

# The Country of The Bahamas

Comprised of some 700 islands and more than 2,000 uninhabited cays, stretching 500 miles from north to south, the islands of the Bahamas are surrounded by perhaps the most stunning crystal clear water in the world due to the shallow depths. Excellent game fishing and scuba diving are the most popular sports and a number of the locations are only accessible from your Yachting Worldwide charter yacht.

Documented Bahamian history begins with the words, "Baja Mar," the name the Spanish bestowed on the islands. This term is misleading, however; it means "shallow sea," but the islands are really mountain plateaux that emerged from the Atlantic hundreds of thousands of years ago. As they grew, they hosted countless generations of coral, which today comprise the islands' limestone base.

The "Lukku-cairi" or island people, as they called themselves, were the first settlers. Originally from South America, they meandered up through the Caribbean and finally arrived in The Bahamas around the Ninth Century AD. Known as Arawaks, they are also called "Lucayans" and "Indians"- a label bestowed by Columbus, who mistakenly thought he found the East Indies when he dropped anchor in San Salvador in 1492.

The Abacos in the north retain the cultural flavour and architecture of its former British colonial life. Protected, pristine waters, pink sand beaches and pastel coloured cottages make this a delightful area for cruising. Grand Bahama Island features Freeport and Port Lucaya with a modern marina and dockside development.

The bustling city of Nassau boasts five star restaurants, resorts, casinos and superb duty free shopping. The outstanding resort of Atlantis on Paradise Island has an exquisite marina and has the largest aquarium in the world and features a water slide through shark tanks.

The lower Bahamas stretch for hundreds of miles from the Exumas island chain to Great Inagua where you will find clear waters, tranquil anchorages and deserted beaches. Arawak Indians inhabited the islands when Christopher Columbus first set foot in the New World on San Salvador in 1492. British settlement of the islands began in 1647; the islands became a colony in 1783. Since attaining independence from the UK in 1973, The Bahamas have prospered through tourism and international banking and investment management. Because of its geography, the country is a major transshipment point for illegal drugs, particularly shipments to the US, and its territory is used for smuggling illegal migrants into the US.

The Bahamas is a stable, developing nation with an economy heavily dependent on tourism and offshore banking. Tourism alone accounts for more than 60% of

GDP and directly or indirectly employs half of the archipelago's labor force. Steady growth in tourism receipts and a boom in construction of new hotels, resorts, and residences had led to solid GDP growth in recent years, but the slowdown in the US economy and the attacks of 11 September 2001 held back growth in these sectors in 2002. Manufacturing and agriculture together contribute approximately a tenth of GDP and show little growth, despite government incentives aimed at those sectors. Overall growth prospects in the short run rest heavily on the fortunes of the tourism sector, which depends on growth in the US, the source of most of the visitors.

The Bahamas, a yachts dream lies less than 50 miles off the Florida coast, charter from any of our bases in Florida and you can be sailing on the crystal clear waters off the Bahamas to Bimini yachtsman's who have made the short shot across the gulf stream have only have a hint of what lies ahead. Stretching to the southeast for nearly 700 miles are countless tropical isles and deserted cays that takes your breath away.

The Bahamas flag three equal horizontal bands of aquamarine (top), gold, and aquamarine, with a black equilateral triangle based on the hoist side.

The sailing in the Bahamas has been called, some of the world finest. The Berry Island, Eleuthera harbour island Spanish wells and Abacos are just a few of the spectacular destination easily accessible. tropical marine; moderated by warm waters of the Gulf Stream.

The Bahamas, 21 districts; Acklins and Crooked Islands, Bimini, Cat Island, Exuma, Freeport, Fresh Creek, Governor's Harbour, Green Turtle Cay, Harbour Island, High Rock, Inagua, Kemps Bay, Long Island, Marsh Harbour, Mayaguana, New Providence, Nichollstown and Berry Islands, Ragged Island, Rock Sound, Sandy Point, San Salvador and Rum Cay

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### **Acklins/Crooked Islands**

Columbus is alleged to have come to the area looking for gold but the only "treasure" he found was the jasmine-like fragrance in the air. Acklins at 120 feet is rocky and steep. Crooked Island's 92 square miles is mainly comprised of tidal flats and deep creeks.

