



# BAHAMAS



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## 1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

**Location:** Caribbean; southeast of Florida.

Bahamas Ministry of Tourism  
PO Box N-3701, Market Plaza, Nassau, The Bahamas  
**Tel:** 322 7500. Fax: 328 0945 or 322 4041. E-mail: [tourism@batelnet.bs](mailto:tourism@batelnet.bs)  
**Web site:** <http://www.bahamas.com>

High Commission of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas  
10 Chesterfield Street, London W1J 5JL  
**Tel:** (020) 7408 4488. Fax: (020) 7499 9937.  
**Opening hours:** 0930-1730 Monday to Friday.

Bahamas Tourist Office  
3 The Billings, Walnut Tree Close, Guildford, Surrey GU1 4UL  
**Tel:** (01483) 448 900. Fax: (01483) 571 846.  
**E-mail:** [btogfd@bahamas.com](mailto:btogfd@bahamas.com)  
**Web site:** <http://www.bahamas.com>

British High Commission  
**Street address:** Ansbacher House, 3rd Floor, East Street, Nassau, The Bahamas  
**Postal address:** PO Box N-7516, Nassau, The Bahamas  
**Tel:** 325 7471-3. Fax: 323 3871.  
**E-mail:** [celia.davies@nassau.mail.fco.gov.uk](mailto:celia.davies@nassau.mail.fco.gov.uk) (consular section).

Embassy of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas  
2220 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008  
**Tel:** (202) 319 2660. Fax: (202) 319 2668. E-mail: [bahemb@aol.com](mailto:bahemb@aol.com)

Bahamas Consulate

## 2 GENERAL

231 East 46th Street, New York, NY 10017  
**Tel:** (212) 421 6420. Fax: (212) 688 5926. E-mail: [mailbox@bahamasconsulate-ny.com](mailto:mailbox@bahamasconsulate-ny.com)  
**Web site:** <http://www.bahamasconsulate-ny.com>

Bahamas Tourist Office  
150 East 52nd Street, 28th Floor North, New York, NY 10022  
**Tel:** (212) 758 2777. Fax: (212) 753 6531.

Embassy of the United States of America  
**Street address:** Queen Street, Nassau, The Bahamas  
**Postal address:** PO Box N-8197, Nassau, The Bahamas  
**Tel:** 322 1181. Fax: 328 7838 or 356 7174 (visa information). E-mail: [usemb@batelnet.bs](mailto:usemb@batelnet.bs)

High Commission for the Commonwealth of The Bahamas  
Clarica Centre, 50 O'Connor Street, Suite 1313, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6L2  
**Tel:** (613) 232 1724. Fax: (613) 232 0097.  
**E-mail:** [ottawa-mission@bahighco.com](mailto:ottawa-mission@bahighco.com)

Bahamas Tourist Office  
121 Bloor Street East, Suite 1101, Toronto, Ontario M4W 3M5  
**Tel:** (416) 968 2999. Fax: (416) 968 6711. E-mail: [btoyyz@bahamas.com](mailto:btoyyz@bahamas.com)

Canadian Consulate  
**Street address:** Shirley Street Plaza, Nassau, The Bahamas  
**Postal address:** PO Box SS-6371, Nassau, The Bahamas  
**Tel:** 393 2123. Fax: 393 1305.

**Country dialling code:** 1 242.

General

**Area:** 13,939 sq km (5382 sq miles).

**Population:** 228,862 (1997).

**Population density:** 20.4 per sq km.

**Capital:** Nassau. Population: 172,000 (1997).

**Geography:** The Bahamas consist of 700 low-lying islands, mostly islets (cays or keys) and rocks. The whole archipelago extends 970km (500 miles) southeastward from the coast of Florida, surrounded by clear, colourful waters. The soil is thin, but on the more developed islands, cultivation has produced exotic flowers. On other islands are large areas of pine forest, rocky and barren land, swamp and unspoilt beaches. The Bahamas are divided into two oceanic features, the Little Bahama Bank and the Great Bahama Bank.

