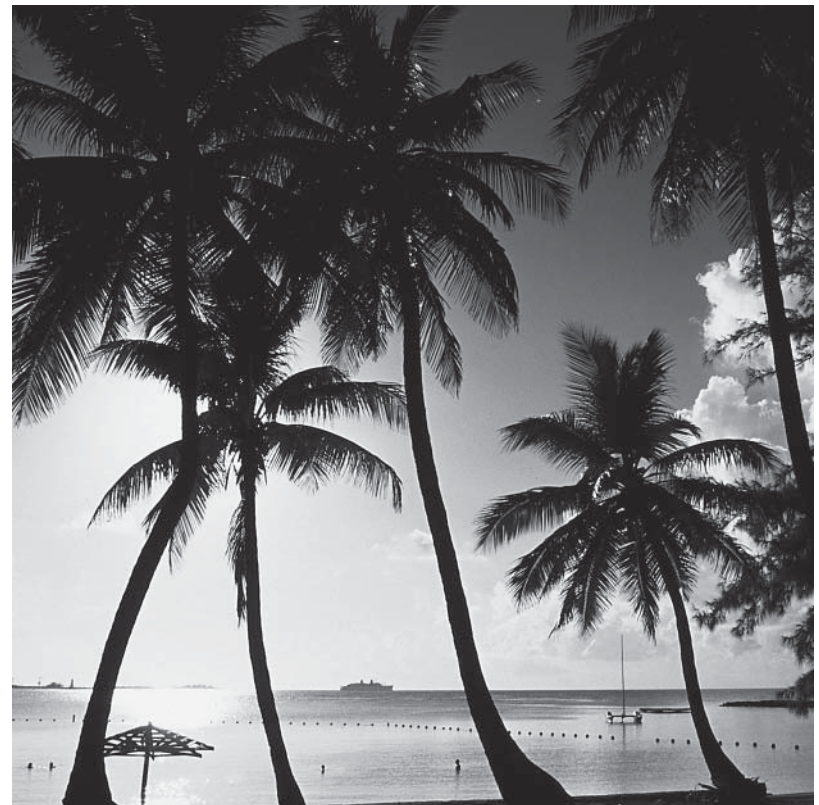


Bahamas



DENNIS JOHNSON

New Providence



Most visitors to New Providence stay within the heady triangle of charming, colonial downtown Nassau, Cable Beach's fun-filled beachside resorts, and the all-pervasive excitement of the Atlantis water and casino complex on adjoining Paradise Island. Nassau is so geared to the tourist that the 'real' island takes some seeking out. Yet it lies close at hand.

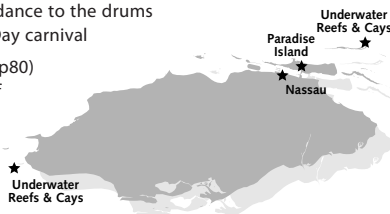
The narrow streets of downtown Nassau spill over with busy residents, hedonistic holiday-makers and shopping cruise-ship passengers. By strolling down to Potter's Cay when fishing boats return laden with glistening fish, you can experience an aspect of Bahamian life that hasn't changed much since the 1800s. Or to enjoy a real Bahamian community experience, attend an exuberant church service or wander amid the *goombay* dancers and the bustle of Arawak Cay, where multicolored shacks sell beer and hot, crispy pieces of fried fish. Quiet communities and fishing villages dot the coastline, where friendly artists display their vivid wares and Bahamians chat while children play on undisturbed beaches after school.

Most of the interior of the island is marshy, with large lakes and dense scrub forest, but it is enjoyed by bird-watchers. Here, serene Lake Nancy is edged by grandiose homes that are only outshone by billionaires' dwellings in the secured settlements on the western coast.

Two-thirds of the nation's population live on this 21 mile-long isle, mostly within Nassau. Although the turquoise seas and white, sugar-soft sands of Cable and Cabbage Beaches are renowned, other idyllic spots include uninhabited cays, perfect for day trips. Locals relish the pretty western and southern beaches, where the snorkeling and diving are superb.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Shop till you drop at the duty-free shops along lively Nassau's **Bay St** (p95) and around **Rawson Sq** (p72), brimming with historic buildings and bustle
- Head for Paradise Island to visit **Atlantis'** (p78) incredible waterpark and aquarium, and then sunbathe and people-watch on the stunning white sands of adjacent **Cabbage Beach** (p79)
- Sip a golden Kalik (locally brewed beer) and dance to the drums of **Junkanoo's** (p83) midsummer or Boxing Day carnival
- Take an exhilarating **powerboat adventure** (p80) to the idyllic Exuma Cays or the pink sands of Eleuthera
- Explore the underwater reefs and cays off the **southwestern** and **northern beaches** (p79) and meet some neon-colored fish



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 242

■ POPULATION: 228,329

■ AREA: 80 SQ MILES

National Parks

Harold and Wilson Ponds are perfect for a spot of hiking or bird-watching, with over a hundred listed bird species including herons, egrets and cormorants to be viewed here.

The Retreat (p74) is tucked away in the center of Nassau, and has a vast collection of palms and tropical plants plus the Bahamas National Trust (BNT; p74). Enjoy a stroll through the garden's 11 acres and collect some detailed information on regional sites of interest.

Bird-watchers should head for the reserves of Paradise Island, Cable Beach Golf Course, the caves, Lakeview, Red Sound, Twin Lakes, Westward Villas, Lake Cunningham, Waterloo, Adelaide Creek, Goulding Cay, Prospect Ridge, Waterworks and Skyline Heights. For the details on where to find these and other Wild Bird Reserves contact the **Department of Agriculture** (☎ 242-325-7413; fax 242-325-3960; Levy Bldg, E Bay St, Nassau, New Providence).

Other national parks are listed on p39.

Getting There & Away

Most travelers to New Providence and the Bahamas fly into Nassau International Airport, which lies 8 miles west of town. Others arrive at Nassau's Prince George Wharf on international cruise ships or on private boats.

Getting Around

You can easily navigate your way around downtown Nassau and Cable Beach by foot. They are joined by a regular stream of jitney buses (private minibuses), which also run around the island, making exploration pretty easy.

Pedestrians can either take the regular ferries between Prince George Wharf and Paradise Island or walk across the Paradise Island bridges to or from downtown. Keep in mind that there is a walk of almost a mile from the bridges into Nassau's tourism center.

Car-rental agencies are located at the airport and in all tourism areas, as are scooter-hire operators.

There are tons of tourism and dive operators who visit surrounding cays and other Bahamian islands, as do mail boats and Bahamas Ferries services.

NASSAU

pop 227,936

Modern Nassau is not such a far cry from the rowdy town that once harbored pirates, stockade runners and prohibition-avoiding party crowds. It's still a lively place fueled by commerce and rum, but more legitimate. The small, historic downtown core is a charming mix of narrow streets, grand sugar-pink neocolonial government buildings, and old wooden and limestone buildings, which are dignified in their faded grandeur.

But downtown is more than a pretty snapshot. It is also a hub of commerce and government, policed by immaculately dressed and starched police officers. Bankers in pinstriped shirts dodge between tourists to reach a myriad of international banks, intent on manipulating billions of dollars to make the wealthy wealthier in this offshore banking haven.

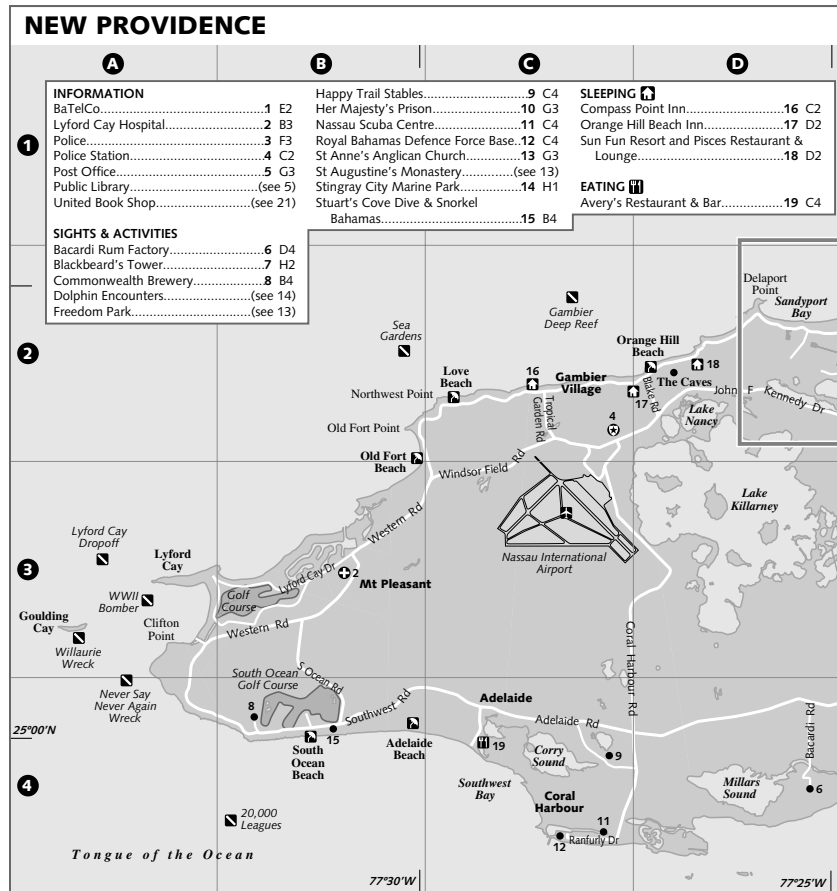
The waterfront and Bay St shops (the heart of downtown) are packed with tax-free sparkling emeralds, spiced rums and elegant silk clothing. Here cafés serve chattering tourists fueled by multicolored cocktails, while vast cruise liners loom nearby, disgorging their hordes which swamp Nassau's identity, but also her cash registers.

Jitney buses run constantly to the soft sands of Cable Beach and adjacent hotels while taxis honk for those heading to Paradise Island. Here the concrete cladding of ritzy resorts covers the land and almost dwarfs the snowy-white sands of Cabbage Beach.

Low-income and middle-class residential suburbs extend inland for miles. Government ministries, modern shopping malls and colleges all lie south of downtown, along with Over-the-Hill, which is bordered by East St and Blue Hill Rd to the east and west, and Prospect Ridge and Blue Hill Heights to the north and south. This African-Bahamian enclave contains both colorful family homes and an edgier and messier picture of Nassau's less affluent and contented residents.

HISTORY

The island's colorful early history is steeped in rum-running and roguery. Nassau (initially known as Charles Town) was established in 1666, her dirt streets pounded by pirates and wreckers, and lined with brothels

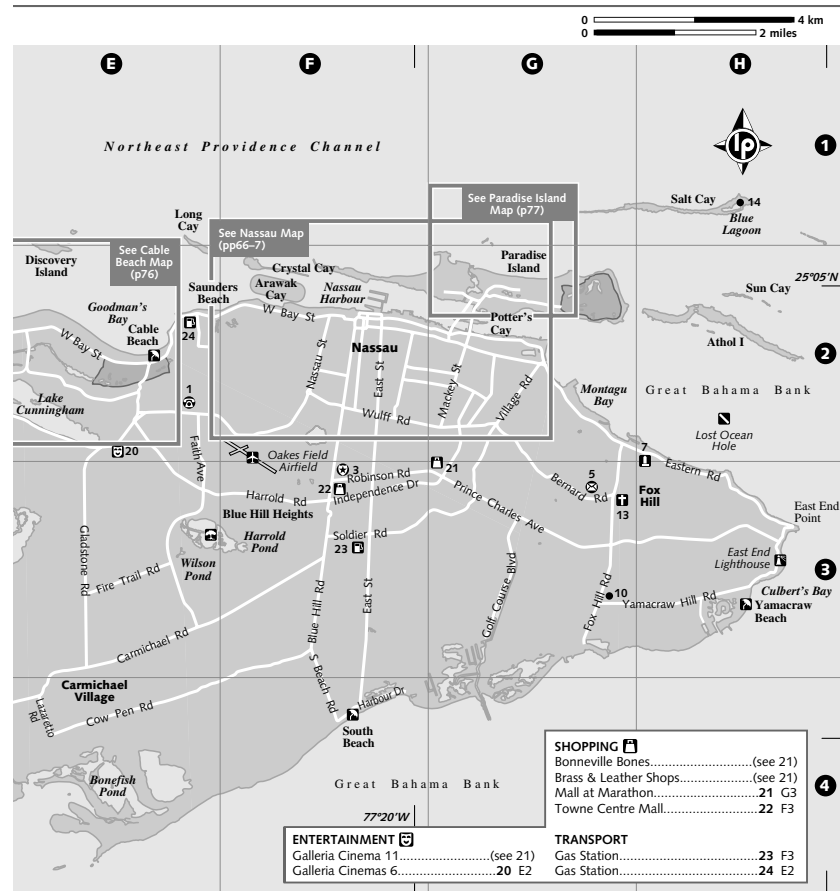


and taverns for 'common cheats, thieves, and lewd persons.' Fed up with relentless attacks by Charles Town's pirates on their ships, the Spaniards attacked the town in 1684, followed by an assault by a combined Spanish and French force in 1703, which didn't help the city's development much either.

Fifteen years later the pirates were ousted by the British but by the middle of the 18th century Nassau still simply consisted of a church, jail, courthouse plus an Assembly House on Bay St. In the 1760s Governor William Shirley, who had been a governor of Massachusetts, brought a Yankee sense of order and ingenuity to help create a real city. The swamps were drained, the

land was surveyed, and tidy new streets were laid.

The American Revolution boosted the city's fortunes, as citizens took to running the English blockade and a flood of entrepreneurial loyalist refugees arrived. In 1787 the haughty and inept Earl of Dunmore arrived as governor of the Bahamas, despite disgracing himself in the posts of governor of New York and Virginia and being accused of a reprehensible private life. Dunmore's legacy is evident today in several fine buildings. These include Fort Charlotte (p75) and Fort Fincastle (p73). The governor was saved from the axe for his extravagance and stupidity by the outbreak of Britain's war with France in 1793.



By the late 18th century Nassau had settled into a slow-paced, glamorous era in which the well-to-do lived graciously and were serviced by slaves who resided in Over-the-Hill shanties. Following the abolition of the slave trade by the Brits in 1807, numerous public edifices and sites, such as the Queen's Staircase, were constructed using the manual labor of former slaves.

The American Civil War and Prohibition further enhanced Nassau's fortunes; many fine hotels and homes were erected on the proceeds from blockade- and rum-running. The 'winter season' of visiting socialites set the pattern for the Bahamian peak tourism season.

Historic downtown Nassau is 10 blocks long and four blocks wide and faces north toward Paradise Island and Nassau Harbour. The town rises south to Prospect Ridge, a steep limestone scarp that parallels the entire north shore about a half-mile inland. A second, higher ridge – Blue Hill Heights – rises to 120ft and runs east-west along Nassau's southern border, 3 miles inland. The major residential areas lie between the ridges.

