

Scattered like precious jewels over 1,500 square miles of turquoise tropical sea at the top of the Caribbean just a hop off the Florida coast are a chain of around 700 islands, uninhabited cays and large rocks which make up The Bahamas.

The Bahamas is a developed, English-speaking Caribbean nation. The 300,000 people who live in The Bahamas are predominantly of West African descent. Their ancestors were slaves brought to the islands to work the cotton plantations until 1834, when Britain abolished slavery in all its territories. Most white residents of are descendants of the first English settlers, who emigrated from Bermuda in 1647 to gain religious freedom. Some are also related to the Loyalists who fled the southern United States during the American Revolution and built enormous plantations here.



After the abolition of slavery, life in the islands changed drastically. The plantations were dissolved, settlers turned to the bountiful sea (sponging and fishing) or tried to farm. The lack of fertile cropland prompted the islanders to become a nation of seafarers, and Bahamians used these skills to great advantage during the days of shipwrecking, gun running, and Prohibition.

With each island in The Bahamas offering something different, your best plan is to hop on a plane or push out a boat and visit as many as time allows. Sample city living, island-style, by spending time in cosmopolitan Nassau. If it's romantic seclusion you're after for your honeymoon, lie back and relax on the pristine white sand of Long Island's deserted beaches. If you're looking for adventure, exploring challenging wreck sites off the coast of San Salvador, snorkelling the clearest waters in the world or taking up the local sport of bonefishing. Get closer to nature and hop over to Inagua National Park to witness the unforgettable spectacle of nesting flamingos and other exotic wildlife. And if you've come in search of paradise, charter a sailboat and indulge in a blissfully tranquil voyage through the Exumas' 100 mile-long string of pristine cays.

Formed mainly of flat coral, with just a few gently rounded hills, the highest point in the entire archipelago is just 206 ft. But despite this shared topography, the character of each island is as individual as the 300,000 people who live here. And as unique as the holiday you'll enjoy here.



There isn't much that you can do on or in the water that you can't do in The Bahamas--these islands offer a smorgasbord for the land-weary.

Once ashore, explore the natural beauty of these islands by plane or by bicycle. Or enjoy a round of golf, a set of tennis, or a visit to any of the island's shopping arcades or casinos. And of course, if you prefer, there is always the old standby, relaxing on a beach, with a good book and a refreshing tropical drink.

Although you can find almost any kind of international food in the Bahamas from Sushi to Lasagna, some dishes are unique to the Islands of The Bahamas.

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



Other specialties include Bahamian stew fish (made with celery, onions, tomatoes, spices and fish), Bahamian crawfish, peas n' rice (consisting of pigeon peas with salt, pork or bacon, tomatoes, celery, rice, thyme and pepper) and Johnny cake (pan-cooked bread made with butter, milk, flour, sugar, salt and baking powder).

In general the weather is good all year and the trade winds ensure that the temperatures remain relatively mild. The rainy season extends from May to November when there is a slight chance of hurricanes. Peak season is between December and April. Generally the northern and western islands are cooler while the southern islands can get very hot in summer.