**Government:** Constitutional monarchy. Gained independence in 1973. Head of State: HM Queen Elizabeth II, represented locally by Governor-General Sir Orville Turnquest since 1995. Head of Government: Prime Minister Hubert Alexander Ingraham since 1992.

**Language:** The official and national language is English.

**Religion:** The three main Christian denominations are Baptist, Anglican and Roman Catholic.

**Time:** GMT - 5.

**Electricity:** 120 volts AC, 60Hz.

**Communications:**

**Telephone:** IDD is available. Country code: 1 242. New Providence and all islands have automatic telephone systems. The state telephone company, BaTelCo, offers both manual- and automatic-dial mobile radio telephones which allow callers to contact ships at sea. Phone cards can be purchased at discounted rates for international calls.

**Mobile telephone:** Handsets must be registered with BaTelCo (tel: 394 4000; fax: 394 3573; e-mail: [info@batelnet.bs](mailto:info@batelnet.bs)). Visitors will need to purchase a SIM card if their provider has no agreement with BaTelCo. Handsets can be hired locally.

**Fax:** This service is available to the public at the Centralised Telephone Office in East Street, Nassau or in cybercafés. Machines can also be hired.

**Internet/E-mail:** There are a few cybercafés on Grand Bahama Island open seven days a week. A cafe is currently being set up in Nassau. Laptop connections are available, as are webcams and facilities for scanning and copying. The main ISP is BaTelNet.

**Telegram:** 24-hour telegraph facilities are available in Nassau.

**Post:** Postal service to Europe takes up to ten days. Post office hours: 0830-1730 Monday to Friday and 0830-1230 Saturday.

**Press:** The three daily newspapers are the Tribune, the Nassau Guardian and the Freeport News. Weekly newspapers include The Bahama Journal and The Punch. International newspapers available in the Bahamas include: The Times, the Miami Herald, Wall Street Journal and the Daily Telegraph.

**BBC World Service and Voice of America frequencies:** From time to time these change.

**BBC:**  
MHz17.7215.226.1955.975

**Voice of America:**  
MHz13.7411.709.7757.405

### 3 PASSPORT

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
<b>British</b>	1	No/3	Yes
<b>Australian</b>	Yes	No/5	Yes
<b>Canadian</b>	1	No/5	Yes
<b>USA</b>	2	No/4	Yes
<b>OtherEU</b>	Yes	No/3	Yes
<b>Japanese</b>	Yes	No/6	Yes

**PASSPORTS:** Passport valid for at least 6 months from date of entry into the Bahamas required by all except:

- (a) 1. nationals of Canada and the UK, provided holding a birth certificate, a citizenship card or a certificate of baptism together with a photo ID for a stay of up to 3 weeks. Passports, however, are required for re-entry into the UK;
- (b) 2. nationals of the USA, provided holding a passport not expired by more than five years, original or certified birth certificate, naturalisation certificate together with an official photo ID.

**Note:** Expired passports are not considered proper ID, even if they are endorsed with unexpired visas, unless they belong to nationals of Canada or the USA.

**VISAS:** Required by all except the following:

- (a) 3. nationals of EU countries for visits of up to 3 months (8 months for nationals of Belgium, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg and The Netherlands);

- (b) 4. nationals of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, San Marino, Switzerland, Turkey and the USA for visits of up to 8 months;
- (c) 5. nationals of Commonwealth countries for visits of up to 8 months (with the exception of nationals of Namibia and South Africa for visits of less than 90 days, and nationals of Cameroon, Ghana, India, Mozambique and Nigeria who do need a visa);
- (d) 6. nationals of Chile, Israel, Japan, Korea (Rep. of) and Mexico for visits of up to 3 months;
- (e) nationals of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia (provided holding either a Green Card or multiple US entry visas), Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela, for visits of up to 14 days;
- (f) transit passengers continuing their journey by the same or next connecting aircraft within 3 days provided holding confirmed onward documentation.

**Types of visa and cost:** Single-entry: £15; Multiple-entry: £30.

**Validity:** Usually 3 months. Applications for extension should be made to the Director of Immigration.

**Application to:** Consulate (or Consular Section at Embassy or High Commission); see address section.

**Application requirements:** (a) Completed application. (b) Valid passport. (c) Proof of sufficient funds to cover stay. (d) 2 passport-size photos. (e) Itinerary of trip. (f) Return ticket.

