

# Directory

## CONTENTS

Accommodations	270
Activities	272
Business Hours	276
Children	276
Climate Charts	277
Customs	278
Dangers and Annoyances	278
Disabled Travelers	279
Embassies & Consulates	279
Festivals & Events	279
Food & Drink	281
Gay & Lesbian Travelers	281
Holidays	281
Insurance	282
Internet Access	282
Legal Matters	282
Money	282
Post	283
Telephone	283
Shopping	284
Tourist Information	285
Visas	285
Women Travelers	286

## ACCOMMODATIONS

With a fantastic range of cheerful little cottages, welcoming inns, stylish condos, excellent hotels and all-inclusive resorts, the Bahamian, Turks and Caicos Islands cater for most tastes, if not for all budgets! You may come across some very scary and often unjustified high rates when checking out accommodation, as many hotels of similar price vary dramatically in ambience and value.

Room taxes can be around 12% and, to add insult to injury, surcharges can hike up your bill by another 10% to 30%. These miscellaneous charges will be described as an energy surcharge, a 'resort levy,' or a per-diem fee for housekeeping service. The housekeeping service charge is legal, but the energy tab is left over from the oil crisis days of the mid-'70s and is definitely illegitimate. Check whether the service charges and taxes are per room or per person (even couples and

children sharing rooms can sometimes be charged individually). Charges may also be added for credit-card payments.

Most hotels also have a price system tiered into peak- and low-season rates. Low or off season (summer) is usually mid-April to mid-December; high or peak season (winter) is the remainder of the year, when hotel prices increase by 25% to 50% or more.

Now for the good news: the off-season (or summer) encompasses many months of great weather, and during this time virtually all accommodation rates drop anywhere from 25% to 60%. During these times even the top-end hotels are usually looking to fill their rooms and may be affordable. So although this region is pricey, it is possible to find value-for-money lodgings and even some great bargains.

Even during peak times, many of the quieter accommodations offer some amazing specials. Your best bet is to contact the hotels directly by telephone and via their websites. These discounts and special website offers can save up to 30% on the book price and many need to be booked online.

Additionally, small guesthouses, hotels or units where Bahamians stay when they're on holiday are normally advertised in local newspapers or in grocery stores.

Similarly, diving and fishing fans should check out the very good-value diving and fishing packages on many islands.

Rental properties shared by at least four people can also bring the rates down a fair bit, and there are some really terrific self-contained condos, apartments and villas in which to stay, especially on the cays.

## Rates

The listings in the sleeping sections of this guidebook come in three broad categories of 'budget', 'midrange' and 'top end'. We haven't included either taxes or hotel surcharges in our listings, unless they are included in the rates, which we have indicated. Rates for all budgets are generally for two people. In high season, decent budget rooms are around \$65 to \$80 a night, but a few bargains can be found. Midrange hotels will usually cost \$110 to \$180 (with \$120 to

## PRACTICALITIES

### Newspapers

- Daily New Providence newspapers include the morning's *Nassau Guardian* and the afternoon's *Tribune* as well as the *Bahama Journal*. The tabloids *Punch* and *Confidential Source* are published weekly. Grand Bahama has the daily *Freeport News* and twice-monthly *Freeport Times*. Abaconians read the weekly *Abaconian* and *Abaco Journal*.
- There are two newspapers in the Turks and Caicos: the biweekly *Free Press* and the weekly *Turks and Caicos News*.

### Magazines

- A number of free magazines on the Bahamas are published locally. *Island Scene* is the official magazine of the Bahamas; also look for *Destination Bahamas* and *Getaway Magazine*.
- The Turks and Caicos has the free *Times of the Islands*, *Where, When, How: Turks & Caicos Islands*, the monthly *Discover Turks & Caicos* and the evocatively named quarterly *S3 Sand Sea Serenity*.

### Radio & TV

- The government-owned Bahamas Broadcasting Corporation operates TV Channel 13 (ZNS) and radio stations ZNS-1, ZNS-2, ZNS-FM and ZNS-3. Commercial radio stations include Love 97FM, More 94.9FM and Jamz 100FM. Most hotels also offer American cable TV.
- The official Turks and Caicos government radio station is Radio Turks and Caicos (106FM) on Grand Turk. There are several private stations. For contemporary light rock, try 92.5FM. You'll find country and western on 90.5FM, easy-listening music on 89.3FM, and classical music on 89.9FM. WPRT at 88.7FM is a religious and public announcement channel, as is WIV at 96.7FM. Multichannel satellite TV is received from the US and Canada. The islands have one private TV station.

### Video Systems

- VHS is the standard, and tapes can be bought in photo supply shops but prices are significantly higher than you may be used to in North America or Europe.

### Electricity

- Hotels operate on 110v (60 cycles), as in the USA and Canada. Plug sockets are two- or three-pin US standard.

### Weights & Measures

- The British Imperial and metric systems are both in use. Liquids are generally measured in pints, quarts and gallons, and weight in grams, ounces and pounds.

\$150 being the average). Upscale resorts will cost from \$180 to \$500 per night as a standard, and above that, the stars are the limit.

Prices in the guidebook refer to room only, or European Plan (EP). Some hotels will quote rates as Continental Plan (CP; room and breakfast), Modified American Plan (MAP; room plus breakfast and dinner) or American Plan (AP; room plus all-inclusive meals).

## Accommodation Websites

Aside from the ones listed below, check out the Internet Resources section on p14 to find useful accommodation links.

**Abaco Real Estate Agency** ([www.abacobahamas.com](http://www.abacobahamas.com))

**Bahama Houseboats** ([www.bahamahouseboats.com](http://www.bahamahouseboats.com))

**Island Dreams Rentals** ([www.islanddreamrentals.com](http://www.islanddreamrentals.com))

**Prestigious Properties** ([www.prestigiousproperties.com](http://www.prestigiousproperties.com))

**Provo.net** ([www.provo.net](http://www.provo.net))

**Rent-a-Home International** ([www.rentavilla.com](http://www.rentavilla.com))

**Turks & Caicos Real Estate Association** (www.tcrealestate.com) Lists all the real-estate agencies, most of which will arrange rental properties.

**Turks & Caicos Realty** (www.tcrealty.com)

**VHR Worldwide** (www.hideaways.com)

**Abaco Bahamas Hideaway** (www.oii.net) Contains Abaco boat rental and accommodation information.

## Camping

The Bahamas does not encourage campers. Camping on the beaches is illegal and there are no official campsites, even in wilderness areas. However, many land and sea parks contain cays that are perfect for pitching a tent. Do check which cays are the best for camping with the park operators (see Environment, p37) as some cays may be out of bounds as they contain nesting or breeding species. A few charter companies and activity operators will rent out basic camping equipment, but don't count on finding rental gear easily.

## Guesthouses

These are the accommodations of choice for Bahamians when traveling. Usually they're small, no-frills, family-run properties. Standards and prices vary enormously. Some are exquisite, with a live-in owner who provides breakfast and sometimes dinner onsite. Some are self-contained apartments, while others are indistinguishable from hotels or motels. In New Providence the *Nassau Guardian* and *Tribune* newspapers list guesthouses under 'Guesthouse' and 'Boarding Accommodation' headings in their classified-ad sections. On other islands check both the local newspapers and grocery stores.

## Homestays & Home Exchanges

Try contacting the following organizations to see if there are any suitable homestays. You gain access to the database upon paying a fee.

**Homestay Finder** (www.homestayfinder.com)

**World Homestays** (www.worldhomestays.com)

Another option is to exchange homes with a family in the Bahamas. These private organizations have databases on available homes around the world. Again, you gain access to the database upon paying a fee.

**HomeExchange.com** (www.homeexchange.com)

**Homelink International** (www.homelink.org.uk)

**Intervac** (www.intervac-online.com)

## Hotels

Bahamian hotels run the gamut, but it is unwise to rely solely on a hotel's brochure or promotional literature. The following associations do not represent all hoteliers and other accommodation owners and tourism service providers on the islands, but can help with information on their members' properties.

**Bahamas Hotel Association** (☎ 242-322-8381; fax 242-326-5346; W Bay St, Nassau)

**Turks & Caicos Hotel Association** (☎ 649-941-5787; www.ttcimall.tc/tcresorts; Ports of Call, Providence)

## Rental Accommodations

The Bahamian, Turks and Caicos Islands and their cays have great private cottages, apartments, condos and houses available for rent. These properties range from modest units at \$850 to lavish villas at \$12,000 and more per week. Affordable, charming one- or two-bedroom cottages rent from \$1,400 and three-bedroom houses from \$1,800 per week. Rates can fall as much as 30% in summer (May to November). Check the websites listed earlier or the links to real-estate agencies from the websites listed on p14. Also try the classified-ad sections of *Caribbean Travel & Life* (www.caribbeantravelmag.com) and *Islands* (www.islands.com) magazines.

Many condos are attached to resort hotels to which you have access. These self-contained, fully furnished apartments are normally timeshare properties with a fully equipped kitchen (some have only a kitchenette), and some will also have their own swimming pool, tennis court or boat jetty or all three. Check for incidentals costs.

## Resorts

All-inclusive resorts are cash-free, village resorts or self-contained hotels; you pay a set price and (theoretically) nothing more once you set foot inside. Take care when choosing a resort. Many properties have jumped onto the 'all-inclusive' bandwagon for marketing purposes. In reality you'll have to pay for booze and some extras, such as scuba-diving. Check carefully for hidden charges for water sports, laundry, and other activities or services not included in the price. Rates begin at about \$230 per day.

## ACTIVITIES

The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands have a range of sports and special-interest

activities for those who get a bit restless after lying around on a beach for an hour or two. Anything to do with these gloriously warm and brilliantly colored seas is a particular delight, and easy to arrange. The island chapters have more specific information, including details on sites of particular interest for each activity and contact information for local activity tour-operators.

## Bicycling

Few people explore the islands by bicycle, but the relative flatness of the islands would seem to be ideal for biking. Many hotels and concessions rent bicycles (\$12 to \$20 per day). Some places have mountain bikes, but most have heavy single-gear beach cruisers, which are definitely *not* for touring.

Grand Bahama hosts the Tour de Freeport 100-mile road race in spring.

## Bird-Watching

The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands are heaven for bird-watchers (see Environment p38). More than two dozen reserves in the Bahamas protect more than 230 bird species, including West Indian flamingos and Bahama parrots.

The **Bahamas National Trust** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-393-1317; fax 242-393-4978; Village Rd, Nassau; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) offers guided bird-watching walks regularly and has information on the wonderful species that visit or live on these isles.

A list of all the Bahamian Wild Bird Reserves is obtainable from the **Department of Agriculture** (☎ 242-325-7413; fax 242-325-3960; Levy Bldg, E Bay St, Nassau).

Also contact the **Bahamas Ornithology Group** (☎ 242-393-1317) for news on further bird-watching activities.

In the Turks and Caicos, the **Department of Environment & Coastal Resources** (Grand Turk ☎ 649-946-2855; fax 649-946-1895; ccr@tcitway.tc; Providenciales ☎ 649-946-4017; fax 649-941-3063; South Caicos ☎ /fax 649-946-3306) administers 23 national parks and nature reserves.

For information on the Ramsar wetlands in North, Middle and East Caicos, contact **Turks & Caicos National Trust** (TCNT; ☎ 649-941-5710; tc.natrust@tcitway.tc; PO Box 540, Providenciales, Caicos).

## Boating & Sailing

With more than 3000 islands and cays scattered over 100,000 sq miles of ocean, the

region is a boater's dream. Indispensable guidebooks are the *2004 Yachtsman's Guide to The Bahamas and Turks & Caicos*, edited by Tom Daly, and *Explorer Chartbook: Far Bahamas, Explorer Chartbook: Near Bahamas and Explorer Chartbook: Exumas*, written by Monty and Sara Lewis. These give details on cruising permits and customs regulations, plus a list of designated ports of entry.

Favored areas in the Bahamas are the protected waters of the Sea of Abaco (between Great Abaco and the Abaco Cays) and Exuma Sound and Exuma Cays Land & Sea Park. Both are good for beginning sailors, as the waters are shallow and sheltered, and land is always within sight.

The Turks and Caicos also offer excellent boating and sailing opportunities.

## BOAT CHARTERS

Experienced sailors and novices can charter sailboats, yachts and cruisers by the day or week. Most marinas offer boats with a skipper and crew, as well as 'bareboat' vessels on which you're your own skipper. You'll need to be a certified sailor to charter bareboat; usually you'll have to demonstrate proficiency before being able to sail away. All boats are stocked with linens and other supplies.

Charters can be arranged at most major hotels or by calling a local charter company. Many individuals offer sportfishing, but will happily take you exploring, diving and snorkeling. They charge anything from \$350 to \$500 per half-day, \$600 to \$1000 per day.

In the Turks and Caicos chartered trips range from \$400/\$700 per half-day/full day and cruisers from \$500/\$1050 per half/full day for up to eight people.

Bareboat charters are usually by the week; prices begin at \$1200, depending on size. Crewed charters often cost about double that. Skippers can be hired for about \$400 a day. See Activities sections in the island chapters for details on local charter companies.

Most resorts provide small sailboats called Sunfish, either as part of the hotel package rate or for an hourly rental fee. You also can rent motorboats, from small fry such as Boston Whalers to giant luxury cruisers with price tags to match, from local marinas.

## BOAT EXCURSIONS

Boat excursions for all sorts of activities abound, whether your thing is fishing, sailing,

kayaking, sightseeing or simply lazing on a boat sipping rum punch while someone else does all the hard work.

Fast-ferry trips from Nassau are a cheap and fast way to get to a few of the Family Islands, and a great day out. Tickets start from \$75 one way.

Day excursions are priced from about \$85 to \$180 depending upon your activities.

## Caving

The islands are honeycombed with dozens of limestone caverns, many only partially explored and mapped. In some, Lucayan Indian petroglyphs add to the allure. Many caves are also roosts for harmless bats. Use extreme caution if you're exploring without a guide.

Grand Bahama has the world's longest cave system in Lucayan National Park. Permits are required to dive these caves, while sightseeing adventure excursions are available. The Turks and Caicos also have plenty of caves, notably Conch Bar Caves National Park on Middle Caicos, a 15-mile-long system full of stalactites and stalagmites. A few tour operators offer day-long cave excursions here. Refer to the islands' Activities sections for operators details.

Also see the Blue Holes boxed text on p49 for a different type of caving.

