

Did You Know?

Fun Facts About the Bahamas

- In 1492, Christopher Columbus made his first landfall in the New World on the island of San Salvador. His remark "baja mar" — translated as shallow water or sea — actually resulted in the area's name: "The Bahamas," islands of the shallow sea.
- The Bahamas has the largest assortment of vacation destinations in the tropics: 700 islands spanning more than 100,000 square miles of ocean.
- Islands of The Bahamas include: Nassau/Paradise Island, Grand Bahama Island, The Out Islands, The Abacos, Acklins/Crooked Island, Andros, The Berry Islands, Bimini, Cat Island, Eleuthera/Harbour Island, The Exumas, Inagua, Long Island, Mayaguana and San Salvador.
- The islands of The Bahamas are actually "cays" (pronounced "keys"), which comes from the Spanish word "cayo," meaning "island."
- The population of The Bahamas is a little more than 300,000.
- Seafood is a main staple of the Bahamian diet, featuring an array of fresh fish, Bahamian "rock lobster," and conch (pronounced "konk"), a type of mollusk with firm, peachy-white meat used in chowders, stews, salads and for conch fritters.
- Main exports include rum, crawfish and petroleum products.
- There are no rivers in The Bahamas but it is home to the world's third longest barrier reef.
- The world's longest known underwater cave and cavern system is found in Lucayan National Park on Grand Bahama Island.
- Bimini is the big game-fishing capital of the world and was home to Ernest Hemingway from 1935 to 1937.
- Great Inagua is a birdwatcher's paradise with the world's largest breeding colony of West Indian flamingos. Totalling more than 60,000 birds, the ratio of flamingos to people on Great Inagua is 61:1.

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- **Junkanoo** (which has been compared to Carnival in Rio and Mardi Gras in New Orleans) is a colorful and uniquely Bahamian parade, featuring lavishly costumed stilt walkers and musicians, held on Boxing Day (the day after Christmas) and New Year's Day.
- The Lucayan Indians were the original inhabitants who lived throughout The Bahamas from 900-1500 A.D.

More Fun Facts About The Bahamas

- The late 1600s through the early 1700s was the golden age of pirates. While Blackbeard and Calico Jack are commonly referenced, two notorious female pirates plundered right along with them. Anne Bonny and Mary Read sailed under pirate captain Calico Jack and were said to be as fierce as the men.
- The area's tourism industry began in the mid-19th century, yet while visiting in the 1760s, George Washington referred to The Bahamas as the "Isles of Perpetual June."
- During World War II The Bahamas served as an air and sea way-station in the Atlantic.
- In 1961 when Cuba was closed to American tourists, tourism in The Bahamas really began to flourish. Today tourism generates 50% of the total GDP and directly/indirectly employs half of the total workforce.
- The Bahama Islands became the free and sovereign Commonwealth of The Bahamas on July 10, 1973 ending 325 years of British rule.
- For more information about The Bahamas, visit www.bahamas.com, or call The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism toll-free, 1-800-Bahamas (1-800-224-2627).

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