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Insider's Guide to The Bahamas

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Travel Advisor

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The Bahamas is a tropical escape known for its clear blue waters, white-sand beaches and laid-back lifestyle. From families to couples to groups, it's a versatile destination with tons of activities and multiple islands to explore.

Adventurers can explore underwater caves or go deep-sea fishing. Culture lovers can experience Junkanoo festivals, visit historic forts and explore local markets. And for lively nightlife, Nassau and Paradise Island are the center of the action, with casinos and luxury hotels. For a secluded getaway, head to the Out Islands. Across the islands, the food scene is on point, blending Caribbean and international flavors that feature plenty of fresh seafood.

The Bahamas delivers warm hospitality and stunning natural beauty. Whether it's a resort water park or secluded beachfront retreat, there's a place for every traveler. Read on to discover what to see and do, plus where to stay across the islands.

Need to know



The Bahamas is known for its warm hospitality and a simple “good morning” or “good afternoon” is always appreciated. Politeness is valued and tipping is customary, though some restaurants include a service charge.

When exploring local settlements or visiting churches, it's best to dress modestly. Life on the islands moves at a relaxed pace — commonly referred to as "island time" — so schedules for

ferries and services may be flexible.

While The Bahamas is generally safe, basic precautions should be taken, especially in busy areas. Keep valuables secure and use ATMs in well-lit locations. Tap water is safe to drink in Nassau and major resorts, but bottled water is recommended for the more remote Out Islands.

Most beaches are public, and beachgoers should stick to designated swimming areas. Be mindful of changing tides, especially on the unmonitored Out Island beaches. For those seeking extra amenities, some resorts offer private access or day passes to enjoy poolside lounging, beachfront dining and water activities.

- **Currency:** The Bahamian Dollar (BSD) is pegged 1:1 with the US dollar, which is also widely accepted. Credit cards are common but cash is useful for taxis, markets and smaller businesses, especially on the Out Islands. ATMs are available in major areas but limited in remote locations.
- **Languages:** While English is the official language, Bahamian dialects often include unique expressions and Creole influences such as “big up,” for example, as a way to show appreciation or respect.
- **Airports:** Nassau’s Lynden Pindling International Airport (NAS) is the main entry point with direct international flights from New York City, Toronto, Houston and Los Angeles, among others. Short domestic flights connect to the Out Islands, including Exuma (GGT), North Eleuthera (ELH) and South Andros (TZN).
- **Transportation:** Many hotels and resorts provide airport pickups and local transfers. Nassau’s downtown and beachfront areas are easily walkable. If heading to the Out Islands, there are regular ferries and charter boats from Nassau but advance planning and reservations are highly recommended.
- **Best time to visit:** There is warm, tropical weather all year long, but the best time to visit is December through April. Humidity starts to increase in May, with hurricane season lasting from June through November.
- **Ideal length of stay:** A 4-night trip to Nassau is perfect to absorb the history, culture and beaches. Spend 5–7 nights in order to island-hop to Exuma, Eleuthera or Andros for quieter beaches and more outdoor activities.
- **Signature dishes:** Cracked conch (conch, battered and fried, served with a side of peas and rice), conch salad (a mix of fresh conch, citrus juice, peppers and onions), Bahamian rock lobster (grilled or steamed with melted butter and local sides), johnny cake (a slightly sweet, dense bread often enjoyed with stews or as a breakfast treat with butter and honey), peas and rice (a staple of pigeon peas, rice and a flavorful blend of herbs and spices), souse (a light stew made with chicken, pork or sheep’s tongue, seasoned with citrus, onions and allspice), guava duff (a traditional guava-filled dough dessert, steamed and drizzled with a warm butter-rum sauce).

- **What to wear:** Lightweight, breathable clothing is perfect for the warm, tropical climate of The Bahamas. Shorts, sundresses and sandals are common for beach days or exploring the islands. Upscale dining or resort evenings typically call for linen pants, button-down shirts, flowy dresses and stylish but comfortable footwear.

Where to stay



Image courtesy of Rosewood Baha Mar

Serving as the gateway to The Bahamas, Nassau and Paradise Island blend a rich history with modern luxury. Colorful markets, historic forts and a lively culture mix with relaxing beaches. It's the quintessential place to stay for a trip to The Bahamas.