## Diving & Snorkeling

These are the region's headline acts. The range of sites means that both novice and experienced divers and snorkelers can enjoy these waters and their exotic occupants. See the Activities sections in each island chapter, plus the Diving chapter (p45), for details on key dive and snorkel sites and local operators.

It's possible to walk off a beach on the islands and be within yards of precious living coral teeming with fish. There is a range of operators that will take snorkelers out to a variety of sites. You may be reminded by the captains not to touch the coral. Don't take offence, as a mere tap with your fins is enough to kill whole sections of the reef, which then has the domino effect of wiping out the area's marine and fish life.

If you intend to do a lot of snorkeling or diving, it is worth bringing your own mask, snorkel and fins, otherwise it is \$10 per day to hire the equipment.

## DIVING ORGANIZATIONS

The following organizations are good to know:

**Divers Alert Network** (DAN; US ☎ 919-684-2948;

www.diversalertnetwork.org; Peter B Bennett Center, 6 W Colony Place, Durham, NC 27705, USA) Offers divers' health insurance, covering evacuation and emergency treatment.

**National Association of Underwater Instructors** (NAUI; US ☎ 813-628-6284; www.naui.org; 1232 Tech Blvd, Tampa, FL 33619-2667, USA)

**Professional Association of Diving Instructors** (PADI; US ☎ 949-858-7234; www.padi.com; 30151 Tomas St, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688-2125, USA)

## RECOMPRESSION CHAMBERS

There are two of these in the Bahamas.

**Club Med Columbus Isle resort** (☎ 242-331-2000; www.clubmed.com; San Salvador)

**Underwater Explorers Society** (UNEXSO; ☎ 242-373-1244; www.unexo.com; Port Lucaya Marina, Freeport, Grand Bahama)

In Turks and Caicos, there is a recompression chamber at **Associated Medical Practices Clinic** (☎ 649-946-4242; Leeward Hwy) on Provo.

## Dolphin Encounters

There are several outfits across the Bahamas that offer swimming with dolphins; details are included in the islands' Activities sections. Some high-profile international organizations point out the detrimental effects that these encounters have on the mammals and their lifespans. For more information please refer to the boxed text on dolphins in captivity (p81).

On North Bimini, operators can take you out to meet wild dolphins.

The protected inshore waters of the Sea of Abaco immediately southeast of Marsh Harbour are also home to a resident population of about 100 bottlenose dolphins.

## Fishing

Very strict regulations are in place, and marine and sea parks are off-limits to all fishing fans, so check with the relevant authorities.

These regions host major annual fishing tournaments (often held from April to June), from big-game contests for serious contenders to laidback, family-oriented contests. Check the tourism websites such as www.bahamas.com and www.turksandcaicostourism.com for details. Also, see the Bahamas Billfish Championship boxed text on p152.

## SPORTFISHING

As fans of Ernest Hemingway realize, the archipelago's ocean waters are a pelagic playpen for schools of marlin, dolphin fish, wahoo and tuna. And reef or bottom fishing for snapper or yellowtail is plentiful.

In the Bahamas, fishing is strictly regulated. Visiting boaters must have a permit for sportfishing (\$20 per trip or \$150 yearly for up to six reels). Boats with more than six reels are charged \$10,000 yearly. No foreign vessels may fish commercially. You can get a permit at your port of entry or in advance from the **Department of Fisheries** (☎ 242-393-1014; PO Box N-3028, E Bay St, Nassau), who can offer current fishing regulations. The capture, possession or molestation of coral, turtles and marine mammals is forbidden, as is long-line, spear and net fishing. Other restrictions exist.

The Turks and Caicos lie on a major route for migrating Atlantic blue marlin, which cross in massive numbers from June to August. All the other game fish of the Bahamas can be caught here, too. Provo has several marinas where fishing boats can be chartered. Prices are similar to those in the Bahamas and a permit is required. No spearfishing (including Hawaiian slings) or scuba gear is allowed, nor may visiting vessels take conch or lobster. Information on regulations can be obtained from the **Department of Environment & Coastal Resources** (Grand Turk ☎ 649-946-2855; fax 649-946-1895; ccr@tcway.tc; Providenciales ☎ 649-946-4017; fax 649-941-3063; South Caicos ☎ /fax 649-946-3306)

## BONEFISHING

The gin-clear waters of the sandbanks that shelve the perimeters of most islands are made for battles with the bonefish: pound for pound, one of the world's fighting champions. Related to the herring, it's named for its complex skeleton, and makes for bony eating. Many lodges are devoted to bonefishing and there are local bonefishing guides on all islands. Bait and tackle are sold and rods rented at many fishing lodges.

The Bahamas gets the fanfare for bonefishing, but the Turks and Caicos give it a run for its money. There are 2000 sq miles of flats between Grand Turk and Provo!

## CHARTER & GUIDE RATES

Dozens of commercial operators offer sportfishing charters, and will charge from \$350 to \$500 per half-day, \$600 to \$1000 per day (in

the Turks and Caicos chartered trips range from \$400/\$700 per half-day/full day) with bait and tackle provided. You usually take your own food and drinks. Most charter boats require a 50% deposit (if you cancel, you should do so at least 24 hours before departure to avoid losing your deposit). Some operators keep half the catch. Discuss terms with the skipper before setting out.

## FISHING TOURS

Several companies offer fishing tours to the Bahamas. Aside from those in the island chapters, try the following:

**Angler Adventure** (US ☎ 813-754-3737; www.anglersadventures.com; PO Box 872, Old Lyme, CT 06371, USA)

**Fishing International** (US ☎ 800-950-4242; www.fishinginternational.com; 1825 Fourth St, Santa Rosa, CA 95404, USA)

**Frontiers International** (UK ☎ 44-1285-741-341, US ☎ 800-245-1950; www.frontiersinternational.net; UK Tithe Barn, Barnsley Park, Barnsley, Cirencester GL7 5EG, UK; US PO Box 959, Wexford, PA 15090-0595, USA)

## Hiking

A few wildlife reserves have tracks, while several islands have tracks originally cut by lumber companies.

Always carry plenty of water and insect repellent, especially in summer, plus a small first-aid kit when hiking in remote places. Rarely will you be far from a settlement. The limestone terrain is too treacherous to permit you to walk off the track safely, as thick vegetation hides sinkholes and crevasses. Be especially wary of clifftops, which are often undercut and can give way easily.

A few tour operators offer a mix of kayaking, snorkeling and hiking tours in Grand Bahama's Lucayan National Park (p118). In the Abacos, Abaco Outback (p151) has guided hiking in Abaco National Park, and Earth Village (p83) has walking tours of the New Providence's central coppice forest. See those island chapters for more details.

There are hunters in Great Abaco's and Andros' backcountry seeking wild boar. Beware! Consider hiring a hunter as a guide.

Cat Island has some of the best hiking. The Fernandez Bay Village resort (p210) is a good starting point; the owners can provide maps and even a guide, if required.

On Great Inagua, trails lead into Bahamas National Trust Park (p237), a semi-arid, rugged landscape with fabulous bird-watching.

In the Turks and Caicos, the Middle Caicos Reserve & Trail System (p255) has 10 miles of trails along the north coast. On Provo you can follow dirt tracks along the east and west shores to North West Point Marine National Park (p245).

### Kayaking

Miles and miles of creeks and flats provide wonderful entrances to the redolent world of the mangroves and wetlands of Grand Bahama and the Family Islands.

Many hotels and resorts rent kayaks or provide free use for guests. And several tour operators are now introducing kayaking as an organized activity.

Guided excursions are offered in the Caicos, Abacos and Grand Bahama. See the island chapters for contact information. The Exuma Cays Land & Sea Park (p204) is a particularly good destination for kayaking.

### Water Sports, Surfing & Windsurfing

Most resort hotels either include water sports in their rates or offer them as extras. On offer are all kinds of beach and water sport, such as parasailing, waterskiing, and windsurfing. Typical rates are as follows: sailboards are \$20 per hour; jet skiing \$50 for 30 minutes; for a 15-minute banana boat ride \$30 per person; parasailing is \$70 per hour; windsurfing is \$25 per hour; sailing is \$90 per day and kayaks rent for \$15 per hour.

For surfers seeking the ultimate wave, look elsewhere. There are a few spots on the Bahamas' east coasts, however, where surfers can find decent Atlantic waves, notably Surfer's Beach on Eleuthera and, most importantly, Garbanzo Reef off Elbow Cay (Abacos). Winter months are best.

Virtually the entire east side of the chain is fringed by an offshore barrier reef onto which the waves break, making surfing dangerous far out. The trade winds, however, continue to blow inside the barrier reef, so the placid stretches inside the reef are perfect for windsurfing (in the absence of other coral).

Resorts and concessionaires rent equipment on the main beaches of New Providence and Grand Bahama. Many hotels have free sailboard use for guests. The Romora Bay Dive Shop (p178) on Harbour Island, Eleuthera, is a good bet for windsurfing.

The Bahamas Windsurfing Championship is held in January in Freeport.

The Turks and Caicos islands are virgin territory for surfers but superbly suited to windsurfing. On Provo, Grace Bay is a fabulous location for windsurfing, with the consistent trade winds behind you.

On Grand Turk you may see windsurfers whizzing along the waters of North Creek.

### BUSINESS HOURS Bahamas

In Nassau and on Grand Bahama some banks close at 2pm and reopen from 3pm to 5pm on Friday, when they can be very busy. In the Family Islands, bank hours vary widely. Usually local banks are open only one or two days a week for two or three hours. A few local banks open 9am to noon on Saturday.

Few businesses and stores open on Sunday, outside of the tourist centers. In the Family Islands many stores and businesses will close for lunch during the week. Most restaurants and cafés in the tourist centers open seven days a week. The following hours should be regarded as a general guide.

**Banks** (☎) 9am-3pm Mon-Thu, 9am-5pm Fri)

**Government offices** (☎) 9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

**Private businesses** (☎) 9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

**Shops** (☎) Fri, 9-10am-5pm Sat)

**Post offices** (☎) 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat)

**Restaurants** (☎) breakfast 6am-9am; lunch noon-2pm, dinner 6-9pm)

**Tourist information** (☎) 9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

### Turks & Caicos Islands

**Government offices** (☎) 9am-4pm Mon-Thu, 9am-3pm Fri)

**Private offices and businesses** (☎) 8:30am-5pm Mon-Fri)

**Banks** (☎) 9am-3pm Mon-Thu, 9am-5pm Fri)

**Post Offices** (9am-4pm)

### CHILDREN

These islands chase the family traveler aggressively, and the larger hotels compete by having children's facilities. Most hotels will have a babysitter, while most larger resorts, such as Atlantis, with its Discovery Channel Camp, cater to families and have a range of activities and amenities for children. These features are covered in this guide's listings.

The best kids' clubs are found in resorts on Nassau, New Providence, Freeport and Lucaya in Grand Bahama, and Caicos in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Yet many other hotels do have a wealth of sea sports

and activities on offer and actually do enjoy having children around.

Most hotels also offer free accommodations or greatly reduced rates for children staying in their parents' rooms (a child is usually defined as being 12 years or younger, but some classify those 16 or younger as children). Rental villas and apartments are also good options for families.

It's a good idea to prearrange necessities such as cribs, babysitters and baby food. Stores sell formula and disposable diapers, but there's not a huge range to choose from, and the prices are high. These problems are exacerbated in the Family Islands, Caicos Islands and less populated cays.

Many of the car-rental agencies can supply safety seats, but you should book these ahead.

**Bahamas Ministry of Tourism** (☎) 242-322-7500; www.bahamas.com) has a very popular and well-organized program, Children-to-Children, which links visiting children with local kids. The program is in operation on many of the Bahamian islands and encourages the children to participate in activities together. The aim is for children to gain an understanding about each other's lives; a fabulous idea.

Bahamian kids play basketball with a passion. The islands' patron saint is Mychal Thompson, a Los Angeles Lakers player from Harbour Island; the first Bahamian to make it to the NBA. Most towns have a small court with makeshift stands for fellow fans.

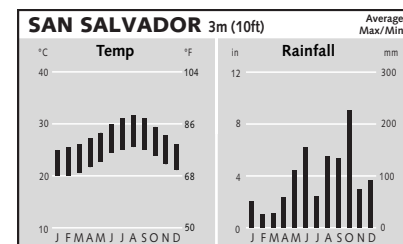
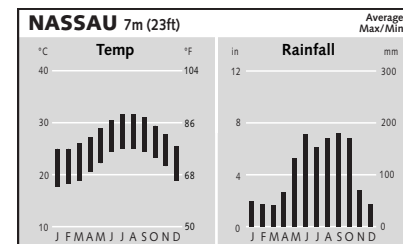
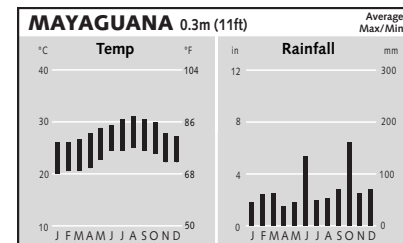
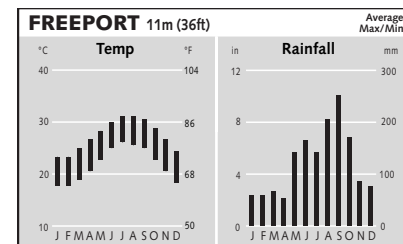
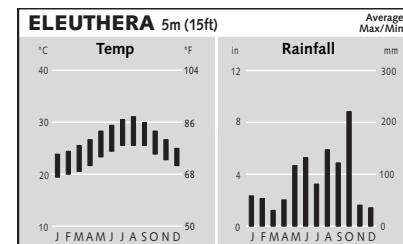
*Travel with Children*, by Cathy Lanigan and Lonely Planet co-founder Maureen Wheeler, gives you the lowdown on preparing for family travel, as well as basic health advice.

For encouragement, you might also check out Nancy Jeffrey's *Bahamas - Out Island Odyssey*, her tale of traveling through the islands with two teenage sons and an infant.

A note of caution: you do not see mothers nursing their babies or changing diapers in public, either in the Bahamas or the Turks and Caicos Islands. You will probably cause offence if you do either of these inappropriately.

### CLIMATE CHARTS

In general, the Bahamas is balmy year-round, with cooling, near-constant trade winds blowing by day from the east. The so-called rainy season extends from late May



to November, and humidity in the northern islands is relatively high year-round, but declines from northwest to southeast across the archipelago.

