

# CARIBBEAN

TRAVEL & LIFE

JANUARY 2002

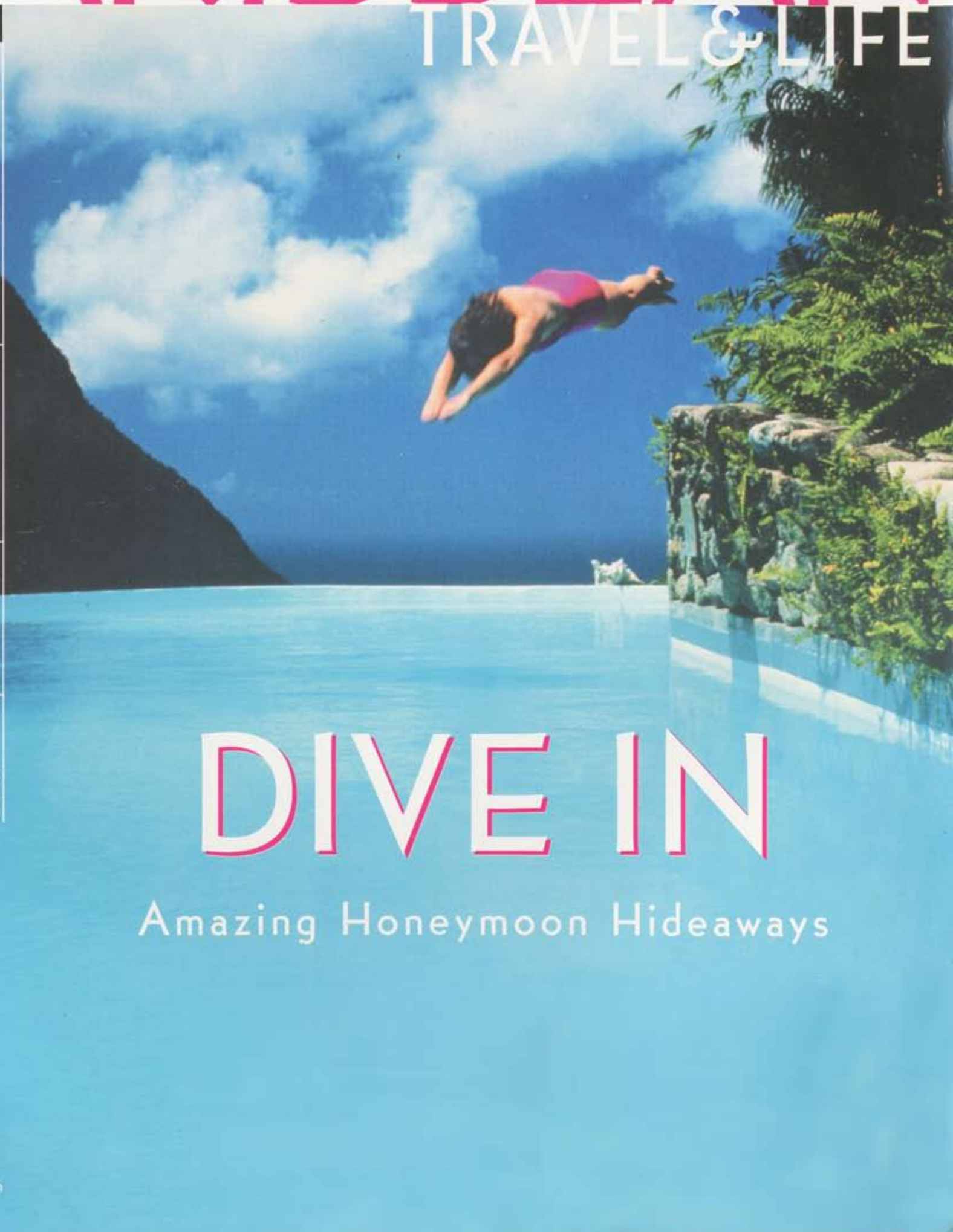
# 4

GREAT PLACES TO  
**WORK & PLAY**

THE  
**D.R.'s**  
ADVENTURE  
COAST

**GRAND**  
**BAHAMA**  
GRAND AGAIN

**FRENCH**  
**DRESSING**  
SHOP ST. MARTIN



# DIVE IN

Amazing Honeymoon Hideaways

The Abacos served as a safe  harbor for British loyalists during the American Revolution.