For more remote adventures, head to the Out Islands. Exuma's crystal-clear waters, hidden cays and secluded beaches make it a travelers' paradise — you'll even find sandbars with swimming pigs. Eleuthera's pink sand beaches and Harbour Island's colonial architecture make them great for a slowed down escape. Meanwhile, the largest but least developed Bahamian

island of Andros is home to world-class diving sites and untouched wilderness for a true feeling of seclusion.

Nassau and Paradise Island



Image courtesy of The Ocean Club, A Four Seasons Resort, Bahamas

Rosewood Baha Mar: This elegant beachfront resort is filled with contemporary rooms and suites. With exclusive access to white-sand beaches, a world-class spa, golf course and immersive cultural experiences make it a great choice for any luxury traveler.

- **Fora's Rosewood Elite** partner perks include a welcome amenity, daily breakfast, and upgrade whenever possible.

SLS Baha Mar: This stylish four-star beachfront escape features sleek rooms, modern suites and a lively energy. A rooftop lounge, private pool cabanas and an exclusive adults-only day club make it perfect for couples and friend groups.

- **Fora's Accor - HERA** partner perks include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

The Reef at Atlantis: An upscale residential-style resort that's perfect for families and extended stays. Studios and suites feature kitchens and private balconies, along with full access to Atlantis' iconic attractions and restaurants.

- **Fora Perks** include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

The Island House: This four-star boutique hotel is a wellness-focused retreat away from the busier resorts. Stylish rooms and suites feature private terraces, dining includes a rooftop restaurant and easy beach access make this a refined yet laid-back Bahamian escape.

The Ocean Club, A Four Seasons Resort, Bahamas: Beachfront luxury and world-class service can be found in their modern style rooms, suites and private villas, Along with an adults-only pool, Balinese-style spa and oceanfront golf course, it's the perfect hideaway.

- When you book Four Seasons with Fora, you'll enjoy exclusive Four Seasons Preferred Partner benefits.

Out Islands



Image courtesy of The Cove Eleuthera

Coral Sands: This elegant retreat is right on Harbour Island's world-famous Pink Sands Beach. With a laid-back vibe, this resort offers ocean-view rooms, suites and beachfront cottages. Also near Dunmore Town's charming shops, galleries and restaurants, it's an intimate island escape.

- **Fora Perks** include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

The Cove Eleuthera: This elegant four-star retreat is a secluded beachfront escape. Modern and minimalist oceanfront villas and cottages are set between private coves. Guests can kayak, paddleboard, or simply unwind at the infinity pool of this relaxed island hotel.

- **Fora Perks** include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

The Potlatch Club: An intimate five-star beachfront hideaway on Andros. This boutique off-the-grid resort offers oceanfront bungalows and cottages with a rustic luxury vibe. It's a true escape for those looking to disconnect and explore the wilder side of The Bahamas.

History and culture



The history of The Bahamas is made up of Indigenous heritage, colonial influences and resilient cultural traditions. The islands were originally home to the Lucayan people, a peaceful branch of the Taíno who thrived on fishing, agriculture and trade. Though their presence was tragically erased after European contact, their legacy has endured in place names and artifacts found throughout the islands. The Bahamas even became a haven for pirates in the 17th century, with legendary figures like Blackbeard and Calico Jack using Nassau as a base.

Gaining independence in 1973, The Bahamas retained a cultural blend of African, European and Caribbean influence. Today, visitors can explore remnants of the islands' history at Fort Charlotte, the Heritage Museum of The Bahamas, Government House and the Pirates of

Nassau Museum. Enduring cultural influence is seen in Junkanoo, the country's most vibrant festival that originated from the celebrations of enslaved peoples.

Cultural celebrations & events

- **Junkanoo (December 26 & January 1):** The Bahamas' signature festival that brings the streets to life with dazzling parades, intricate costumes, rhythmic goombay drums and energetic dancing across the islands.
- **New Year's Eve (December 31):** Celebrate with fireworks and lively beach parties across Nassau, Paradise Island and other islands, leading up to the grand Junkanoo parade on New Year's Day.
- **Regatta Season (March–August):** A series of sailing competitions honoring Bahamian maritime traditions, including the National Family Island Regatta in Exuma and the Long Island Regatta.
- **Bahamas Carnival (May):** A vibrant showcase of music and dance, featuring colorful costumes, lively road marches and high-energy Soca and Junkanoo-infused performances in Nassau.
- **Independence Day (July 10):** A nationwide celebration of The Bahamas' independence from Britain, marked by fireworks, flag-raising ceremonies and festive gatherings.
- **Goombay Summer Festival (July–August):** A cultural celebration with live music, traditional dance, local artisans and Bahamian cuisine in Nassau and the Out Islands.