The Turks and Caicos' climate is similar to that of the southern Bahamas, though slightly warmer and drier. The hottest months are August to November and average humidity is 35%.

Refer to When to Go on p13 for more information.

## CUSTOMS

### Entering & Departing the Bahamas

All baggage is subject to a customs inspection, and Bahamian customs officials are serious about their business. All visitors are expected to fill a Baggage Declaration Form.

Individuals are allowed to import \$10,000 cash, plus 50 cigars, 200 cigarettes or 1lb of tobacco, plus 1 quart of spirits free of charge. Purchases of \$100 are also allowed for all arriving passengers. You are allowed to bring in a reasonable amount of personal belongings free of charge. However, you may need to show proof that laptop computers and other expensive items are for personal use. You should declare these upon arrival.

Excess items deemed to be imported goods are subject to 35% duty (25% for clothing). The tariff is as much as 300% for certain items.

The following items are also restricted: firearms, drugs (except prescription medicines), flowers and plants, honey, fruits, coffee, and meats and vegetables (unless canned).

For more information, call the **Bahamas Customs Department** (☎ 242-325-6550).

### Entering & Departing the Turks & Caicos

Visitors may each bring in duty free one carton of cigarettes or 50 cigars, one bottle of liquor or wine, and 50 grams of perfume. The importation of all firearms is forbidden, except upon written authorization from the Commissioner of Police. Spear guns, drugs and pornography are also illegal.

For further information, contact **Turks and Caicos Customs** (Grand Turk ☎ 649-946-2801, Provo ☎ 649-946-4241).

## DANGERS AND ANNOYANCES

The most you will probably have to worry about on the islands are mosquitoes and

'no see ums' (sandflies), which contrary to most expectations do not confine their human-munching to dawn and dusk, and in the case of sandflies, only to the beach. Do not be shy about applying mosquito repellent and covering up at night to prevent the sandflies' powerful bites. Invisible crowds of these little pests will otherwise leave you spottier than a leopard and itchier than a dog's bottom. The Bahamian chemists sell a pink calamine-style lotion that soothes the itching a bit.

Another threat in the Turks and Caicos, and some of the Family Islands, may be the roving bands of donkeys and horses. Dogs and chickens also tend to wander off, so although all these creatures are pretty wary of vehicles, take care on the roads nonetheless.

## Natural Hazards

Many of the reefs and beaches across the region have dangerous undertows and currents, so do take care.

Public warnings will be issued if a hurricane is due to come ashore. In the event of a hurricane, seek shelter in the sturdiest structure you can find. (For more on hurricane seasons see p37).

The manchineel tree, which grows along the Bahamian shoreline, produces small, applelike green fruits. Don't eat them – they're highly poisonous! The sap is also irritating. Take care not to sit beneath the tree, as even raindrops running off the leaves onto your skin can cause blisters.

## Human Hazards

Most Bahamians are extremely law-abiding citizens and their tolerance of thieves and criminals is extremely low. The Turks and Caicos Islands are also relatively crime-free and are therefore a joy to explore.

Nassau is a distinct exception, where shootings and violent robberies are frequent...with most murders and crimes related to the drug trade. They occur overwhelmingly in the low-income area south of downtown and to a lesser degree in parts of Freetown on Grand Bahama. Even the mellow Family Islands have seen noticeable increases in crime levels in recent years, notably in Marsh Harbour, Abacos.

However, most crime against travelers is petty opportunistic theft, so take sensible precautions with your valuables.

## DISABLED TRAVELERS

Disabled travelers will need to plan their vacation carefully, as few allowances have been made for them in either the Bahamas or the Turks and Caicos, although the Bahamas is slightly better equipped.

New construction codes mandate ramps and parking spots for disabled people at shopping plazas and other select sites. Larger hotels are beginning to introduce features such as Braille instructions and chimes for elevators, bathrooms with grab bars, and ramps. However, only the most recent structures in Nassau and, to a lesser degree, Freeport have adopted these features.

The tourism boards can provide a list of hotels with wheelchair ramps, as can the **Bahamas Council for the Handicapped** (☎ 242-322-4260; Commonwealth Blvd, Elizabeth Estates, Nassau) and the **Bahamas Association for the Physically Disabled** (☎ 242-322-2393; fax 242-322-7984; Dolphin Dr, Nassau, PO Box N-4252, Nassau). The latter can also hire out a van and portable ramps for those with wheelchairs.

## EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

There are no foreign embassies or consulates in the Turks and Caicos. Contact the relevant officials in Nassau, New Providence.

### Bahamian Embassies & Consulates

**Canada** Ottawa (☎ 613-232-1724; ottawa-mission@bahighco.com; 50 O'Connor St, Suite 1313, Ottawa, ON K1P 6L2, Canada)

**China** Hong Kong (☎ 852-2147-0202; fax 852-2893-3917; Suite 704-5 A Sino Plaza 7F, 255-257 Gloucester Rd, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong, Republic of China)

**UK** London (☎ 207-408-4488; fax 207-499-9937; 10 Chesterfield St, London W1X 8AH, England)

**USA** Washington DC (☎ 202-319-2660; bahemb@aol.doc; 2220 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC 20008, USA); Florida (☎ 305-373-6295; fax 305-373-6312; Bahamas Consulate General, 25 SE 2nd Ave, Suite 818, Miami, FL 33131, USA)

### Turks & Caicos Embassies & Consulates

As a British crown colony, the Turks and Caicos are represented by British embassies and consulates abroad. There are also British Consulate-Generals in many US cities.

**Australia** Canberra (☎ 02-6270-6666; fax 02-6237-3236; British High Commission, Commonwealth Ave, ACT 2600, Australia)

**Canada** Montreal (☎ 514-866-5863; montreal@britainincanada.org; Consulate-General, 1000 De La

Gauchetiere St W, suite 4200, Montreal, Quebec H3b 4W5, Canada)

**France** Paris (☎ 144-51-3100; fax 144-51-4127; British Embassy, 35, rue du Faubourg St Honoré, 75383 Paris Cedex 08, France)

**USA** San Francisco (☎ 415-617-1300; fax 415-434-2018; British Consulate General, 1 Sansome St, Suite 850, San Francisco, CA 94104, USA); Washington DC (☎ 202-588-7800; British Embassy, 3100 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC 20008, USA)

## Embassies & Consulates in the Bahamas

Most countries are represented by honorary consuls, individuals appointed to represent the respective country.

**Canada** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-393-2123/4; fax 252-393-1305; Shirley St Plaza, Nassau)

**UK** (Map p69; ☎ 242-325-7471; 242-323-3871; www.britishhighcommission.gov.uk/bahamas; Bitco Bldg, E St, Nassau)

**USA** (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-1181/2/3; fax 242-328-7838; www.usemb.state.gov/nassau; Mosmar Bldg, Queen St, Nassau)

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS Bahamas

No traditional African festivals were kept in the Bahamas, but several folk festivals evolved from the brief slave era, notably Junkanoo (p34) and Emancipation Day. Nassau and Freeport in Grand Bahama host a midyear Junkanoo in June, while other islands also host a summer 'Goombay Festival.'

Most events run on a predictable schedule. Many annual events occur at the cusp of months, so the specific month may vary from year to year. For more information contact the **Bahamas Ministry of Tourism** (☎ 242-322-7500; www.bahamas.com; Welcome Centre, Festival Place, Prince George Wharf, Nassau; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, Sun if cruise-ship in port).

There's a wealth of festivals in the Family Islands involving bonefishing championships, as well as cultural and sporting celebrations. Information for these can be found through the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism websites and via visitor information centers. The more famous regattas, the Family Island Regatta in the Exumas (April) and the Long Island Regatta (May), are fabulous fun; locally made sailing craft compete for prizes and partying abounds.

Most Family Island towns also celebrate 'homecomings,' the absolute heart of the

Bahamian social scene, when family members return from Nassau, other islands or the US. Usually these homecomings are associated with national holidays so that participants can stretch the festivities for three to five days.

### January

**Polar Bear Swim** A beach party culminates in some crazy fun: people swimming in the sea among giant ice cubes off Nassau.

**New Year's Day** The Junkanoo parade on Bay Street in Nassau is a great visual and musical spectacle.

**Staniel Cay New Year's Day Cruising Regatta** Craft from all over speed around Exumas cays.

**Nassau Classic Car Festival** A parade of polished classics and proud owners through Nassau.

**Supreme Court Opening** This formal ceremony opens the annual session of the Bahamas Supreme Court, accompanied by the Royal Bahamas Police Force Band.

### February

**George Town Cruising Regatta** More than 500 yachts visit for a week of fun and partying at this fabulous sailing regatta.

### March

**Bacardi Rum Cup** Two days of sailing competitions and notes of encouragement from the Royal Bahamas Police Force Band in Nassau.

**Freeport Rugby Club Annual Easter Rugby**

**Festival** Grand Bahama hosts 15 of the world's top rugby teams, as players from as far afield as Argentina and Wales gather to tussle for the grand prize.

**Hope Town Heritage Day** Abaco has a day of fun for all the family.

### April

**Family Island Regatta** This four-day extravaganza of sailboat races and general merry-making is a highlight of the Bahamian social calendar. It takes place in George Town (Great Exuma), and thousands fly in for the lively social scene, which includes beauty pageants, cooking demonstrations, and plenty of drinking and dancing.

### May

**Bimini Festival** A popular sportfishing tournament is the highlight of this festival in mid-May, featuring barbecues, cookouts and general merriment.

**Bahamas Heritage Festival** A cultural event with lots of traditional music, food and fun.

**Long Island Sailing Regatta** More than 40 locally built sailing sloops, representing each of the major Bahamian islands, compete for prizes. Onshore rake 'n' scrape bands, sporting activities and Bahamian food keep it lively.

### June

**Annual Eleuthera Pineapple Festival** This annual festival, held in early June in Gregory Town (Eleuthera), combines four days of music, games and festivities with cooking contests, 'best pineapple' contests, beauty pageants and the highlight – the crowning of the young Pineapple Queen.

**Bahamas Boating Flings** Each June through mid-August, a lead boat guides a flotilla of yachts and other craft from Fort Lauderdale into the Biminis.

**Goombay Summer Festival** Nassau hosts a midyear Junkanoo parade, with round-the-clock festivities for summertime visitors.

**Rake 'n' Scrape Music Festival** A four-day annual event held in June. It's organized by Sidney Poirier's daughter, Pamela.

### July

**Independence Day** A public holiday across the Bahamas with parades, celebrations and festivities.

**Beer Festival** During full moon in this month, Exuma consumes beer and pizza; what a great excuse!

### August

**Emancipation Day** Held the first Monday in August to commemorate the emancipation of slaves in 1834 across the islands.

**Cat Island Regatta** Held on Emancipation Day, this is the biggest event of the year on Cat Island, where sailboat races, dominoes tournament and rake 'n' scrape music are the rage.

**Great Abaco Triathlon** Athletes descend on Marsh Harbour to test their mettle, with a children's triathlon and Sprintman race.

### September

**Bahamas Atlantis Superboat Challenge** Life is never so fast in Nassau as in late September during this annual professional powerboat race.

### October

**Annual Grand Bahama Triathlon** Watch and wonder as superhumans compete in a 1½-mile swim, 15-mile bike race and 3-mile run.

**Great Bahamas Seafood Festival** The Arawak Cay Seafood Market in Nassau is the setting for this annual four-day culinary and cultural extravaganza, featuring concerts, Junkanoo and plenty of food.

**International Cultural Weekend** Bahamians celebrate unity with a weekend of float parades, food fests, arts and crafts displays and concerts in Nassau.

**North Eleuthera Sailing Regatta** This three-day racing pageant features scores of locally built sloops vying for the championship while onshore festivities are roaring.

### November

**Annual Grand Bahama Conchman Triathlon** More than 200 athletes gather in Freeport to compete in swimming, bicycling and running, while others party.

**Andros Community Awareness Week** Androsians celebrate their Bahamian dishes, music, Junkanoo, dance and stories.

**Bahamas Wahoo Tournament** Hosted by the Bimini Big Game Fishing Club, this game is for fishing fans.

**All Abaco Sailing Regatta** Boats and Bahamian fun on the water and land.

### December

**Christmas Concert Under the Stars** Green Turtle Cay (Abacos) has a grand open-air concert of traditional Christmas music and performances.

**Annual Christmas Day Parade** Bimini hosts a 5am parade with music and festivities.

**Plymouth Historical Weekend** Residents of Green Turtle Cay celebrate their Loyalist heritage with musical concerts, theater, art exhibit and barbecues.

**Junkanoo** The national street party of the year starts in the early hours of Boxing Day across the isles; don't miss the parades and partying!

### Turks & Caicos

These islands do not miss out on festivities, with many local events taking place. Cultural and musical events occur in May, August, September and November including the Ripshaw Music Festival, when Turks and Caicos rake 'n' scrape musicians gather in Grand Turk to outrake and scrape each other with much exuberance and entertainment.

For more information contact **Turks and Caicos Tourism** (☎ 649-946-4970; www.turksandcaicos tourism.com; Stubbs Diamond Plaza, Providenciales).

### May

**Regatta on South Caicos** The oldest and most playful festival held on the islands.

**Culture Night** Held on Provo to make up for all the regatta's partying; well you have to pay your dues!

### June

**Conch Carnival on Grand Turk** Conch-fritter eating contests, dancing, island music and the Grand Turk Iron Divemaster competition, finished off with beach bonfires.

**Fun in the Sun Festival** Held in Salt Cay.

### July

**Provo Day 'Summer Festival'** Miss Turks and Caicos is crowned in Provo amid much chatter and hollering, alongside regattas, parades and partying. These lively events are spread over a week around Emancipation Day.

### Turks & Caicos International Billfish

**Tournament** Incorporates the Invitational Billfish Tournament. One for those who get excited by discussing the intricacies of bait.

**Festarama Festival** North Caicos has fun; this annual regatta includes beach parties.

### August

**Ripsaw Music Festival on Grand Turk** Rake 'n' scrape musicians have noisy fun.

**Cactus Fest** A week-long carnival on Grand Turk with reggae music and general festivities.

### September

**Cultural Week** Island culture is relived and celebrated throughout the islands.

**Middle Caicos Expo** Held every year, with a bit of everything.

### October

**North Caicos Extravaganza** These festivities feature a Junkanoo rush.

### December

**Marathon** A run that tests the physical mettle of all competitors on Grand Turk.

**Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony** Many of the islands enjoy this event.

## FOOD & DRINK

For a full explanation of local cuisine and drinks, please refer to the Food and Drink chapter (p55). Listings are categorized into 'budget' (anything up to \$10), 'midrange' (mains averaging \$12 to \$23) and 'top end' (mains around and over \$23).

## GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELERS

Gay travelers need to be discreet in either Bahamas or the Turks and Caicos Islands. Most Bahamian gays and lesbians are still in the closet, and the nation has draconian laws against homosexual activity, which is punishable by prison terms. Laws are strictly enforced; sadly any public expressions of affection between gays may well bring trouble.

Please refer to the boxed text on p62 as this information, both social and legal, basically applies across the whole region.

## HOLIDAYS

You may also want to check out the 'When to Go' section on p13 when planning your trip.

## Bahamas

Bahamian national holidays that fall on Saturday or Sunday are usually observed on the following Monday.

**New Year's Day** January 1

**Good Friday** Friday before Easter

**Easter Monday** Monday after Easter

**Whit Monday** Seven weeks after Easter

**Labour Day** First Friday in June

**Independence Day** July 10

**Emancipation Day** First Monday in August

**Discovery Day** October 12

**Christmas Day** December 15

**Boxing Day** December 26

## Turks & Caicos

The following national holidays are recognized in this region.

**New Year's Day** January 1

**Commonwealth Day** March 13

**Good Friday** Friday before Easter

**Easter Monday** Monday after Easter

**National Heroes' Day** May 29

**Her Majesty the Queen's Official Birthday** June 14  
(or nearest weekday)

**Emancipation Day** August 1

**National Youth Day** September 26

**Columbus Day** October 13

**International Human Rights Day** October 24

**Christmas Day** December 15

**Boxing Day** December 26

## INSURANCE

A travel insurance policy to cover theft, loss and medical problems is worth organizing for your trip. There is a wide variety of policies available, so check the small print.

Some policies specifically exclude 'dangerous activities' (eg motorcycling, rock climbing, canoeing, scuba-diving and even hiking). If you're planning on doing any of those activities, be sure to hunt down the right policy to cover yourself.

You may prefer a policy that pays doctors or hospitals directly rather than requiring you to pay on the spot and claim later. If you have to claim later make sure you keep all documentation. Some policies ask you to call back (reverse charges) to a center in your home country where an immediate assessment of your problem is made.

Check that the policy covers ambulances or an emergency flight home.

For health insurance information see p296; for car insurance see p294.

## INTERNET ACCESS

A few of the midrange and most of the top-end accommodations in the Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands have Internet connections in the guest rooms. Some hotels also offer the use or 'hire' of a computer.

Internet connections will accept the standard laptop jacks, while plugs accept the standard USA/Canadian two or three-pin plugs. You will require a local ISP provider's dial-up number however, which can be arranged through your home ISP operator.

If you do not have a laptop, you will not be completely bereft. Internet cafés exist in most tourist centers, and in some of the larger towns in both the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos. The quality of connections is normally pretty good across the board, but expect to pay from \$10 for 15 minutes.

For a list of useful websites please refer to p14.

## LEGAL MATTERS

Marijuana (ganja) and cocaine are prevalent in the Bahamas and in the Turks and Caicos, which are used as a transshipment point for drug traffic into North America and Europe. At some stage, you may be approached by hustlers selling drugs.

Possession and use of drugs and the 'facilitation of drug trafficking' in these islands are strictly illegal and penalties are severe. The islands are swarming with US Drug Enforcement agents, and purchasing drugs is a risky business. Foreigners do not receive special consideration if caught and Bahamian prisons are notoriously nasty places.

## MONEY

The Bahamian dollar is linked one-to-one with the US dollar, so you can use US currency everywhere. Note the only bank permitted to exchange amounts of more than B\$70 is the Central Bank of the Bahamas on Market St in Nassau. It's a good idea to spend all your Bahamian dollars before you leave. Major commercial banks maintain branches throughout the islands, although in the Family Islands they are thin on the ground. Most hotels and car-rental companies will take credit cards on the Family Islands, but do have some ready cash just in case.

The Turks and Caicos are unique: a British-dependent territory with the US dol-

lar as its official currency. The treasury also issues a Turks and Caicos crown and quarter. There are no currency restrictions on the amount of money that visitors can bring in.

## ATMs

Automated teller machine (ATM) cards are a good way to obtain incidental cash. There are ATMs in the leading tourist centers and at many (but not all) banks around the islands. Most machines accept Visa, MasterCard and American Express via international networks such as Cirrus and Visa/PLUS.

## Credit Cards

Major credit cards are widely accepted throughout the Bahamas, Provo and Grand Turk as well as the bigger hotels on the Turks and Caicos islands. Credit cards are not widely accepted for general transactions in the more remote Family Islands or Turks and Caicos Islands. Elsewhere you may need to operate on a cash-only basis. You can use your credit card to get cash advances at most commercial banks. Companies that accept credit cards may add an additional charge of up to 5%.

Foreign currency can be changed at banks in Provo and Grand Turk, which can also issue credit-card advances and operate ATMs.

## Traveler's Checks

These are widely accepted throughout the Bahamas and Turks and Caicos except on more remote Family Islands, although some hotels, restaurants and exchange bureaux charge a hefty fee for cashing traveler's checks. They are accepted in the Caicos and Grand Turk but you may be charged a transaction fee of 5%.

To report lost American Express traveler's checks in the Bahamas, contact **Destinations** (☎ 242-322-2931; 303 Shirley St, Nassau).

## POST

Mail from the islands is slow. Airmail to North America usually takes about 10 days. Allow about four weeks for mail to Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

Postcards to the UK, US, or Canada cost \$0.55. Airmail letters cost \$0.65 per half-ounce to the US and Canada; \$0.70 to the UK and Europe; and \$0.90 to Africa, Asia, or Australasia.

Express mail services are listed in the Yellow Pages. Note that 24-hour service is not usually guaranteed from the Family or Turks and outlying Caicos Islands, as the express-mail services tend to rely on air-charter services.

You can have mail addressed to you 'Poste Restante' care of 'The General Post Office,' East Hill St, Nassau, The Bahamas. Mail should be marked 'To be collected from the General Delivery desk.' All correspondence is retained for three weeks.

## TELEPHONE

Hotel telephone rates are expensive across the region and should be avoided when possible. Many hotels also charge for an unanswered call after the receiving phone has rung five times.

Most US toll-free numbers can't be accessed from the Bahamas or Turks and Caicos. Usually you must dial ☎ 1-880, plus the last seven digits of the number.

## Bahamas

The government-owned **Bahamas Telecommunications Corporation** (☎ 242-302-7000; John F Kennedy Dr, Nassau), or BaTelCo, has an office on most Bahamian islands. Even the smallest settlement usually has at least one public phone.

The Bahamian country code is ☎ 242. You need to dial this when making inter-island calls. To call the Bahamas from the US and Canada, dial ☎ 1-242. From elsewhere, dial your country's international access code + ☎ 242 + the local number.

## MOBILE PHONES

You can travel with your own cellular phone in the Bahamas, but you may be charged a customs fee upon entry (which is refunded when you leave). Your phone will not function on BaTelCo's cellular system unless you rent temporary use of a 'roaming' cellular line.

## DOMESTIC CALLS

Local calls are free of charge, although hotels will charge you between \$0.75 to \$1 per call.

**Current Time & Temperature** ☎ 917

**Directory Assistance** ☎ 916

**Interisland calls** ☎ 1-242 followed by the seven-digit local number

**International Operator Assistance** ☎ 0  
**Weather by Phone** ☎ 915

### INTERNATIONAL CALLS

Many Bahamian phone booths and all BaTelCo offices permit direct dial to overseas numbers. It is far cheaper to call direct from a phone booth than to call from your hotel via operator-assisted calls. Assisted calls to the USA cost around \$1.80 per three-minute minimum, then \$0.90 per minute. Calls to Canada cost around \$1.30, then \$1.30 per minute, to Europe it costs \$2.90, then \$2.15 per minute while calls to Australia and New Zealand are just frightening.

Many national companies offer a service for their subscribers, issuing international charge cards and a code number. Costs for calling home are then billed directly to your home number. The following companies provide such cards.

**AT&T USA Direct** (☎ 1-800-225-5288)

**British Telecom** (☎ 0-800-345-144)

**Canada Direct** (☎ 1-800-389-0004)

**MCI** (☎ 1-800-888-8000)

**Sprint** (☎ 1-800-389-2111)

**Telstra Australia** (☎ 1-800-038-000)

### PHONECARDS

The majority of Bahamian public telephones accept only prepaid phonecards issued by **BaTelCo** (☎ 242-302-7827), available at stores and other accredited outlets near phone card booths. The cards are sold in denominations of \$5, \$10, \$20 and \$50.

### Turks & Caicos Islands

**Cable & Wireless** (☎ 1800-804-2994) operates a digital network from its offices in Grand Turk and Provo. Direct dial is standard.

Public phone booths are located throughout the islands. Many booths require phonecards, issued in denominations of \$5, \$10, and \$15.

Hotels will charge you \$1 per local call, and some also charge for unanswered calls after the receiving phone has rung five times.

The Turks and Caicos country code is ☎ 649. To call from North America, dial ☎ 1-649 + the local number. From elsewhere, dial your country's international access code + the local number. For interisland calls, dial the seven-digit local number.

**Directory Assistance** (☎ 118)

**Local operator** (☎ 0)

**International Operator Assistance** (☎ 115)

### MOBILE PHONES

American mobiles can work here, as long as you register with Cable & Wireless call roaming. Mobiles can also be rented from around \$10 per day.

### PHONECARDS

Phonecards are issued in denominations of \$5, \$10 and \$15 and can be bought from Cable & Wireless outlets and also shops and delis.

You can also bill calls to your American Express, Discover, Visa or MasterCard by dialing ☎ 1-800-744-7777 on any touchtone phone and giving the operator your card details (there's a one-minute minimum).

### SHOPPING

Most prices are fixed, and bargaining is less of a common practice than it is on Caribbean islands. Feel free to bargain, however, at straw markets and crafts stalls.

### Bahamas

#### DUTY-FREE GOODS

The two main resort towns, Nassau and Freeport, and major settlements have a wide choice of duty-free stores stocked with perfumes, Cuban cigars, Italian leathers, Colombian emeralds, plus china, crystal, gold, silverware, linens, watches, and silks. Many items can be bought at up to 30% below US or European retail prices.

Paying by credit card is best, as this protects you if the item is defective (some card companies provide buyers' insurance).

Fine handmade cigars from Cuba are all the rage in the Bahamas. Nassau and Freeport boast well-stocked tobacco shops dedicated to cigar lovers.

### ARTS & CRAFTS

The Bahamas is well known for its busy straw markets, as Bahamian weavers were among the first in the Caribbean region to take their skills to commercial heights. You'll find crafts stores virtually everywhere, selling baskets, bags, mats, dolls and hats woven from the top fronds of coconut palms. Much of the straw-work for sale in Nassau is actually imported from Taiwan

and the Orient (even if it has 'Made in Bahamas' stitched across the front in blazing colors)!

Also look for Androsia batik, brightly colored, handmade, authentically Bahamian material.

There are dozens of art galleries throughout the chain. The Abacos are particularly blessed, for here reside some of the islands' most famous artists; originals by collector-name artists can be had for a relative steal.

### Turks & Caicos

The handcrafted plait-and-sew style of straw weaving survives. Handmade rag rugs and baskets are a great buy. The art scene is also pretty lively on Provo; you can pick up some splendid Haitian art for a few dollars as well as some excellent local art works. And you can stock up on Cuban cigars.

### TOURIST INFORMATION

#### Bahamas Visitor Centres

**Abacos** (☎ 242-367-3067; Queen Elizabeth Dr, Marsh Harbour; www.go-abacos.com)

**Andros** (☎ 242-368-2286; Andros Town Airport, Fresh Creek)

**Eleuthera** Governor's Harbour (☎ 242-332-2142; Queen's Hwy) Harbour Island (☎ 242-333-2621; Bay St)

**Exumas** (☎ 242-336-2430; Queen's Hwy, George Town)

**Freeport** (☎ 242-352-8044; www.grand-bahama.com; International Bazaar)

**Nassau** Welcome Centre (☎ 242-323-3182, 322 7680; Prince George Dock) Airport Arrivals Terminal (☎ 242-377-6806; www.bahamas.com)

#### Bahamas Tourism Offices Abroad

The **Bahamas Ministry of Tourism** (☎ 800-422-4262; www.bahamas.com) has a central information office in the US that sends out literature. There are also regional offices across the USA and in other countries that can also help with information.

Also in the US is the **Bahama Out Islands Promotion Board** (US ☎ 954-475-8315; www.boipb.com; 1200 South Pine Island Rd, Suite 750, Plantation, FL 33324, USA).

**Canada** (☎ 416-968-2999; bmotca@bahamas.com; 121 Bloor St E, No 1101, Toronto, Ontario, M4W 3M5, Canada)

**France** (☎ 01-45-26-62-62; info@bahamas-tourisme.fr; 113-115 rue du Cherche Midi, 75006 Paris, France)

**Italy** (☎ 2-48194390-2; info@vertexcic.com; Corso Magenta 54, 20123 Milano, Italy)

**UK** (☎ 44-20-7355-0800; info@bahamas.co.uk; Bahamas House, 10 Chesterfield St, London W1J 5JL, UK)

**USA** California (☎ 800-439-6993 or 310-312-9544; gjohnson@bahamas.com; 11400 W Olympic Blvd, suite 204, Los Angeles, CA 90064, USA); Florida (☎ 954-236-9292; bmotff@bahamas.com; 1200 S Pine Island Rd, Suite 750, Plantation, FL 33324, USA) Illinois (☎ 773-693-1500; bmotch@bahamas.com; 8600 W Bryn Mawr Ave, No 820, Chicago, IL 60631, USA) New York (☎ 212-758-2777; bmotny@bahamas.com; 150 E 52nd St, 28th fl, New York, NY 10022, USA)

Additional Bahamas websites include the following.

