassles associated with home ownership. The program's benefits include themed design packages. Interior implementation is marshaled by a team that takes care of every detail, from lighting fixtures and appliances to china, crystal and glassware with selections from only the best, even down to the sheets. Everything is ordered, installed and perfected before the lucky owners walk through the door. (Now that's a housewarming!) But the program extends beyond the home. With the ability to ask for pretty much anything, knowing it will be delivered promptly with a smile, residence owners truly can enjoy and experience island paradise, which, at the Ritz, also includes access to luxurious 7-series BMWs, a fleet of Intrepid 36-foot motor yachts complete with captain and crew, and an on-call chef.

Card-carrying members of the residence ownership club may take full advantage of all resort amenities—an impressive list, which includes several dining venues with menus created by renowned

### THE RITZ-CARLTON, GRAND CAYMAN

The Resort  
[ritzcarlton.com](http://ritzcarlton.com)

The Residences  
[residences-cayman.com](http://residences-cayman.com)



Inside a luxurious Ritz-Carlton Residence living room.



Blue Tip at The Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman is a nine-hole golf course designed by Greg Norman.

Chef Eric Ripert (a seafood specialist); Silver Rain, the 20,000-square-foot Swiss-inspired La Prairie Spa; a Nick Bollettieri tennis center with clay and grass courts; and the Greg Norman-designed Blue Tip golf course. Those with little ones in tow will appreciate the “Ambassadors of the Environment” program. Developed by Jean-Michel Cousteau and the Ocean Futures Society, this unique offering enables children to explore the Caribbean in a monitored environment that is entertaining, educational and eco-safe. Also available on-site is a trend-setting beauty salon, state-of-the-art fitness center, oceanfront free-form pool with private cabanas, lagoon side pool, shopping and the island’s largest indoor/outdoor special events area.

If owning a residence is not a possibility, not to worry. Rooms at the resort aren’t exactly shabby seconds by any stretch of the imagination. With a true sense of place, the resort captures the authentic laid-back island vibe. While refined, it is surprisingly unpretentious. The resort’s complementary color tapestry—shades of aquamarine, yellow and tangerine—integrates the natural surroundings of Grand Cayman into the hotel, weaving a Caribbean aesthetic throughout.

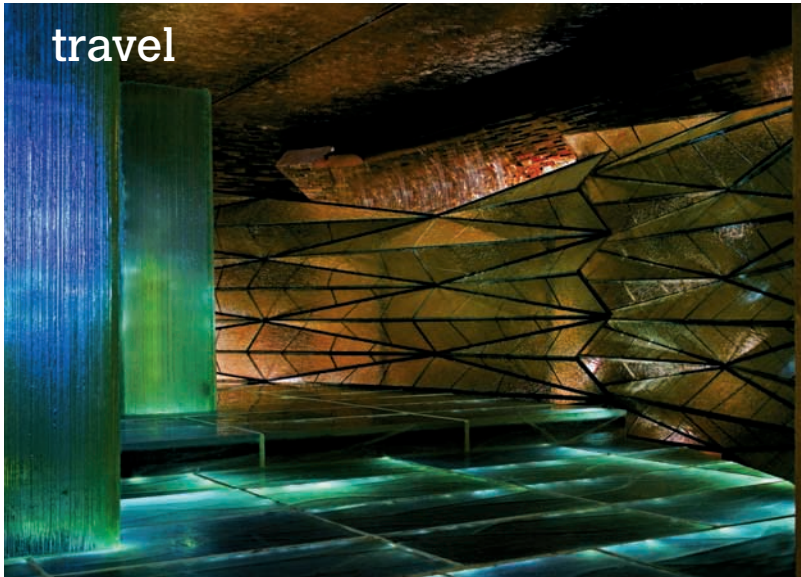
A large, open-air lobby welcomes guests. Spacious guest rooms are designed with relaxation in mind. We’re talking private balconies, quality furnishings and lush fabrics. King rooms are equipped with a loveseat that converts to a single bed; double rooms offer two queens. Amenity-laden bathrooms are signature Ritz with black and white marbling and a welcome separation between bathtub and shower. High-speed Internet access is available for those who need it; those who don’t will find respite on their room’s private balcony, a great place to gaze at the water and relax. In the evening, guests drift to sleep in possibly the most comfortable bed of all time—dressed in signa-



Grand Cayman’s premier restaurant, Blue by Chef Eric Ripert, inside The Ritz-Carlton.