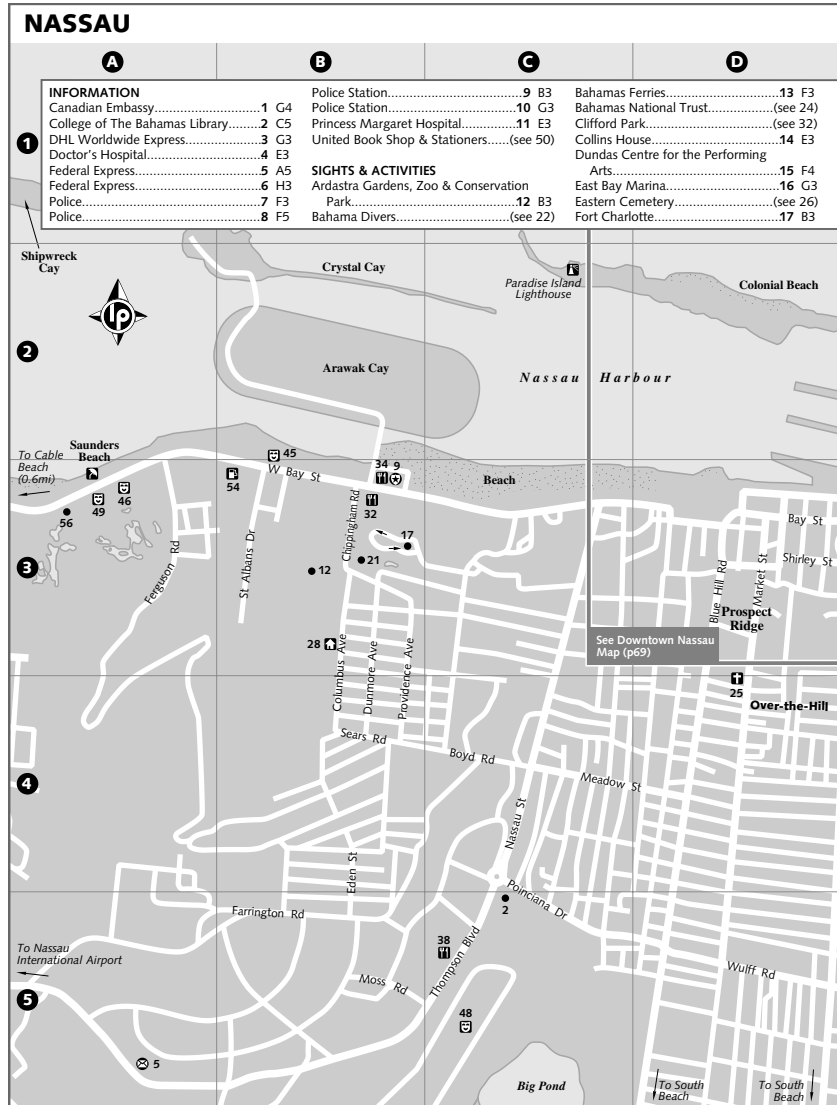
The main thoroughfare through town is Bay St, which runs east to the Paradise Island Exit Bridge; beyond, it follows the windward shore as Eastern Rd. West of downtown, Bay St becomes W Bay St, and

runs to Cable Beach. From here, continue on this road (which changes names several times) to complete a loop of the island via Lyford Cay, Adelaide and Carmichael Village. At Fox Hill join Eastern Rd to get back into town.

Downtown, Bay St is one-way, from west to east. The main westbound thoroughfare

downtown is Shirley St, which runs from Eastern Rd.

Paradise Island is 4 miles long and a half-mile wide, tapering to the west. It is divided in two by a narrow man-made waterway linking Nassau Harbour to the Atlantis marina. Two road bridges (one to enter and the other to exit the island) link



Paradise Island to New Providence. Both bridges have pedestrian walkways.

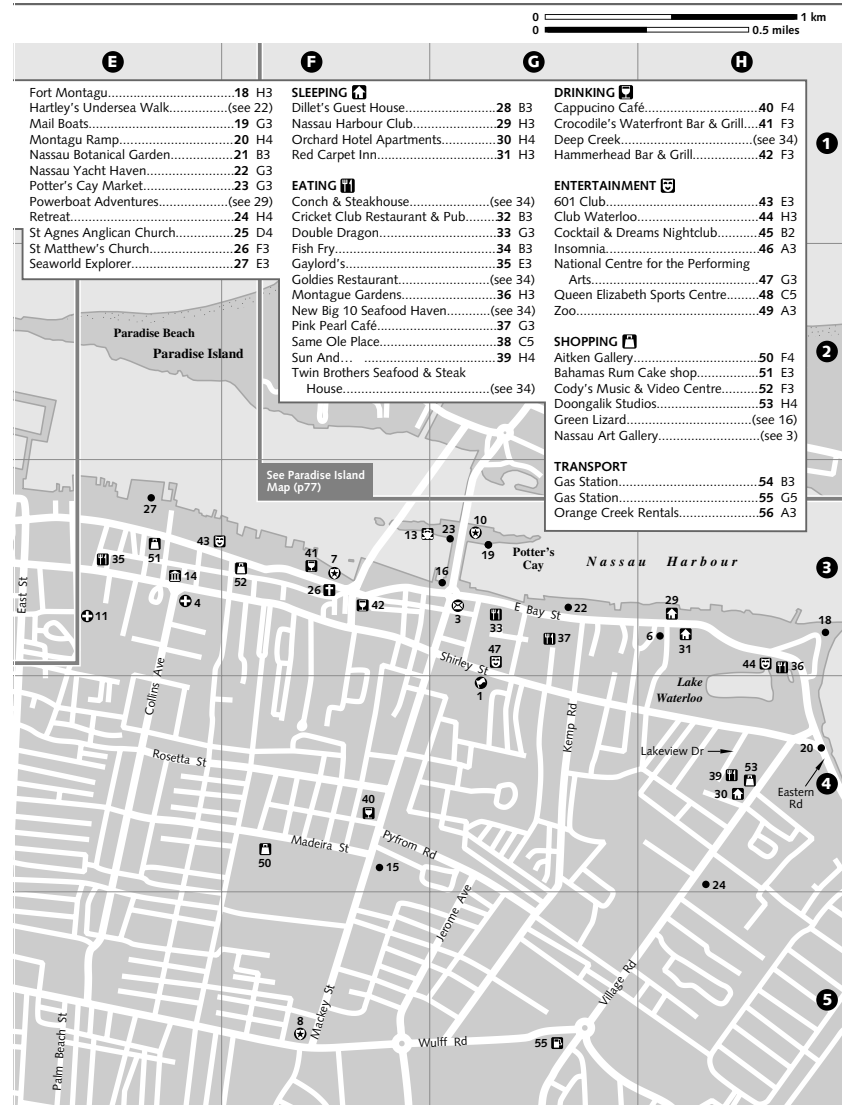
See p96 for information on getting to/from the airport.

Maps

Stores and hotels have the free tourist *Bahamas Trailblazer Map* and *Super Map*.

INFORMATION Bookstores

Several stores on Bay St stock a wide range of magazines, newspapers and books. **Island Shop** (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-4183; fax 242-322-8470; 2nd fl, cnr Bay & Frederick Sts, Nassau) Sells a good collection of Bahamian literature, maps, nautical handbooks and Lonely Planet guides.



NASSAU IN...

Two days

Start your day with a Bahamian breakfast at **Café Skan's** (p88) followed by a stroll through historic downtown, past the huge floating cities docked in port, and the **Pompey Museum** (p72) before jumping on a **jitney bus** (private minibuses; p97) to explore the island.

Then laze on **Cable Beach** (p75), sipping a rum cocktail at sunset before relaxing into the Italian ambience of nearby **Capriccio Ristorante** (p91) for a creamy pasta.

The next day, shop for duty-free goodies along **Bay St** (p95). Salute the marching flamingos and snoozing iguanas of **Ardastra Gardens, Zoo & Conservation Park** (p75) before heading off to the southwestern beaches (p98) for lunch at Avery's and a snorkel.

Treat yourself to fine wine and dining at the **Humidor Restaurant** (p90), followed by a Cuban cigar and the nightspots of **Paradise Island** (p93).

Four days

Go scuba diving or have a fun day trip **snorkeling** (p80) at Rose Island, take a walk around the leafy **Retreat** (p74) or **Nassau Botanical Garden** (p75) and have a look at the vibrant artworks found in Nassau's studios and elegant **National Art Gallery of the Bahamas** (p71).

One week

Add a **fast ferry** (p80) ride to Eleuthera's pink-sand beaches, an **island adventure** (p80) trip to the Exuma Cays, a **diving or fishing expedition** (p79) to the Abacos or Biminis, and some rum-tasting at the **Bacardi Rum Factory** (p99).

United Book Shop (Map pp64-5; ☎ 242-393-6166;

Mall at Marathon, Robinson & Marathon Rds, Nassau)

A wide selection of children's books and novels are stocked here.

United Book Shops & Stationers (Map pp66-7;

☎ 242-322-8597; Palmdale Shopping Centre, Madeira St, Nassau) Stocks a fairly comprehensive variety of novels.

Emergency

Air Sea Rescue Association (☎ 242-325-8864)

Ambulance (☎ 242-322-2221, 911)

Fire (☎ 242-302-8404, 911)

Med-Evac (☎ 242-322-2881)

Police (☎ 242-322-4444, 911; E Hill St)

Red Cross (☎ 242-323-7370)

State Care Medical & Emergency Centre

(☎ 242-328-5596)

Internet Access

Bahamas Internet Café (Map p69; ☎ 242-325-7458; Bay St, Nassau; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat)

Cyber Café (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-1253; cybercafé3@coralwave.com; Paradise Island Shopping Centre, Paradise Island; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat)

FML Web Shop (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-2241; Hurricane Hole Plaza, Paradise Island; ☎ 7am-7:30pm Mon-Sat, noon-7:30pm Sun)

Internet Café (Map p69; ☎ 242-323-1000; West Bay Hotel, W Bay St, Nassau; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat)

Tech Shop (Map p76; ☎ 242-327-0081; W Bay St, Cable Beach; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6:30pm Sat, 11am-4pm Sun)

Libraries

The Historical Library & Museum (p73) is a public library dedicated mostly to works of popular fiction. It also houses a small museum.

College of The Bahamas Library (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-323-8552; Poinciana Dr, Nassau; ☎ 8am-9pm Mon-Fri plus 9am-5pm Sat Oct-Jun) The largest collection of books in Nassau.

Public library Blue Hill Rd (Map pp64-5; ☎ 242-322-1056); Fox Hill (Map pp64-5; ☎ 242-324-1458); Mackey St (☎ 242-322-1096)

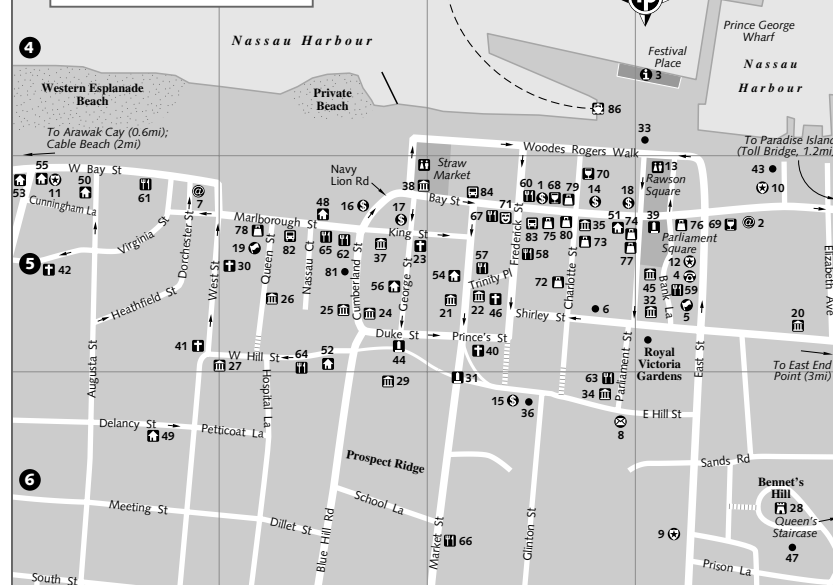
Media

Apart from the daily and weekly newspapers listed in the boxed text on p271, there are two monthly tourist papers, *What's On* and *Tourist News*. These are available free in hotel lobbies, stores and tourist information booths. They include feature articles, a calendar of events, and discount coupons. *What-to-do: Where to shop, dine, stay, play, invest* is available free at tourist bureaus and most hotel lobbies. It has a good shopping section.

DOWNTOWN NASSAU

0 400 m
0 0.2 miles

	A	B	C	D	
INFORMATION					
ATM.....	1 C5	Junkanoo Expo.....	(see 3) 35 C5	DRINKING ☑	
ATM.....	(see 13) 2 D5	Ministry of Foreign Affairs.....	36 C6	Dockside Sports Bar & Grill.....	68 C5
Bahamas Internet Café.....	7 A5	National Art Gallery of the Bahamas.....	(see 27) 37 B5	Drop-Off.....	69 D5
Bahamas Ministry of Tourism Information Booth.....	3 D4	Pirates of Nassau Museum.....	38 B5	Rum-Off.....	70 C5
BaTelCo.....	4 D5	Pompey Museum.....	38 B5	ENTERTAINMENT ☑	
British High Commission.....	5 D5	Queen Victoria Statue.....	39 D5	Blue Note Club.....	(see 48) 71 C5
Destinations.....	6 C5	St Andrews Presbyterian Kirk.....	40 C5	Fluid Lounge & Nightclub.....	71 C5
Internet Café.....	(see 67) 7 A5	St Francis Xavier Cathedral.....	41 A5	SHOPPING ☑	
Island Shop.....	(see 67) 8 C6	St Mary's Church.....	42 A5	Balmain Antiques & Gallery.....	(see 80) 81 B5
Main Post Office.....	9 D6	Seaworld Explorer Office.....	43 D5	Bay.....	(see 68) 82 B5
Police Headquarters.....	10 D5	Statue of Christopher Columbus.....	44 B5	Brass & Leather.....	72 C5
Police Station.....	11 A5	Supreme Court.....	45 D5	Coins of the Realm.....	73 C5
Police Station.....	12 D5	Trinity Methodist Church.....	46 C5	Coin of Nassau.....	74 C5
Public Toilets.....	13 D5	Water Tower.....	47 D6	Colombian Emeralds.....	75 C5
Royal Bank of Canada.....	14 C5	Welcome Centre.....	(see 3) 48 B5	Gucci.....	76 D5
Scotiabank.....	16 B5	SLEEPING ☑		John Bull.....	(see 83) 77 C5
Scotiabank.....	17 B5	British Colonial Hilton Nassau.....	48 B5	Kennedy Gallery.....	(see 81) 78 B5
Scotiabank ATM.....	18 C5	Buena Vista Restaurant & Hotel.....	49 A6	Linen Shop.....	(see 67) 79 C5
US Embassy & Consulate.....	19 B5	El Greco.....	50 A5	Marlborough Antiques.....	78 B5
		Grand Central Hotel.....	51 C5	Perfume Shop.....	(see 67) 79 C5
		Graycliff Hotel & Restaurant.....	52 B5	Philatelic Bureau.....	(see 67) 80 C5
		Holiday Inn Junkanoo Beach Hotel.....	53 A5	Pipe of Peace.....	(see 68) 81 B5
		Mignon Guest House.....	54 C5	Prince George Plaza.....	(see 68) 82 B5
		Quality Inn.....	55 A5	Pylons.....	(see 75) 83 C5
		Towne Hotel.....	56 B5	Solomon's Mines.....	80 C5
		EATING ☑		TRANSPORT	
		Bahamian Kitchen, Restaurant & Bar.....	57 C5	Avis.....	81 B5
		Brussels Brasserie.....	58 C5	Bus Stop to Cable Beach & West.....	82 B5
		Café Matisse.....	59 D5	Buses to Cable Beach & West.....	83 C5
		Café Skan's.....	60 C5	Buses to Paradise Islands & East.....	84 C5
		Chef Willie.....	61 A5	Dollar.....	(see 48) 85 D4
		Conch Fritters Bar & Grill.....	62 B5	Ferries to Paradise Island.....	85 D4
		Green Shutters Restaurant & Pub.....	63 C6	Knowles Scooter Rentals.....	(see 3) 86 C4
		Humidor Restaurant.....	64 B5	Water Taxi to Paradise Island.....	86 C4
		Imperial Cafeteria & Take-Away.....	65 B5		
		Mama Lyddie's Place.....	66 C6		
		Sbarro's.....	67 C5		
		Jacaranda.....	34 C6		



Medical Services

Pharmacies exist in all shopping malls, but mainly keep standard shop hours.

Cable Beach Medical Centre (Map p76; ☎ 242-327-2886; W Bay St, Cable Beach) Outside Sandals Royal Bahamian.

Doctor's Hospital (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-322-8411, 242-302 4600; Shirley St at Collins Ave) Privately owned full-service hospital east of Princess Margaret Hospital; provides emergency services and acute care.

Princess Margaret Hospital (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-322-2861; Elizabeth Ave at Sands Rd) This government-run, full-service hospital is the island's main facility, providing emergency services and acute care.

Money

There are plenty of banks clustered around Rawson Sq and Bay St. ATMs dispensing US and Bahamian dollars can be easily found throughout Nassau. The Rawson Sq branch of Scotiabank has an ATM.

Commonwealth Bank (Map p76; ☎ 242-327-8441; W Bay St, Cable Beach)

Destinations (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-2931; 303 Shirley St, Nassau) Represents American Express.

First Caribbean International Bank (Map p76; W Bay St, Cable Beach) Opposite Sandals Royal Bahamian.