[www.bahamasnet.com](http://www.bahamasnet.com)

[www.bahamas-on-line.com](http://www.bahamas-on-line.com)

[www.caribbeanaviation.com](http://www.caribbeanaviation.com)

[www.cruisecritic.com](http://www.cruisecritic.com)

[www.interknowledge.com/bahamas](http://www.interknowledge.com/bahamas)

[www.themassauguardian.com](http://www.themassauguardian.com)

[www.thinkbahamas.org](http://www.thinkbahamas.org)

### Turks & Caicos Visitor Centers

**Cockburn Town** (☎ 649-946-2321; www.turksandcaicostourism.com; tci.tourism@tcitwv.tc; Front St, Cockburn Town, Grand Turk)

**Providenciales** Providenciales Airport (☎ 649-941-5496; www.turksandcaicostourism.com) Stubbs Diamond Plaza (☎ 649-946-4970; Providenciales)

### Turks & Caicos Tourism Offices Abroad

**USA** (☎ 800-241-0824; tcitrsms@bellsouth.net; 2715 E Oakland Pk Blvd, Suite 101, Ft Lauderdale FL33306, USA)

**Canada** (☎ 613-332-6470; rwilson@northcom.net; 29620 Hwy 62N RR#2, Bancroft, Ontario K0L 1L0, Canada)

**UK** (☎ 0180-350-1000; fax 0181-350-1011; 66 Abbey Rd, Bush Hill Pk, Enfield, Middlesex EN12RQ, England, UK)

Additional Turks and Caicos websites:

[www.northcaicos.tc](http://www.northcaicos.tc)

[www.wherewhenhow.com](http://www.wherewhenhow.com)

[www.tcisearch.com](http://www.tcisearch.com)

[www.milk.tcitwv.tc](http://www.milk.tcitwv.tc)

### VISAS

#### Bahamas

Canadians and citizens of the UK and Commonwealth countries may enter the Bahamas without a passport or visa for up to three weeks. For longer stays, a passport is required. However, UK citizens need to show a passport to re-enter their home country. Changes to the law in effect from 31 December 2005 mean US citizens and all visitors are now required to have a passport or 'other secure, accepted document' to enter or re-enter the USA from the Caribbean. Onward tickets will also be required.



Visitors from most European countries, Turkey and Israel require passports but no visas for stays up to three months. Citizens of most Central and South American countries, including Mexico, require passports but no visas for stays up to 14 days. Visas are required for longer stays.

Citizens of the following countries require passports and visas for stays of any duration: Dominican Republic, Haiti, South Africa and all communist countries. Citizens of all other countries should check current entry requirements with the nearest Bahamian embassy. For any enquiries about extended stays or work (there are strict legal regulations about foreigners seeking work in the Bahamas) check with the **Ministry of Labour & Immigration Department** (☎ 242-322-7530; fax 242-326-0977; PO Box N-831, E Hill St, Nassau).

### Turks & Caicos

US citizens need proof of citizenship (a valid passport, voter's registration card or birth certificate) and photo identification to enter the Turks and Caicos. Changes to the law in effect from 31 December 2005 mean US citizens and all visitors are required to have a passport or 'other secure, accepted document' to enter or re-enter the USA from the Caribbean. No visas are required for citizens of the US, Canada, UK and Commonwealth countries, Ireland and most Western European countries. Citizens of most other countries require visas, which can be obtained from British embassies, High Commissions or consulates abroad.

Proof of onward transportation or tickets are required upon entry.

For information on work, residence, or stays longer than three months, contact the **Turks and Caicos Immigration Department** (☎ 649-946-2929; fax 649-946-2924; South Base, Grand Turk, Turks and Caicos, BWI).

### WOMEN TRAVELERS

It is unusual for women to travel alone in the Caribbean and West Indies, and you will be asked on many occasions by curious men and women about your husband's whereabouts. This is a friendly enquiry, and it is often easier to reply that you are meeting up somewhere or that he is working, rather than get into the whole discussion about free choice.

There is no doubt that these amiable locals will be concerned about your welfare. Although single women have little to fear in either the Bahamas or the Turks and Caicos, and cases of sexual assault are very, very rare, there is always the exception that proves the rule. Enjoy the warmth of their trepidation, take obvious precautions at night, and dress appropriately; you'll *never* see a Bahamian or Turks and Caicos woman in shorts, let alone a bikini top, around town.

**Women's Crisis Centre** (☎ 242-328-0922; Shirley St, Nassau) can assist in an emergency or if you need emotional support, while the **Women's Health & Diagnostic Centre** (☎ 242-322-6440; 1st Terr, Collins Ave, Nassau) and **Women's Health** (☎ 242-328-6636; Collins Ave, Nassau) are useful resources.

# Transportation

## CONTENTS

<b>Getting There &amp; Away</b>	<b>287</b>
Bahamas	287
Turks & Caicos	291
<b>Getting Around</b>	<b>292</b>
Bahamas	293
Turks & Caicos	294

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

With the Bahamas consisting of some 700 islands and 2000 cays spread over a 100,000-sq-mile radius and the Turks and Caicos having a further 40-odd islands and cays to explore, this is not exactly a simple one flight in and another flight out set of islands. But isn't that part of the region's charms? Private boat-owners certainly believe so.

Nearly all the region's major international traffic flows through Nassau, New Providence. The main forms of transport are scheduled flights and cruise liners. From Nassau, local carriers, a few ferries and the slower mail boats reach most inhabited islands and cays.

The skies are opening up, however, and it is now possible to take direct flights from the USA and Europe to a few of the other Bahamian islands and Providenciales in the Caicos.

### THINGS CHANGE

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

## BAHAMAS Entering the Bahamas

All baggage is subject to customs inspection, and Bahamian customs officials take this business seriously. All visitors must complete a Baggage Declaration Form.

Individuals are allowed to import \$10,000 cash, plus 50 cigars, 200 cigarettes, or 1lb of tobacco, plus 1 quart of spirits free of charge. Purchases totaling \$100 are also allowed for all arriving passengers. You are allowed to bring in a reasonable amount of personal belongings free of charge. However, you may need to show proof that laptop computers and other expensive items are for personal use. You should declare these upon arrival.

Excess items deemed to be imported goods are generally subject to 35% duty. The tariff is 25% for clothing and increases to 300% for certain items.

The following items are also restricted: firearms, drugs (except prescription medicines), flowers and plants, honey, fruits, coffee, and meats and vegetables (unless canned).

For further information, contact the **Bahamas Customs Department** (☎ 242-325-6550).

### PASSPORT

Changes to the law in effect from 31 December 2005 mean US citizens and all visitors are now required to have a passport or 'other secure, accepted document' to enter or re-enter the United States from the Caribbean. Onward tickets will also be required.

Visitors from most European countries, Turkey and Israel require passports but no visas for stays of up to three months. Citizens of most Central and South American countries, including Mexico, require passports but no visas for stays of up to 14 days. Visas are required for longer stays.

Citizens of the following countries require passports and visas for stays of any duration: Dominican Republic, Haiti, South Africa, and all communist countries. Citizens of all other countries should check current entry requirements with the nearest Bahamian embassy. For information about extended stays or work (there are strict regulations for foreigners seeking work in the Bahamas) check with the **Ministry of Labor & Immigration**

**Department** (☎ 242-322-7530; fax 242-326-0977; PO Box N-831, E Hill St, Nassau).

## Air

### AIRPORTS & AIRLINES

The Bahamas has six international airports, including two major hubs at Nassau and Freeport.

**Exuma International Airport** (GGT; ☎ 242-345-00095) Located in George Town, Exuma.

**Freeport International Airport** (FPO; ☎ 242-352-6020) Located in Freeport, Grand Bahama.

**Marsh Harbour International Airport** (MHH; ☎ 242-367-3039) Located in Marsh Harbour, Abacos.

**Moss Town Exuma International Airport** (MWX; ☎ 242-345-0030) Located in Moss Town, Exuma.

**Nassau International Airport** (NAS; ☎ 242-377-7281) Located in Nassau, New Providence.

**North Eleuthera International Airport** (ELH; ☎ 242-335-1242) Located in North Eleuthera.

### Airlines Flying To & From the Bahamas

The Bahamas is well served by flights from North America and Europe. Its proximity to Florida means regular, relatively inexpensive flights from Miami, Fort Lauderdale and Orlando, as well as other east coast gateways. Nassau is less than three hours' flying time from the northeast USA and about 30 minutes by jet from Miami.

The national airline of the Bahamas, **Bahamasair** (☎ 242-377-5505, Freeport ☎ 242-352-8341; www.bahamasair.com) has an unblemished safety record and the pilots have an excellent reputation (see www.airsafe.com for details). However, delays and lost luggage are regular occurrences. Bahamians say 'If you have time to spare, fly Bahamasair.' You are warned.

The following major international airlines have offices at Nassau Airport.

**Air Canada** (AC; ☎ 1-888-247-2262, 242-377-8220; www.aircanada.ca; hubs Toronto & Montréal)

**Air Jamaica** (JM; ☎ 1-800-523-5585, 242-377-3301; www.airjamaica.com; hub Montego Bay)

**Air Sunshine** (YI; ☎ 1-800-327-8900, 954-434-8900; www.air sunshine.com; hub Fort Lauderdale)

**American Airlines/American Eagle** (AA; ☎ 1-800-433-7300, 242-377-2355; www.aa.com; hubs New York, Newark, Miami & Orlando)

**Bahamasair** (UP; ☎ 242-377-5505, Freeport ☎ 242-352-8341; www.bahamasair.com; hubs Nassau & Freeport, Miami, Orlando & Fort Lauderdale)

**British Airways** (BA; ☎ 1-800-247-9297, 242-377-2338; www.british-airways.com; hubs Heathrow & Gatwick)

**Chalk's Ocean Airways** (OP; ☎ 1-800-424-2557, 242-363-3114; www.flychalks.com; hubs Atlantis Heliport, Paradise Island nr Nassau, Fort Lauderdale & Miami)

**Continental Connection/Gulfstream International** (3M; ☎ 1-800-231-0856, 242-394-6019; www.gulfstreamair.com; Star Plaza, Mackey St, Nassau; hubs Miami, Fort Lauderdale & West Palm Beach)

**Delta Air Lines/Comair** (DL; ☎ 1-800-241-4141, 242-377-7774, 800-354-9822; www.delta.com; hubs New York, Orlando, Cincinnati & Atlanta)

**Island Express** (3Z; ☎ 954-359-0380; www.abacotoday.com/islandexpress; hub Fort Lauderdale)

**Laker Airways** (7Z; ☎ 242-352-3389; Freeport International Airport; hub Freeport)

**US Airways/US Air Express** (US; ☎ 1-800-622-1015, 242-377-8886; www.usair.com; hubs New York & Miami)

**Charter Airlines**  
Charter flights are available throughout the Bahamas and Turks and Caicos. Some of the major charter companies flying in this region:

**Cherokee Air** (☎ 242-367-3450; www.cherokeeair.com; hub Marsh Harbour, Abaco)

**Lynx** (☎ 954-772-9808; www.lynxair.com; hub Fort Lauderdale)

**Professional Air Charters** (☎ 888-938-9508; www.professionalaircharters.com; hub Fort Lauderdale)

**Twin Air Airways** (☎ 954-359-8266; www.flytwinair.com; hub Fort Lauderdale Jet Centre)

**Yellow Taxi-Charter** (☎ 888-935-5694; www.flyyellowairtaxi.com; hub Fort Lauderdale Jet Centre)

**TICKETS**  
As an alternative to booking directly with airlines, there is a plethora of web-based companies selling flights, and you can sometimes find bargain fares this way. Some websites are listed below:

**Airbrokers** (www.airbrokers.com) A US company specializing in cheap tickets.

**Cheap Flights** (www.chepflight.com) A very informative site with specials, airline info and flight searches mainly from the USA and UK.

**Cheap Tickets** (www.cheaptickets.com) Discount flight specialists.

**Expedia** (www.expedia.co.uk) A UK-based company listing major airlines; the earlier you book the better.

**Flight Centre** (www.flightcentre.co.uk, www.flightcentre.com.au) One of the largest and cheapest travel agents in the UK and Australia.

**Hotwire** (www.hotwire.com) Bookings from the US only, some cheap last-minute deals.

**Last Minute** (www.lastminute.com) One of the better sites for last-minute deals including hotels.

**Orbitz** (www.orbitz.com) Cheap deals when flying from the USA.

**Priceline** (www.priceline.com) A name-your-own-price site.

**STA Travel** (www.sta-travel.com) Prominent in international student travel, but you don't have to be a student to use the site.

**Travel** (www.travel.com.au) Reputable online flight-bookers from New Zealand and Australia.

**Travelocity** (www.travelocity.com) A US site that allows you to search fares to and from practically anywhere.

The following table includes prices for one-way tickets on popular routes.

Route	Price	Frequency
Bimini—Fort Lauderdale	\$117	3 daily
Freeport—Miami	\$267	3 daily
Freeport—New York	\$674	3 daily
George Town—Fort Lauderdale	\$167	3 weekly
Governor's Harbour—Fort Lauderdale	\$164	4 weekly
Marsh Harbour—Fort Lauderdale	\$186	3 daily
Marsh Harbour—Miami	\$186	1 daily
Marsh Harbour—West Palm Beach	\$186	2 daily
Nassau—London	\$919	2 weekly
Nassau—Miami	\$185	5 daily
Nassau—Montego Bay	\$333	5 weekly
Nassau—Montréal	\$540	1 weekly
Nassau—Provo, Caicos	\$216	2 weekly
Nassau—Toronto	\$540	1 daily
New Bight—Fort Lauderdale	\$217	4 weekly
North Eleuthera—Miami	\$196	2 daily
Treasure Cay—Miami	\$188	1 daily
Treasure Cay Beach—Fort Lauderdale	\$186	2 daily

### AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

**Flight Centre** Australia (☎ 131-600; www.flightcentre.com.au) New Zealand (☎ 1800-243-544; www.flightcentre.co.nz)

**STA Travel** Australia (☎ 1300-360-960; www.sta-travel.com.au) New Zealand (☎ 1800-874-773; www.statravel.co.nz)

**Thor Travel** Australia (☎ 1800-801-119; www.thorworldtravel.com)

### CANADA & THE USA

**Air Brokers International** (☎ 1800-883-3273; www.airbrokers.com)

**Airtech** (☎ 1877-247-8324; www.airtech.com)

**Airtreks Inc** (☎ 1800-350-0612; www.airtreks.com)

**Skylinks US** (☎ 1800-247-6659; www.skylinkus.com)

**STA Travel** (☎ 1800-777-0112; www.statravel.com)

**Travac** (☎ 1800-872-8800; www.thetravelsite.com)

**Travel Cuts** (☎ 800-667-2887; www.travelcuts.com)

### CONTINENTAL EUROPE

#### France

**OTU Voyages** (☎ 0820-817-817; www.otu.fr)

**Voyageurs du Monde** (☎ 01-42-86-1600; www.vdm.com)

#### Germany

**Just Travel** (☎ 089-747-3330; www.justtravel.de)

**STA Travel** (☎ 01805-456-422; www.statravel.de)

#### Italy

**CTS Viaggi** (☎ 06-462-0431)

**Passagi** (☎ 06-474-0923)

#### Netherlands

**Airfair** (☎ 020-620-5121; www.airfair.nl)

**NBBS Reizen** (☎ 0900-10-20-300; www.mytravel.nl)

### THE UK & IRELAND

**Bridge the World** (☎ 0870-444-7474; www.b-t-w.co.uk)

**Dive Worldwide** (☎ 1794-389-372; www.diveworldwide.com)

**Flight Centre** (☎ 0870-890-8099; www.flightcentre.co.uk)

**Flightbookers** (☎ 0870-010-7000; www.ebookers.com)

**STA Travel** (☎ 0870-160-0599; www.statravel.co.uk)

**Trailfinders** (☎ 020-7938-3939; www.trailfinders.co.uk)

### Sea

#### CRUISE SHIPS

If you just want a short taste of the Bahamas, consider visiting by cruise ship. The Bahamas is by far the most popular port of call in the Caribbean region.

