

The Bahamas **The Abacos**

Like A Boomerang, These Quaint Islands Boast Some Of The Prettiest Waters In The World

II. These fertile reefs present optimum potential for viewing kingfish, amberjack, rays and the occasional wahoo and sailfish.

A near-continuous reef system follows the outside of Grand, Double

Breasted, Stranger's, Carter's, Fish, Pensacola and Powell's Cays. Because there are no immediate dive operators around many of these cays, most sites remain unnamed and loaded with huge lobster. On Green Turtle Cay at the Green Turtle Club, take a dive with Brendal Stevens, owner of Brendal's Dive Shop and enjoy a bit of island life. "One of the things we do is a combination of diving and snorkeling with a picnic lunch of lob-

Divers have a rare opportunity to swim with a school of tarpon ...

ster or fish on one of the beaches," Stevens said. Most dive sites are a 15- to 30-minute ride from shore.

Divers have the rare opportunity to swim with a school of tarpon off Manjack Cay (also called Nun Jack) in 50 feet of water. This coral promontory, called Tarpon Caves, also attracts spotted eagle rays. Just south of here, lies the wreck of the *Bonita* in 55 feet of water. This English transport ship, once used during operations in WW II, has tame grouper and moray eels. Farther south, off Chub Rocks, lies the *San Jacinto*. This

wreck, which sank in 1865, has the distinction of being the first U.S. commercial steamship.

Great Guana Cay has massive stands of elkhorn coral, extending within a few feet of the surface. Near Scotland Cay, in a mere eight feet of water, several caves and boiling holes penetrate the island's porous rock.

To see some old cannons, dive the federal warship USS *Adirondack*, east of Man-O-War Cay. The ship was used during the American Civil War, and its cannons lie scattered among the coral.

Fowl Cay is a favorite diving spot. There are many excellent sites in the area, but Juliette Swain, who works at Dive Abaco in Marsh Harbour, said Grouper Alley is the most popular. "There's a huge, tame grouper and people can go up and pet it."

Enormous coral heads, known as The Towers, mound up from a depth of 25 feet off Fowl Cay. The coral is laced with crevices and passageways. Not far from here, large grouper and snapper live at Maxi Cave. Adjacent to the cave are two steam locomotive trains. The trains were lost from a barge at the turn of the century.

There are a number of inland blue holes around Treasure Cay. One, Devil's Hole, is about 80 feet across, and encircled in coral. This geologic phenomenon, spawned from lower sea levels during past ice ages, drops over 200 feet.