Royal Bank of Canada Cable Beach (Map p76; ☎ 242-327-6077; W Bay St) Downtown Nassau (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-8700; E Hill St; ☎ 242-356-8500; W Bay St)

Scotiabank Cable Beach (Map p76; ☎ 242-327-7380; Cecil Wallace Whitfield Centre, W Bay St); Downtown Nassau (Map p69; ☎ 242-356-1400; Rawson Sq, Nassau) The Cable Beach branch is opposite Nassau Beach Hotel.

Western Union (Map p76; ☎ 242-394-1429; W Bay St, Cable Beach)

Post

DHL Worldwide Express (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-394-4040; E Bay St, Nassau)

FedEx (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-322-5656; www.fedex.com; EE McKay Plaza, Thompson Blvd, Nassau)

Main post office (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-322-3025; E Hill St at Parliament St, Nassau; ☎ 8:30am-5:30pm Mon-Fri, to 12:30pm Sat)

Telephone

BaTelCo East St (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-323-6414; ☎ 7am-10pm); John F Kennedy Dr (Map pp64-5; ☎ 242-323-4911; ☎ 7am-10pm) Has public phone booths for international calls. The East St branch is a half-block south of Bay St.

Toilets

There are public toilets on Bay St (on the west side of the Straw Market) and on the north

side of Rawson Sq. Apart from those two, public toilets are as rare as hen's teeth. Just pop in and use the facilities at big hotels as everyone else does!

Tourist Information

Bahamas Ministry of Tourism information centers are based at the airport and the Welcome Centre in downtown Nassau. Information can also be obtained from websites listed on p285.

Bahamas Ministry of Tourism (Map pp64-5; ☎ 242-377-6806; Nassau International Airport; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) In the arrivals area.

Festival Place (Map p69; ☎ 242-323-3182; fax 322 7680; Welcome Centre, Prince George Wharf; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Open on Saturday and Sunday if cruise ship is in port.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Avoid Over-the-Hill at night; this area suffers from violence. Also use caution by day, as the area's down-at-the-heels quality is aggravated by the presence of 'Joneses' (drug users). You should also avoid walking alone downtown at night; stick to well-lit main streets.

SIGHTS

Even if you are short on time, it's worth seeing Nassau's attractive historical sights, many of which can be found downtown and around W Hill St and E Hill St. Art fans should also head to these locations and to Village Rd for the galleries, while those itching for sand and sea should go to Cable Beach, the southern beaches and Paradise Island. On the way to Cable Beach, families may want to stop downtown and west of downtown for fun museums and some wildlife, but don't miss Atlantis on Paradise Island!

Downtown Nassau

The heart of downtown Nassau is a compact and colorful historic area with many well-preserved 18th- and 19th-century buildings.

Before embarking on a walking tour of downtown, get yourself a copy of *Nassau's Historic Buildings* by C Sieghbert Russell, available at the Bahamas Historical Society Museum (p73).

MARLBOROUGH STREET & W BAY STREET

Much of the north side of Marlborough St, once occupied by Fort Nassau, is taken up by the British Colonial Hilton (p86),

fronted by a statue dedicated to Governor Woodes Rogers, plus a rusty anchor and cannon. Remnants of the old walls can be seen on the hotel grounds.

Marlborough St runs east into King St, which parallels Bay St for two blocks. The heart of Nassau's financial affairs is concentrated between Cumberland and Market Sts. Several old cut-stone buildings here are now fine restaurants.

Queen St, which ascends south from Marlborough St, is lined with fine balconied colonial homes, particularly **Devonshire House** (Map p69). Two blocks east, **Cumberland House** (Map p69) and the **Deanery** (Map p69) are described as 'the quintessential trademark of colonial Bahamian architecture.'

At Marlborough St's west end, it becomes Virginia St. Prim 1868 **St Mary's Church** (Map p69) could have fallen out of a postcard depicting the English countryside. The junction of Marlborough and West Sts has several fine old balconied houses.

Nassau has a large Greek community which is served by the Kurikon, also called the **Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation** (Map p69). Erected in 1932 the church is one block south of the Marlborough and West Sts junction. It's intimate and beautiful within, with an exquisite gilt chandelier.

The interactive **Pirates of Nassau Museum** (Map p69; ☎ 242-356-3759; pirates@bahamas.net.bs; King St; adult/child \$12/6; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8:30am-noon Sat) is hugely popular, with life-size recreations of pirate life, including a twilight quayside replete with all the sounds of the era, and a cutaway of the pirate ship *Revenge*. Beware Blackbeard and his ferocious Amazon, Anne Bonney! Stop for a break and drink at the adjacent Pirate's Pub.

The striking 1753 **Christ Church Anglican Cathedral** (Map p69; King St) nearby has a splendid wood-beamed roof, stained glass and pendulous Spanish-style chandeliers. The current structure is the fourth version. The original church was destroyed in 1684 by the Spaniards. Its successors were leveled during the French-Spanish invasion in 1703 and by the ravages of weather and termites.

W & E HILL STREETS

These two streets run parallel to Nassau Harbour and are joined by Duke St, running east to west. They're lined with important historical buildings, including **Jacaranda**

(Map p69), previously home to the duke of Windsor.

The 1885 **St Francis Xavier Cathedral** (Map p69; cnr W Hill St & West St) has a long, slender nave topped by a bell tower, illuminated within at night. Many prominent Protestants of the time resented the incursion of the Catholics and ascribed to the hands of God the bolt of lightning that struck the church during construction, killing a workman and doing significant damage.

The huge three-story balconied **Dunmore House** (Map p69) was built by the disreputable Lord Dunmore after his arrival as governor in 1787. This stunning yellow-and-white mansion now houses the **National Art Gallery of the Bahamas** (☎ 242-328-5800; info@nagb.org.bs; admission adult/child \$3/2; ☎ 11am-4pm Tue-Sat). Different exhibitions display a wealth of Bahamian art that traverses many eras, but it's always vibrant. Don't miss the extraordinary sculptures in the gardens.

The beautiful **Graycliff Hotel & Restaurant** (see the boxed text, p86) was built partly on the ruins of the oldest church in the Bahamas, erected in 1694 but destroyed by the Spaniards in 1703. It became a hostelry in 1844 and later passed into the hands of the Earl and Countess of Dudley, whose guests included Sir Winston Churchill. Today it is one of the city's finest hotels and restaurants, redolent with faded charm, antiques and original Cuban art.

Two doors down and part of the same property is **Graycliff Cigar Co** (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-2795; W Hill St; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri), staffed by 20 Cuban cigar rollers under the tutelage of Avelino Lara, former head of the El Laguito factory in Havana, and former personal roller for Fidel Castro. Visitors are always courteously welcomed.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE

The vast cotton-candy pink Georgian structure commanding the city from atop Mt Fitzwilliam, just south of W Hill St, is the **official residence** (Map p69) of the Bahamas' governor-general. The original home was built in 1737 by Governor Fitzwilliam but was destroyed by a hurricane in 1929. The current building was completed in 1932, and the lavish decorations date from the Duke of Windsor's time as governor in the 1940s. Visitors can walk the grounds for a close look at the building, but must be

accompanied by the guards. Twice a month, you can 'have a cuppa' with the governor-general's wife (contact the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism on ☎ 242-322-7500 or visit the website www.bahamas.com) or watch the changing of the guard. This British tradition of pomp and ceremony includes a performance of the Royal Bahamas Police Force Band, and occurs at 10am twice a month; call ☎ 242-322-2020 to confirm date and time.

A **statue of Christopher Columbus** (Map p69) stands on the steps overlooking Duke St. It was designed by US writer Washington Irving, who dressed the 15th-century Genoese explorer in the garb of Irving's day.

Gregory Arch (Map p69), a stone arch topped with iron railings, spans Market St at the east end of Government House grounds, and informally delineates downtown Nassau and Over-the-Hill.

Handsome **St Andrews Presbyterian Kirk** (Map p69), below Government House on Prices and Market Sts, owes its existence to a loyalist who settled in Nassau at the end of the American Revolution. In 1798 he established the St Andrew's Society, comprising 55 Scots, to 'cultivate good understanding and social intercourse.' The Freemasons laid the cornerstone in 1810, and the church has since undergone many architectural changes.

East of Gregory Arch is where the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** (Map p69) is located, a beautiful pink Georgian edifice fronted by a cannon. Outside you'll see a modern purple sculpture – *El Vigía* (The Lookout) – by Mexican sculptor Sebastian. It was a gift from the Mexican government for the 1992 quincentennial of Columbus' landing.

BAY STREET

This is the heart of the duty-free shopping district. Two impressive buildings are the Royal Bank of Canada (1919) and the 1885 **Masonic Temple** (Map p69).

The Bahamas' history is told through displays at the small **Pompey Museum** (Map p69; ☎ 242-326-2566; Vendue House; adult/child \$5/1; ☎ 9:30am-4:30pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat, noon-4pm Sun). The building was once a slave-auction site, and the museum is named in memory of a slave who led a rebellion on Exuma in 1830. The exhibits include artifacts, straw-work, historical documents, and drawings tracing events from the Lucayan period (the

Lucayans were a tribe of Arawak Indians who arrived in the Bahamas near the turn of the 9th century) to the bootlegging era. Upstairs is a permanent exhibit of vibrant naïf paintings by noted artist Amos Ferguson.

Life at the west end of Bay St is dominated by what is said to be the world's largest **Straw Market**. Some 160 vendors set up stalls daily to sell everything from straw-work to T-shirts, woodcarvings, shell souvenirs and other island handicrafts, all decorated with brightly colored motifs. You can watch craftspeople whittling wood or weaving straw.

A restored two-story 18th-century merchant's home, **Balcony House** (Map p69; ☎ 242-302-2621; Market St; admission by donation; ☎ 10am-4:30pm Mon, Wed & Fri, to 1pm Thu & Sat), a few blocks off Bay St, was named for its prominent balcony supported by wooden knee braces. The original slave kitchen remains, as does the staircase, taken from a sailing ship. It is now a local history museum.

RAWSON SQUARE

The heart of town for tourists is Rawson Sq, on the south side of Bay St. It's a natural place to begin a tour of downtown Nassau. Guided walking tours also begin here (see p83). Nearby is a life-size bronze statue, **Bahamian Woman**, which honors the role of women during 'years of adversity.' She holds a small child. In the center of the square is a **bust of Sir Milo Butler**, the first governor-general of the independent nation, and a fountain pool with leaping bronze dolphins.

PARLIAMENT SQUARE

The area immediately south of Rawson Sq on Bay St is known as Parliament Sq. On three sides of the square nestle three pink-and-white Georgian neoclassical buildings (1805–1813) that house the offices of the leader of the opposition (on the left), the Assembly House (right), and the Senate (facing Bay St). In their midst sits the 1905 **Queen Victoria statue** (Map p69), whose presence reflects still-held allegiances.

You can peek inside the House of Assembly to watch proceedings when it's in session. Make such arrangements at the **House Office of the Clerk of Courts** (☎ 242-322-7500). Note its green carpet, symbolizing the English meadow where King John was forced to sign the Magna Carta in 1215.

The Senate also has a visitors' gallery, with tickets given out free on a first-come, first-served basis.

Immediately south of Parliament Sq, between Parliament St and Bank Lane, is the **Supreme Court** (Map p69), a Georgian edifice where bewigged judges perform their duties.

A few yards further north is the small Garden of Remembrance, with a **cenotaph** (Map p69) honoring Bahamian soldiers who died in the two world wars. Also note the plaque to four members of the Royal Bahamas Defence Force killed in 1980 when their patrol vessel, *Flamingo*, was attacked by Cuban MiGs.

PRINCE GEORGE WHARF

The historic cruise-ship wharf, north of Rawson Sq and Bay St, is the gateway to Nassau for 1.4 million visitors a year!

The wharf is fronted by bustling **Woods Rogers Walk** (Map p69), lined with souvenir stalls, fast-food outlets and a canopied stand where **horse-drawn surreys** (Map p69) await customers. The drivers will take you around the historical landmarks of the Bay St area. The rides begin and end at the Welcome Centre, Woods Rogers Walk, Prince George Wharf. A 30-minute ride costs approximately \$10/5 per adult/child. Negotiate a price before climbing aboard if you want to hire a surrey for longer, and to avoid jammed streets only take the rides when the cruise ships are not in town. Ferries to Paradise Island also leave from Woods Rogers Walk.

The old wharfside customs building today houses the **Welcome Centre** containing visitor information, a few pricy craft stalls, as well as the **Junkanoo Expo** (Map p69; ☎ 242-356-2731; adult/child \$1/0.50; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun when cruise liners are in dock), with its decidedly patchy display of some costumes and paraphernalia that make up the colorful and high-spirited street extravaganza of Junkanoo (see the boxed text, p34).

SHIRLEY STREET

The delightful **Trinity Methodist Church** (Map p69), at the west end of Shirley St, was originally planned for a congregation of 800 people. Alas, the four carpenters sent from Scotland all succumbed to yellow fever, and a more modest church was built in 1861. It had been open only a year when

it was blown down by a hurricane. The current church dates from 1869 and was significantly repaired following damage in the 1928 hurricane.

With its old prison cells now crammed with books and dusty periodicals, the unusual octagonal 1790 **Historical Library & Museum** (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-4907; Parliament & Bank Lane; admission free; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Thu, to 5pm Fri, to 4pm Sat) was originally a jail (the dungeon still exists below ground). Convicts gave way to books in 1873. Note the amazing model of *Arethusa*, the rum-running schooner of Captain Bill McCoy. A museum on the 2nd floor, dedicated to the peaceful Lucayan Indians, has a motley collection of artifacts, including bones, a few old maps, engravings, photographs, shells, stamps and old parchments.

The **Bahamas Historical Society Museum** (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-4231; Shirley St at Elizabeth Ave; adult/child \$1/0.50; ☎ 10am-1pm Mon, to 4pm Tue-Fri, to noon Sat) has a modest miscellany of artifacts and documents tracing the islands' history from Lucayan times to the contemporary era. It's worth the admission merely to admire the beautiful model of the Spanish galleon *Santa Luceno*.

Collins House (Map pp66–7), an attractive two-story property built in 1929 and later used as a school, began housing the Ministry of Education & Culture in 1971.

BENNETT'S HILL

At the south end of Elizabeth Ave, a passage and 90ft-deep gorge in Prospect Ridge lead to Fort Fincastle and a water tower. The passageway was cut from solid limestone by slaves, beginning in the 1790s, with the intent of constructing a roadway through Prospect Ridge. Emancipation was proclaimed before it could be finished.

The **Queen's Staircase** (Map p69), also known as the '66 Steps,' leads up to the tiny 1793 **Fort Fincastle** (Map p69), built by Lord Dunmore. Why it was whimsically built in the shape of a paddle-wheel steamer isn't clear. The fort faces east and was intended to guard 'all the Town and the Road to the Eastward.'

The **Water Tower** (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-2442; admission \$0.50; ☎ 8am-5pm) behind the fort was erected in 1928 to maintain water pressure on the island. It is 126ft tall and provides a marvelous panoramic view of Nassau. You

can walk up the narrow, winding staircase – there are 216 steps (or take the elevator).

OVER-THE-HILL

This area began as a settlement for free Blacks and slaves liberated from slave ships after 1807 by the British Navy. After emancipation in 1834, the area – comprising the villages of Grants Town and Bains Town and, further east, Fox Hill – expanded. Most inhabitants were destitute and lived in squalor.

The historic 1847 **Wesley Methodist Church** (Map p69) on Market St and the 1846 **St Agnes Anglican Church** (Map pp66–7) on Cockburn St are both worth a visit. Much caution is needed in this area and it should be avoided at night, as drug users and pushers are unfortunately quite discernible.

East of Downtown

EASTERN CEMETERY

Near the juncture of Bay and Dowdeswell Sts, this grassy **cemetary** (Map pp66–7) holds the remains of pirates and other rascals executed during the past three centuries. The tumbledown tombs are above ground. Behind is the 1802 **St Matthew's Church** (Map pp66–7). The cemetery to the west of the churchyard also dates back to the 1800s.

POTTER'S CAY

The liveliest **market** (Map pp66–7) in town sits beneath the Paradise Island Exit Bridge, where fishing boats from the Family Islands arrive daily carrying the sea's harvest, as well as fruit, herbs, biting pepper sauces and vegetables. Piles of glistening conch, crab, jack, mackerel and spiny lobster are sold alive, dead, dried or filleted, along with, more distressingly, dismembered turtles.