Cruise experiences vary vastly according to the cruise company and individual ship you choose. One person's sugar may be another's poison. For example, some passengers may wish to avoid the cruise liners now trotting out old rock bands such as REO Speedwagon or Foreigner for 'rock-nights,' while other travelers may whip out their snakeskin boots and shoulder pads, do a combover, and just get on down. *Caveat emptor!*

**Cruise Line International Association** (www.cruising.org) is a handy resource. Most cruises that call in the Bahamas depart from Florida and, less frequently, from New York.

Immigration and customs formalities are handled by the cruise companies upon arrival in port.

Some major cruise lines include the following:

**Cape Canaveral Cruise Line** (☎ 321-783-4052, 800-910-7447; www.capecanaveral.com)

**Carnival Cruise Lines** (☎ 305-599-2200, 800-327-9501; www.carnival.com)

**Celebrity Cruises** (☎ 305-358-7325, 800-437-3111; www.celebrity.com)

**Costa Cruises** (☎ 305-358-7325, 800-462-6782; www.costacruises.com)

**Crystal Cruises** (☎ 310-785-9300, 800-446-6620; www.crystalcruises.com)

**Discovery Cruise Line** (☎ 800-866-8687, 800-937-4477; www.discoverycruise.com)

**Disney Cruise Line** (☎ 407-566-3500, 800-511-8444; http://disneycruise.disney.go.com/dcl/en\_US/home)

**Dolphin Cruise Lines** (☎ 305-358-5122; www.dolphincruise.com)

**Holland America Line** (☎ 206-281-3535, 800-426-0327; www.hollandamerica.com)

**Norwegian Cruise Line** (NCL; ☎ 305-436-4000, 800-327-7030; www.ncl.com)

**Premier Cruises** (☎ 305-358-5122, 800-990-7770; www.premiercruises.com)

**Princess Cruises** (☎ 310-553-1770, 800-421-0522; www.princess.com)

**Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines** (☎ 305-379-4731, 800-327-6700; www.royalcaribbean.com)

## FERRIES

**Discovery Cruise** (☎ 1800-937-4477; www.discoverycruise.com) runs daily between Fort Lauderdale and Freeport, Grand Bahama (\$129). It leaves Fort Lauderdale at 7:45am, returning at 10pm. Rates include three main meals. There's a Las Vegas-style casino on board.

## FREIGHTERS

Gone are the good ol' days when travelers could easily buy passage aboard the banana freighters that plied between the Caribbean and North America and Europe, but it's not impossible. Try the following for some helpful information on traveling by freighter.

*Ford's Freighter Travel Guide & Waterways of the World* by **Judith Howard** (☎ 818-701-7414; 19448 Londelius St, Northridge, CA 91324, USA) lists freighters that carry passengers. The **Freight & Cruise Travel Association** (TravelTips; www.traveltips.com) has a website that lists freight ships that take passengers.

**Windjammer Barefoot Cruises** (☎ 305-672-6453, 800-327-2601; www.windjammer.com) has a 13-day cruise from Freeport to Trinidad (\$1,475) aboard the *Amazing Grace*, a 'workhorse'

vessel supplying the company's clipper ships in the Caribbean (none of which sail to the Bahamas). It has elegant cabins and charm. It stops at Nassau, Little San Salvador, Conception Island, Little Inagua and the Plana Cays, plus Grand Turk and Providenciales.

## YACHTS

The sheltered waters of the 750-mile-long archipelago attract thousands of yachters each year. Winds and currents favor the passage south. Sailing conditions are at their best in summer, though you should keep fully abreast of weather reports, as summer is hurricane season.

## Customs

You must clear customs and immigration upon arrival in the Bahamas. For details of each port's marinas, see the destination chapters. Your crew and guests will each need either a passport or birth certificate (a driver's license is not proof of citizenship). You'll need to clear customs again upon arrival at each island. It's a hassle, but the Bahamas' drug problem is such that you should be sympathetic to this policy. Anticipate the possibility of being boarded and searched by the US or Bahamian coast guard.

Details of official requirements are given in the *Yachtsman's Guide to The Bahamas including Turks & Caicos* (see opposite).

Specified marinas on each island are designated ports of entry (you may not enter at any other place):

**Abacos** Green Turtle Cay, Treasure Cay, Marsh Harbour, Spanish Cay, Walker's Cay.

**Andros** Congo Town, Fresh Creek, San Andros.

**Berry Islands** Chub Cay, Great Harbour Cay.

**Biminis** Alice Town, South Bimini, Cat Cay.

**Cat Island** Smith's Bay, New Bight, Bennett's Harbour.

**Eleuthera** Governor's Harbour, Harbour Island, North Eleuthera, Rock Sound, Spanish Wells.

**Exumas** George Town, Moss Town.

**Grand Bahama** Freeport Harbour, Port Lucaya Marina, Old Bahamas Bay Marina (West End).

**Great Inagua** Matthew Town.

**Long Island** Stella Maris.

**Mayaguana** Abraham's Bay.

**New Providence** Nassau (any yacht basin).

**San Salvador** Cockburn Town.

## Permits

You'll require the regular documentation for foreign travel (see p287). There is a \$150

charge for each foreign pleasure vessel under 30ft, and a \$300 charge for vessels longer than 30ft with up to four passengers. Each additional person must pay \$15. These charges cover customs and immigration services as well as fishing and cruising permits.

You must have a separate import permit for any pets on board. Contact the **Department of Agriculture** (☎ 242-325-7413; fax 242-325-3960; Levy Bldg, E Bay St, Nassau) for information.

## Maps, Charts & Guidebooks

You'll need accurate maps and charts for any voyage through the Bahamas and Turks and Caicos' reef-infested waters. British Admiralty charts, US Defense Mapping Agency charts, and Imray yachting charts are all accurate. You can order them in advance from **Bluewater Books & Charts** (US ☎ 1-954-763-6533, 1-800-942-2583; www.bluewaterweb.com).

No sailor should set out without the excellent *Yachtsman's Guide to The Bahamas including Turks & Caicos* (\$40). It provides detailed descriptions of just about every possible anchorage in the archipelago, and lists information on marinas throughout the islands as well as other invaluable information. Small sketch charts are *not* intended for use in navigation. It's available at bookstores and marinas in the Bahamas or by mail from **Tropic Isle Publishers** (US ☎ 305-893-4277; PO Box 610938, N Miami, FL 33261, USA).

Likewise, refer to the splendid *Bahamas Cruising Guide* by Mathew Wilson, which is available at good bookstores, and Julius Wilensky's *Cruising Guide to the Abacos and the Northern Bahamas* (\$20). These and many other regional boating guides can be ordered from **White Sound Press** (US ☎ 386-423-7880; www.wspress.com).

**Waterproof Charts** (☎ 800-423-9026; www.waterproofcharts.com) publishes a series of large-scale waterproof sectional charts of the Bahamas. The charts mostly show physical features and are of limited use as travel maps. Larger-scale (11in by 17in) versions of the charts can be ordered; they're highly detailed and durable. A complete set of eight charts covers the Bahamas and Turks and Caicos (\$160).

US government charts of the region can be ordered through most marine stores, as can detailed charts from **National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration** (NOAA; ☎ 301-436-6829; www.nws.noaa.gov).

## Crewing

Crewing aboard a yacht destined for the Bahamas from North America or the Caribbean is a popular way of getting to the islands. Check the bulletin boards of marinas: often you'll find notes advertising for crew or you can leave one of your own.

## TURKS & CAICOS Entering the Turks & Caicos

Visitors may each bring in duty free one carton of cigarettes or 50 cigars, one bottle of liquor or wine and 50g of perfume. The importation of all firearms is forbidden, except upon written authorization from the Commissioner of Police. Having spear guns, drugs and pornography with you is also illegal.

For further information, contact **Turks and Caicos Customs** (Grand Turk ☎ 649-946-2801, Provo ☎ 649-946-4241).

## PASSPORT

Changes to the law in 2005 mean US citizens and all visitors are now required to have a passport or 'other secure, accepted document' to enter or re-enter the United States from the Caribbean. Everyone else including UK citizens also need a valid passport. No visas are required for citizens of the US, Canada, the UK and Commonwealth countries, Ireland, and most Western European countries. Citizens of most other countries require visas, which can be obtained from British embassies, High Commissions or consulates abroad (see p279).

Proof of onward transportation or tickets are required upon entry.

For information on work, residency or stays longer than three months, contact the **Turks and Caicos Immigration Department** (☎ 649-946-2929; fax 649-946-2924; South Base, Grand Turk, Turks & Caicos, BWI).

## Air

### AIRPORTS & AIRLINES

There are three airports handling international traffic to Grand Turk and Provo, but most international flights arrive at Provo. Other islands have local airstrips.

**Grand Turk International Airport** (GDT; ☎ 649-946-2233)

**Providenciales International Airport, Caicos** (PLS; ☎ 649-941-5670)

**South Caicos International Airport** (XSC; ☎ 649-946-4255)

The national carrier is **Air Turks and Caicos** (QW; ☎ 649-941-5481; www.airturksandcaicos.com; hub Caicos). It has a very good safety record and flies to Miami and Nassau.

### Airlines Flying To and From the Turks & Caicos

**Air Canada** (AC; ☎ 649-941-3136; www.aircanada.com; hub Toronto)

**Air Jamaica** (JM; ☎ 1-800-523-5585; www.airjamaica.com; hub Montego Bay)

**American Airlines/American Eagle** (AA; ☎ 649-946-4948; www.aa.com; hubs New York & Miami)

**Bahamasair** (UP; ☎ 649-941-3136; www.bahamasair.com; hub Nassau)

**British Airways** (BA; ☎ 1-800-247-9297, 649-946-4420; www.british-airways.com; hubs Heathrow & Gatwick)

**Delta Air Lines/Comair** (DL; ☎ 1-800-221-1212; www.delta.com; hubs La Guardia New York & Boston)

**US Airways/US Air Express** (US; ☎ 1-800-622-1015; www.usair.com; hubs Philadelphia & New York)

### TICKETS

See p288 for a list of online travel agencies. The fares below are one way.

Route	Price	Frequency
Providenciales–Atlanta	\$449	1 daily
Providenciales–Boston	\$431	1 weekly
Providenciales–Cap Haitien	\$140	4 daily
Providenciales–Charlotte	\$473	1 daily
Providenciales–Cuba	\$380	2 weekly
Providenciales–Heathrow	\$952	2 weekly
Providenciales–Miami	\$371	2 daily
Providenciales–Montego Bay	\$343	4 weekly
Providenciales–Nassau	\$216	2 weekly
Providenciales–New York	\$416	1 daily
Providenciales–Puerto Plaza	\$179	2 daily
Providenciales–Toronto	\$813	2 weekly

### SEA

#### CRUISE SHIPS

The major cruise lines bypass the Turks and Caicos, although this may change in the future – the government has been talking of building a cruise-ship terminal on East Caicos.

At the time of going to press, a couple of cruise companies provided regular cruises to these islands: **American Canadian Caribbean Line** (☎ 0800-556-7450; www.accl-sm.allships.com) as well as **Windjammer Barefoot Cruises** (☎ 305-672-6453, 800-327-2601; www.windjammer.com).

### FREIGHTERS

A comfortable passenger-carrying freighter departs from Grand Bahama to drop off supplies at Nassau, Little San Salvador, Conception Island, Little Inagua and the Plana Cays, plus Grand Turk and Providenciales. See p290 for details of this trip and some other useful information sources on freighter travel.

### YACHTS

Yachters are permitted seven days in the islands, after which they must obtain a cruising permit good for three months. See the island chapters for marina details.

If traveling in your own boat, you must clear customs and immigration. Contact details for these officials are listed in destination chapters.

Many of the approaches and landfalls lie within protected areas where anchoring is strictly controlled (moorings within such areas are for dive boats only, although visiting yachts can moor while diving). No firearms may be brought into the Turks and Caicos (you must surrender them for the duration of your stay). No conch or lobster may be taken and fishing in national sea parks is forbidden.

The latest regulations can be obtained from the **Department of Environment & Coastal Resources** (Grand Turk ☎ 649-946-2855; fax 649-946-1895; ccr@tcway.tc; Providenciales ☎ 649-946-4017; fax 649-941-3063; South Caicos ☎ /fax 649-946-3306).

Contact **Wavy Line Publishing** (www.wavylinepublishing.com) to obtain a copy of *Turks & Caicos Islands Overall*, a series of navigational charts of the Turks and Caicos (\$28 each). Nautical charts are sold in the Turks and Caicos at the Unicorn Bookstore (p243) on Provo. See Maps, Charts & Guidebooks (p291) for some other excellent reference materials.

Boaters and yachties should use VHF channel 16 (and VHF 09 or 13 in an emergency) for communications.

## GETTING AROUND

Perusing a map, you may be tempted to think that island-hopping down the chain is easy. But unless you have your own boat or plane, it isn't. Interisland air travel is centered on Nassau. Getting between the islands

without constantly backtracking is a bit of a feat. Even the mail boats are Nassau-centric.

