

NORTH AMERICA · BEACHES · ISLANDS · DIVING · WILDLIFE



Bahamas

Some 700 islands and thousands of cays are strewn across the shallow Bahama Banks, whose water is about as clear as the Atlantic gets: swimming pigs and rock iguanas in the Exumas, pink sand on Harbour Island, blue holes off Andros. Nassau has the forts, the cruise ships and the nightlife; the Out Islands move at the pace of the weekly mailboat.



Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Bahamas and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 28 May 2026.

 CAPITAL Nassau	 CURRENCY Bahamian dollar (BSD) £1 ≈ BSD 1.34	 LANGUAGE English, Bahamian Creole	 BEST TIME Dec–Apr
 DAILY BUDGET £90–£450 £££ Expensive	 PLUGS Type A, B 120V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 9h 40m direct ~£550–£1,050 return	 TIME ZONE UTC-5 standard time

The Bahamas is an archipelago rather than a single destination, and the island you choose shapes everything. Most trips start on New Providence, where Nassau holds nearly three-quarters of the population, the main international flights and the cruise terminal, with Paradise Island's resorts across the bridge. From there the Out Islands (also called the Family Islands) fan out: the Exumas for sailing and sandbars, Eleuthera and Harbour Island for pink-tinged beaches and clapboard villages, Andros for bonefishing and blue holes, the Abacos for boating. Grand Bahama, close to Florida, is a separate hub. A first visit usually pairs a few nights in Nassau with one or two Out Islands reached by short flight or ferry.

This is one of the most expensive places to travel in the Caribbean region. Almost everything is imported, so groceries, restaurant meals and rooms cost more than in the UK, and Out Island lodges often charge Florida prices for simple accommodation. The reward is space: away from Nassau and the big resorts you can have a beach, a reef or a sandbar largely to yourself. It suits divers, sailors, anglers and couples far better than backpackers. Visitors are often surprised by how British the place still feels, with driving on the left, a Westminster-style parliament and Anglican churches in every settlement, and by how cool winter evenings can be when a cold front blows through.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

WILDLIFE

Exuma Cays and Pig Beach

A 120-mile chain of cays and sandbars best explored by boat from Staniel Cay or George Town: the swimming pigs of Big Major Cay, Thunderball Grotto's snorkel cave and the protected Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park.
- 2

BEACH

Harbour Island's Pink Sands Beach

Three miles of blush-pink sand on the Atlantic side of a tiny island off Eleuthera, coloured by crushed foraminifera shells. Dunmore Town's clapboard cottages and golf-cart lanes show the Bahamas at its most polished.

3

NATURE

Andros blue holes and barrier reef

The largest Bahamian island is mostly mangrove, pine forest and tidal creek, pocked with inland and ocean blue holes. Offshore runs one of the world's longest barrier reefs, and the flats draw anglers chasing bonefish.

4

HISTORY

Historic Nassau

Climb the Queen's Staircase, cut from limestone by enslaved labourers in the 1790s, to Fort Fincastle, then walk down past Parliament Square's pink buildings to Bay Street and the Pompey Museum of Slavery and Emancipation.

5

NATURE

Lucayan National Park

Grand Bahama's best day out: boardwalks through mangroves to the wide tidal flats of Gold Rock Beach, and two caves opening onto about 10km of charted underwater passages, where ancient Lucayan burials were found.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Nassau

≈ 297,000 people

The capital spreads across New Providence: colonial Bay Street, pastel government buildings, hilltop forts and the Fish Fry at Arawak Cay. Worth two days, ideally away from cruise-ship peak hours.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Freeport

≈ 27,000 people

Grand Bahama's planned free-trade city, founded in the 1950s, is quieter and cheaper than Nassau and a handy base for Lucayan National Park and the beaches and dive sites of Lucaya.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Marsh Harbour

≈ 6,000 people

The Abacos' boating hub was flattened by Hurricane Dorian in 2019 and has been rebuilding since; most visitors pass through for ferries to Hope Town on Elbow Cay and to Man-O-War Cay.

Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

When to go to Bahamas

Best time: **Dec–Apr.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

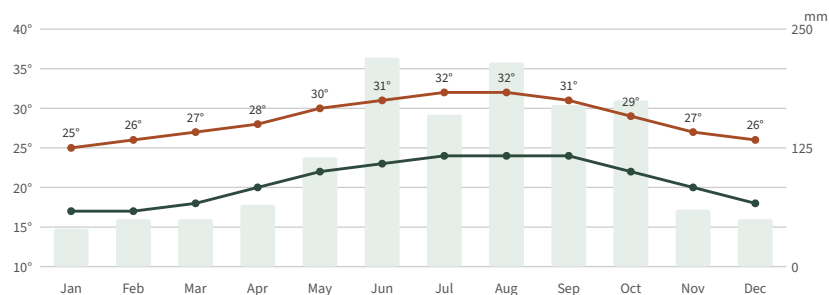
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Nassau

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Jan, Dec	Junkanoo Nassau's Bay Street fills in the small hours of Boxing Day and New Year's Day as rival groups parade in vast crêpe-paper costumes to goatskin drums, cowbells and horns.
Apr	National Family Island Regatta George Town in the Exumas hosts the country's traditional wooden sloops, built and crewed by Bahamians, for several days of racing and partying in late April.
Jul	Independence Day 10 July marks independence from Britain in 1973 with church services, fireworks and Junkanoo rush-outs in Nassau and across the islands.

How much does Bahamas cost?

SHOESTRING £90 per person / day ≈ BSD 120 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £210 per person / day ≈ BSD 281 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £450 per person / day ≈ BSD 601 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Conch salad Raw queen conch diced and 'cooked' in lime and sour orange juice with onion, tomato and hot peppers, made to order at the Arawak Cay Fish Fry and waterside shacks.	Peas 'n' rice Pigeon peas and rice cooked with salt pork, tomato and thyme: the side that comes with almost every Bahamian plate, from fried snapper to steamed conch.	Guava duff The classic Bahamian pudding: dough swirled with guava, rolled, boiled or steamed in a cloth, and served in slices with a sweet butter sauce, often laced with rum.
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Getting around

Bahamasair and small regional airlines link Nassau with most inhabited islands, and Bahamas Ferries' boats reach Eleuthera, Harbour Island and several other islands. Slower government mailboats leave Potter's Cay for almost everywhere, cheaply but unpredictably. In Nassau, jitney minibuses run fixed routes by day; taxi fares are set by zone, so agree the price before setting off. On the Out Islands, hire a car or golf cart, and remember to drive on the left.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE   A B 120V — bring a UK-to-A/B adapter	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Telephone: 911 or 919 (ambulance, fire, police) Source: FCDO “Getting help”
DIALLING CODE +1-242	TIME ZONE UTC-5 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Varies — bottled or filtered is safer

DRIVING

On the left

TIPPING

Restaurants and hotels often add a 15% gratuity to the bill, so check before adding more; tip taxi drivers, guides and boat crews around 15%.

ETIQUETTE

Courtesy matters: open with 'good morning' or 'good afternoon' before any question. Keep swimwear for the beach, and expect quiet Sundays, with many Out Island shops closed.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Lynden Pindling International Airport (NAS), Nassau; Exuma International Airport (GGT), George Town; Grand Bahama International Airport (FPO), Freeport

Visas & entry for Bahamas

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can usually stay in The Bahamas for up to 30 days without a visa. You can get extensions up to a maximum of 8 months. Penalties for overstaying include a fine, detention and deportation. The Bahamas High Commission lists more information about visas.

If you arrive in The Bahamas from the USA, and you have an Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA), the time you spend in The Bahamas counts towards the 90 days you have on your ESTA. If you are in any doubt about your US visa status, ask the US Immigration and Naturalization Service or any US diplomatic mission before starting your return journey.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Dengue

Bat Lyssavirus

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever certificate is only required if you arrive from (or transit through) a country with yellow fever risk — not if you fly direct from the UK.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Bahamas

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Sat 26 Dec 2026	Boxing Day
Mon 28 Dec 2026	Boxing Day (observed)
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Sun 10 Jan 2027	Majority Rule Day
Mon 11 Jan 2027	Majority Rule Day (observed)
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Mon 17 May 2027	Whit Monday
Fri 4 Jun 2027	Randol Fawkes Labour Day
Sat 10 Jul 2027	Independence Day
Mon 12 Jul 2027	Independence Day (observed)
Mon 2 Aug 2027	Emancipation Day
Mon 11 Oct 2027	National Heroes Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Know before you go

- The Bahamian dollar is pegged one-to-one to the US dollar and the two are used interchangeably, so bring US dollars rather than buying Bahamian notes; change often comes back mixed.
- Nassau often has several cruise ships in port at once. Check the day's schedule and explore Bay Street and the forts early or late, when passengers are back on board.
- Hurricane season runs from June to November, peaking from August to October; if travelling then, buy insurance that covers storm disruption and check the FCDO travel advice.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.