Nevertheless it is a great place to hang out and watch the pandemonium whenever a boat returns.

The mail boats serving the Family Islands also berth here.

VILLAGE ROAD

The **Retreat** (Map pp66–7; ☎ 242-393-1317; fax 242-393-4978; The Retreat, Village Rd; admission \$3; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri) is an 11-acre garden which claims to have one of the largest private collections of palms in the world (176 species representing more than half of all known genera of palms). The **Bahamas National Trust** (Map pp66–7; ☎ 242-393-1317; fax 242-393-4978; The

Retreat, Village Rd; admission \$3; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri) is located here. The star of the show was a rare and awesome Ceylonese talipot palm that expended all its energy in 1986 on a once-in-a-lifetime bloom and then died. Other specimens include hardwoods such as mahogany. Native orchids grace the trunks, and splendid ferns nestle in the limestone holes in which the palms are planted. Take a tour or stroll in this peaceful place.

Alongside working artists flaunting their creative skills, **Doongalik Studios** (Map pp66–7; ☎ 242-393-6640; www.doongalikstudios.com; 18 Village Rd; admission free; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri) serves as a gallery for exuberant Bahamian fine art, Junkanoo crafts, T-shirts and rainbow-hued furniture. The entrance is guarded by three larger-than-life statues, and a bush garden to the rear features native trees and plants.

FORT MONTAGU

There's not much to draw you to this diminutive **fort** (Map pp66–7), though the place is intact and the cannon in situ. The oldest of Nassau's remaining strongholds, it was built in 1741 to guard the eastern approach to Nassau Harbour. It never fired its cannon in anger. The surrounding park is enjoyed by football-playing Bahamians and occasional market stalls.

EASTERN ROAD

A shoreline park south of Fort Montagu is lined with palms and casuarina trees. Nearby **Montagu Ramp** (Map pp66–7) is the site where locals bring fish and conch ashore to clean and sell. You'll smell it well before you see it!

Sitting atop the ridge 2 miles south of Fort Montagu is **Blackbeard's Tower** (Map pp64–5), a semiderelict cut-stone tower that, according to local lore, was built by Edward Teach – 'Blackbeard' – as a lookout tower. Historians point out that it was actually built in the late 18th century, long after the infamous pirate had been killed. The view is good but the place isn't worth the journey in its own right. To reach it, you go up an unmarked path next to a green-and-white house called 'Tower Leigh,' 400yd south of Fox Hill Rd.

This windward shore is quite scenic towards the **East End Lighthouse** (Map pp64–5) at the easternmost point of New Providence. Just south is **Yamacraw Beach** (Map pp64–5),

where the road turns west and heads inland via a middle-class residential area, ending at **Her Majesty's Prison** (Map pp64–5).

FOX HILL

This settlement for freed slaves began life in the 18th century as Creek Village. During the 1900s, Robert Sandilands, chief justice of the Bahamas, bought much of the area and distributed land grants to Blacks for £10 or the equivalent in labor. The recipients named their settlement after their benefactor.

Freedom Park (Map pp64–5), at the juncture of Fox Hill Rd and Bernard Rd, is the center of town and the setting each year for Emancipation Day celebrations in the first week of August.

Other highlights include the 1867 **St Anne's Anglican Church** (Map pp64–5) and the fortresslike **St Augustine's Monastery** (Map pp64–5; ☎ 242-364-1331; admission by donation), atop a rocky perch on Bernard Rd. This working monastery was designed by Father Jerome, the itinerant architect-cleric who blessed Cat and Long Islands with beautiful Gothic churches (see the Father Jerome boxed text, p211). The imposing building dates from 1947 and is still used by Benedictine monks, who give guided tours that offer a fascinating glimpse of monastic life. A college run by the monks is attached. Phone ahead to enquire about opening hours.

West of Downtown

About a half-mile from the British Colonial Hilton, you'll see remains of a battery of cannons on the harborside, immediately next to the road. A cricket ground, **Clifford Park** (Haynes' Oval; Map pp66–7), is to the south; it's the site of the annual Independence Day festivities on July 10.

At the entrance to **Arawak Cay** (Map pp66–7) is a very lively village of small bars, and fresh-fish and conch stalls, as well as Bahamian takeouts housed in multicolored shacks. Lunchtime fish sales and weekend-long Fish Frys are high-spirited occasions worthy of a smoky fritter, chat and rum or two! Junkanoo 'shacks' practise their music and choreographed dance moves here throughout the year.

Fort Charlotte (Map pp66–7; ☎ 242-322-7500; admission free; ☎ 8am–4pm), the largest in the Bahamas, was built between 1787 and 1790

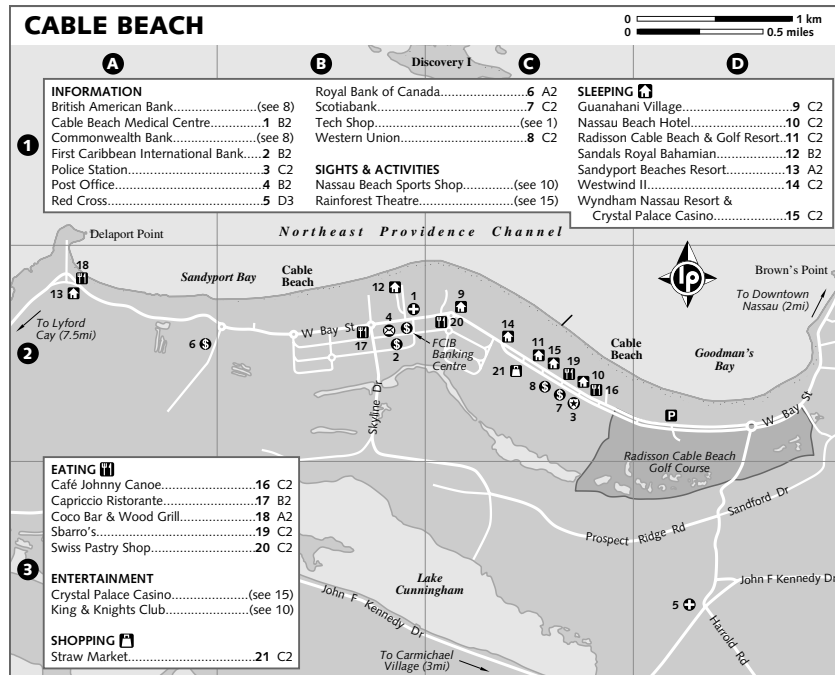
to guard the west entrance to Nassau Harbour. Sitting on the ridge above Clifford Park, it is intact and today is painted white. The deep moat and exterior walls were cut from solid rock and the walls buttressed by cedars. Lord Dunmore estimated its cost as a 'trifling' £4000 and, to ensure the approval of the crown, proposed to name it Charlotte, after the consort of King George III. Within a year Dunmore had exceeded all resources. Reluctantly the English War Office forwarded the extra £17,846 required to complete the fort. Dunmore's folly was ill-conceived, with the troops' barracks erected directly in the line of fire! Today its moat, dungeon, underground tunnels and bombproof chambers make an intriguing excursion, enhanced by a re-creation of a torture chamber. Tours are led by guides in period costume who expect a tip.

Nassau Botanical Garden (Map pp66–7; ☎ 242-323-5975; adult/child \$1/0.50; ☎ 8am–4pm Mon–Fri, 9am–4pm Sat & Sun) was constructed in 1951 on the site of an old rock quarry. The 26 acres contains more than 600 species of tropical plants, many indigenous, plus lily ponds, grottoes and a waterfall fountain donated by the government of China.

The well-stocked **Ardastra Gardens, Zoo & Conservation Park** (Map pp66–7; ☎ 242-323-5806; fax 242-323-7232; Chippingham Rd; adult/child \$12/6; ☎ 9am–5pm) has a few placid iguanas and around 50 species of animals, birds and reptiles from around the world. Indigenous species of flora and fauna include hutias (similar to guinea pigs), snakes and the endangered Bahama parrot, which, uniquely, is bred in captivity here. The zoo also has a large collection of nonnative species, including monkeys and caimans, and sleek cats such as jaguars and ocelots. The undisputed highlight, however, is the small army of West Indian flamingos trained to strut their stuff on voice command at 11am, 2pm and 4pm daily (except Sunday, when they have the day off). Facilities include a snack bar and toilets.

Cable Beach

A long, curved white-sand beach and sparkling turquoise sea is linked to downtown Nassau by a 3-mile long stretch of coastline. The beach is named for the undersea telegraphic cable laid from Florida in 1892 that came ashore here. Cable Beach's resorts seem to have derived from the Floridian peninsula



as well. Beloved by families seeking simple seaside pleasures, the hotels also have bars, clubs, casinos and many eateries.

One mile east of Cable Beach is tiny **Saunders Beach**, popular with locals at lunchtime (they sit in their cars, munching cracked conch). At Delaport Point is the waterfront residential and resort development of Sandypoint (p87).

For a break, you can head out to **Discovery Island** (Map p76), a small cay – formerly Balmoral Island – about a mile offshore from Cable Beach. Now leased by the Sandals chain but open to nonguests, it has its own beach, an atmospheric restaurant, and a lively bar with swim-up pool and Jacuzzi.

Free ferries run regularly from Sandals Royal Bahamian (for guests only). Ferries also operate from the pier between the Radisson and Marriott Wyndham Nassau Resort hotels on a regular basis, charging \$10 round-trip.

Paradise Island

This island lies almost shouting distance across the harbor from Nassau, to which it is

linked by two great arcing bridges and regular ferry services. The whole island appears to be man-made; an endless array of ritzy resorts, stacked cheek to cheek, that loom over the land and line the island's gorgeous beaches, almost without a pause. Parking is at a premium, and the public beaches on Paradise Island are becoming increasingly difficult to access, unless you are a guest at the resorts or pay out for a 'day ticket' (to utilize a hotel's facilities). But for those seeking an idyllic island holiday with serene seas and empty beaches, or more of a Bahamian-style experience, this is not the place for you.

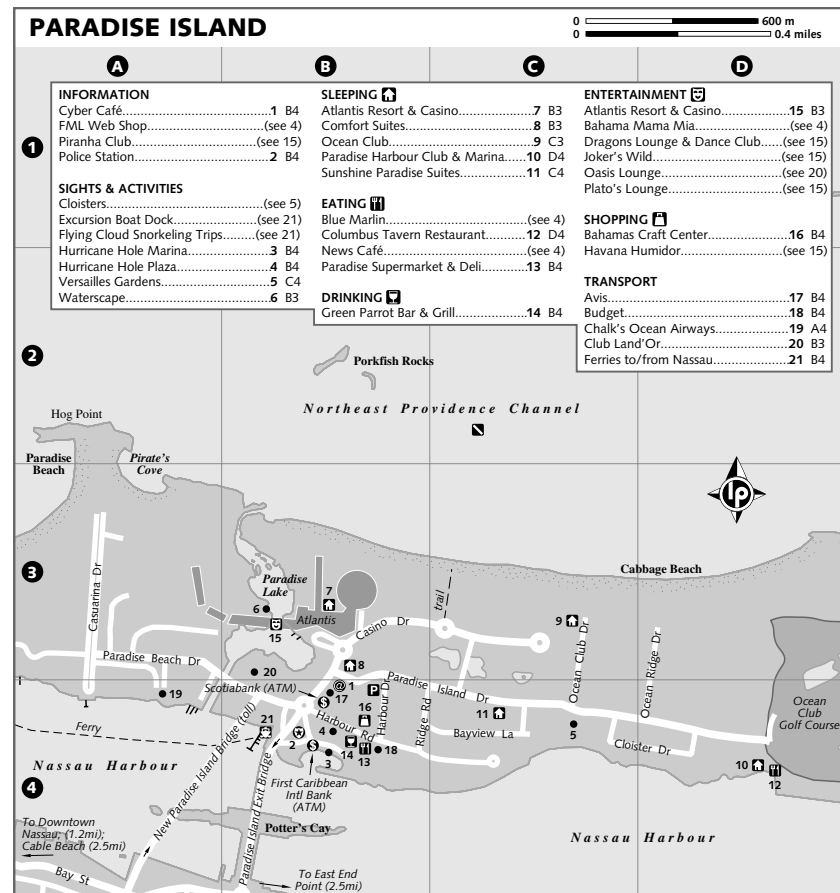
Yet this Bahamian playground understandably appeals to many who want an easy all-inclusive holiday with some sand and sea thrown in for good measure. Families, casino-lovers and nightclubbers particularly enjoy the resorts' facilities, especially the amazing Waterscape, casino and social amenities of Atlantis (p78).

In 1939 Dr Axel Wenner-Gren, a wealthy Swedish industrialist, developed his 'Shangri-La' on adjacent 'Hog Island,' now the tourist mecca of Paradise Island. His ostentatious

binge resulted in the creation of the sweeping 35-acre **Versailles Gardens** (Map p77), stepped in tiers and lined with classical statues depicting the millionaire's heroes. They span the ages: Hercules, Napoleon Bonaparte and Franklin D Roosevelt to name a few. Equally wealthy Huntington Hartford II then bought and remodeled the property as an exclusive golf resort and marina, simultaneously persuading the Bahamians to rename the island 'Paradise Island.' At the crest of the gardens is **Cloisters**, (Map p77), a romantic gazebo where weddings are often held. This genuine 14th-century cloister was purchased by newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst from an Augustine estate in France.

The first bridge between Paradise Island and Nassau was built in 1967, followed by a casino and the arrival of Donald Trump and Merv Griffin, who built further resorts.

Billionaire Sol Kerzner's South African company Sun International, having bought and demolished many competing small and traditional hotels, now owns most of the island in the guise of the vast and expanding Atlantis complex (supposedly the largest employer in the Bahamas after the Bahamian government). The Atlantis project included massive private home development for the superrich (Oprah Winfrey and Michael Jordan are reputed to have bought homes in the woodlands behind Cabbage Beach). A second bridge was built in 1998 to



handle the increased traffic and Sol Kerzner's eye has turned west to Cable Beach, where existing resorts tremble with fear.

ATLANTIS

No trip would be complete for families, or even big kids, without a visit to Atlantis' 34-acre (and growing) **Waterscape** (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-3000, ext 28; www.atlantis.com; Atlantis Resort; guided walking tours nonguests \$25; 🚶 tours 9am-5pm). It claims to be the world's largest open-air aquarium and has a whole host of lagoons and is home to 200 species of marine life.

Sun International remade the Paradise Island Resort & Casino as the Atlantis at a cost of \$850 million (only the initial expenditure). It now has waterfalls and the quarter-mile 'Lazy River Ride' for tubing, plus six exhibit lagoons filled with live coral, more than 14,000 fish and heaps of other sea life. It's best viewed from a 100ft-long underwater Plexiglas walkway or from other subaqueous tunnels surrounded by massive aquariums.

The waterscape is centered on The Dig, a full-size depiction of the ruins of Atlantis, linked by interconnecting passageways; and a Mayan temple with six water slides, one of which – the Leap of Faith – sends brave

vacationers through a Plexiglas tube that plummets down through the Predator Lagoon full of sharks. The best time to check out Waterscape is at feeding times; check at reception. Tours depart from the Coral Towers Lobby. A new marine park, mini-zoo and dolphin-channel were under construction at the time of research.

BEACHES

Downtown Nassau

Western Esplanade Beach (Map p69), on W Bay St, is downtown Nassau's only beach and stretches west from the British Colonial Hilton Hotel (which has its own private beach). It has limited attractions and no facilities, but is within minutes of downtown restaurants and hotels.

Cable Beach

Saunders Beach is tiny, and sits between Cable Beach and downtown. Local families head there at weekends, although there are no facilities.

The most beautiful beach on the main island, **Cable Beach** (Map p76), is about 2 miles long and has plenty of water sports and activities. Hotels, restaurants, and bars line the beach.

CONFETTI & SAND

OK, who hasn't dreamt of mother-in-law- and hassle-free nuptials, where you and your beloved are alone on an idyllic island beach with a backdrop of astonishing turquoise seas? Where simple white cotton clothes and a garland of wild flowers mark the occasion, and the pastor blesses you with a smile and a reasonable invoice?

The Bahamas is a popular destination for honeymooners, many of whom also tie the knot in these gorgeous islands. The Bahamians make it easy for nonnationals to meet their requirements, and it is possible to marry with just a 24-hour wait.