**Note:** Applications should be made in person.

**Working days required:** Dependent on nationality of applicant, a minimum of 48 hours. Applications from some nationals may take up to 6 weeks to process.

**Temporary residence:** Apply to the Director of Immigration, Hawkins Hill, PO Box N-831, Nassau, New Providence (tel: (242) 322 7531; fax: (242) 326 0977).

## 4 MONEY

**Currency:** Bahamian Dollar (B\$) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of B\$100, 50, 20, 10, 5, 3 and 1, and 50 cents. Coins are in denominations of 25, 15, 10, 5 and 1 cents. The Bahamian Dollar has parity with the US Dollar and the latter is also accepted as legal tender.

**Currency exchange:** Available in banks and at exchange bureaux and hotels. Cash dispensers are located on the larger islands in airport terminals, at banks and casinos and at other convenient locations.

**Credit cards:** Diners Club, MasterCard, Visa and American Express are accepted. Check with your credit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available.

**Travellers cheques:** To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take travellers cheques in US Dollars.

Exchange rate indicators

The following figures are included as a guide to the movements of the Bahamian Dollar against Sterling and the US Dollar:

DateApr '00Aug '00Nov '00Feb '01£1.00=1.601.501.451.46\$1.00=1.001.001.001.00

**Note:** The Bahamian Dollar is tied to the US Dollar.

**Currency restrictions:** Permission is required from the Central Bank of the Bahamas to import local currency, which may be exported up to a maximum of B\$70. The import and export of foreign currency are unlimited.

**Banking hours:** 0930-1500 Monday to Thursday, 0930-1700 Friday.

## 5 DUTY FREE

The following goods may be taken into The Bahamas by persons aged over 18 years without incurring customs duty:

200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 454g of tobacco; 1.136 litres of spirits and 1.136 litres of wine; goods up to the value of B\$100.

**Note:** Duty is payable on household items such as small electrical appliances (blenders etc) which are taxed at 45% of their cost. Laptop computers are considered to be personal effects and are therefore duty free.

**Prohibited items:** Weapons and drugs.

## 6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Jan 1 2001 New Year's Day. Apr 13 Good Friday. Apr 16 Easter Monday. Jun 4 Whit Monday. Jun 8 Labour Day. Jul 10 Independence Day. Aug 6 Emancipation Day. Oct 12 Discovery Day. Dec 25 Christmas Day. Dec 26 Boxing Day. Jan 1 2002 New Year's Day. Mar 29 Good Friday. Apr 1 Easter Monday. May 20 Whit Monday. Jun 7 Labour Day. Jul 10 Independence Day. Aug 5 Emancipation Day. Oct 14 Discovery Day. Dec 25 Christmas Day. Dec 26 Boxing Day.

## 7 HEALTH

	<i>Special Precautions</i>	<i>Certificate Required</i>
<b>Yellow Fever</b>	No	1
<b>Cholera</b>	No	No
<b>Typhoid and Polio</b>	No	-
<b>Malaria</b>	No	-
<b>Food and Drink</b>	2	-

**1:** A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers aged over one year travelling from an infected area.

**2:** Tap water is safe to drink although it can often be salty in taste. Milk is pasteurised and dairy products are safe for consumption. Local meat, poultry, seafood, fruit and vegetables are generally considered safe to eat.

**Health care:** Medical facilities are on a par with the USA, but can be costly and therefore medical insurance is recommended.

#### Travel - International

**AIR:** The Bahamas' national airline is Bahamasair (UP). Other airlines with regular flights to the Bahamas include American Airlines, Air Canada, Air Jamaica, Continental Airlines, Delta Airlines, British Airways, AOM French Airlines, TWA, USAir and United Airlines. Charter airlines also fly regularly to the islands.

**Approximate flight times:** From Los Angeles to Nassau is 7 hours, from New York is 3 hours, from London is 8 hours 30 minutes and from Singapore is 33 hours.