Inside a guest room at The Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman with a fantastic view.



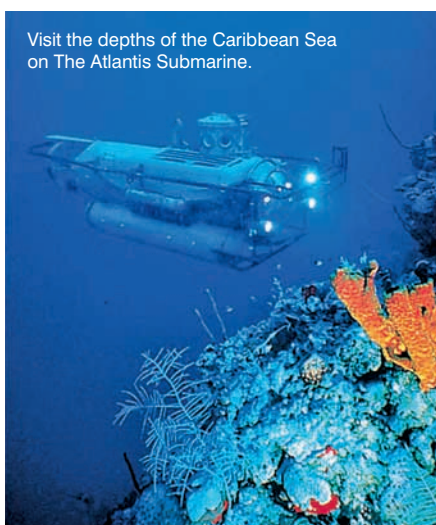
## MUST DO

### AT THE RITZ-CARLTON

- Dine at venues created by renowned Chef Eric Ripert.
- Indulge in total spa opulence at Silver Rain, a 20,000-square-foot La Prairie Spa.
- Get expert instruction at the Nick Bollettieri tennis center.
- Grab your clubs, and tee off at the nine-hole golf course designed by Greg Norman.
- Assist little ones in appreciating nature with the “Ambassadors of the Environment” program, developed by Jean-Michel Cousteau and the Ocean Futures Society.
- Work out in the state-of-the-art fitness center.
- Swim in the oceanfront free-form pool.
- Lounge in one of the private pool cabanas.

### OUT AND ABOUT

- Stingray City excursion**  
Sail on a Red Sail Sports catamaran to swim with the stingrays and snorkel.
- Thriller Cayman**  
Tour Seven Mile Beach at 50 mph on this jumbo speedboat.
- Shopping in George Town**  
Duty-free at its best. Here, you’ll find an array of brand name items in fine jewelry and watches, china, crystal, perfumes, and more, all at great deals.
- Horseback riding on the beach**  
Hit the beaches on professionally trained horses. What a thrill!



Visit the depths of the Caribbean Sea on The Atlantis Submarine.

#### The Atlantis Submarine

Want to see down deep, but scuba’s not your thing? See the Cayman Islands from a diver’s point of view in this spacious submarine. [atlantisadventures.com](http://atlantisadventures.com)

#### Scuba Diving in reefs

Take a deep-sea adventure in the “birthplace” of scuba diving.

#### Back to the beginning

Check out the island’s native inhabitants at the Cayman Turtle Farm.

#### Rum, anyone?

A visit to Rum Point should not be missed. Enjoy a snack or a full meal while beachside, or simply take a dip in the crystal-clear sea. Regular ferry services operate back and forth daily, departing from Hyatt’s dock.

#### Explore

The 65-acre Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park and National Trust’s Mastic Trail, Cayman Islands National Museum in George Town and the Pedro St. James Historic Site in Savannah.

For more details on these Cayman adventures and others, visit [caymanislands.ky](http://caymanislands.ky).

## INSIDE SILVER RAIN, A LA PRAIRIE SPA

A most luxurious spa experience is found inside the Swiss-inspired Silver Rain, a La Prairie Spa. “Celebrating the energies of water in all its form,” to the left is the modern entrance way to spa. To the right is the unisex Silver Haven Lounge where guests chill out pre- or post-treatment. Silver Rain truly is a spa experience like no other. La Prairie, just like the Ritz-Carlton brand, has garnered a reputation for using the absolute best in its products and services. A myriad of unique treatments are offered, including the Silver Rain, Caviar Firming and Pure Gold Radiance facials; Tropical Rain, Stone Therapy and Aromatherapy massages; Silver Rain, Sea of Tranquility and Mineral Rain body treatments; just for men treatments; bath treatments; nail care and more. As you walk throughout the spa, exclusive Silver Rain fragrances stimulate the senses, adding to the overall mind, body and spirit experience.

ture linens, no less. Talk about sweet dreams! For a step up in accommodations (it is The Ritz-Carlton, remember), reserve one of five style suites. Book on the club level, and receive five food preparations a day plus beverages! No notch is higher, however, than “The Reserve” level, consisting of 24 one-, two- or three-bedroom residential suites with chef’s kitchens and concierge service.

Whether you choose to own a Ritz-Carlton Residence or simply enjoy taking up residence at a five-star resort, hop a Delta Airlines non-stop flight from Atlanta to Grand Cayman, where an island escape is just a reservation away. —BETH WEITZMAN