You can even get married underwater, provided you and your spouse-to-be are certified divers and can blow the right-sounding bubbles. Maybe you just make the thumb & finger 'OK' sign? Get out your waterproof mascara and contact **Underwater Explorers Society** (UNEXSO; ☎ 242-373-1244; www.unexo.com; UNEXSO, Port Lucaya Marina, Freeport) in Grand Bahama.

Marriage licenses cost \$100 and can be obtained from the **Registrar General's Office** (☎ 242-326-5371, 242-328-7810; Rodney E Bain Bldg, Parliament St, Nassau). You'll need photo identification, proof of citizenship, proof of status if divorced or widowed, and to swear an oath of eligibility before a notary of the Bahamas. No blood test is required. Anyone under 18 years of age requires notarized parental consent.

If you want help with the event, contact the **Bahamas Ministry of Tourism** (☎ 242-302-2034; www.bahamas.com), who have a division specifically for all the dewy-eyed romantics out there. It can put you in touch with local wedding consultants, photographers and ministers. Most major hotels and tour operators can also make arrangements; they usually ask couples to send notarized copies of required documents at least one month in advance. Major resorts also have special honeymoon packages and can make wedding arrangements at your behest.

Paradise Island

Cabbage Beach (Map p77) is a stunner that stretches 2 miles along the north shore, with plenty of activities and water sports. Several resorts have facilities at the west end.

Pirate's Cove (Map p77) nestles in its own cove west of Atlantis. It has no facilities.

Another beauty, **Paradise Beach** (Map p77) curves gently along the northwest shore of the island; it is very lonesome to the west. The resorts have their own facilities, but nonguests pay for privileges.

Snorkeler's Cove Beach (Map p77) lays east of Cabbage Beach and is favored by day-trippers on picnicking and snorkeling excursions from Nassau.

ACTIVITIES

Look out for the free monthly *What's On* guide, which can be found in most hotel lobbies and outside many retail outlets. The guide details a lot of upcoming events and sporting matches as well as containing discount coupons for plenty of tourist activities.

Diving & Snorkeling

New Providence offers superb diving close to its shores, including fantastic wall and wreck dives. The most noted sites lie off the southwest coast between Coral Harbour and Lyford Cay, as well as north of Paradise Island.

At **Anchor** a coral head pokes out of a wall 60ft below the surface, and teems with fish life. At **School House**, another favorite snorkeling and diving spot, there are endless varieties of coral at depths that rarely exceed 20ft. Fish life ranges from blennies and gobies to schooling yellowtail.

Divers love the **Lost Blue Hole**. This vertical cavern gapes in 30ft of water on a sand bottom is frequented by nurse sharks and stingrays. The cave bells out to 200ft and deeper. There's a lobster-filled cavern at 80ft. **Oasis Wall**, a deep dive just off Old Fort Beach, is known for reef corals all the way down to 200ft. There's plenty of lobster and pelagics too.

The spectacular dive site, **Razorback** is named for the arcing ridge of coral-covered limestone that rises from a sand bottom before plummeting into the Tongue of the Ocean. The reef is a menagerie of fish, and the wall attracts hammerhead sharks.

Equally spectacular is the **Valley**, a path leads you through a labyrinth of coral and marine life to the Tongue of the Ocean, just over the ridge.

Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) certification courses, as well as snorkeling trips, equipment hire and hotel transfers, are offered by all the following operators.

One of the Bahamas best and largest outfits, **Stuart Cove's Dive & Snorkel Bahamas** (Map pp64-5; ☎ 242-362-4171; www.stuartcove.com; Southwest Rd) offers a mass of diving, PADI certification and snorkeling choices, including a bone-rattling shark wall and shark-feeding dive (\$135); a two-tank dive trip (\$88); and 'wall-flying' (a two-tank underwater scooter adventure that is as good as it sounds!; \$135). Snorkeling trips are available (adult/child \$48/24) and you can even pilot your own Scenic Underwater Bubble (SUB), a scooter with air wheels and a giant plastic bubble that envelops your shoulders and head (\$135).

A good bunch of pros, **Bahama Divers** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-393-5644; www.bahamadivers.com; E Bay St, Nassau) has a variety of trips, including some to the Lost Blue Hole (famous for its sharks and schools of stingrays) and wrecks. A three-hour learn-to-dive course can be taken prior to PADI certification courses (PADI course \$449). A two-tank dive trip costs \$130 and half-day snorkeling trips are also available (\$30).

Nassau Scuba Centre (☎ 242-362-1964; www.dive.nassau.com; Coral Harbour) is another excellent outfit. They also offer two-tank dives (\$90), night dives (\$65), trips to the walls and drop-offs and the separate shark-feeding dives (\$135). And if that is not enough for you (eek), try the shark suit adventure (\$425). A range of PADI diver and diving instructor training courses are also on offer, including one that teaches you how to feed sharks while wearing a chainmail suit...

Sportfishing & Boat Charters

For general information about sailing and chartering boats see p273. Nassau is a great base for sportfishing, with superb sites just 20 minutes away. Charters can be arranged at most major hotels or by calling a charter company. The following recommended companies mainly offer sportfishing, but will also happily take you exploring, diving

BLUE LAGOON

Several uninhabited cays are sprinkled northeast of New Providence, together with **Blue Lagoon** (Map pp64-5) on Salt Cay, which is featured on several day cruises. It's a 30-minute ride to the lagoon. Here you can create your own desert-island fantasy. Choose from snorkeling, parasailing, volleyball or even a dolphin encounter. There are nature walks, changing rooms, restrooms, showers and 250 hammocks slung between palms. Please be aware that the stingrays and dolphins on this island are captive. See the boxed text on opposite.

Not included in your tour price is the Lagoon's **Stingray City Marine Park** (Map pp64-5; ☎ 242-363-3333; www.nassaucruisesbahamas.com; admission \$55), where you can swim or snorkel in 12ft of water with captive rays.

The movies *Zeus & Roxanne*, *Splash* and *Flipper* were filmed at this 2-sq-mile private cay and featured the aquatic dolphin stars Jake, MacGyver and Fatman.

You can take a half-day trip to Blue Lagoon with **Dolphin Encounters** (Map pp64-5; ☎ 242-363-1003; www.dolphinencounters.com; Blue Lagoon Island) from Paradise Island. The choices include either a 30-minute swim (\$165) or a waist-deep standing encounter (\$85) with these captive mammals. These hugely popular trips depart the ferry terminal four times daily from the base of Paradise Island Exit Bridge.

A full-day excursion to Blue Lagoon with **Nassau Cruises** (☎ 242-363-3333; www.nassaucruisesbahamas.com) costs \$65, and includes hotel transfers, unlimited water sports and lunch.

and snorkeling. They charge two to six people from \$400 to \$500 per half-day, \$700 to \$1000 per day.

Born Free Charter Service (☎ 242-393-4144; www.bornfreefishing.com)

Brown's Charter (☎ 242-324-2061; www.brownscharter.com)

Chubasco Charters (☎ 242-324-3474; www.chubascocharters.com)

Coral Reef Boat Rentals (☎ 242-327-2098; Sandy Port) Rents out small speedboats from \$250/400 per half-/full day.

Paradise Island Charters (☎ 242-363-4458; www.paradise-island-charters.com)

Boat Excursions

Dozens of day trips are offered, with options for snorkeling, diving, beach and island visits, partying, sunset and dinner cruises, and anything else you can think of! A few vessels depart the Nassau waterfront; most depart the dock immediately west of the Paradise Island Exit Bridge.

Apart from the public fast ferry, **Bahamas Ferries** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-323-2166; www.bahamasferries.com; Potter's Cay, Nassau; adult/child \$159/99) also operates the great value 'Harbour Island Day Away' excursion to wonderful Eleuthera. It departs daily from Potter's Cay, takes two hours each way and includes a tour of pretty Harbour Island, a great lunch and refreshments on the idyllic Pink Sands Beach. This is a simple decision – go!

Powerboat Adventures (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-393-7116; www.powerboatadventures.com; Nassau; adult/child \$190/130) take you on a thrilling powerboat trip which zips you from Nassau to the Exuma Cays in an hour. The first stop is Allan's Cays to say hi to some iguana families, then it is time for drift snorkeling, before heading to Ship Channel Cay for a nature hike. The excursion also includes shark feeding, snorkeling with stingrays, a barbecue lunch and plenty of rum swizzles.

Island World Adventures (☎ 242-363-3333; www.islandworldadventures.com; Nassau; adult/child \$175/120) has daylong excursions on a high-powered speedboat to Saddleback Cay, in the Exumas. There's great snorkeling and seven private beaches to wander. Trips include lunch, an open bar, snorkeling gear and a stop at lovely Leaf Cay to commune with iguanas.

Nassau Cruises (☎ 242-363-3333; www.nassaucruisesbahamas.com) offers a 'Historical Harbour Cruise' around Paradise Island, passing the East End Lighthouse, Arawak Cay, pirate homes and other sites, tracing the Bahamas' colorful past. The trips depart daily, take about 90 minutes and cost around \$40.

A day of fun is on offer with **Flying Cloud Catamaran Cruises** (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-4430; flyingcloud@coralwave.com; Paradise Island Ferry Terminal; adult/child \$90/45), with a catamaran cruise, snorkeling around lovely little Rose Island and a chance to snooze in a hammock after a beach BBQ lunch with wine; perfect.

UNDERWATER EXCURSIONS

For those who don't want to get wet, **Seaworld Explorer** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-356-2548; shorex@batelnet.bs; adult/child \$22/10) departs from John Alfred Wharf off Bay St, and has an office in the city. This 45-passenger semisubmarine with a window-lined hull takes a great 90-minute daily excursion above the fish-filled coral reefs of the Sea Gardens Marine Park, off the north shore.

Hartley's Undersea Walk (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-393-8234/7569; www.underseawalk.com; adult \$125) is a daily 3½-hour cruise that includes an escorted undersea adventure; you don't need snorkeling or diving experience to wear a

roomy brass helmet with large glass windows for all-around viewing. Trips depart from Nassau Yacht Haven.

Water Sports

Most resort hotels either include water sports in their rates or offer them as optional extras. On offer are nearly every kind of beach and water activity, including parasailing, water-skiing and windsurfing.

Nassau Beach Sports Shop (Map p76; ☎ 242-327-7711, ext 6590; Nassau Beach Hotel, W Bay St, Cable Beach; ☎ 9am-5pm) rents sailboards for \$20 per hour, and has equipment for a plethora of other sports.

ARE DOLPHIN ENCOUNTERS KILLING DOLPHINS?

Dolphin encounters are a popular attraction in the Bahamas and elsewhere, but they are not without controversy. Many scientists and conservation groups maintain that dolphin encounters harm the very creatures that we are all so enamored with. It appears that it is not so much the encounter, but the location and context of the meeting that can do so much damage to these graceful, playful and ultimately, wild animals.

One thing is clear: dolphin encounters that take place within enclosed environments such as pools and lagoons mean that those dolphins have been taken traumatically from their environment, their family pod and a natural way of life.

The US National Marine Fisheries Service has kept an inventory of captive marine mammals since 1972, which reports the births, deaths and migrations of each creature. In 2004 the South Florida *Sun Sentinel* (see below) ran a series of articles analyzing these figures. The conclusion: that captivity considerably shortens the life expectancy of dolphins, whales and sea lions.

The following figures from different sources are believed to be a pretty accurate reflection of the effects of captivity upon dolphins.

- The maximum life expectancy of a dolphin in the wild is around 40 to 50 years.
- The average life expectancy of a dolphin in captivity is 5 to 10 years.
- Stress of confinement results in behavioral abnormalities, illness, lowered resistance to disease and early death.

If you want the joy of meeting a dolphin, there are outfits that will take you to see, swim and dive with wild dolphins in their environment, out in the ocean. See p125 for details. Across the world, sanctuaries look after injured dolphins and would also welcome your visits. For further information, check out the following organizations:

- **Captivity Stinks Organisation** (www.captivitystinks.org) Records how long dolphins live at individual parks around the world.
- **Earthwatch Institute** (www.earthwatch.org/expedselect.html) and **Ecotourism Lindblad Expeditions** (www.expeditions.com) can organize volunteering with dolphin-trips.
- **Whale & Dolphin Conservation Society** (www.wdcs.org) Strongly advocates the removal of dolphins from theme parks.
- **NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service** (www.nmfs.noaa.gov) Produces US Marine Mammal Inventory Reports and keeps comprehensive records of captive mammals in the US.
- **Sun Sentinel** (www.sun-sentinel.com) Check out this South Florida US newspaper's archives for its May 2004 stories entitled 'Marine Attractions Below the Surface.'

Water sports are available at all the resorts along Paradise and Cabbage Beaches on Paradise Island. Most of the motorized sports are operated by local entrepreneurs. Typical prices include \$50 for 30 minutes' jet-skiing, \$30 per person for a 15-minute banana-boat fun ride, and \$45 to \$60 for parasailing.

Tennis, Racquetball & Squash

Dozens of hotels have tennis courts, some of which are open to nonguests for a fee. **Radisson Cable Beach Golf Course** (Map p76; ☎ 242-327-6000; W Bay St, Cable Beach) has tennis, squash and racquetball courts that are open to nonguests for \$10 per person, per day (racquet hire is \$5). Night court hire is also possible.

Golf

New Providence has three great golf courses open to the public, including Paradise Island's Ocean Club Golf Course (p88).

The challenging 7-acre **Radisson Cable Beach Golf Course** (Map p76; ☎ 242-327-6000; www.radisson-cablebeach.com; Cable Beach) is the oldest in the Bahamas, but has been recently redesigned. Once managed by golfing supremo Arnold Palmer, it charges a \$140 green fee (\$100 for nine holes) and rates include a golf cart.

Another excellent course, the South Ocean Golf Course (p98) is at New Providence's western tip, and was closed for a face-lift at the time of research.

Running

Fitness fanatics can run the shaded jogging trail that snakes along the central median of W Bay St, a 1½-mile-long path from Sandals Royal Bahamian to the Cable Beach Golf Course.

The **Nassau Hash House Harriers** (Brian Crick ☎ 242-325-2831; www.nassauhash.com) have an organized run that lasts around 40 minutes each Monday (April to October) or Sunday (November to March).

Bird-Watching

The **Bahamas National Trust** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-393-1317; fax 242-393-4978; Village Rd, Nassau; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) regularly offers guided bird-watching walks.

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

Horseback Riding

Take a trot on a trail with the horses of **Happy Trails Stables** (Map pp64-5; ☎ 242-362-1820; Coral Harbour, Southern Beaches; \$90; ☎ Mon-Sat). Ninety-minute rides take in the woodland and beach scenery of the southern coastlands, and transfers are also provided.

For further horseback-riding options, also see Earth Village (opposite).

NASSAU FOR CHILDREN

The following are some ideas for things that children, and their parents, might enjoy doing while in Nassau.

- Take a tour of the amazing 34-acre Waterscape at the Atlantis resort (p78), where a whole host of lagoons are home to over 200 species of marine life, including sharks.
- Sit and wave at people from your horse-drawn surrey (p73).
- Gawk at the huge diamante-studded and rainbow-colored costumes of the Junkanoo carnival at the Junkanoo Expo (p73).
- Salute a marching flamingo, yawn at a dozing iguana, cluck at a Bahama parrot and smile at a big cat at Ardastra Gardens, Zoo & Conservation Park (p75).
- Walk past a bunch of wicked and wanton buccaners and their pirate ship at the brilliant interactive Pirates of Nassau Museum (p71).
- Ride in a glass-hulled semisubmarine with Seaworld Explorer (p81).
- Swim or snorkel in 12ft of water with gentle captive rays in Blue Lagoon's Stingray City Marine Park (see the boxed text, p80).
- Mingle with a captive dolphin at Blue Lagoon's Dolphin Encounters (see the boxed text, p80).

Cable Beach and Paradise Beach are both lined with operators offering water-sports activities and equipment for hire. Beachside resorts usually have their own facilities which are open to nonguests upon the purchase of a day ticket.

For more information on traveling with children in the Bahamas, see p276.

TOURS

Nearly all hotels have tour desks that will offer a selection of choices and make all bookings on your behalf. Also refer to the

recommended boat excursions that are listed on p80.