**International airports:** Nassau International (NAS) is 16km (10 miles) west of the city. Taxi services are available. Airport facilities include banking (0930-1500 Monday to Thursday and 0930-1700 Friday), car hire, post office, bars, restaurants (0600-2000) and duty-free shops (0930-1900).

Freeport International (FPO) is 5km (3 miles) from the city. Taxis are available. Airport facilities include banking, car hire, car parking, bar/restaurant and a duty-free shop.

The new international airport at Moss Town, Exuma, has been completed.

There are scheduled turbo-prop services between several airports in Florida and Treasure Cay (TCB) and Marsh Harbour (MHH), Abaco Island; Rock Sound (RSD) and Governor's Harbour (GHB), Eleuthera; and Georgetown (GGT) Exuma.

**Departure tax:** B\$15 (Freeport - B\$18). Children under six years of age and passengers for immediate transit are exempt.

**SEA:** A large number of international passenger ships from New York and Miami call at Nassau. Nassau has direct passenger-cargo connections with the USA, the UK, the West Indies and South America. In addition, a large number of cruise ships call there. Facilities for cruisers in Nassau and some harbours of the Out Islands (Eleuthera, Andros and Exuma) are being improved. Contact Bahamas Tourist Office for an up-to-date list of cruise operators to The Bahamas, with all relevant contact numbers.

#### Travel - Internal

**AIR:** Charter services are available from Bahamasair Charter (UP), Pinder's Charter Service, Sansd Piper Air, Le Air Charter Ltd, Sky Unlimited and Major's Air Service.

**Approximate flight times:** From Nassau, New Providence Island to Freeport is 40 minutes, to Marsh Harbour or Treasure Cay, Abaco is 35 minutes, to Governor's Harbour is 30 minutes, and to Georgetown on Exuma is 40 minutes.

**SEA:** The Out Islands are served by a mail boat which leaves Nassau several times a week carrying mail and provisions to the islands. Passengers share facilities with the crew. Arrangements should be made through boat captains at Potters Cay. Air-conditioned ferries operate between Nassau, Eleuthera and Harbour Island. For further details contact Bahamas Fast Ferries (tel: 323 2166; fax: 323 8185; e-mail: info@bahamasferries.com; web site: <http://www.bahamasferries.com>).



**ROAD:** Traffic drives on the left. Bus: The jitney (bus) provides inexpensive touring. Paradise Island is served by a bus service which stops at every hotel. A horse-drawn ride, which takes three passengers, is available along the streets of Nassau. Taxis in New Providence are metered. The rates are government controlled. Car hire: Avis, Budget, Dollar and Hertz are represented at the airports and in Nassau. Motor scooter hire is also available. Bicycles can be rented by the day or by the week. Documentation: A national driving licence is valid for up to three months. Motorcycle riders and passengers are required to wear crash helmets.

**JOURNEY TIMES:** The following chart gives approximate journey times (in hours and minutes) from Nassau to other major centres.

AirSea  
Central Andros, Andros 0.153.00  
Governor's Harbour, Eleuthera 0.305.30  
Freeport, Grand Bahama 0.30/0.4512.00  
Marsh Harbour, Abaco 0.4511.00  
George Town, Exuma 0.4513.00

## 8 ACCOMMODATION

The Bahamas offer a wide selection of accommodation, ranging from small, private guest-houses where only lodging is available, to large luxury resorts, complete with swimming pools, private beaches, sailing craft, skindiving equipment, full dining facilities and nightclub entertainment. Information can also be obtained from The Bahamas' Hotel Association, PO Box N-7799, Dean's Lane, Nassau (tel: 322 8381; fax: 326 5346; e-mail: bhainfo@batelnet.bs).

**Classifications:** Many of the larger resorts offer accommodation on either a Modified American Plan (MAP) which consists of room, breakfast and dinner or European Plan (EP) which consists of room only. Accommodation is classified as Hotels, Colonies, Guest-Houses, Apartment Hotels or Apartment/ Cottage Units.

