

Beautiful by nature

The Turks and Caicos Islands have a well-deserved reputation as an opulent holiday destination, but there's a wealth of untapped investment opportunities to be seized there too, according to James Bursey, CEO of Invest Turks and Caicos

With swathes of white sand beaches, balmy temperatures all year round and an abundance of stunning coral reefs, it's no surprise that the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) is a highly sought-after holiday destination. The largest island, Providenciales, boasts superlative diving opportunities, the serene Chalk Sound National Park and one of the world's best beaches, Grace Bay, which stretches for 12 miles along the island's southern coast.

TCI has all of the makings of an ultra-secluded, exclusive hideaway, while remaining conveniently located for travellers from the US, Canada, Europe and the Caribbean. It's a quick 75-minute direct flight from Miami – the closest major airport – but the islands also benefit from up to 150 flights per week to other destinations, as well as a seaport connection to the US.

The islands have remained the Caribbean's best-kept secret for years, making them a fantastic choice for vacation investors looking to purchase their own slice of paradise. Moreover, the increased tourist interest of late means that a holiday property can also prove to be a lucrative rental investment, with a steady revenue stream guaranteed for much of the year.

A favourable environment

TCI's open financial system, non-existent income tax and wealth of untapped opportunities make it a natural choice for wise investors. With an S&P sovereign credit rating of BBB+, the island chain has one of the fastest-growing economies in the Caribbean, as its economy continues to expand at around three percent, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit. TCI is a British Overseas Territory, meaning that it has a strong, effective judicial system based on English common law, which guarantees a safe and secure environment for all residents and tourists. Moreover, there is a commitment to maintaining compliance with regulatory standards, including those set by the OECD and IMF. TCI also uses the US dollar as

currency, which provides an additional level of convenience for American visitors.

TCI's strongly pro-business government has recently implemented measures to foster a more inclusive environment for foreign investors, including duty concessions in priority sectors. Exchange controls have been eliminated, along with all direct corporate, personal, capital gains and inheritance taxes. International investors are also welcome to apply for temporary or permanent resident permits if they wish.

For families with young children that are considering investing, TCI benefits from an excellent schooling system, with one student recently awarded the 'Top in the World' accolade for AS-level mathematics by Cambridge Assessment International Education. Aside from the educational opportunities, the quality of life on the island archipelago is second to none, with children able to experience enriching sport and cultural activities on a daily basis. After all, there's no better way to understand the coral reef ecosystem than by exploring it with nothing more than a snorkel, all beneath the brilliant sun.

Once in a lifetime

These favourable financial conditions can benefit not only personal holiday investors, but also institutional investors seeking to capitalise on the rapidly emerging tourist industry – or, better yet, those who have holidayed in TCI for some time and are seeking to take their investment to the next level.

In order for tourism to grow, supportive infrastructure must be in place. Until now, the TCI economy has expanded along with the growth of available finished real estate, including villas, rental apartments and condominiums, which form the backbone of the hospitality industry. In correlation, TCI has also seen a significant increase in the number and quality of restaurants, bars and cafes that are springing up to support the growing number of tourists looking for a unique TCI experience. As



a result, the popularity of managed condominiums, villas and large houses continues to flourish, making real estate and tourism development the islands' most popular industry.

The growth of these industries had previously been limited to the principal islands of Providenciales and Grand Turk. These islands should not be overlooked, as the cruise ships that call at Grand Turk offer commercial opportunities, as does the superb fishing for visiting yachts. The island is also developing a world-class reputation for adventure tourism, attracting kite surfers, sailors and sports fishermen alike. With some of the best dive sites in the world, including a 7,000ft vertical wall a short distance away from shore at Grand Turk, it's no surprise that visitors are travelling across the globe to experience the thrill of snorkelling and diving in TCI's crystal-clear waters.

Untapped gems

The development of burgeoning tourism industries on smaller islands such as South Caicos, Parrot Cay and North Caicos also provides promising opportunities for shrewd investors. As ecotourism rises in popularity, more environmentally conscious visitors are flocking to TCI, thanks to its beautiful, unspoiled landscape. Many of the 40 islands in the TCI archipelago are uninhabited, providing excellent opportu-

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nities for tourists to observe nature at work, as well as to view some of the world's most unique flora and fauna. The islands do not currently have any eco lodges or retreats, but the demand is certainly there. As such, investment in an ecologically conscious, sustainable resort is likely to be extremely successful.

Likewise, some of the world's finest yachts and sports-fishing vessels visit TCI throughout the year. Providenciales boasts several marinas, while other islands have limited provision for these vessels at present. Many marine travellers also seek hotels and villa lodging close to marinas: a hybrid resort-marina development project would therefore be highly sought-after and would prove a lucrative business model. It's certainly a worthy consideration for investors.

Finally, with many global citizens now opting to travel for medical procedures, plenty of opportunity for investment in luxury recuperation facilities exist across TCI. With two hospitals that have space for private patients, and opportunities for cosmetic and other surgical procedures by the islands' best-known clinicians, the medical sector is well accounted for. There are also plenty of options for recovery accommodation.

Economic support

In addition to holiday rentals, the TCI environment is hungry for development funding to sup-

port other projects. It imports large quantities of food, furniture and consumable materials which, due to the distances travelled, tend to be expensive. There are significant opportunities for import substitution, covering a wide range of products across the fields of agriculture, fisheries, food processing and light manufacturing.

The many islands of TCI also offer untapped potential with regards to arable land and bountiful oceans. Demand for local farm produce and fish by the thriving tourism industry continues to increase exponentially. Agricultural industries – including hydroponic farming, food processing and fish farming – have been identified as priority sectors by the TCI Government. The Caicos islands in particular offer fertile soil and an ideal climate for agricultural growth. Furthermore, significant amounts of agricultural land exist on North and Middle Caicos that would support new farms producing crops and livestock.

Opportunities in light manufacturing exist for businesses supplying the tourism and hospitality sectors, both in TCI and the surrounding Caribbean islands. We are now in need of training services for existing businesses, as well as the creation of service businesses in finance, tourism support and IT.

Investments such as these are a fantastic way for vacation investors to reinforce the local resident communities and ensure that TCI remains a serene and sustainable destination for future generations. By channelling funds into the economy, this also helps to support financial development of the TCI, creating a mutually lucrative situation for both investors and permanent residents.

There's even scope for TCI to become a top destination for business gatherings in the future. Due to the islands' convenient location and easy accessibility from US, Canadian and European cities, they are an excellent choice for conventions and company gatherings. TCI currently has limited standalone hotels, but several investors have expressed their interest in this unexploited opportunity. Whichever person is lucky enough to sign the contract for that deal is sure to secure themselves profit for life.

For investors seeking to take advantage of these opportunities, Invest Turks and Caicos is the only agency you need. It will be by your side through every step of the process, providing free and confidential advice, as well as support in liaising with key government departments to ensure the transaction is entirely stress-free. All that's left for investors to do is enjoy the beautiful-by-nature destination that they have helped to safeguard for years to come. ■

40
Number of islands in the TCI archipelago

75 mins
Duration of direct flight from Miami to TCI

150
Number of weekly flights to international locations from TCI