



HONEYMOON

# THE BAHAMAS

We can't *guarantee* your Bahamas experience will be as romantic as J-Lo and A-Rod's recent high-profile proposal here, but let's just say the chances are pretty high. Hundreds of islands make up this archipelago and all are the stuff tropical-honeymoon dreams are made of. New Providence is the most populous and where you'll find the capital, Nassau. This city by the sea has Honolulu vibes and is definitely worth exploring, but if you're after minimal bustle and maximum beach, you might want to make your way to one of the less developed Out Islands, like Harbour, Bimini, Eleuthera or the Exumas. There's so much to see within short flights or boat rides over the bluest blue water, and this internal travel is a thrill in itself. Whatever your destination, though, pack your togs. It did randomly snow here once in 1977, but the Bahamas is essentially winterless, so the water is warm year-round, putting swimming, diving and boating right up there on the itinerary.





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**Play:** Whether you've never met a horse, pig or stingray you didn't like, or never met one at all is irrelevant – prepare to become an animal-lover faster than you can say, "Because Bahamas". Who in their right mind would want to miss horse-riding with their beloved on a white-sand beach? The longest-running equestrian tour in the Bahamas, since 1977 Happy Trails Stables has been setting off from Coral Harbour, about 20 minutes from Nassau. They'll pick you up from your accommodation and take you on a relaxed ride through the trees and onto the footprint-free sand.

Meanwhile, southeast of Nassau, the Exumas are a chain of 365 cays and islands where, on Big Major Cay, you'll find Insta-famous Pig Beach. Given it's uninhabited by humans, how the pigs got there is disputed, but what we do know is it's best to visit them in the morning – by afternoon you're more likely to find them lazing in the sand with full bellies than excitedly swimming out to meet you. Guided tours from Nassau offer other unforgettable activities to enjoy while you're over there, including swimming with sharks and stingrays and snorkelling in Thunderball Grotto, the spot made famous by the 1965 James Bond film *Thunderball*.

Also, did we mention the manatees? These magical marine mammals can be found in the water off Bimini Island, which is also known for its uncrowded beaches and considers itself the fishing capital of the world, if that's your thing.

**Stay:** On New Providence is sky-scraping Baha Mar, a 1000-acre beachside resort complex close to Nassau, which as well as accommodation boasts the Caribbean's largest casino, high-end shopping, restaurants, bars, an art gallery and a golf course. Of the three hotels here, we recommend near-new Rosewood on Cable Beach (said to be one of the Bahamas' best strips of sand) for its private butlers, marble bathrooms and in-house spa.

On the more chill Harbour Island, there are lots of great Airbnbs for rent, but if you're up for treating yo'selves, book in to The Ocean View Club, a boutique family-run stay with tent cottages (one has a pair of coconut palms protruding through the roof!) and beach 'shacks' (one has an outdoor clawfoot bath!), as well as chic rooms and swanky suites in

the main house. Fun facts: thanks to millions of tiny pieces of coral and shell, and a micro-organism called foraminifera, the sand on Harbour Island is the prettiest pink; plus the island is so small, cars aren't really necessary, so most people get around in golf carts.

A short boat ride away on Eleuthera, solar-powered glampsite The Other Side is another amazing find. As well as sleeping tents with four-poster beds and hardwood floors, there are four communal tents designed for eating, drinking, playing and reading, and a divine salt-water pool on a sun-bleached deck beside the beach. When you've finished doing nothing much, practise yoga by the pool, paddleboard out to see the sea turtles, surf, explore the caves or indulge in an in-room massage.

**Eat:** Obviously, you can't visit the Bahamas without trying the seafood. On Harbour Island (which you'll be calling 'Briland' like its residents by the time you leave), Sip Sip champions local produce and culinary traditions – order the spicy conch chilli. Speaking of this ubiquitous shellfish, while on Harbour Island you should also visit Queen Conch, a funky little eatery set over the water with a front-row seat to the sunset and some say the best-ever conch salad (the Bahamas' version of ceviche). Nearby, canary-coloured Cocoa Coffee House is a great go-to for plant-based fare.

Also on your must-try menu should be the country's rum and signature cocktails like the Bahama Mama, which you should definitely try to say five times fast. John Watling's Distillery in downtown Nassau is the Bahamas' only locally owned distillery and sits on a grand 1789 estate. As well as classic drinks like the aforementioned tongue-twister, it offers hand-crafted small-batch rum and tours of the historic property.

Governor's Harbour Bakery in Eleuthera is popular for its traditional treats, including Johnnycake, a cornmeal flatbread that can be eaten savoury or sweet. Another delicacy you can't leave without sampling is guava duff. Made with indigenous fruit and drizzled with rum butter sauce, this steamed dessert looks like a Swiss roll and tastes like a slice of heaven.