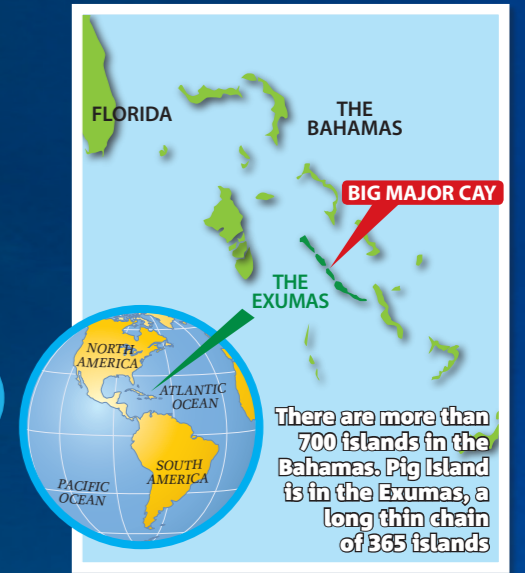


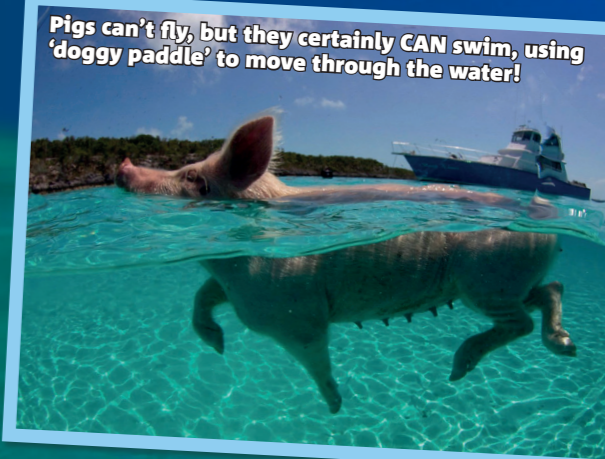
Pigs at sea!

Meet some of the ocean's most surprising swimmers...



Imagine yourself sailing quietly around the crystal clear waters of the Caribbean Sea, the sun beating down on your shoulders as you gaze at the fish darting about below the surface. Your yacht slows and you grab a snorkel, leaping into the inviting warm water to see the colourful shoals up close. Suddenly, from out of nowhere, you feel something nudging your side. You turn, startled, to see what it is. Your friend who's just jumped in after you? A sh..sh..shark? Nope. It's a **pig**, an inquisitive porker that's swum out from the shoreline to greet you. Welcome to Pig Island in the Bahamas' sun-kissed Exuma archipelago...

Piggy paddle
The tiny uninhabited isle, officially known as **Big Major Cay**, is home to more than 30 of the sand-loving squealers, who swim out, snouts above the surface, to investigate any visitors. "There's nothing that can prepare you for seeing a pig swimming out to your boat," laughs photographer **Mary Gabbett**, from ecotourism website Green Global Travel. "We were surprised and in awe to see them swimming so well."



Hello, hogs!

So how did the island's unusual inhabitants get there? One theory is that a few pigs were **dropped off by sailors** who planned – but failed – to return to the island to eat them. Other people believe that the animals are descended from the piggy survivors of a **pirate ship** that sank. Mary, however, thinks the truth is rather different.

island, the pigs were left to roam free, and they slowly bred. "From time to time, the men would head over to the island, pick the fattest pig for slaughter and sell the meat to locals for their big Sunday supper," Mary says. "That way they didn't have to deal with the smell. It was an ingenious, enterprising idea."



Home from home

"We visited Pig Island in August 2013 while we were staying on a tiny neighbouring island called **Staniel Cay**," Mary explains. "The lady who was looking after us said her father's friend had kept pigs at his home but, because pigs can stink quite a bit, his neighbours complained. So he decided to **relocate them** to Big Major Cay, just a short boat ride away." With access to drinking water, thanks to a **freshwater spring** on the

Super sea swine

Over time, the incredible porkers learned that the crews of passing boats would **throw their food waste overboard**, and so the pigs supplemented their island diet by foraging for scraps tossed into the ocean. And then, one day, the sea-loving bovines were spotted by tourist boats and word of their existence quickly spread. Today, the pigs are no longer served up as the locals' supper. Instead, they live the life of luxury, lazing around in the shade of the island's wooded interior, playing on the beach and paddling out to passing yachts to **pig out** on free grub whenever holidaymakers pop by to take photos. "Given the fact that these pigs now bring in lots of money as a tourist attraction, I have a feeling they should be in for a nice, long, happy life on Pig Island!" says Mary. We hope so, too!



DID YOU KNOW...?
Pigs are omnivores, which means they'll eat anything that's available – from plants, fruits, seeds, corn, meat and grubs to humans' leftover food.

All pictures: Getty Images UK. With thanks to Mary Gabbett and Bret Love from GreenGlobalTravel.com and the American Association of Swine Veterinarians.