### **Berry Islands**

Lying in a long lacy line, this group of 30 cays covers an area of 12 sq. miles. With names like Fish Cay, Bird Cay, Frozen Cay, Whale Cay and Little Whale Cay, it's little wonder they are second only to the Biminis as a haven for sports fishing. Their seclusion, beautiful beaches and surrounding waters also make the islands a popular retreat for yachtsmen. Only a few of the islands have a permanent population.

### **Andros**

As the largest and least-explored island in the Bahamas, Andros offers a wide variety of activities for just about everyone. This 2,300-square-mile island paradise is not only known as the bonefishing capital of the world, but also boasts the second-largest reef in the Northern Hemisphere, and is home to the oldest dive resort in the world.

It is flat (except for the east coast) and marked by numerous inlets and inland lakes teeming with fish. The landscape includes extensive virgin pine, palm and mahogany forests, scrub and mangrove swamps with large colonies of seabirds.

### **Bimini Islands**

Being the closest of the Bahamas islands to the East Coast of Florida, has made the Bimini Islands a popular destination for American yachtsmen. But it's more than just location that makes it a hot attraction.

A tiny group of islands, consisting of North and South Bimini, Cat Cay and Gun Cay, they are located 50 miles east of Miami, Florida, on the edge of the Gulf Stream (deep-sea fishing territory) with the Great Bahama Bank (bonefish haunt) at the back door. The waters of this little chunk of the Bahamas spawn some of the largest game fish in the world. The Bimini Islands are known the world over for top big-game fishing.

## Cat Island

This is one of the most beautiful, fertile islands in the Bahamas and boasts the highest elevation of them all with Mt. Alvernia at 206 feet. Its 150 square miles are covered with rolling hills of dense green forests and uncounted miles of magnificent beaches. Still very much enmeshed in the past, evidence of Cat Island's early Indian cultures and Loyalist plantations abounds throughout the island.

## Eleuthera

Miles of glistening pink and white sand beaches, serene colonial villages and rolling acres of pineapple plantations make Eleuthera Island an island of the most casual sophistication. Harbour Island reminds many visitors of a miniature Bermuda with its Georgian architecture and fabulous beaches of coral pink sand.

Here, the roots of modern Bahamian history were planted by the "Eleutheran Adventurers," who established what was probably the first true democracy in the western world more than 300 years ago. Much of the early colonial atmosphere is preserved in the tiny fishing villages and sprawling farming areas. The island is 110 miles long and only two miles wide along most of its length. Just offshore, as well as Harbour Island, you will find Spanish Wells (where pirates and others found fresh water).

## The Exumas

The Exumas were settled in 1783 by American Loyalists who wanted to remain true to the British king after the United States won the American Revolutionary War. They reassembled their former way of life in these islands, complete with cotton plantations and African slaves. Remnants of these plantations still remain. Lord John Rolle was a major landowner and one of the most powerful Loyalists. When he freed his slaves in 1835, he bequeathed his land to them for life. In gratitude, several towns are named after him and many of the people in The Exumas wear the name of "Rolle" with pride.

Stretching for 130 sq. miles, and located in the middle of the Bahamas, these islands offer remarkable cruising and are known by yachtsmen as the "Sailing Capital of the Bahamas." There are 365 cays and islands stretching over 120 miles, with pure sand beaches, isolated anchorages and landlocked harbours. Variety and adventure mark every mile. Some islands are merely a pile of sand in the sea; others are high-cliffed and forested. The two main islands are Great and Little Exuma, but most of the cays are uninhabited.

These islands are home to giant iguanas. Fascinating to watch, you can catch the moment on camera as you feed them, while for the fainter hearted the quaint, brightly coloured houses of Staniel Cay make for equally compelling photo opportunities. In Sampson Cay, there is a pristine underwater park for snorkelling and diving. Head for Warderick Wells Cay or steer a course towards Highbourne

Cay for world-class diving and to explore surface coral wrecks, or simply find one of the world's best beaches, lie back, and relax.

### **Grand Bahamas**

The flavour of Grand Bahama Island is a combination of the exciting, modern commercial and resort centre of Freeport/Lucaya and forgotten sleepy villages and historical towns like West End and McLeans Town. Freeport/Lucaya, a man-made miracle, is the nation's second city. It evolved from an area of wilderness, and was tamed and transformed into a holiday mecca for those seeking to indulge their sporting nature, whether on land or sea.

