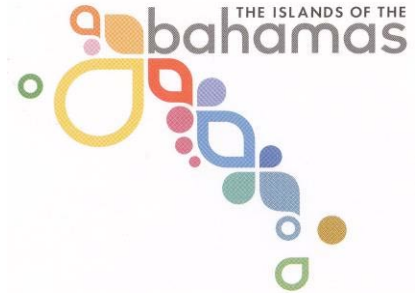




Bahamas – Facts and Information

Geography - Starting 60 miles off the coast of South Florida and stretching as far south as Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, The Bahamas is a coral archipelago of 700 islands, 29 of which are inhabited, and over 2,000 rocks and cays. The islands stretch in a North/South layout covering 750 miles with the majority of the island protected by the world's third largest Barrier Reefs and turquoise blue sand banks.



The closest island to the United States is Bimini, which is also known as the gateway to the Bahamas. The island of Abaco is to the east of Grand Bahama. The southeastern most island is Great Inagua. Other notable islands include the Bahamas' largest island, Andros Island, and Eleuthera, Cat Island, Long Island, San Salvador Island, Acklins, Crooked Island, Exuma and Mayaguana. Rum Cay is located 345 miles southeast of Miami and is a 45 minute jet ride from either Ft. Lauderdale or Miami.



Capital – Nassau, New Providence Island

Climate - The Bahamas is subtropical to tropical and the waters are warm year around.

Population - With a population of some 284,000 people, most of who live on the major islands (New Providence, Grand Bahama, Eleuthera, Abaco, Exuma, Long Island, Inagua, Cat Island, Bimini and Andros), and with an adult literacy rate of 95%, The Bahamas has a capable and adaptable work force.

Language - English

Government - The Bahamas is an independent country and a member of the Commonwealth of Nations. Political and legal traditions closely follow those of the United Kingdom. After gaining its independence from Britain on July 10, 1973, The Bahamas is one of the most politically stable countries; a parliamentary democracy has operated without interruption for 275 years. Jurisprudence is based on English common law.



The elected Prime Minister is the head of the Parliamentary Government with a Senate (or Upper House) and a House of Assembly (Lower House).

Queen Elizabeth II is the Head of State, represented by a Bahamian governor-general. The prime minister is the head of government and is the leader of the party with the most seats in the elected House of Assembly. The current governor-general is Arthur Dion Hanna and the current prime minister is Hubert Alexander Ingraham. The upper house (the Senate) is appointed. Executive power is exercised by the cabinet. Legislative power is vested in the two chambers of parliament.

Constitution and Civil Rights - Constitutional safeguards include freedom of speech, press, worship, movement, and association.

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Religion - The islands are predominantly Christian

Currency - The Bahamian dollar is the national currency. It is on par with, equivalent to, and interchangeable with the American dollar.



Infrastructure - The Bahamas has comprehensive and modern infrastructure, particularly on the two major islands, New Providence and Grand Bahama, where most of the population live. Electricity and water are in abundant supply.

Telecommunications services and facilities in The Bahamas are state-of-the-art, with direct international links provided through a 100% digital switching system.



Economy - The economy of The Bahamas is driven by tourism and international banking and other financial services. Retail and wholesale distributive trades, manufacturing, agriculture and fisheries are the other major sectors of the economy. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of The Bahamas exceeds \$3 billion, 60% of which comes from tourism related activities. The per capita income of the country is \$11,000. The Bahamas is an independent monetary entity. There are no income and corporate taxes in The Bahamas.

Immigration & Customs - All persons entering The Bahamas must produce identification in the form of either a valid passport or a notarized birth certificate accompanied by a picture ID. Citizens of certain countries, except the United States and Canada, may be required to obtain visas to enter. All foreigners entering the

Bahamas will be subject to a maximum stay and will be required to show a return ticket from the Bahamas. Persons may be subject to varying rates of duty on items being imported into The Bahamas. All persons departing the country pay a \$15 departure tax. Boating and fishing permits are granted for a small fee. An American may obtain a cruising permit which allows one way tickets to and from The Bahamas.



Arts, Crafts and Festivals - Bahamians are famous for making handcrafts which include basketry made from palm fronds. This material, commonly called "straw", is plaited into hats and bags that are popular tourist items.



Regattas are important social events in many family island settlements. They usually feature one or more days of sailing by old-fashioned work boats, as well as an onshore festival.

Some settlements have festivals associated with the traditional crop or food of that area, such as the "Pineapple Fest" in Gregory Town, Eleuthera or the "Crab Fest" on Andros. Other significant traditions include story telling.

Culture - Bahamian culture is a hybrid of African and European cultures and is related to other Creole culture. Though increasingly influenced by American music and television, Bahamian culture retains much of its uniqueness. Bahamians are known for their friendliness and warm hospitality.

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Food - The Bahamas are the delight of fresh seafood lovers who enjoy the bountifully rich treasures from the sea. Crawfish (local rock lobster) conch and fish such as Grouper, Yellow Tail and Red Snapper are local and tourist favorites.

Conch (pronounced 'konk'), is a mollusk (shell fish like an oyster), is a perennial local seafood favorite. Unlike the slippery oyster, the meat of conch is firm and white and is prepared in a variety of ways including conch chowder, conch stew, conch salad, popular conch fritters, and is also deep fried as "cracked conch".



Wildlife – The Bahamas is renowned for its migration of Flamingos and it's surrounding shores boast some of the most fertile areas in the world for marine life. In particular, The Bahamas is famous for its abundant population of billfish such as Marlin, Swordfish and Sailfish where many world records have been established.



Activities - The Bahamas provides visitors many things to do both on land and on the water. Activities on land include horseback riding, fine dining, spa visits, shopping, golfing, gambling, sight seeking, ecotourism and many others. Activities on water include fishing, swimming, scuba diving, snorkeling, boating and relaxing on the beach.

The Bahamas is world renowned for its wild dolphin excursions as the waters of the Bahamas boast one of the largest populations of indigenous dolphin pods in the world.



History - The Bahamas were first discovered by European settlers in 1492 as Christopher Columbus made his maiden voyage to the new world in search of gold and treasure.

When Columbus reached the Bahamas the islands were inhabited by the indigenous Lucayan people who were described by the Spanish as "peaceful". In 1648 the Bahamas were first settled by the British and in 1670 King Charles II, king of England, granted the islands to the Lords Proprietors of the Carolinas, who rented the islands from the king to be used for trading.



During proprietary rule, the Bahamas became a haven for pirates, including the infamous Blackbeard. To restore orderly government, the Bahamas was made a British crown colony in 1718 in part to suppress the treachery committed by these renegades.

In 1973 the Bahamas became fully independent, but retained membership in the Commonwealth of Nations, which it still remains. Today the Bahamas is a place for treasure seekers and adventurers looking for buried treasure left behind by the Pirates.