Many taxi drivers will offer tours of the island and/or Nassau. Negotiate prices carefully prior to commencing any trips. It may well be cheaper to hire a car and take yourself to any spots of interest.

Nassau's quaint horse-drawn surreys (p73) are a great way to explore downtown Nassau at an easy pace.

Earth Village (☎ 242-356-2274, 242-434-8981; tkmill@coralwave.com; ☎ Mon-Sat) Offers something off the beaten track. Enjoy exploring the island's center and coppice forests either on a guided walking tour (adult/child \$50/15), horseback ride (adult/child \$90/50) or through a special bird-watching experience (adult/child \$60/20). This 155 acres of protected territory for birds encompasses water ponds teeming with fish, windmills and wooden bridges providing access to historical ruins; perfect for nature lovers (adult/child \$75/45).

Majestic Tours (☎ 242-322-2606; www.majesticoholidays.com; \$35) Runs a number of air-conditioned bus tours including the extended City & Country Tour, which incorporates the city and environs, such as Forts Fincastle and Charlotte, the Queen's Staircase, plus Government House and Ardastra Gardens, Zoo & Conservation Park. The company offers a good-value deal on three tours for \$110 (City & Country; Robinson Crusoe – snorkeling and lunch on a deserted cay; and a dinner-cruise with buffet and a DJ). Majestic Tours also have a range of land- and water-based tours.

Nassau Walking Tour (☎ 242-325 8687, 242-328 8687; tour \$10; ☎ tours 10am & 2pm Mon-Sat) Departs twice daily from the bust of Sir Milo Butler in Rawson Sq (the guides wear blue batik waistcoats), and covers all the major points of historical interest in downtown Nassau. This is a great way to find your way around as well as learning all the salient bits of Nassau's past. Take a hat and some water; this 90-minute walk covers a fair bit of ground.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Major Bahamian Festivals, such as Boxing Day's brilliant Junkanoo, are listed on p279. For more on local events and festival dates, contact the **Bahamas Ministry of Tourism** (☎ 242-302-5000; www.bahamas.com) information booths at the Welcome Centre or at the airport.

One of two great events full of colonial tradition is the **Opening of Parliament**, a colorful, formal occasion featuring the Royal Bahamas Police Force Band marching in pith helmets, starched white tunics and leopard-skin shawls. The governor-general delivers a speech on behalf of Her Majesty, to whom the gathered officials swear allegiance.

Pageantry also marks the **Opening of the Supreme Court Sessions** in January, April, July, and October. Lawyers and judges in full regalia march to Christ Church Anglican Cathedral for a service, followed by an inspection of the guard of honor. Music and even more pageantry are provided by the police force band.

The following are a few other fun-filled local proceedings.

JANUARY

Classic Cars Race Lovers of flashy vintage cars should head to Nassau for this four-day, midmonth festival when rare Ferraris, Jaguars and other classics dating back to the 1920s gear up for a race along Cable Beach.

FEBRUARY

International Food Fair Local Bahamian fare comes to the streets of Nassau, with cookouts and competitions highlighting the bounty of the sea and land.

People of the Bahamas Annual Archives Exhibition Held in Nassau, the exhibition features exhibits showcasing the contributions of various ethnic groups to the historical and cultural development of the nation.

APRIL

Snipe Winter Sailing Championship Draws homemade boats to race one another in Montagu Bay; contact Royal Nassau Sailing Club (☎ 242-393-0145) for details.

JUNE

Caribbean Muzik Fest This will make you shake something! Move to reggae, soca, calypso and dance hall at the Queen Elizabeth Sports Centre until dawn.

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

AUGUST

Emancipation Day Held the first Monday in August to commemorate the emancipation of slaves in 1834. A highlight is an early-morning 'Junkanoo Rush' at 4am in Fox Hill.

Fox Hill Day Celebration Held a week after Emancipation Day, this celebration recalls the day on which residents of Fox Hill learned of emancipation.

Miss Bahamas Contest More than 10 finalists vie for the coveted Miss Bahamas title in a gala evening featuring star-spangled entertainment. It's held midmonth in Nassau. The winner represents the Bahamas in the Miss Universe contest.

SEPTEMBER

Bahamas Atlantis Superboat Challenge Life is never so fast in Nassau as in late September, when this annual professional powerboat race is held. Forty or more teams compete in boats that are to smaller speedboats what dragsters are to the family sedan.

Summer Madness Revue A satirical review at the Dundas Centre for the Performing Arts looks at local politics.

OCTOBER

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 among the many nationalities residing in the islands with a midmonth weekend of float parades, food fests, arts and crafts displays, and concerts; held in Nassau.

International Mixed Championship Golf Tournament This is a weeklong 54-hole event for amateurs, traditionally held at the Ocean Club Golf Course (p88).

GAY & LESBIAN NASSAU

The pink dollar is not welcomed by many Bahamians, and there are few public illustrations of support for a Bahamian gay and lesbian population across the islands, unless individuals openly support the political pressure group Rainbow Alliance. Sadly, although Bahamians are generally an extremely tolerant and friendly people, the pervasiveness of fundamentalist religious beliefs has fostered an ugly bigotry and intolerance of progressive lifestyles, particularly towards gays and lesbians.

Most Bahamian gays are still deeply in the closet, and the nation has draconian laws against homosexual activity, which is punishable by prison terms. Laws are strictly enforced and public expressions of affection between gays will bring trouble.

In 1998 a group of religious bigots called Save the Bahamas made waves when it angrily protested against the arrival of a gay charter-cruise. The group compounded the negative press by also protesting against the arrival of the company Holland America's *Veendam*, which they mistakenly believed was chartered by a gay group, causing Bahamian Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham to issue a public apology.

This reformation was then followed up by a preemptive protest against the docking of the *Norwegian Dawn*, a gay family cruise backed by American comedian and actor Rosie O'Donnell, in July 2004. By the actual date of the cruise ship's arrival, the previously vocal protestors were greatly reduced in number, but among them were the Bahamian gay rights group Rainbow Alliance, who bravely met and welcomed the cruise ship's gay and lesbian passengers.

According to the former group Bahamian Gays & Lesbians Against Discrimination, Club Med, Super Club Breezes, and Atlantis resorts are gay-friendly, but Sandals Royal Bahamian forbids same-sex couples.

Rainbow Alliance (☎ 242-328-1816), the aforementioned political pressure group, is a good point of contact for assistance and advice in planning a trip. Try also the website www.bahamasuncensored.com for some information on gay issues.

NOVEMBER

Guy Fawkes Night On November 5, Bahamians celebrate retribution for the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, when Catholic plotters tried to blow up the Houses of Parliament in London, by lighting bonfires and burning the lead villain, Guy Fawkes, in effigy, accompanied by fireworks and a nighttime parade.

Christmas Jollification An arts and crafts bonanza at The Retreat (p74) with food, drink, kids and music, as well as a lot of fun.

Thanksgiving Ball This black-tie do at the British Colonial Hilton Nassau (p86) is a long-established traditional fundraiser for the Bahamas Humane Society. Anyone who is anyone is seen here.

DECEMBER

Police Band Annual Christmas & Classical Concert The Royal Bahamas Police Force Band performs holiday classics at the Atlantis resort on Paradise Island, with accomplished local musicians assisting in the festivities.

Junior Junkanoo Parade A fabulous taste of things to come with some serious competitors, beating drums and wonderful images.

SLEEPING

Visitors of all budgets tend to agree, New Providence in particular, and the Bahamas

overall, has surprisingly expensive accommodations. Many hotels are obviously overpriced. These places provide meanly equipped or tatty rooms, but charge the same rates as the hotels that work hard to maintain good standards and offer a variety of guest facilities. Even some charming, modern and well-facilitated lodgings tend to push the line between 'reasonable' and 'over-the-top' rates. However, most accommodations share one thing in common; additional room and guest charges that can push the daily rate up by 20% to 30%.

But don't despair; with a bit of easy planning, there are ways to find reduced rates (up to 60 per cent), at all budget levels. Many hotel websites offer lower rates not available through tour operators. See p270 for more information.

Downtown Nassau

In general, downtown Nassau hotels tend to be smaller and cheaper than those in Cable Beach. Paradise Island resorts top the scale, both in terms of luxury and rates. It is strongly rumored that many Cable Beach hotels and adjacent businesses are to be demolished for another vast Paradise Island-style Atlantis and casino complex, which probably means a price hike in Cable Beach, so make hay while the sun shines.

BUDGET

Mignon Guest House (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-4771; 12 Market St; s/d \$40/45; ☒ ☑) This neat, clean and comfortable guesthouse is situated in the heart of downtown and is a veritable bargain; prices have not changed over the years, and are inclusive of taxes. If the aging hosts are a bit inflexible, they are refreshingly not driven by money, and the security is good. There are six small rooms, with fans, TV and central air-conditioning, that share a toilet and bathroom. Guests also have access to a small kitchen, fridge and microwave.

Buena Vista Restaurant & Hotel (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-2811; stanbv2000@yahoo.com; Delancy St; r \$50; ☒ ☑ ☑) This faded old mansion, acclaimed for its restaurant (p90) of the same name, still has much charm, and some great-value lodgings upstairs. The rooms have en suites, and are clean and furnished with some lovely antique furniture, they also have TV, radio and direct-line phones. The rates are inclusive of all charges and it

is only a 10-minute walk into town or to the city beach.

Towne Hotel (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-8450; www.townehotel.com; 40 George St; r \$70; ☒ ☑) This hotel offers 46 small, well-lit rooms, but they have been cheaply refurbished. However, the rooms appear to be clean, and the location is good. Each room has a fan, king-size bed, and small bathroom. There is a nice downstairs bar and small dining area, where the house parrots natter away with an American accent.

Grand Central Hotel (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-8356; www.grand-central-hotel.com; Bay & Parliament Sts; r \$70; ☑) If you can cope with gloomy rooms, try this small, well-located hotel. The rooms are certainly better than the lobby would suggest, and they are very clean. Despite dowdy orange-and-brown decor, each room has its own bathroom, TV, air-con and phone. Overpriced but negotiable, the rates are inclusive of all charges.

MIDRANGE

Holiday Inn Junkanoo Beach Hotel (Map p69; ☎ 242-356-0000; www.basshotels.com/holiday-inn; W Bay St at Nassau St; r \$135; ☒ ☑ ☑ ☑) Although things can be a little haphazard occasionally (the booking system can fail, and the fittings in refurbished rooms are sometimes not what they should be), this hotel has the best facilities of the midrange hotels in Nassau. Rooms are clean, light and comfortable, and are decorated in bright tropical pastels. Each has a balcony, TV, safe, fridge, data port, hairdryer, iron and coffeemaker. Rooms have en suites, and the beds are firm and spacious. The hotel has a guest laundry, gym, shop, business services, restaurant as well as a bar.

Quality Inn (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-1515; www.qualityinn.com; cnr W Bay & Nassau Sts; r \$90; ☒ ☑ ☑ ☑) This shiny new hotel sits next door to the Holiday Inn Junkanoo, and all rooms face the sea, some with better views than others. The cheerfully decorated rooms are nearly as well equipped as their neighbor's (unfortunately no fridge though), which will attract a similar business client as well as mid-range travelers. Mind you, there are no hotel facilities, such as laundries, a restaurant or Internet connections, and the pool is tiny.

El Greco (Map p69; ☎ 242-325-1121; fax 242-325-1124; cnr W Bay & Augusta Sts; s/d \$90/110; ☒ ☑ ☑ ☑) At the west end of downtown,

this compact family-run hotel, enhanced by Spanish decor, surrounds a small courtyard with pool and bougainvillea. The rooms can be gloomy, the fittings ramshackle and the facilities limited, but the location and security are good, and rates are inclusive of all charges. Rooms come with phone, fan and TV. Upstairs rooms are larger, have balconies and a little more light.

TOP END

British Colonial Hilton Nassau (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-9036; www.hiltoncaribbean.com/nassau; 1 Bay St; s/d \$230/240; Ⓟ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This massive grande dame of a hotel, built in 1922, is a Bahamian institution and was a location for two James Bond movies. The rooms have elegant, contemporary decor and modern amenities, with marble-lined bathrooms and a surfeit of mahogany. Or maybe you'd enjoy the 'Double-O Suite,' stocked with James Bond movies and decorated with Bond posters on the walls? There's a choice of restaurants as well as bars offering live music, big US sports games on TV, and dancing and entertainment. Other facilities include a swimming pool, tennis courts and some water sports. The rooms have their own climate control, Internet connections and video games – something to please everyone. The small private beach doesn't get washed by the sea but it does face the cruise-ships dock, and offers some amazing sights.

East of Downtown

Red Carpet Inn (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-393-7981; www.redcarpetinnbahamas.com; E Bay St; r \$106; Ⓟ ☎ ☎) A contemporary 40-room hotel with adequate but plain rooms, this is a quiet and simple place, taxes are included and the security is good. The rooms are clean, with double beds, fridges, microwaves, safes, TV and phone. Some have a kitchenette. There's also a restaurant and guest laundry.

Nassau Harbour Club (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-393-0771; nch@batelnet.bs; E Bay St; r \$90; ☎ ☎ ☎) Popular with yachties and spring-breakers, this place overlooks the marina and has a pool and sundeck suspended over the water. The rooms are appealing if a little bare. The Dockside Bar & Grill, downstairs, and another on-site restaurant add to the party atmosphere. Each room has a TV and phone.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Graycliff Hotel & Restaurant (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-2796; www.graycliff.com; W Hill St, Nassau; r \$290; Ⓟ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Nassau's most discreet and character-laden hotel is this fabulous 250-year-old Georgian home built by a wealthy pirate and hidden away above town on W Hill St. Nine rooms with lofty ceilings and five romantic cottage suites in the garden have windows on all sides. The bathrooms are exquisite. The central rooms feature unique Cuban art and comfortably faded and eclectic furnishings. There's a smoking room and library resplendent with the rich aroma of Cuban cigars, an astonishing wine cellar, a restaurant (p90) beloved by gourmants and regular themed evenings of South American cuisine. The tranquil garden and courtyards contain a salt-water Olympic-length swimming pool, one of three pools, and often host intimate weddings. A history of celebrity guests past and present include Sir Winston Churchill, the Beatles, Elle and LL Cool J.

Orchard Hotel Apartments (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-393-1297; fax 242-394-3562; Village Rd; studios \$95, standard/superior cottages from \$130; ☎ ☎) Fourteen pink cottages are tucked away in quiet, lush grounds centered on a small pool. A little worn around the edges, each is pleasantly furnished and has air-con, TV and a small kitchen.

West of Downtown

Dillet's Guest House (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-325-1133; fax 242-325-7183; Columbus Ave at Strachan St; s/d incl continental breakfast \$85/135; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) One of Nassau's true gems, this family-run B&B is a great place to experience some Bahamian hospitality. A row of tall palms guides you up the path to the 1920s-era home, with rocking chairs on the veranda, hammocks in the garden, wicker furniture, original art and squawking parakeets. All the comfortable rooms have cable TV and some have kitchenettes. Dinners are available on request. Care is definitely required in this area at night.

Cable Beach

There are some great family-friendly resorts along this beach. Most offer tons of daytime

and evening activities, water sports and restaurants. Parents will also be grateful for in-house bars and restaurants as well as baby-sitting services and laundry facilities. Many resort hotels also offer some good-value packages.

MIDRANGE

Radisson Cable Beach & Golf Resort (Map p76; 242-327-6000; www.radisson.com; W Bay St; r \$165; Ⓟ ☎ ☎ ☎) This large resort has spacious ocean-view rooms, all with balcony, overlooking an exquisitely landscaped 25,000 sq ft courtyard with three large pools, cascading falls, whirlpool spas, outdoor dining and shady palms. The resort offers six restaurants, 'Camp Junkanoo' – an extensive supervised program for kids – and after-dark activities for teens. Guests can also take part in tennis, golf, racquetball, squash and water sports.

Nassau Beach Hotel (Map p76; ☎ 242-327-7711; www.nassaubeachhotel.com; W Bay St; r \$150; Ⓟ ☎ ☎ ☎) This older, traditional hotel was featured in two James Bond movies many years ago. All the rooms are admirable, but those in the east wing are spacious and nicely furnished. There's a small shopping arcade and several dining options, including Café Johnny Canoe (p91). Flood-lit tennis courts and water sports are offered.