Grand Bahama Island is an ecological wonder waiting to be discovered. Endless beaches, emerald green water, charming fishing villages and enchanting marine life are just some of the Island's attractions that make this a unique destination for the yachtsman.

### **Inagua**

Lying the farthest south in the Bahamas, it covers 645 sq. miles and comprises the islands of Great and Little Inagua. The terrain here is wild and desolate, with a desert-like climate. Great Inagua is famous for its extensive salt production. A large part of the land is a protected park - a sanctuary and breeding territory for over 80,000 West Indian flamingos, the national bird of the Bahamas.

### **LONG ISLAND**

This paradise lives up to its name, with a length of 60 miles and an area of 230 sq. miles. It is alternately hilly and punctuated with numerous limestone caves that descend beneath the sea, marshy with brackish flatlands perfect for salt production, or expansive with sloping, perfect white beaches laid out in the sun. It is an island known for its carefree air, where residents place emblems high on the houses to ward off evil spirits.

Mayaguana Island, an Arawak Indian name, is the least developed and most isolated of the family of islands. Mayaguana is a perfect stop for sailing enthusiasts, with several good harbours and anchorages, great fishing, shelling and swimming. Walking through the villages is another favourite pastime, where there is much local colour to enjoy in the charming cottages and people.

With unspoiled beaches and excellent scuba diving and fishing, Mayaguana Island offers a quiet and relaxing getaway for yachtsmen.

### **Nassau/Paradise Island**

Come visit the jewel of the Bahamas - Nassau/Paradise Island. As the cultural, social, political and economic centre of The Bahamas, it is the most visited destination in the islands. Nassau/Paradise Island has much to offer yachtsmen. There are more sights and activities here than you can experience in one visit.

Economically the most important island of the Bahamas, and home to its capital, Nassau, the seat of government. Nassau is a sophisticated, charming old town built on a sun-splashed hillside overlooking the sea. It was founded in 1670 and rapidly grew as the centre of commerce for the islands due to its protected harbour with fine anchorages. Nassau/Paradise Island also includes the resort areas of Cable Beach and Paradise Island. Within its 80 sq. miles live 171,542 people--about 60% of the Bahamian population.

On beautiful Paradise Island you'll discover the recently created wonderland of Atlantis - the epitome of the Bahamas both in its natural and its man-made attractions. During the day it will dazzle you as you wander through its dry aquarium tunnels, encircled by a myriad tropical fish, while at night the flash of neon lights will entice you into some of the Caribbean's most spectacular casinos, restaurants and bars. After some fast-living fun here and at nearby Nassau - a pirates' haunt several centuries ago and now the fashionable capital of the Bahamas - Allan's Cay makes a refreshing contrast.

### **Ragged Island**

Covering an area of 15 square miles, the sickle-shaped Ragged Island Range stretches from the Jumento Cays at the southern tip of The Exumas curves east, then south down to Great Ragged Island with its main settlement of Duncan Town. It is a very dry, wild, windswept place, surrounded by a treacherous sea. Ragged Islanders are in much demand for their skills in navigating these shoals; their chief occupations are shipping, fishing and making handicrafts.

### **Rum Cay**

The "Sleeping Beauty" of The Bahamas, with its historic Loyalist cotton plantation ruins and Indian artefacts, lovely rolling hills, golden beaches and necklace of coral reefs encircling its shores. Originally named Santa Maria de la Conception by Columbus, Rum Cay is supposed to have derived its present name from the wreck upon its shore of a West Indian rumrunner laden with the commodity. Port Nelson, a sheltered harbour on the south coast, is the only settlement. The island is 10 miles long and 5 miles wide and has fewer than 100 inhabitants.

### **San Salvador**

Christopher Columbus made this tiny, 63-square-mile area, originally called "Guanahani," the most historically important island of The Bahamas. He made first landfall here in 1492 and no less than four separate monuments mark the exact spot where Columbus came ashore! San Salvador Island still remains largely cloaked in its past amongst scattered Loyalists' plantation ruins and interesting relics and artefacts from Indian relics. The population makes a living by fishing and farming.