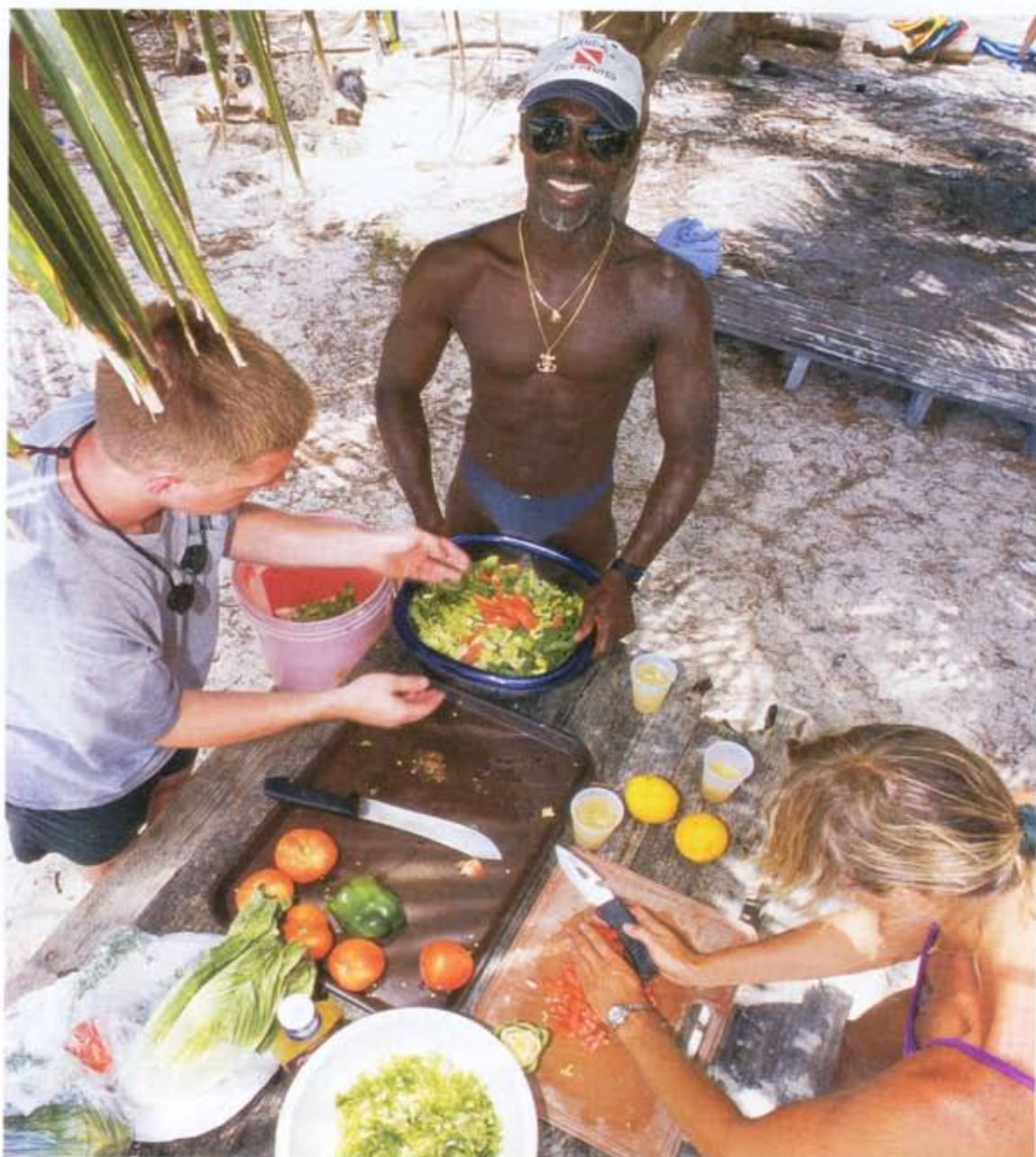
# DAY TRIP

## DIVE DOWN AND DIG IN

**D**awdling behind the other divers in my group, I turn around to see a curious black-tip shark following us. I tug at the arm of my dive buddy and point, but the beautiful little shark has already turned tail.

