

# In Love With Long Island

*by Fay Knowles*

Many of Long Island's loyal sons and daughters, who move to Nassau or overseas for economic or educational purposes, long to return to the 70-odd miles of old churches, plantation



ruins, goats, sheep, caves, boat builders, fishermen, white-white beaches and the brightest blue crystal-clear waters.

Visitors from around the world are also captivated by this hilly island of mangos, pigeon peas, cassava, yams, guavas, sapodillas, corn, banana and citrus groves, crabs, wild tamarind and lignum vitae, the national tree of the Bahamas. Most, once they experience Long Island's charm and its residents' warm friendly welcome, yearn to return.

It's said that Christopher Columbus, making his third landfall there in 1492, commented Long Island was the most beautiful island he had ever seen. He called it "Fernandina" to honour the King of Spain.



Columbus also named Cape Santa Maria in north Long Island after a ship in his fleet. The Cape's dazzling white beach is numbered in the world's top ten. Situated on the beach is the Cape Santa Maria Beach Resort, one of two premier hotels located in this part of Long Island.

Some of the facilities offered at the resort are a modern restaurant, bar, fitness center, water sports and “enchanted colonial style villas.”



Later, the British renamed the narrow rambling miles of rolling hills - “Long Island” (the widest parts are four to five miles across, giving hilltop homes beautiful vistas from sea to sea).

The site of an Indian village is located near the hospitable eco-friendly resort of Stella Maris (“Star of the Sea”), a few miles south of Cape Santa Maria.

A world class scuba diving resort, Stella Maris was the first to offer a “Dive with the Sharks” programme (Dean’s, Long Island, has a “blue hole” reputed to be the deepest in the world). Bone and big game fishing are also available at Stella Maris.....



..... or you can just snorkel, swim, walk, bicycle and soak up the sun at your leisure.



Facilities at Stella Maris include the Clubhouse with dining room, bar and lounge. Tennis courts, three swimming pools and delightful beaches offer additional recreation.

The Stella Maris Marina & Yacht Club provides a variety of marine services and their Resort Air Service has two single engine aircrafts available for self-rental by licensed pilots. The Air Service also runs seat-rated as well as charter flights between the islands.

Accommodation consists of rooms, apartments, bungalows and villas.





It's just a forty minute flight to Stella Maris from Nassau by the "National Flag Carrier", Bahamasair. Florida is also only a short hop away. Visitors can clear Bahamas Immigration and Customs at Stella Maris International Airport if arriving from Florida or by private aircraft. Those in transit through Nassau International Airport clear Bahamas Immigration and Customs there.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century Adderley Plantation ruins are located near Stella Maris. Other plantation sites can be seen at Dunmore's or Gray's. After the American Revolutionary War ended, loyalists and their slaves settled throughout the Bahama islands. Slavery in the Bahamas was finally abolished in 1838 and descendants of loyalists and slaves remain on Long Island, living in harmony with people of many other nationalities who continue to settle there and call the island their home.

Tour the island in a rental car or scooter, bask in the seclusion of one of Long Island's many sandy beaches or visit large cave systems with Indian drawings, stalactites or stalagmites.



Along the way, you will probably see quite a number of sheep (the sheep is Long Island's symbol on its coat of arms). You can also swim to Guana Cay and visit its friendly inhabitants, the curly-tailed Iguanas.

It's easy and stress-free, driving along the well-maintained Queen's Highway, which runs almost the entire length of the island.

Long Island's temperatures range from mid-seventies to eighties in the winter and eighties to nineties in summer to fall. Straddling the Tropic of Cancer, pleasant Atlantic breezes are kind to this tropical isle year round. In the old days, kitchens were built separately from the main house, and open windows and doors throughout chased the heat, sending smoke from wood stoves spiraling upwards to the dazzling blue skies.

The popular song “Long Island Breeze”, composed and sung by Bahamian entertainer Pat Rahming with words by Long-Island-born schoolteacher Jerome Cartwright, epitomizes the very essence of Long Island.



The song is heard on nearly every radio around Regatta time. The Long Island Regatta, with its majestic sailing sloops, has been held at Salt Pond every year in May or June since 1967 and people flock to it from throughout the country and overseas for the happy event. The renowned Knowles boat builders at Mangrove Bush produce the majority of racing sloops in the Bahamas.

Deep-water harbours on Long Island, where mail boats enter with their heavy cargoes, are at Salt Pond, Simms and Clarence Town. Simms and Salt Pond need high tides.



Although not the largest settlement, Clarence Town in the south is the capital of Long Island. Its prominent features are the impressive two hilltop churches built by Father Jerome. Father Jerome, the former John Hawes, built St. Paul's when he followed the Anglican faith.



He built St. Peter's when he converted to Catholicism. Father Jerome also established St. Augustine's Monastery in Nassau. He then moved to Cat Island where he died in 1956.

Another church of interest is St. Mary's at The Bight, thought to have been Spanish and built in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. It's said to be the oldest church on Long Island. Dr. Gail Saunders, Director of Archives, well known historian and author of several great books of note on the Bahamas, says there are plans to add St. Mary's to a register of historic places. One of The Bight's residents claims they are anxious to restore the place where many of their ancestors were christened, married or buried.



St. John's Church at Buckley's, Deadman's Cay, is fortunate in that its members and supporters united to rebuild, modernize and expand the 116 year old church.

The entrepreneurial nature of Long Islanders is evident. Guesthouses and businesses are springing up throughout the island, sponging is making a comeback and the fishing industry is thriving.

Perhaps that is the secret behind Long Island's charisma and success – the faithfulness, hard work and dedication of its people, along with the natural, peaceful beauty of its rolling hills, sparkling white beaches and shimmering blue waters.



Also, there are not many places in the world that offer the tranquility that Long Island enjoys.

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**the End**