Guanahani Village (Map p76; ☎ 242-327-0688; www.guanahanivillage.com; 8-person units from \$415) These garden and oceanfront rental units in three-story townhouses are attractive and great-value.

TOP END

Westwind II (Map p76; ☎ 242-327-7211; ww11club@batelnet.bs; W Bay St; d \$210; ☎ ☎) This intimate resort is immediately west of the Radisson. A small number of well-maintained, self-contained, two-bedroom air-con villas are centered on lush grounds with tennis courts and pools. Dinghy boats as well as snorkeling are on offer. Each unit has satellite TV and a fully furnished kitchen and there is easy access to the beach from the grounds.

Wyndham Nassau Resort & Crystal Palace Casino (Map p76; ☎ 242-327-6200; www.wyndhamnassauresort.com; W Bay St; r \$199; Ⓟ ☎ ☎ ☎) This outwardly gaudy resort has tasteful, contemporary and comfortable rooms. Fun-lovers will revel in the Crystal Palace

Casino, a cabaret nightclub, golf course, tennis and squash courts, shopping plaza and several bars and restaurants. The hotel also has a kids club, with supervised activities and theme days. The landscaped beachfront courtyard has a 100ft waterslide, Jacuzzi and swim-up bar – what else do you need?

Sandals Royal Bahamian (Map p76; ☎ 242-327-6400; www.sandals.com; W Bay St; d \$645-925; Ⓟ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Minimum stays of two days are required at this all-inclusive hotel, which is recommended for those couples who like to party. No children or singles are permitted at this award-winning flagship of the renowned Sandals hotel chain. The property extends over 13 landscaped acres and includes a private beach with water sports and full-service spa.

Sandyport

Sandyport Beaches Resort (Map p76; ☎ 242-327-4279; www.sandyport.com; W Bay St; d \$100, townhouses \$210; Ⓟ ☎ ☎ ☎) This snazzy new residential-resort complex at the west end of Cable Beach has a marina, fitness center, tennis courts and church to keep you toned, spiritually and physically. Airy, modern and well-equipped rooms and townhouses offer good value with weekly and monthly deals. Townhouse rates are for two adults and two children. The gardens are still a building site but the beach is just across the road.

Sun Fun Resort (Map pp64-5; ☎ 242-327-8827; www.sunfunbahamas.com; W Bay St; r per week \$800; Ⓟ ☎ ☎ ☎) Although 'resort' is stretching it a bit, this small hotel's rooms are clean and nice, if a tad small, and come equipped with telephone, satellite TV and a balcony that overlooks the pool and the ocean. The in-house Pisces Restaurant & Lounge serves a range of Bahamian and seafood dishes as well as tropical drinks.

Paradise Island

This is a fairly ritzy place, make no mistake. The beaches are lined with big hotels that offer all facilities, luxuries and activities. There is fun to be had, but at a price. At the time of writing several of the island's former hotels were being replaced with new resorts.

MIDRANGE

Sunshine Paradise Suites (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-3955; Paradise Island Dr; r \$145; ☎ ☎) These 16

self-contained apartment suites are very good value, if a little spartan and short on furniture! However, they are clean, spacious and sit in the center of the island. Rates are for four people, and weekly and monthly rates are also good. All units come with TV and a fully fitted kitchen.

Paradise Harbour Club & Marina (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-2992; www.phc-bahamas.com; Paradise Island Dr; \$150; 📍 📺 📺 📺) At the east end of Paradise Island Dr, this is a small, attractive Swiss-run property in a marina setting. An eclectic collection of buildings contain spacious and clean rooms, with large kitchens and contemporary decor. There's no beach at hand, but the splendid Columbus Tavern Restaurant (p92) is here, and the small pool has a water cascade.

TOP END

Atlantis (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-3000, ext 28; www.atlantis.com; r \$350; 📍 📺 📺 📺) Merge Disneyland and Sea World and you have a bustling mega-resort unlike any hotel this side of Vegas. This 24-story resort's rooms all boast balconies and mod cons. Atlantis also has 11 swimming areas, a 7-acre snorkeling lagoon, six-story water slides, 35 specialty restaurants, numerous bars and an entertainment complex with a 50,000 sq ft casino, and cabaret and other shows. There's also exercise and sports facilities, a full-service spa, a shopping plaza, a Discovery Channel Camp for kids and Club Rush for teens. Phew! The resort offers special package rates and the off-peak rates make staying here a more feasible option.

Ocean Club (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-2501; www.oneandonlyoceanclub.com; Paradise Island Dr; \$695; 📍 📺 📺 📺) This exquisite colonial property exudes European elegance, serenity and class. A large garden fronts the ocean and a wonderful and peaceful beach, while the central building contains an elegant library, small bar and dining areas. Crystal and silver sparkle on linen-draped tables around a courtyard dining area, and a children's club offers a full day of activities. Rooms, cottages and villas are capacious, with private verandas, large marble bathrooms, elegant bygone-era decor and state-of-the-art amenities. A Bermudan-style bar, nine tennis courts plus the nearby Ocean Club Golf Course are open to guests, as are the Atlantis facilities.

Comfort Suites (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-3680; www.comfortsuites.com; Casino Dr; r incl breakfast \$215-275; 📍 📺 📺 📺) This large, efficient hotel is nicely furnished and the attractive rooms are well equipped with king-size beds, a sitting area with sofa bed, cable TV, minibar, hairdryer and safe. There is a great pool and deck area containing a swim-up bar. What makes this hotel really impressive is that guests have free access to all Atlantis facilities, and that children (under 18) who share their parents' room stay for free.

EATING

Nassau's eateries run the gamut from colorful local establishments serving down-home Bahamian dishes to chic restaurants offering world-class gourmet fare.

The resort hotels contain a plethora of good restaurants and more informal eateries, as do the lively Arawak Cay's Fish Fry (p91) and Potter's Cay market (p74).

Downtown Nassau Budget

Imperial Cafeteria & Take-Away (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-4522; Marlborough St; mains \$5-10; 📍 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Ignore the yellow Formica, this is consistently the best-value takeout food in Nassau, beloved of many Bahamians and guests of the lordly British Colonial Hilton opposite. Simple fast-food cooked well; the fish is fresh, light and crispy, the burgers are tasty and the \$3 breakfasts are filling.

Bahamian Kitchen, Restaurant & Bar (Map p69; ☎ 242-325-0702; Trinity Place; mains \$10-18; 📍 lunch & dinner Mon-Fri) The place for traditional Bahamian dishes, specializing in seafood dishes from \$15, but also serving salads, curried, steamed and broiled meats, and BBQ chicken and ribs. Most customers choose the day's specials while enjoying a chilled beer.

Café Skan's (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-2486; Bay St at Frederick St; mains \$12-20; 📍 breakfast, lunch & dinner) The Bahamian and American breakfasts are very popular and getting a table can be a squeeze; it's chock-full of breakfasting businessmen and police officers – you can't go wrong with those references.

Also recommended for tasty and quick food:

Conch Fritters Bar & Grill (Map p69; ☎ 242-323-8778; Marlborough St; mains \$9-16; 📍 lunch & dinner) Specializes in conch dishes and burgers.

GROUPER & CONCH; DISTINCT FLAVORS OR EXTINCT SPECIES?

With conch and grouper on every restaurant menu across the isles, you are not going to be able to avoid a very difficult moral decision; should you eat what are rapidly declining species in this region? It is your choice of course, but international and local research all says the same thing: grouper and conch populations in the Bahamas and Turks and Caicos region are fast approaching the point of no return.

Grouper populations have collapsed in most of the Caribbean, and the Nassau grouper is now classified as an endangered species in many areas. The Bahamian grouper catch in 2001 was less than half a million pounds, about a third of the 1999 catch. And recent surveys of discarded conch shells show that 75% of those taken for food and tourism are undersized.

The cause for the decline is pretty obvious; over-fishing at the worst possible times. Bahamian groupers are being fished en masse as they group together to spawn, while conch are being harvested before they can breed.

The Queen conch (*Strombus gigas*) is a large marine snail with a spectacular pink shell that grazes on sea grasses and lives for 20 years. The primary source of protein for islanders, it is widely sought after for its sweet, white meat, which tastes somewhat like a rubbery scallop.

Groupers are very slow-growing fish, and some species of grouper live to be over 120 years old. The fish like to breed in groups of thousands at a full moon during the months of November to February. Fishermen have been deliberately targeting these fish at this time with big nets and satellite navigation equipment. To put it into perspective, a similar practice in Bermuda resulted in a 95% decline in the population. Evidence shows that the fish and conch do not repopulate locations even if they are protected.

Following the collapse of the conch populations in parts of the Caribbean, Florida and Bermuda, the Nassau grouper and conch have been protected from all fishing in Florida for around 25 years. But both species are rarely seen.

Groups such as the **Bahamas Reef Environment Educational Foundation** (☎ 242-362-6477; www.breef.org; 24b Wulff Rd, W Bay St, Nassau) have been virtually begging the Bahamian government to take swift and decisive action as follows:

- Establish marine reserves to protect conch populations, which will also benefit grouper (and other species such as crawfish).
- Set up a four-month total ban (from November to February inclusive) on fishing grouper; this is, they say, the most critical action required.
- Police the marine reserves and the seasonal ban on grouper fishing to prevent both local fishermen and international poachers ignoring these edicts.

The Bahamian government instigated a one-month ban on fishing grouper during January 2004, and a two-month ban during January and February 2005, but this is not perceived to be enough to save the species in the long run.

Likewise, in 1992 the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species listed the conch one category below threatened status, yet these creatures are still exported across the Caribbean to other regions where the fishing of them has been banned. Contact CITES (www.cites.org) for more information.

So perhaps you fancy pizza or chicken for supper after all?

Sbarro's (Map p69; ☎ 242-356-0800; Bay St; mains \$5-12; 📍 lunch & dinner) Very popular with Bahamian workers and cruise-ship passengers for its yummy pizza slices, pastas and hot Bahamian lunches.

MIDRANGE

Brussels Brasserie (Map p69; ☎ 242-326-4523; Maritime House, Frederick St; mains \$22-28; 📍 lunch Mon-Fri)

This licensed and intimate restaurant is authentically Belgian, from the gleaming wood and mirrored walls to the great menu. Delicate crepes, steak and omelette dishes are listed alongside the monthly special of steamed mussels and Belgian frites. A long-luncher's paradise; don't miss out on the wonderful chocolate-orange crepes.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Café Matisse (Map p69; ☎ 242-356-7012; Bank Lane, Nassau; mains \$18-24; 🍴 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) A comfortable restaurant with great atmosphere and excellent food that is reasonably priced – what more could you ask for? The decor combines leopard-skin fabrics, rich hardwoods, bare limestone walls and Matisse prints. However, regulars prefer a bottle of wine and lunch alfresco, under the dappled shade of the courtyard's trees. The menu displays Italian flair and tasty vegetarian choices with homemade pastas that melt in the mouth and pizzas with pizzazz. The service is exemplary and friendly. This is real understated class.

Green Shutters Restaurant & Pub (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-3701; 48 Parliament St; mains \$8-25; 🍴 lunch daily, dinner Mon-Sat) You'd swear you were in old country England; this intimate pub has authentic beamed ceilings, leather chairs and a polished wooden bar serving ploughman's platters and bangers and mash with pints of best Bitter and draught ales. The dining room offers good fish and beef dishes as well as live music at weekends, but do make reservations beforehand. Cheers!

Chez Willie (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-5364; W Bay St; mains \$14-30; 🍴 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, brunch Sun) The coy statues that surround this place usher you into a little courtyard where you can dine alfresco or indoors. The menu covers French and Bahamian cuisines. Dishes include pumpkin soup and blackened swordfish, although they love doing fancy things with lobster, cream and puff pastry too. Smart dress required.

Gaylord's (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-356-3004; Dowdeswell St; mains \$8-25; 🍴 lunch Mon-Fri, dinner daily) The Indian cuisine is excellent, and vegetarians will also rejoice in a rare choice of dishes. Creamy masalas and kormas, spicy tandooris and *bhunās* and more are consumed to a backdrop of gentle, classical music on the small veranda or in the dining room.

TOP END

Graycliff Hotel & Restaurant (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-2796; www.graycliff.com; W Hill St, Nassau; r \$290; 🍴 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷) has mains for \$30 to \$45 and is open for lunch from Monday to Friday

and for dinner daily. The French-inspired cuisine here is superb, as is the signature dish of Lobster Graycliff. The wine cellar with its hundreds of thousands of bottles, including some rare dusty gems worth thousands of dollars, claims to be the largest collection in the Caribbean region. There is no better selection of fine Cuban cigars with which to end the evening. Jacket and tie are required. See the boxed text on p86.

Buena Vista Restaurant & Hotel (Map p69, ☎ 242-322-2811; stanbv2000@yahoo.com; Delancy St; r \$50; 🍴 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷) p85) has mains for \$34 to \$40 and is open for dinner. There's an aura of faded but comfortable elegance in this mansion and grounds, which is the backdrop to a creative and unpretentious menu. The French and Italian cuisine includes dishes such as snapper sautéed with almonds, sirloin or filet mignon with cream, brandy and peppercorns.

Humidor Restaurant (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-2796, ext 301; mains \$22-35; W Hill St; 🍴 lunch & dinner, closed Sun) Next door to Graycliff Hotel & Restaurant is this elegant bistro. A Grand Award Winner in *Wine Spectator*, it serves California-Caribbean fare under the baton of a master chef. Typical dishes include seafood in a large scallop shell and pasta in saffron cream sauce with mussels and roasted bell peppers. The adjacent lounge is awash in Cuban art.

East of Downtown

Pinder's Place, at Potter's Cay Market (p74), is a simple stall under the Paradise Island Exit Bridge. However, the place is packed to the brim at night with diners who love the conch dishes here as well as the exuberant Bahamian atmosphere. Open till late, but watch yourself at night.

Double Dragon (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-393-5718; Bridge Plaza; mains \$8-15; 🍴 lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Thu-Sun) This cheap and cheerful Chinese eatery is at the foot of the Paradise Island Exit Bridge.

Pink Pearl Café (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-394-6413; E Bay St; 🍴 lunch & dinner, closed Sun) A consistently top-notch restaurant, its setting is a cool two-story house with polished wood floors, vibrant contemporary artworks and a wrap-around, breeze-swept deck. The service is grand, as is the delicious food. Appetizers include roasted peppers, spinach and *cho-cho* (crispy beef in a garlic sauce), and such mouthwatering entrees as ginger chicken

and guava-glazed pork. Don't miss out on the lemon-scented cake or the lively jazz nights at weekends.

Montagu Gardens (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-394-6347; E Bay St; mains \$15-26; 🍴 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) For surf 'n' turf, head to this casually elegant place located in an old Bahamian home, with gardens, on Lake Waterloo. The somewhat flat atmosphere is, however, uplifted with live music on Friday evenings, and reasonably priced meals include flame-grilled and blackened entrees and specials such as snapper cooked with wine, butter and capers. These continental dishes are served alongside steaks, seafood, ribs, lamb dishes and burgers. Smart dress is required.

Sun And... (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-393-1205; Lakeview Dr; mains \$36-42; 🍴 dinner Tue-Sat) An acclaimed option is the oddly named and, some might say, teeny-bit pretentious restaurant that vets its customers before allowing them to enter the converted home on a cul-de-sac off the east end of Shirley St. Yet the highly acclaimed menu offers wonderful French cuisine as well as Bahamian dishes with a French twist. Steak and stone crabs are the house specialties and the baked Alaska and soufflé desserts are equally renowned. Reservations and extremely smart dress are required.

West of Downtown

Fish Fry (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-328-5033; W Bay St, Arawak Cay) This is the place to be on weekends. A number of small huts and established restaurants serve hot food and drinks to a backdrop of Caribbean music. Some local favorites include **Goldie's Restaurant** (Map pp66-7), **New Big 10 Seafood Haven** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-322-5344; 🍴 lunch & dinner Tue-Sun), **Conch & Steakhouse** (Map pp66-7), **Twin Brothers Seafood & Steak House** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-328-5033; 🍴 lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) and **Deep Creek** (Map pp66-7) bar. Early evenings here are busy with all age groups, but take care as it can get a bit feral later on. The Great Bahamas Seafood Festival (p84) is also held here each October.