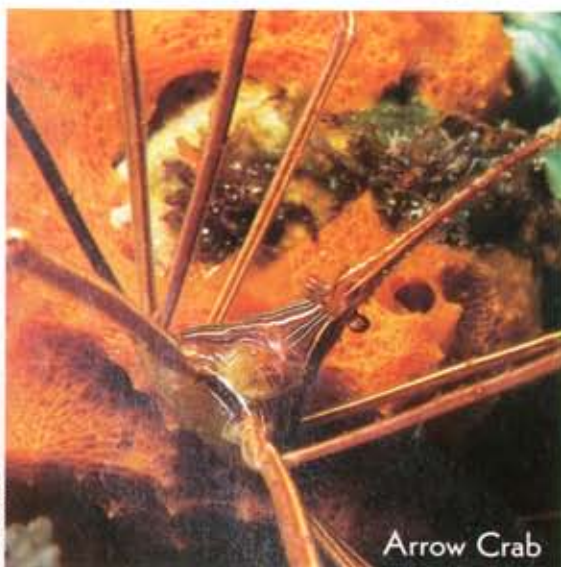
About two dozen of us are on the scuba and snorkel picnic offered by Brendal's Dive Center on Green Turtle Cay in the Abacos. We're split into two groups — divers and snorkelers — and take separate boats to the area known as Coral Caverns. The snorkelers jump in and fin along the shallow part of the reef, while we divers submerge and follow Stevens, a Bahamian who has lived on Green Turtle for about 30 years.

Underwater, we're immediately approached by several Nassau groupers that have come to know Stevens — and his handfuls of food. The groupers swim so close they brush against us. Nurse sharks are the next to arrive, and Stevens pulls them to him, inviting us to feel their sandpapery skin. After snack time, we cruise slowly behind Stevens. He finds an arrow crab, a small alien-looking creature with spindly legs, and passes the crab from diver to diver, giving everyone a chance to hold it. On the rest of the dive we see everything from parrotfish to



HEATHER LEE

Après dive, Abacos style: Brendal Stevens oversees the picnic preparations.



BOB FRIEL

Arrow Crab

tarpon, and even a green moray eel.

Back on the boat, Stevens cranks up the music and breaks out gallon jugs of rum punch. We head for Man Jack Cay, a small uninhabited island, where we meet up with the snorkelers for a Bahamian picnic. Stevens whips up some conch salad with some help from a few volunteers, then prepares fresh snapper, tossing it with tomato, green peppers and Italian dressing and cooking it over an open fire. Green salad and Bahama bread round out the menu, and after the hearty

lunch and some more punch, we move down to the beach. Kids toss a Frisbee, and the more ambitious in the group try windsurfing, but we're perfectly content to hang out in the 3-foot-deep water — just deep enough to keep cool under the hot sun and just shallow enough that we don't have to struggle to keep our drinks above water. — Jessica Chapman

*The dive and snorkel picnic with Brendal's (242-365-4411) costs \$75 for snorkelers and \$90 for a one-tank dive, including rum punch and food.*



GREG JOHNSTON

### WILD WONDERS

You haven't seen all of the Abacos' natural attractions until you've done a day trip with Brendal Stevens. Sure he'll guide snorkelers and divers to see the turtles, stingrays and sharks that call the waters near Green Turtle Cay home, but it's Brendal himself, with his Cheshire grin and his official daytime uniform — a stop-sign-red banana hammock — that puts the "wild" in wildlife.

One of the most popular trips Brendal's Dive Center offers is a dive and snorkel picnic. Certified divers set out aboard one boat while snorkelers follow in another. Both motor out to Coral Caverns, a shallow reef with great visibility and rich marine life, including black-tip and nurse sharks, Nassau grouper, arrow crabs and moray eels. Each group gets a couple of hours to explore the overhangs and colorful nooks and crannies.

Back on board, Stevens breaks out jugs of homemade rum punch, cranks up the reggae and steers to nearby Man Jack Cay. This uninhabited island looks like a place you might find Gilligan and the gang — the perfect location for a beach barbecue. Stevens and his staff serve up grilled snapper, fresh conch salad and Bahama bread, along with yet more tasty punch. There's plenty of time for beach bumming, rum slurping and romantic walks on the beach. Just beware of the wildlife.

— Jessica Chapman



# ABACOS

B A H A M A S