**HOTELS:** Hotels vary in size and facilities. There are luxury hotels offering full porter, bell and room service, planned activities, sports, shops and beauty salons, swimming pools and entertainment; some have a private beach, golf course and tennis courts. Double and single rooms are often the same price. The small hotels are more informal and while activities are less extensive, they usually offer a dining room and bar. There are new resorts situated on New Providence Island, which has sporting facilities and luxury accommodation. Some hotels include service charge on the bill.

**COTTAGE COLONIES:** Separate cottages or villas, with maid service, surrounding a main clubhouse with a bar and dining room - these are 'Cottage Colonies'. They are not equipped with kitchenette or facilities for the preparation of meals, although some have facilities for preparing beverages and light snacks. They offer the facilities of a hotel, such as a private beach/swimming pool, and are designed to offer maximum privacy.

**GUEST-HOUSES:** Often less expensive than hotels and located near downtown Nassau. Many offer European Plan only, but restaurants are plentiful. Rooms may be with or without a bath. The Out Islands hotels are small with a casual atmosphere.

**APARTMENT HOTELS:** These consist of apartment units with complete kitchen and maid service. Other hotel facilities (ie swimming pool, sporting activities, restaurant and bar, etc) are normally available on the premises.

**APARTMENT/COTTAGE UNITS:** These have complete kitchen facilities and some have maid service. Generally, there are no restaurant facilities and tenants are required to prepare their own meals. A few are situated in landscaped estates with their own beach, much like the cottage colonies but without the main clubhouse. Others offer inexpensive accommodation in less spacious but comfortable surroundings. Restaurant and bar facilities are not available.

**CAMPING:** Camping is not permitted in any of the islands of The Bahamas.

## 9 RESORTS & EXCURSIONS

There are over 700 islands in The Bahamas, many of which have escaped the notice of tourists. The islands offer clear warm water and sandy beaches. Several are relatively large - see below for a description of some of these - but others are tiny and uninhabited. All the larger islands offer a high standard of accommodation and leisure facilities.

**Nassau and Paradise Island:** Nassau and Paradise Island: The capital of The Bahamas, Nassau, stands on New Providence Island. In the capital, tourists can shop in the bustling 'straw market', where local vendors create unique straw goods on the spot, or the more sophisticated shops in Bay Street. The 18th-century Fort Charlotte, on West Bay Street has a moat, open battlements, dungeons and a magnificent view of the harbour. The nearby Ardastra Gardens have tropical flowers and pink flamingoes. There are two casinos. The Queen's Staircase, at the top of Elizabeth Avenue, is a 40m (102ft) climb up steps carved into the limestone leading to Fort Fincastle and the Water Tower. Built in 1793, Fort Fincastle is in the shape of a ship's bow. The Water Tower is the highest point in the island, 85m (216ft) above sea level. An elevator takes visitors to an observation deck for panoramic views. Sunbathing, diving, fishing and boating are the main daytime amusements on these islands. An underwater observatory and marine park, Crystal Cay, is just a few minutes' away from downtown Nassau. Visitors descend below the water surface to view the feeding of sharks (every day at 1430) and a multitude of exotic marine life.

**Grand Bahama Island:** Grand Bahama Island: The main towns are Freeport/Lucaya, which has an airport, and West End. The island offers wide white sandy beaches, two casinos and good shopping facilities, entertainment and restaurants at the International Bazaar and Port Lucaya. The Rand Memorial Nature Centre offers an excellent nature walk and the Garden of the Groves has exotic flowers, waterfalls and colourful birds.

**Andros:** Andros: The largest but probably the least well-known of the bigger islands. Laced with creeks and densely forested inland, the interior is still largely untouched and natural. Off the eastern shore is the 224km-long (140-mile) coral barrier reef - the world's third longest. Beyond the reef, the ocean floor drops away steeply to a depth of more than 1.5km (1 mile); called the Tongue of the Ocean, deep-water fishing here is a major attraction.