## BAHAMAS

### Air

#### AIRLINES IN THE BAHAMAS

Interisland flights offer the only quick and convenient way to travel within the Bahamas, and islanders ride airplanes like Londoners use buses. You don't save any money by booking interisland tickets for the Bahamas in advance.

The scene is dominated by **Bahamasair** (UP; ☎ 242-377-5505, Freeport ☎ 242-352-8341; www.bahamasair.com; hubs Nassau & Freeport). The airline runs on a hub-and-spoke system: Nassau's the main hub. If you island-hop a lot, you'll feel like a yo-yo and may need to stay in Nassau between flights. Budget accordingly.

There are several airlines operating in the Bahamas.

**Abaco Air** (☎ 242-367-2266; www.abacoaviationcentre.com/abacoair; hub Marsh Harbour)

**Caribbean Aviation** (☎ 242-377-3317; caribairline@yahoo.com; hub Nassau)

**Cat Island Air** (☎ 242-377-3318; fax 242-377-3723; hub Nassau)

**Flamingo Air Charter Services** (☎ 242-377-0354; www.flamingoair.com; hub Nassau)

**Major's Air Services** (☎ 242-352-5778; www.thebahamasguide.com/majorair; hubs Grand Bahama & Eleuthera)

**Southern Air** (☎ 242-367-2498; www.southernaircharter.com; hub Nassau)

**Western Air** (☎ 242-329-4000; fax 242-329-3167; hub Andros & Nassau)

### Tickets

Refer to the destination chapters for relevant interisland flight information. The table below includes prices for one-way fares for connections to Nassau.

Route	Price	Frequency
Nassau–Abacos	\$81	3 daily
Nassau–Andros	\$68	2 daily
Nassau–Bimini	\$85	2 daily
Nassau–Cat Island	\$75	2 daily
Nassau–Crooked	\$105	2 weekly
Nassau–Eleuthera	\$69	2 daily
Nassau–Exumas	\$81	3 daily
Nassau–Grand Bahama	\$85	6 daily
Nassau–Inagua	\$111	3 weekly
Nassau–Long Island	\$85	1 daily
Nassau–San Salvador	\$80	3 weekly

### CHARTER FLIGHTS

See p288 for a list of the region's major charter airlines.

### Bicycle

Cycling is a cheap, convenient, healthy, environmentally sound and above all fun way to travel. Major resort hotels rent bicycles for \$20 a day. Unfortunately, the bikes are heavy, have only one gear and are virtually guaranteed to give you a sore bum.

### Boat

#### BOAT EXCURSIONS

There are a myriad of boat excursions on offer covering activities such as watersports, sightseeing, pleasure cruises, snorkeling and diving. Refer to the destination chapters for further information.

#### FERRY & WATER TAXI

The only ferry operator in the islands is **Bahamas Ferries** (☎ 242-323-2166/8; www.bahamasferries.com), which runs a high-speed ferry linking Nassau, Andros, Abacos, Eleuthera and the Exumas.

Water taxis ply between Nassau and Paradise Island. Several other offshore islands and their neighboring cays are served by private water taxis.

Government-run water taxis link islands that are a short distance apart, such as North Bimini and South Bimini; Mangrove Cay and South Andros; and Crooked and Acklins Islands.

### MAIL BOAT

Around 30 mail boats sail under government contract to most inhabited islands. They regularly depart Potter's Cay for Grand Bahama and all the Family Islands. Traditionally sailing overnight, boat journeys last between five and 24 hours. You can call the **Dockmaster's Office** (☎ 242-394-1237) and check with the **Bahamas Ministry of Tourism** (☎ 242-322-7500; www.bahamas.com) for the latest schedules and prices.

### Car & Motorcycle

Bahamians are generally very cautious and civilized drivers. Main roads are normally in good condition, but minor roads are often indented with deep potholes. Believe any Bahamian who warns you that a road is in bad condition.

**DRIVER'S LICENSE**

To rent a car you must be 21 (some companies rent only to those 25 or older) and must have a current license for your home country or state. Visitors can drive using their home license for up to three months.

**FUEL**

Esso, Shell and Texaco maintain gas (petrol) stations on most islands. Gas stations are usually open from 8am to about 7pm. Some close on Sunday. In Nassau and Freeport you'll find stations open 24 hours a day. Gasoline costs \$3.50 per US gallon. Credit cards are accepted in major settlements; elsewhere, it's cash only.

**HIRE**

Several major international car-rental companies have outlets in Nassau and Freeport, as do smaller local firms. In the Family Islands there are some very good local agencies. Ask your hotel for recommendations, or look for display boards at the airport. Local companies may not offer insurance.

You usually rent for 24-hour periods with rates starting at \$70. Rates start from around \$80 in Nassau, and from \$60 on the smaller islands.

Golf carts can be rented on the smaller islands and cays for \$40 per day.

**INSURANCE**

Damage-waiver insurance is \$15 a day. On many Family Islands, however, no insurance is on offer at all.

**ROAD RULES**

Always drive on the left-hand side of the road. At traffic circles (roundabouts), remember to circle in a clockwise direction, entering to the left. You must give way to traffic already in the circle. It is compulsory to wear a helmet when riding a motorcycle or scooter.

**Hitchhiking**

Hitching is never entirely safe anywhere, and we don't recommend it. Travelers who do decide to hitch should understand that they are taking a small but potentially serious risk. Those who choose to hitch will be safer if they travel in pairs, and let someone know where they are planning to go. Hitchhiking by locals is fairly prevalent (and legal) in the Bahamas, especially in the Family Islands.

**Local Transportation****BUS**

Nassau and Freeport have dozens of jitney buses (private minibuses) licensed to operate on set routes.

There is no public transportation on the Family Islands or at airports (the taxi drivers' union is too powerful). Few hotels are allowed to run a transfer service for guests.

**TAXI**

There's no shortage of licensed taxis in Nassau and Freeport, where they can be hailed on the streets. Taxis are also the main form of local transportation in the Family Islands, where they meet all incoming planes.

All taxi operators are licensed. Taxi fares are fixed by the government based on distance. Rates are usually for two people, with each additional person charged a flat-rate of \$3. Fixed rates have been established from airports and cruise terminals to specific hotels and major destinations. These rates should be shown in the taxi. However, you should be aware of some crafty scams in Nassau and Freeport, where an unscrupulous driver may attempt to charge additional people the same rate as the first and second passengers.

**TURKS & CAICOS****Air****AIRLINES IN THE TURKS & CAICOS**

Both scheduled local carriers have excellent safety records:

**Air Turks & Caicos** (JY; ☎ 649-941-5481; www.airturksandcaicos.com; hub Providenciales)

**Skyking** (RU; ☎ 649-941-5464; www.skyking.tc; hub Providenciales)

**Tickets**

The two local carriers fly between the following islands in the Turks and Caicos region. The following are sample prices for one-way fares.

Route	Price	Frequency
Grand Turk–Salt Cay	\$25	2 daily
Providenciales–Grand Turk	\$70	11 daily
Providenciales–5th Caicos	\$65	3 daily
Providenciales–Middle Caicos	\$40	1 daily
Providenciales–Nth Caicos	\$30	2 daily

Charter planes are available on most islands for private hire.

**Bicycle**

Cycling is an inexpensive and great way to travel. Bicycles can be rented at many hotels and concessions for about \$20 per day.

**Boat****BOAT EXCURSIONS**

Most trips depart from the marinas in Provo (Providenciales). They cover the full gamut of pleasure cruises, watersports and sightseeing. Snorkeling and diving trips are offered on every island and operators will normally include any special wishes in their itineraries. Please refer to the destination chapters for specific trip details.

**FERRY & WATER TAXI**

A ferry normally runs biweekly from Grand Turk to Salt Cay (\$12 round trip). Book ahead with **Salt Cay Charters** (☎ 649-231-6663; piratequeen3@hotmail.com). Whale-watching trips with this company cost \$75.

**Car, Motorcycle & Scooter**

Because local transportation is limited, renting a car makes sense if you plan to explore Provo or Grand Turk. Provo does have a few atrocious, potholed, rocky and dusty roads, although many are now paved.

**DRIVER'S LICENSE**

To rent a car for up to three months, citizens of the USA, Canada, the UK and Commonwealth countries are required to have a valid driver's license from their home country. Everyone else requires an International Driving Permit. You must obtain this permit before you arrive in the Turks and Caicos.

**FUEL**

Gas stations are plentiful and usually open from 8am to 7pm. Some close on Sunday. Gasoline costs \$3.50 per US gallon. Credit

cards are accepted in major settlements. Elsewhere, you'll need to pay cash.

**HIRE**

Car rentals are available from \$80 per day. Otherwise, stick to taxis for one-off trips or bicycles for scooting around locally. A government tax of \$15 per rental on cars and \$8 on scooter rentals is levied. Please refer to island destinations for rental companies.

**INSURANCE**

Mandatory insurance costs \$15 per day.

**ROAD RULES**

Driving is on the left-hand side of the road. At traffic circles (roundabouts), remember to circle in a clockwise direction, entering to the left. You must give way to traffic already in the circle. Speed limits in the Turks and Caicos are 20mph in settlements and 40mph on main highways.

**Hitchhiking**

Hitchhiking is legal in the Turks and Caicos islands. However, only locals heading to and from work normally use their thumbs.

**Local Transportation****BUS**

Public bus services are limited to a few jitney routes in Provo. For regular routes, check with the **Turks & Caicos Tourist Board** (Providenciales Airport ☎ 649-941-5496, 649-946-4970; www.turksandcaicostourism.com; Stubbs Diamond Plaza, Providenciales).

**TAXI**

Taxis are available on all the inhabited islands. Most are minivans. They're a good bet for touring; most taxi drivers double as guides. Be sure to negotiate an agreeable price before setting out.

# Health

David Goldberg MD

## CONTENTS

<b>Before You Go</b>	<b>296</b>
Insurance	296
Recommended Vaccinations	296
Medical Checklist	296
Internet Resources	296
Further Reading	297
<b>In Transit</b>	<b>297</b>
Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)	297
Jet Lag & Motion Sickness	297
<b>In The Bahamas &amp; Turks &amp; Caicos</b>	<b>297</b>
Availability & Cost of Health Care	297
Infectious Diseases	297
Travelers' Diarrhea	299
Environmental Hazards	299
Children & Pregnant Women	300

Prevention is the key to staying healthy while abroad. Travelers who receive the recommended vaccines and follow common-sense precautions usually come away with nothing more than a little diarrhea.

From the medical standpoint, the Bahamas and Turks and Caicos are usually safe as long as you're pretty careful about what you eat and drink. The most common travel-related diseases, such as dysentery and hepatitis, are acquired by consumption of contaminated food and water. Mosquito-borne illnesses are not a significant concern here, except during outbreaks of dengue fever.

## BEFORE YOU GO

Bring medications in their original containers, clearly labeled. A signed, dated letter from your physician describing all medical conditions and medications, including generic names, is also a good idea. If carrying syringes or needles, be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity.

### INSURANCE

If your health insurance does not cover you for medical expenses abroad, consider supplemental insurance. Check the Subway

section of the **Lonely Planet website** ([www.lonelyplanet.com/travel\\_links](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_links)) for more information. US travelers can find a list of medical evacuation and travel insurance companies on the **US State Department website** (<http://travel.state.gov>). Find out in advance if your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers or reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures.

### RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

No vaccinations are required to enter the Bahamas or Turks and Caicos. However, a yellow fever vaccination certificate is required for travelers arriving within seven days of traveling in many central African and South American countries. See [www.mdtravelhealth.com](http://www.mdtravelhealth.com) for a current list of infected areas. Vaccination protection lasts 10 years.

### MEDICAL CHECKLIST

- acetaminophen/paracetamol (Tylenol) or aspirin
- adhesive or paper tape
- antibacterial ointment (eg Bactroban) for cuts and abrasions
- antibiotics
- antidiarrheal drugs (eg loperamide)
- antihistamines (for hay fever and allergic reactions)
- anti-inflammatory drugs (eg ibuprofen)
- bandages, gauze and gauze rolls
- DEET-containing insect repellent for the skin
- iodine tablets (for water purification)
- oral rehydration salts
- permethrin-containing insect spray for clothing, tents and bed nets
- pocketknife
- scissors, safety pins and tweezers
- steroid cream or cortisone (for poison ivy and other allergic rashes)
- sunblock
- syringes and sterile needles
- thermometer

### INTERNET RESOURCES

There is a wealth of travel health advice on the Internet. The **Lonely Planet website** ([www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)) is a good place to start. The **World Health Organization** ([www.who.int/ith/](http://www.who.int/ith/)) publishes a

superb book called *International Travel and Health*, which is revised annually and is available online at no cost. Another website of general interest is **MD Travel Health** ([www.mdtravelhealth.com](http://www.mdtravelhealth.com)), which offers travel health recommendations for every country, updated daily, also at no cost.

It's usually a good idea to consult your government's travel health website before departure, if one is available.

**Australia** ([www.smarttraveller.gov.au](http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au))

**Canada** ([www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english))

**UK** ([www.doh.gov.uk/traveladvice](http://www.doh.gov.uk/traveladvice))

**USA** ([www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel))

### FURTHER READING

If you're traveling with children, Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* may be useful. *ABC of Healthy Travel* by E Walker et al, and *Medicine for the Outdoors* by Paul S Auerbach, are other valuable resources.

## IN TRANSIT

### DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)

Blood clots may form in the legs during plane flights, chiefly because of prolonged immobility. The longer the flight, the greater the risk. Though most blood clots are reabsorbed uneventfully, some may break off and travel through the blood vessels to the lungs, where they could cause life-threatening complications.

The chief symptom of DVT is swelling or pain in the foot, ankle or calf, usually but not always on just one side. When a blood clot travels to the lungs, it may cause chest pain and difficulty in breathing. Travelers with any of these symptoms should immediately seek medical attention.

To prevent the development of DVT on long flights, you should walk about the cabin, perform isometric compressions of the leg muscles (ie contract the leg muscles while sitting), drink plenty of fluids and avoid alcohol and tobacco.

### JET LAG & MOTION SICKNESS

Jet lag is common when crossing more than five time zones, and is characterized by insomnia, fatigue, malaise or nausea. To avoid jet lag, try drinking plenty of fluids (nonalcoholic) and eating light meals. Upon arrival, get exposure to natural sunlight

and readjust your schedule (for meals, sleep etc) as soon as possible.

Antihistamines such as dimenhydrinate (Dramamine) and meclizine (Antivert, Bonine) are usually the first choice for treating motion sickness. Their main side effect is drowsiness. A herbal alternative is ginger, which works like a charm for some people.

