



Pirates of the Cayman Islands

Unlike the torrid past of many a Caribbean isle, Cayman Islands history has run the course of time in a relatively stable fashion, with few international squabbles or revolutionary moments to mark its past. This does not mean, however, that Cayman Islands history is uninteresting. Far from it. Cayman Islands history has seen its fair share of intrigue, making it an enjoyable stop for history buffs of all backgrounds.

On the three Cayman Islands, history after inhabitation came rather late as the islands remained virtually empty through to the late 1600s. Christopher Columbus sailed the area in 1503 and provided Cayman Islands history with its first official name - Las Tortugas, after the abundance of turtles swimming in the surrounding sea - but did not land there. The first arrivals in Cayman Islands history, rather, began landing after the islands were acquired by the British (along with Jamaica) from Spain under the Treaty of Madrid. They came from all over Europe, Africa, and other Caribbean colonies, creating a multicultural mosaic that has continued unabated throughout Cayman Islands history. The islands' name was changed to Cayman, after a local species of crocodile, and the official 'Cayman' Islands history was off and running. Some of the most famous residents in Cayman Islands history took up residence here during the same period; with an inviting maze of secluded coves in the Cayman Islands, history has seen the likes of marauding pirates - Blackbeard included - set up a base or two en route to plundering rich Spanish galleons. This exciting bit of Cayman Islands' history led to several shipwrecks, many of which can be viewed in its offshore reefs.

Cayman Islands history has seen pirates come and go, but not lords - the three territories have remained a British colony since the 1600s, complete with an appointed governor. Relying originally on fishing and farming industries, Cayman Islands history has gradually diversified the economy into one that sees tourism support much of the GNP. A shakeup of the colony's economic laws in the 1960s, one of the most significant turning points in Cayman Islands history, also allowed for the expansion of its offshore banking sector, turning the islands into a virtual big-business haven. The capital of George Town, once a small town like many others to influence Cayman Islands history, is now bursting at its refined seams with nearly 600 banks.