**The Abacos:** The Abacos: A crescent-shaped chain of islands to the north of New Providence. Many of the towns here have the atmosphere of New England fishing villages. The islands are particularly noted for their tradition of shipbuilding, the original 200 year-old practice of which can still be observed in Man-O-War Cay. Treasure Cay has an excellent golf course and here, as in the other major islands, there are excellent leisure facilities. Other attractions include Alton

Lowe's Museum in New Plymouth, Green Turtle Cay, Elbow Cay and Marsh Harbour, the bare-boat charter centre of the northern Bahamas. Scuba divers are drawn to Pelican Cay National Park, an underwater preserve where night dives can be arranged.

**Eleuthera:** Eleuthera: A narrow island 177km (110 miles) long but seldom more than 3km (2 miles) wide. Attractions include the Ocean Hole, Glass Window Bridge, Harbour Island (with Dunmore Town, one of the oldest settlements in The Bahamas), Spanish Wells, off the northern tip of the island, Preacher's Cave and the underwater caves at Hatchet Bay. The scuba diving from Eleuthera is particularly superb.

**The Exumas:** The Exumas: The waters surrounding this 160km-long (100-mile) chain of islands have been described by yachtsmen as being the finest cruising region in the world. There are also spectacular reefs protected by the Exuma Land and Sea Park. Inland, several once-great plantation houses now stand ruined and deserted, although the names of their owners still live on in many local family surnames. In April, Elizabeth Harbour is the setting for the Family Island Regatta.

**Cat Island:** Cat Island: One of the eastern bulwarks of The Bahamas, Cat Island has 60m (200ft) cliffs (a rare height for The Bahamas), dense natural forest and pre-Columbian Arawak Indian caves. On Mount Alvernia is the Hermitage built by Father Jerome. The Cat Island Regatta takes place here during the August bank holiday.

**Bimini:** Bimini: Lying between Andros and Florida, Bimini is widely regarded as one of the best fishing centres in the world. Hemingway used to live in Alice Town in Blue Marlin Cottage, and mementoes of his life can be seen in the local museum.

**Berry Island:** Berry Island: Popular with fishing enthusiasts and also noted for its serene landscapes and white sand beaches. Great Harbour Cay has a championship golf course and a marina. Scuba divers can admire the underwater rock formations and 5m (15ft) staghorn coral reefs off Mamma Rhoda Rock.

**Blue Lagoon Island:** Blue Lagoon Island: An exotic lagoon where visitors can enjoy close encounters with friendly bottle-nosed dolphins. Regular 45-minute sessions include an educational talk and about 30 minutes of swimming in the water with the dolphins.

**Long Island:** Long Island: This island certainly lives up to its name, being almost 100km (60 miles) long but rarely more than 5km (3 miles) wide. The landscape consists of rugged headlands dropping sharply down to the sea, fertile pastureland, rolling hills and sandy beaches washed by surf. At Conception Island divers can explore over 30 shipwrecks and tours are arranged from the Stella Maris resort complex at the north end of the island. The Long Island Regatta at Salt Pond takes place here in May.

**San Salvador:** San Salvador: This was Columbus' first landing place in the New World. Cockburn Town is the main settlement, which is not far from the spot where Columbus is said to have landed, although other sites also claim this distinction. Game fishing and diving are the most popular pastimes.

**The Out Islands:** The Out Islands: These stretch across a huge area of clear ocean and are fringed with hundreds of kilometres of white sandy beaches. The islands have resort facilities for groups of up to 200 people and are ideal for a relaxing, secluded holiday. Though secluded, the islands are not isolated. They are served by the national flag carrier, Bahamasair, from Nassau and Freeport.

## 10 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

**Watersports:** Watersports: These are exceptionally well catered for in The Bahamas; sailing, parasailing, diving, swimming, snorkelling and water-skiing are all widely available. The temperature of the sea rarely drops below 21°C (70°F) even in midwinter. Equipment is available from shops, hotels and marinas. Surfing can be done on Eleuthera and windsurfing in Nassau and on Grand Bahama. Sport fishing is popular throughout the islands. For further details on beaches and diving, see the Resorts & Excursions section.