Activities



Image courtesy of Rosewood Baha Mar

The Bahamas is filled with activities that are right for families, friends groups and couples. Families can visit museums and resort water parks. Friends can head to beachside bars, take boat trips to hidden cays and snorkel through underwater caves. Couples can retreat to luxurious oceanfront resorts, enjoy romantic dinners and unwind on secluded beaches.

Nassau and Paradise Island

- **Boating:** Spend a day on the water with a private boat charter, snorkeling among vibrant coral reefs or trying deep-sea fishing just off the coast.
- **Bonefishing:** Test your skills at bonefishing in the shallow flats surrounding New Providence, a favorite pastime for anglers seeking the elusive “grey ghost.”
- **Junkanoo:** Experience the energy of a Junkanoo, a dazzling festival featuring elaborate costumes, rhythmic drumming and lively street parades held around the New Year.
- **Beaches:** Unwind on Nassau’s beaches, from lively Cable Beach to quieter hidden stretches with public access or enjoy a private beachfront at select resorts.
- **Golf:** Play a round of golf on a championship course, where ocean breezes and lush tropical scenery make for a memorable game.

- **Tennis:** Hit the courts for a game of tennis at a resort or local club, taking advantage of Nassau's year-round warm weather.

Out Islands

- **The Exumas:** Sail through the Exumas, stopping at secluded cays, sandbars and beaches only accessible by boat.
- **Andros:** Paddle through the mangroves and dive into the blue holes of Andros, exploring underwater caverns, marine life and coral formations unique to The Bahamas.
- **Abacos:** Island-hop through the Abacos, visiting charming colonial towns like Hope Town, walking the famous sandbars of Treasure Cay and enjoying the boating culture.
- **Birdwatching:** Go birdwatching in Abaco National Park where the rare Bahama parrot can be spotted in the forests and mangrove wetlands.
- **Pink Sands Beach:** Relax on Harbour Island's Pink Sands Beach, known for its soft, rose colored sand and crystal-clear waters.
- **Eleuthera:** Sail into Governor's Harbour to experience local markets, old-world architecture and the island's laid-back charm.

Add-on destinations



Within a couple of hours, flights could take you to several destinations to add on to your trip to The Bahamas. Here are a few favorite options to extend your vacation:

Miami, Florida (1-hour flight): A quick getaway for upscale shopping, world-class dining and beachfront luxury, complete with art scenes, vibrant nightlife and easy connections to other US cities.

Jamaica (1.5-hour flight): A dynamic island escape with reggae beats, mountains and stunning beaches to create the perfect balance of adventure and relaxation.

The Dominican Republic (2-hour flight): From Punta Cana's idyllic beaches to Santo Domingo's colonial history, this Caribbean hotspot blends cultural charm with laid-back coastal vibes.

Puerto Rico (2.5-hour flight): A US territory rich in history, tropical rainforests and lively nightlife, offering an easy cultural addition to a Bahamas getaway.

If not The Bahamas...



Looking for a similar destination to The Bahamas? Here are a few alternatives with great beaches, turquoise waters and lively island culture to consider:

The Seychelles: A remote paradise in the Indian Ocean with striking granite rock formations, crystal-clear waters and an abundance of marine life.

The Cayman Islands: Perfect for divers and luxury travelers, with vibrant coral reefs, the famous Stingray City and world-class dining in Grand Cayman.

Bali, Indonesia: A tropical retreat offering breathtaking beaches in Uluwatu, jungle resorts in Ubud and a rich cultural heritage with temples and traditional Balinese cuisine.

The Greek Islands: Santorini and Mykonos boast sun-soaked beaches, picturesque coastal villages and a thriving food scene, while Milos and Naxos provide a more tranquil seaside escape.

Get in touch with Gregory

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Please provide some details about your trip.

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