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The Bahamas Investor

Rum Cay: the "Sleeping beauty"

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Rum Cay "is a very innocent island," says John Mittens, chairman of Montana Holdings Ltd, in his international real estate and investment firm's Nassau offices. "I just found Rum Cay absolutely charming ... I like the geographic location, I like the people, I like the weather and I like the opportunity."

Game fish such as marlin, Wahoo, Sailfish and Mahi Mahi are found off the shores of Rum Cay. Bonefish enthusiasts can also try their hand by casting in salt pond flats on the island.

The island's coast features beautiful beaches, secluded coves and 75-foot cliffs. The interior includes rolling hills, salt lakes, scrub brush and native trees and the ruins of former settlements. Twenty-seven bird species have been recorded on Rum Cay, including herons and songbirds.

The island also has "incredible diving conditions," says Mittens, including a 2,000-foot coral wall just off the beach and 60-foot walls of coral rising to just below the surface.

Scuba enthusiasts can also explore remains of the 101-gun man-of-war HMS Conqueror, Britain's first sail- and propeller-driven warship. It sank in 1861, just off Summer Point. The warship, sometimes called "the underwater museum of The Bahamas," is owned by the Bahamian government and cannot be plundered.

History and beauty

"There's that je ne sais quoi, that ambience, that makes a place special. And we believe Rum Cay is very special ... we're trying to preserve that special effect," says Mittens.

Cave carvings by Arawak Indians, pirates, sunken warships, plus the ruins of Loyalist plantations and slave quarters are all in evidence on Rum Cay today.

First called Mamana by the Lucayan Indians, the island was later named Santa Maria de la Concepción by Christopher Columbus. It is thought that Columbus made Rum Cay his second stop in the New World after landing on nearby San Salvador in 1492. Local lore says Rum Cay got its modern name from a shipwrecked cargo of rum.

Falling in love with an island

"The lifestyle here I enjoy immensely," he says. "I've taken up boating, sea fishing, things like that. It seems that Rum Cay is gradually opening back up to the rest of the world. "Anyone who wants to work on Rum Cay has got a job," adds Mittens.

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