**Golf:** Golf: Ten 18-hole courses are available and the islands are host to major tournaments.

**Health and fitness:** Health and Fitness: There are gyms and fitness centres which are open to visitors on Nassau/Paradise Island and on Grand Bahama Island. Good spa facilities and yoga tuition exist throughout the islands. A variety of New Age therapies are available.

**Tennis, squash, baseball, softball, basketball, volleyball, soccer, rugby, golf, American football:** Tennis, squash, baseball, softball, basketball, volleyball, soccer, rugby, golf, American football and cricket are all popular. Excellent facilities exist for tennis and squash.

## 11 SOCIAL PROFILE

**Food & Drink:** There is a wide choice of restaurants and bars. Specialities include conch, grouper cutlets, baked crab and red snapper fillets in anchovy sauce. Fresh fruit is available from the Out Islands, including sweet pineapple, mango, breadfruit and papaya. Table service is usual in restaurants. Drink: Local drinks are based on rum. The local liqueur is Nassau Royal, served alone or in coffee.

**Nightlife:** Hotels have bars and nightclubs. Beach parties and discotheques are organised regularly. Live entertainment includes calypso, goombay music and limbo dancing. Nightclubs are found in Nassau and Freeport. There are four casinos: one on Cable Beach, another on Paradise Island; on Grand Bahama there is a casino in Freeport and one in Lucaya. All casinos feature restaurants and live entertainment.

**Shopping:** Special purchases include china, cutlery, leather, fabrics, spirits from Britain, Scandinavian glass and silver, Swiss watches, German and Japanese cameras and French perfume. Local products include all types of straw artefacts, sea-shell jewellery and woodcarvings.

**Special Events:** For a full list of special events, contact the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism (see address section). The following is a selection of special events occurring in The Bahamas during 2001:

Jan 1 2001 New Year's Junkanoo Festival, Nassau. Feb Nassau Race Week, Nassau/Paradise Island. Apr Annual Fishing Tournament, Eleuthera/Harbour Island. May 8th All Bahamian Bikini Beach Party, Nassau/Paradise Island. May 6th Annual Bimini Festival of Champions (fishing competition), Bimini Islands. Jun 24th Annual Big 5 Fishing Tournament, Bimini Islands; 7th Annual Grand Bahama Sailing Regatta, Grand Bahama Island. Jun-Jul Bahamas Summer Boating Fling/Flotilla; Bimini Islands. Jul 25th Annual Regatta Time in Abaco. Aug Annual Bernie Butler Basra Swim Race, Grand Bahama Island; Bimini Native Fishing Tournament. Sept 7th Annual Atlantis Superboat Challenge, Nassau/Paradise Island. Oct Cricket Festival, Nassau/Paradise

Island. Nov 8th Annual One Bahamas Music & Heritage Festival, Nassau/Paradise Island; Christmas Jolification, Nassau/Paradise Island; Annual Bahamas Wahoo Championships. Dec Christmas Sailing Regatta, Nassau/Paradise Island. Dec 26 Boxing Day Junkanoo Parade, Nassau/Grand Bahama Island.

**Social Conventions:** The pace of life is generally leisurely. Informal wear is acceptable in the resorts with some degree of dressing up in the evenings, particularly for dining, dancing and casinos in Nassau or Freeport. Further from the main towns, dress is more casual although there is still a tendency to dress up at night. Small outposts like Green Turtle Cay, for example, will not require more than a shirt and long trousers. It is not acceptable to wear beachwear in towns. Tipping: 15% is usual for most services including taxis. Some hotels and restaurants, however, include service charge on the bill.

## 12 BUSINESS PROFILE

**Economy:** One of the wealthiest countries in the Caribbean, The Bahamas depend heavily on their main industry of tourism. Other industries produce rum, oil, pharmaceuticals and salt. Transshipment through Freeport, which enjoys significant tax concessions, is another valuable source of revenue. The Bahamas also has a sizeable and growing offshore banking sector, although it has come under pressure as a result of changes to disclosure requirements and competition from elsewhere. Most foodstuffs and virtually all other products must be imported, mainly from the USA, although oil is purchased primarily from Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. Other than the USA, the UK and Puerto Rico are The Bahamas' major trading partners.