## IN THE BAHAMAS & TURKS & CAICOS

### AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

High-quality medical care is usually available, but expensive, in Nassau and Freeport in the Bahamas. Medical care is limited elsewhere. Bahamian doctors and hospitals expect payment in cash, regardless of whether you have travel health insurance. If you develop a life-threatening medical problem, you'll probably want to be evacuated to a country with state-of-the-art medical care. Since this may cost tens of thousands of dollars, be sure you have insurance to cover this before you depart (see opposite).

Many pharmacies are well supplied, but important medications may not be consistently available. Be sure to bring along enough supplies of all prescription drugs.

Medical facilities are limited in the Turks and Caicos. There is a small public hospital on Grand Turk and a private clinic on Provo, which has a hyperbaric chamber. Most serious medical problems require medical evacuation by air from the Turks and Caicos to the US.

### INFECTIOUS DISEASES Dengue Fever

Dengue fever is a viral infection found throughout the Caribbean. Dengue is transmitted by aedes mosquitoes, which bite mostly during the daytime and are usually found close to human habitations, often indoors. They breed primarily in artificial water containers, such as jars, barrels, cans, cisterns, metal drums, plastic containers and discarded tires. As a result, dengue is especially common in densely populated, urban environments.

Dengue usually causes flu-like symptoms, including fever, muscle aches, joint pains,

headaches, nausea and vomiting, often followed by a rash. The body aches may be quite uncomfortable, but most cases resolve uneventfully in a few days. Severe cases usually occur in children under age 15 who are experiencing their second dengue infection.

There is no treatment for dengue fever except to take analgesics such as acetaminophen or paracetamol (Tylenol) and drink plenty of fluids. Severe cases may require hospitalization for intravenous fluids and supportive care. There is no vaccine. The cornerstone of prevention is insect-protection measures, described on opposite.

### Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is the second most common travel-related infection (after travelers' diarrhea). It occurs throughout the Caribbean, particularly in the northern islands. Hepatitis A is a viral infection of the liver that is usually acquired by ingestion of contaminated water, food or ice, though it may also be acquired by direct contact with infected persons. The illness occurs throughout the world, but the incidence is higher in developing nations. Symptoms may include fever, malaise, jaundice, nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain. Most cases resolve without complications, though hepatitis A occasionally causes severe liver damage. There is no treatment.

The vaccine for hepatitis A is extremely safe and highly effective. If you get a booster six to 12 months later, it lasts for at least 10 years. You really should get it before you go to any developing nation. Because the safety of hepatitis A vaccine has not been established for pregnant women or children under age two, they should instead be given a gamma globulin injection.

### Hepatitis B

Like hepatitis A, hepatitis B is a liver infection that occurs worldwide but is more common in developing nations. Unlike hepatitis A, the disease is usually acquired by sexual contact or by exposure to infected blood, generally through blood transfusions or contaminated needles. The vaccine is recommended only for long-term travelers (on the road more than six months) who expect to live in rural areas or have close physical contact with locals. Additionally, the vaccine is recommended for anyone who anticipates sexual contact with the local inhabitants or

a possible need for medical, dental or other treatments while abroad, especially if a need for transfusions or injections is expected.

Hepatitis B vaccine is safe and highly effective. However, a total of three injections are necessary to establish full immunity. Several countries added the hepatitis B vaccine to the list of routine childhood immunizations in the 1980s, so many young adults are already protected.

### HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS has been reported in all Caribbean countries. More than 2% of all adults in the Caribbean carry HIV, which makes it the second-worst-affected region in the world, after sub-Saharan Africa. The highest prevalence is reported in the Bahamas, Haiti and Trinidad and Tobago. In the Caribbean, most cases are related to heterosexual contacts, especially with sex workers. Be sure to use condoms for all sexual encounters. If you think you might visit a piercing or tattoo parlor, or if you have a medical condition that might require an injection, make certain you bring along your own sterile needles.

### Typhoid Fever

Typhoid is uncommon on most of the Caribbean islands, except Haiti, which has reported a number of typhoid outbreaks.

Typhoid fever is caused by ingestion of food or water contaminated by a species of salmonella known as *Salmonella typhi*. Fever occurs in virtually all cases. Other symptoms may include headache, malaise, muscle aches, dizziness, loss of appetite, nausea and abdominal pain. Either diarrhea or constipation may occur. Possible complications include intestinal perforation, intestinal bleeding, confusion, delirium or (rarely) coma.

Typhoid vaccine is recommended for all travelers to Haiti, and for travelers to the other islands who expect to stay in rural areas for an extended period or who may consume potentially contaminated food or water. Typhoid vaccine is usually given orally, but is also available as an injection. Neither vaccine is approved for use in children under age two. If you get typhoid fever, the drug of choice is usually a quinolone antibiotic such as ciprofloxacin (Cipro) or levofloxacin (Levaquin), which many travelers carry for treatment of travelers' diarrhea.

### Yellow Fever

There is no yellow fever on the Bahamas or Turks and Caicos, but they require proof of yellow fever vaccination if you're arriving there from a yellow-fever-infected country in Africa or the Americas.

Yellow fever vaccine is provided only in approved yellow fever vaccination centers, which provide validated international certificates of vaccination ('yellow booklets'). The vaccine should be given at least 10 days before any potential exposure to yellow fever and remains effective for approximately 10 years. Reactions to the vaccine are generally mild and may include headaches, muscle aches, low-grade fevers or discomfort at the injection site. Severe, life-threatening reactions have been described but are extremely rare. In general, the risk of becoming ill from the vaccine is far less than the risk of becoming ill from yellow fever, and you're strongly encouraged to get the vaccine.

### TRAVELERS' DIARRHEA

To prevent diarrhea, avoid tap water unless it has been boiled, filtered or chemically disinfected (with iodine tablets); eat fresh fruits or vegetables only if cooked or peeled; be wary of dairy products that might contain unpasteurized milk; and be highly selective when eating food from street vendors.

If you develop diarrhea, be sure to drink plenty of fluid, preferably an oral rehydration solution containing lots of salt and sugar. A few loose stools don't require treatment, but if you start having more than four or five stools a day, you should start taking an antibiotic (usually a quinolone drug) and an antidiarrheal agent (such as loperamide). If diarrhea is bloody or persists for more than 72 hours or is accompanied by fever, shaking chills or severe abdominal pain, you should seek medical attention.

### ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

#### Animal Bites

Do not attempt to pet, handle or feed any animal, with the exception of domestic animals known to be free of any infectious disease. Most animal injuries are directly related to a person's attempt to touch or feed the animal.

Any bite or scratch by a mammal, including bats, should be promptly and thoroughly cleansed with large amounts of soap and

water, then an antiseptic such as iodine or alcohol should be applied. The local health authorities should be contacted immediately regarding possible postexposure rabies treatment, whether or not you've been immunized against rabies. It may also be advisable to start an antibiotic, since wounds caused by animal bites and scratches frequently become infected. One of the newer quinolones, such as levofloxacin (Levaquin), which many travelers carry in case of diarrhea, would be an appropriate choice.

### Mosquito Bites

To prevent mosquito bites, wear long sleeves, long pants, hats and shoes (rather than sandals). Bring along a good insect repellent, preferably one containing DEET, which should be applied to exposed skin and clothing but not to eyes, mouth, cuts, wounds or irritated skin. In general, adults and children over 12 should use preparations containing 25% to 35% DEET, which usually lasts about six hours. Children between two and 12 years of age should use preparations containing no more than 10% DEET, applied sparingly, which will usually last about three hours. Products containing lower concentrations of DEET are as effective, but for shorter periods of time. Neurological toxicity has been reported from DEET, especially in children, but appears to be extremely uncommon and generally related to overuse. Compounds containing DEET should not be used on children under the age of two.

Insect repellents containing certain botanical products, including eucalyptus oil and soybean oil, are effective but last only 1½ to two hours. Repellents containing DEET are preferable for areas where there is a high risk of malaria, dengue fever or yellow fever. Products based on citronella are not effective.

For additional protection, you can apply permethrin to clothing, shoes, tents and bed nets. Permethrin treatments are safe and remain effective for at least two weeks, even when items are laundered. Permethrin should not be applied directly to skin.

Don't sleep with the window open unless there is a screen. If sleeping outdoors or in accommodations that allow entry of mosquitoes, use a bed net, preferably treated with permethrin, with edges tucked in under the mattress. The mesh size should be less



than 0.6in (1.5mm). If the sleeping area is not otherwise protected, use a mosquito coil, which will fill the room with insecticide through the night. Wristbands impregnated with repellent are not effective.

### **Sun**

To protect yourself from excessive sun exposure, you should stay out of the midday sun, wear sunglasses and a wide-brimmed sun hat, and apply sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher, with both UVA and UVB protection. Sunscreen should be generously applied to all exposed parts of the body approximately 30 minutes before sun exposure and should be reapplied after swimming or vigorous activity. Travelers should also drink plenty of fluids and avoid strenuous exercise when the temperature is high.

### **Water**

Tap water is safe to drink in the Bahamas and Turks and Caicos.

## **CHILDREN & PREGNANT WOMEN**

In general, it's safe for children and pregnant women to go to the Bahamas and Turks and Caicos. When traveling with children, make sure they're up to date on all routine immunizations. It's sometimes appropriate to give children some of their vaccines a little early before visiting a developing nation. You should discuss this with your pediatrician. If pregnant, you should bear in mind that should a complication such as premature labor develop while you're on the islands, the quality of medical care may not be comparable to that in your home country.

Since the yellow fever vaccine is not recommended for pregnant women or children less than nine months old, these travelers, if arriving from a country with yellow fever, should obtain a waiver letter, preferably written on letterhead stationary and bearing the stamp used by official immunization centers to validate the international certificate of vaccination.

# Glossary

English, the official language and that of business and daily life, is spoken by everyone but a handful of Haitian immigrants, who speak their own Creole. Many words in the region's lexicon are carryovers from the early English colonial days. You may, for example, be served a drink in a 'goblet.' Other words have been passed down from Africa, such as *bo-bo* (fool) and *nyam* (to eat).

'True-true' Bahamians normally speak both Bahamian Standard English (BSE) and their own distinct island patois, a musical Caribbean dialect with its own rhythm and cadence. Though there are variances among the islands and between Blacks and Whites, all sectors of Bahamian society understand patois, the language of the street.

The official language of the Turks and Caicos Islands is English. The local islanders' distinct dialect bears much resemblance to the Bahamian dialect. The Haitians speak their own French-based Creole patois.

**All is well?** – How are you today?

**Bahama Mama** – rum, fruit juice and coffee liqueur cocktail

**Bahama parrot** – endangered indigenous species of parrot

**bangers and mash** – a meal of sausages and mashed potatoes, usually served with baked beans

**blockade running** – avoiding the blockade during the American Civil War by traveling through the Bahamas to supply the Confederates

**bo-bo** – a fool or idiot

**bound** – constipated

**cascating** – being sick or vomiting

**chile** – a child or youngster

**conch** – large endangered marine snail, the flesh of which is a popular staple of Bahamian diet

**Conchy Joes** – Loyalist descendants

**cook-outs** – meals cooked outside, normally a social gathering with music

**dress down to a fowl feather** – to get dressed respectably eg for church services

**fillymingo** – flamingo

**Fish Fry** – a collection of informal bars and takeouts, prime party spots at weekends

**fishenin** – fishing

**flim** – movie, film

**goblet** – a glass, such as a goblet of beer

**Gombay** – otherwise called 'Junkanoo' is a fruit drink, popular with children

**goombay** – island music derived from the days of slavery

**Goombay Smash** – a classic Bahamian rum cocktail

**Guava Duff** – traditional Bahamian dessert made from guava jelly and sponge

**go spillygatin'** – going out to party

**grits** – a tapioca-like side dish (made of potato)

**Gussy Mae** – term of affection for a woman with an ample posterior

**Hey man** – typical colloquial and cordial greeting

**jerk** – peppery seasoning used in Jamaican cooking

**Junkanoo** – Boxing Day street carnival with parades, costumes and *goombay* music

**johnnycakes** – sweet bread or drop-scones made with shortening, fried or baked

**Kalik** – award-winning, locally brewed Bahamian beer

**Loyalists** – American colonists who supported British royalty during the US Revolution

**man** – friend

**mash up** – smashed up, such as a car after it has been in an accident

**montell** – a rogue; a person (typically a man) who is befriending people for their wealth

**Moon Juice** – alcoholic drink made with fresh coconut water and rum

**no see ums** – aggressive and invisible sandflies, whose bites will leave you itching for days

**nyam** – to eat or to consume

**obeah** – African-based practice; communicating with spirits

**peas 'n' rice** – commonplace side dish of boiled or fried rice and kidney beans

**peas 'n' rice boungy** – a woman with an ample posterior

**pinas** – pineapples

**Pineathlon** – a triathlon, run as part of the Pineapple Festival on the island of Eleuthera

**plantain** – banana variety and side dish that tastes like squash

**potcake** – mongrel dog, fed food from the bottom of pots  
**pudin de pan** – bread pudding, a traditional English dessert

**rake 'n' scrape** – music made with household objects used as percussion

**rat** – wrath

**rigging and chatting** – a cornerstone of religious celebrations, much like a call and answer sermon

**rum** – local alcohol made from molasses, which comes in many flavors and strengths

**Rum Cream** – chilled drink made with rum, cream, custard and spices

**sapodilla** – fruit often made into custard and ice cream

**seed-pods** – a shaker that can be used as a popular musical instrument

**slippy dick** – a slipped disc

**souse** – a stew made from fish, goat and mutton often utilizing offal

**soursop** – also known as custard apple, a sweet and musky fruit used in ice cream

**spiny lobster** – the traditional Caribbean lobster, very popular

**steak and kidney pud'** – pastry-topped pie, made with kidney and steak; a traditional English dish

**strongbark** – tree with brilliantly colored white flowers, sometimes called the butterfly tree

**T'anks** – thank you

**Ting** – Jamaica's exported grapefruit carbonated drink, very tasty

**tot** – though

**t'ree** – three

**true-true** – definitely correct or real and genuine

**Turks Head** – local dark brewed beer made in the Turks and Caicos Islands

**What happ'nin?** – How are you? What has happened to you lately?

**Who yo daddy is?** – Where are you from?

**wining** – an intimate and common form of dancing across the Caribbean and West Indies