**Business:** Normal courtesies are observed, ie appointments are made and calling cards are exchanged. Office hours: 0900-1700 Monday to Friday.

**Commercial Information:** The following organisation can offer advice: Bahamas Chamber of Commerce, PO Box N-665, Shirley Street, Nassau (tel: 322 2145; fax: 322 4649; e-mail: chamber@tropitec.net; web site: <http://www.tropitec.net/bahamaschamber>).

**Conferences/Conventions:** Conference venues can seat up to 2000 people. Information may be obtained from the Bahamas Tourist Office or the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism in Nassau (see address section).

## 13 CLIMATE

The Bahamas are slightly cooler than other Caribbean island groups owing to their proximity to the continental North American cold air systems.

**Required clothing:** Lightweight or tropical, cottons all year round. Light raincoats are useful during the wet season.

## 14 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

**History:** Columbus discovered The Bahamas (and hence America) in 1492. San Salvador was his first landing place in the New World and Cockburn Town, the main settlement, is not far from the

spot where Columbus is said to have landed (although other sites also claim this distinction). Subsequently, the Spanish neglected the Lesser Antilles and England colonised The Bahamas during the 17th century, which for the most part remained occupied by Britain until the country achieved independence in 1973. For most of the subsequent period, Bahamian politics have been dominated by (later Sir) Lynden Pindling, who was first elected to the premiership as head of the Progressive Liberal Party in 1967. The PLP, with Pindling at its head, were returned to office at each of five subsequent elections, despite increasingly numerous and detailed allegations against Pindling and some of his associates of corruption and involvement in drug trafficking. All were vehemently and repeatedly denied by Pindling. The drugs issue dominated the political agenda throughout the 1980s, as The Bahamas became used as a transit facility for traffickers between South and North America. Pressure from the United States (which leases two military bases on the islands) forced the Government to introduce more stringent measures against trafficking, including changes to the islands' banking secrecy laws. The damage to Pindling's reputation and the islands' poor economic performance during the early 1990s led to the PLP's rejection by the electorate at the August 1992 polls. The new premier was the leader of the long-time opposition Free National Movement (FNM), Hubert Ingraham. Once a minister under Pindling, Ingraham had resigned in 1984 in protest against Pindling. At the most recent poll in March 1997 the FNM, with Ingraham still at its head, substantially improved its position, winning 35 of 40 parliamentary seats.

**Government:** The bicameral Parliament, composed of a 16-member Senate and a 40-strong House of Assembly directly elected for a five-year term, has legislative powers. The British monarch has formal executive powers, vested in a Governor General, though in practice the Governor General almost invariably acts upon the advice of a Cabinet of Ministers appointed from the House of Assembly.

## 15 OVERVIEW

**Country Overview:** There are over 700 islands in The Bahamas, lying southeastward from the coast of Florida, many of which have escaped the notice of tourists. The islands offer clear warm water and sandy beaches. All the larger islands offer a high standard of accommodation and leisure facilities. Sunbathing, diving, fishing and boating are the main daytime amusements. The capital of The Bahamas, Nassau, stands on New Providence Island. In the capital, tourists can shop in the bustling 'straw market', where local vendors create unique straw goods on the spot. The Water Tower is the highest point in the island, 85m (216ft) above sea level. An elevator takes visitors to an observation deck for panoramic views.

**Long Island:** This island certainly lives up to its name, being almost 100km (60 miles) long but rarely more than 5km (3 miles) wide. The landscape consists of rugged headlands dropping sharply down to the sea, fertile pastureland, rolling hills and sandy beaches washed by surf. At Conception Island divers can explore over 30 shipwrecks, and tours are arranged from the Stella Maris resort complex at the north end of the island.

Blue Lagoon Island features an exotic lagoon where visitors can enjoy close encounters with friendly bottle-nosed dolphins.

Local delicacies include conch, grouper cutlets, baked crab and red snapper fillets in anchovy sauce. Local drinks are rum based and the local liqueur is called Nassau Royal.

Beach parties and discotheques are organised regularly by hotels. Live entertainment includes calypso, goombay music and limbo dancing.

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