Cricket Club Restaurant & Pub (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-326-4720; W Bay St; mains \$8-15; 🍴 lunch & dinner) Homesick male Brits ahoy! Come here for a bellyful of shepherd's pie, bangers and mash, and Courage or Fosters beer, at the same time you're being intellectually stimulated by the accompanying soccer,

cricket and rugby games on satellite TV. It's opposite Arawak Cay.

Coco Bar & Wood Grill (Map p76; ☎ 242-327-4287; W Bay St, Sandport; mains \$12-26; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Sitting adjacent to Sandport Bridge, this packed eatery brims with chatter and the aroma of wonderful wood-fired dishes and the best pizzas for miles. Just a gem on all levels.

Cable Beach

Capriccio Ristorante (Map p76; ☎ 242-327-8547; cnr W Bay St & Skyline Dr, Cable Beach; mains \$14-23; 🍴 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun & public holidays) Head here for a cosy ambiance enhanced by classical music and friendly Italian hosts. A choice of dishes to please all includes wonderfully luscious pastas, such as fettuccine with rosé and mushrooms. The attention to detail also makes this place a true and consistent star. The coffee is a joy alone – aromatic, rich and authentically Italian – and the baguettes are a crisp and refreshing change to some of the soggy bread found locally.

Café Johnny Canoe (Map p76; ☎ 242-327-3373; W Bay St, Cable Beach; mains \$8-20; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) This popular café and bar adjoins the Nassau Beach Hotel. It has a rustic yet atmospheric outside deck (lit up at night by Christmas lights) and a brightly colored air-conditioned interior. It serves mainly US-style burgers, ribs and chops, and Bahamian fish dishes. The cocktails are bucket-sized, and happy hour starts at 4pm. There's also a Junkanoo performance on Friday evening.

Swiss Pastry Shop (Map p76; ☎ 242-327-7601; W Bay St, Cable Beach; pastries \$3-6; 🍴 9am-6pm Mon-Sat) This shop near Sandals Royal Bahamian is one of the few places to find cheap beef patties. It also serves yummy brownies and some very ornamental cakes.

Sbarro's (Map p76; ☎ 242-327-3076; W Bay St, Cable Beach; mains \$5-12; 🍴 lunch & dinner) This is the place to fill up on cheap, tasty pizza, calzone, salads or American-Italian fare. Sbarro's also offers daily Italian and Bahamian specials.

Paradise Island

There are few budget options here, and most eateries are contained within the various hotel resorts.

News Café (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-4684; Hurricane Hole Plaza; mains \$8-18; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Homesick Americans will love this delightful deli; there's indoor or patio dining, an

all-American menu of deli sandwiches, burgers, salad platters, delicious coffee and popular breakfasts, and American newspapers are on sale as well as a range of magazines.

Blue Marlin (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-2660; Hurricane Hole Plaza; mains \$26-35; ☺ lunch & dinner) Come here for dinner and a show. Mains include creamy and spicy dishes such as the yummy Eleuthera coconut chicken. The show includes calypso music, a steel band and some Junkanoo fun.

Columbus Tavern Restaurant (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-2992; Paradise Island Dr; mains \$14-34; ☺ lunch & dinner) This place exudes a maritime air. It offers a popular mix of French and Swiss specialties, such as stuffed escargots in shells, roast duck à l'orange and sirloin steak.

You can purchase groceries at the **Paradise Supermarket & Deli** (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-1056; Harbour Rd).

Over the Hill

Same Ole Place (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-322-1311; Thompson Blvd; mains \$5-12; ☺ lunch & dinner) This place in the Oakes Field area serves okra soup, crawfish and pork chops, drawing locals ranging from the hoi polloi to Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham.

Mamma Lyddie's Place (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-328-6849; Market St; mains \$8-18; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) This cheerful place sells johnnycakes (sweet bread that is served hot with creamy butter) and guava duff (a fruit-filled jelly pudding served with sauce made of sugar, egg, butter and rum), as well as truly fabulous side dishes, in particular the macaroni cheese, plantain, and peas 'n' rice.

DRINKING

Most bars in Nassau bill themselves either as English-style pubs or US-style sports bars (or 'satellite lounges,' so named for their satellite TVs). Many resort hotels have at least one such bar, as well as more sophisticated lounge bars where music plays in the background to the low-key chatter of groups of groomed cocktail drinkers.

You will not experience the local color by playing the tourist, however. For that, you need to hang out at satellite lounges. Although middle-class locals tend toward the same places as out-of-towners, there are plenty of funky watering holes where the activities center on downing beers and

playing dominoes. Most have a TV and pool table.

Downtown Nassau

Good coffee shops or wine bars are rare, as most people use hotel lounges to dither, gossip, people-watch and sup their caffeine and alcohol.

Rumors (Map p69; ☎ 242-323-2925; Charlotte St) Tucked away in a little house in the center of town, this wine bar services a lot of local business types and those who want a quiet drink away from the hustle and bustle.

Drop-Off (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-3444; Bay St) This slightly sleazy but atmospheric basement bar and dance club attracts a mix of locals and staff from the cruise ships, as well as Boddington's draft ale fans. It starts to get jam packed after midnight, especially on weekends when the ships are in port. Check out the aquarium and see if the fish will perform for you after you've had a draft or two. Drop-off is near East St.

East of Downtown

Cappuccino Café (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-394-6332; Mackey St; mains \$5-8; ☺ breakfast & lunch) This small place gets packed out by a lunch crowd desperate to get their teeth into the light lunches which include yummy tuna melts and desserts. The great coffee might also have something to do with its popularity.

Crocodiles Waterfront Bar & Grill (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-323-3341; E Bay St, Paradise Island Bridge; ☺ noon-late) Although this place is more an eatery than a bar, many people also come here for the great atmosphere and rum cocktails at sunset.

Dockside Sports Bar & Grill (Map p69; ☎ 242-393-0771; E Bay St, Nassau; ☺ noon-late) This bar is teeming with life at the weekends, and with yachting at festival times.

Hammerhead Bar & Grill (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-393-5625; E Bay St; ☺ noon-late) This small bar has a three-hour happy hour from 4pm and carries the subtle advertising line 'get hammered at hammerheads.' You will find the bar between the two Paradise Island bridges.

West of Downtown

Fish Fry (p91), kicks off at weekends and a number of bars serve golden beer and rum cocktails while rocking to reggae and Junkanoo music; check out the life at Deep Creek bar. The area can get a bit wild later

on, but the early evenings here are lively with all age groups, and the police do keep an eye on things.

Paradise Island

Green Parrot Bar & Grill (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-3633; Hurricane Hole Marina, Paradise Island; ☺ noon-midnight) One of the few bars on the island outside the hotel complexes. Live music on Saturday and Sunday evenings helps add to this place's popularity.

ENTERTAINMENT

Downtown Nassau is strangely dead at night, once the day's business is put to bed. Cruise-ship passengers return to their ships and the Christian community, including the Bahamas Christian Council, have influenced the decision to centralize nightspots around a couple of areas. See the media section p68 for details on the nightlife.

Anyone who wants to party should head for the tourist nightspots of Cable Beach and Paradise Island. Here you can party and will at will!

At the opposite end of the spectrum, afternoon-tea parties are hosted regularly at Government House, which forms part of the People-to-People program, designed to put tourists in closer contact with Bahamians. This highly recommended and free program also runs on many of the Family Islands. Contact the **Bahamas Ministry of Tourism** (☎ 242-302-2000; www.bahamas.com) for more details.

Nightclubs

There are numerous clubs that come and go, but the following are staunch favorites. Promotion nights normally mean free entry. It is also worth checking on dress codes and which nights the clubs open. Some clubs only open at weekends in quieter periods but then party nightly during the peak times of spring break, Easter, Christmas and New Year.

Several resort hotels have their own dance clubs, too, including Sandals Royal Bahamian, which is private. Nonguests can buy an evening pass to the resort's own club, Breezes, and the Fanta-Z Disco at the Radisson Cable Beach (p87) is open to all comers.

Fluid Lounge & Nightclub (Map p69; ☎ 242-356-4691; Bay St, Nassau; admission \$5-25; ☺ from 9pm Tue-Sun) Two dance floors and a mix of hip-hop,

R&B and karaoke keep this place popular. Dress and minimum age requirements may apply. There is free entry for women until 11pm and tourists with a taxi-driver pass can get in for \$5.

601 Club (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-322-3041; 601 Bay St, Nassau; admission \$5-30; ☺ Fri-Sun) This club on the east end of downtown is the snazziest place. Dress and minimum age requirements may apply. There is free entry for women until 11pm and tourists with a taxi-driver pass can get in for \$5.

Club Waterloo (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-393-7324; E Bay St, Nassau; admission \$5-30; ☺ 9pm-4am) Near Fort Montagu, this indoor/outdoor club is still going strong after seven years, and is popular with Bahamians and holidaymakers of most ages. American spring break college students also head here. The old colonial building contains a number of bars, and separate dance areas that host live rock-and-roll bands and play hip-hop and reggae. Wednesday's 'happy hour' continues until midnight.

Insomnia (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-322-7664; W Bay St, Nassau; admission \$25; ☺ from 10pm Thu-Sun) Fans of reggae, soca, calypso and Bahamian music head to Insomnia. Admission charges can vary, check ahead.

Cocktail & Dreams Nightclub (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-328-3745; W Bay St, Nassau; admission \$20; ☺ from 9pm Tue-Sun) This indoor/outdoor venue has a dance-hall vibe and a DJ, and is popular with tourists, visitors and local crowds. On Thursdays they play 'old school' reggae, and on Wednesdays most drinks are half price.

Zoo (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-322-7195; W Bay St, Saunders Beach; admission \$20-40; ☺ Thu-Sat) The dance club of choice is near Saunders Beach, though it was in the process of reopening with a new name and management at the time of research. Admission prices may change, but previously some Cable Beach hotel guests gained free entry with hotel ID. This ultramodern club has a number of different bars, a ground-floor late-night eatery, and plays house, techno, R&B and reggae music to a pretty cool crowd.

Dragons Lounge & Dance Club (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-2400; Atlantis Resort, Paradise Island; admission \$30; ☺ from 9pm till late) Atlantis' hot, high-tech nightclub is part of the casino complex and is hugely popular with locals as well as tourists. Entry is free to hotel guests.

Live Music

Many restaurants and bars rock it up at the weekends; check the local tourist newspapers for a calendar of events, but it's also worth asking hotel and restaurant staff as not everything is listed.

Arawak Cay (p75) is always lively at weekends, especially as it draws close to Junkanoo times. Many bands and dancers practice their routines for the Junkanoo parades at the Fish Fry. It is great fun to watch performers from competing 'shacks' or groups and comment on their performances along with the crowd.

The classy Pink Pearl Café (p90) keeps its hungry diners coming back for more with some great jazz music that adds to the night's entertainment. Yet, it also hosts R&B, headliner names and jam sessions. Call for details about who's playing.

For rake 'n' scrape music on Sunday evenings, check out Same Ole Place (p92). It guarantees a warm welcome and a richly rewarding experience.

Blue Note Club (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-3301; British Colonial Hilton, Bay St, Nassau) Has regular free jazz nights. There's some other really great live music in the hotel's other bars and lounges.

Most Paradise Island hotels have bars playing live music, including a fistful of options at Atlantis: **Plato's Lounge** (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-3000; www.atlantis.com), with candlelight and a pianist, and the **Piranha Club** (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-3000; www.atlantis.com), where you can watch the eponymous fish through Plexiglas. A crooner sings nightly at the **Oasis Lounge** (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-3000; www.atlantis.com) of Club Land'Or. And live musicians perform at **Bahama Mama Mia** (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-2660; Paradise Island) located in Hurricane Hole Marina.

Casinos & Floorshows

Wyndham Nassau Resort & Crystal Palace Casino (p87) The casino at the Wyndham Nassau Resort in Cable Beach is vast and is open to anyone over 21 years of age. The tables and poker machines are open 24 hours and tuition is given to anyone wanting to learn how to throw away their money. The 800-seat **Rainforest Theatre** (Map p76; ☎ 242-327-6200; www.wyndhamnassauresort.com; Wyndham Nassau Resort & Crystal Palace Casino, W Bay St, Cable Beach; admission \$25) hosts Las Vegas-style revues such as the 'Magical Voyage' show, which blends

comedy, dance and magic acts. The show changes themes regularly.

Atlantis Resort & Casino (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-2400; www.atlantis.com; Atlantis Resort, Paradise Island; admission free; ☎ 10am-4am) This enormous casino links to the resort's restaurants. Poker machines are rattling 24 hours a day amid tables offering every conceivable means of losing your money or watching others get poorer. Also in the Atlantis resort, **Joker's Wild** (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-3000; www.atlantis.com; Atlantis Resort, Paradise Island; admission price varies; ☎ 9:30pm Tue-Sun) hosts Bahamian and international acts who enjoy their gigs tremendously.

King & Knights Club (Map p76; ☎ 242-327-7711; www.nassaubeachhotel.com; Nassau Beach Hotel, W Bay St, Cable Beach; admission \$25) This club offers a Bahamian dance show that includes traditional rake 'n' scrape music, limbo, a fire dance and Junkanoo music.

Cinemas

Matinee prices at these cinemas are slightly cheaper (adult/child \$6/2.50).

Galleria Cinemas 11 (Map pp64-5; ☎ 242-380-3549; Mall at Marathon, Prince Charles Ave & Marathon Rd, Nassau) An 11-screen theater with super-surround sound that has day and evening shows (adult/child \$7/3.50).

Galleria 6 (Map pp64-5; ☎ 242-380-3549; RND Plaza, John F Kennedy Dr, Nassau) This six-screen multiplex also has matinees and evening shows (adult/child \$7/3.50).

Theater

Dundas Centre for the Performing Arts (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-393-3728; fax 242-394-7179; Mackey St, Nassau; admission \$10-20) This is Nassau's most valued venue, hosting plays, dances, revues, musicals and (occasionally) ballets.

National Centre for the Performing Arts (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-301-0600; Shirley St, Nassau) This 600-seat center hosts large-scale performances and international productions. Look out for 'Summer Madness,' when popular local theatrical troupes address contemporary issues in Bahamian society. The excellent National Youth Choir, who have recorded eight CDs, hold an annual concert here in late April or early May. Performances by the National Dance Company, Nassau Amateur Operatic Society, Chamber Singers, and Diocesan Chorale are also a fabulous treat.

Spectator Sports

Check the weekend papers for matches that may be of interest. The following are two key match venues.

Clifford Park (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-322-1875/3622; W Bay St, Nassau; free admission) Cricket is played on weekends from March to December at this park below Fort Charlotte, where informal soccer matches also occur.

Queen Elizabeth Sports Centre (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-323-5163; Over-the-Hill off Thompson Blvd, Oakes Field, Nassau) The center has track and field and softball stadiums, plus netball courts. The swimming pool and cycling tracks attract amateur and professional athletes. Baseball games are hosted here for the Little League and Pony League Baseball Diamonds.

SHOPPING

Bay St is lined with arcades (such as Prince George Plaza; Map p69) and duty-free stores selling everything from Swiss watches and nugget-sized Colombian emeralds to Milanese fashions and spicy rums. The side streets are favored by stores selling leather goods, artwork and collectibles. Upscale resorts also have duty-free jewelry and gift stores. The largest are the 'malls' in the Radisson Cable Beach & Golf Resort (p87) and Wyndham Nassau Resort & Crystal Palace Casino (opposite).

It is worth checking out comparative prices at home before visiting the Bahamas. Also look out for special deals and coupons in the free *What-to-do* tourist booklets, available from any shop or hotel lobby.

Most Bahamians shop for major items in Miami, but use the shopping malls in the residential areas south of downtown for the weekly shop and other incidentals. The largest, with 70 stores, is the **Mall at Marathon** (Map pp64-5; ☎ 242-393-4043; Marathon & Robinson Rds); you can take the shuttle that leaves from outside KFC on Woodes Rogers Walk for \$1 one-way. The **Towne Centre Mall** (Map pp64-5; ☎ 242-326-6992; Blue Hill Rd & Independence Dr) is another multilevel mall.

Antiques

Marlborough Antiques (Map p69; ☎ 242-328-0502; Marlborough St, Nassau) A wide range includes items with a nautical theme. Prices are high!

Balmain Antiques & Gallery (Map p69; ☎ 242-323-7421; 2nd fl, Mason's Bldg, Bay & Charlotte Sts, Nassau) For antique maps and etchings.

Arts & Crafts

Galleries abound, as do souvenir shops selling cheap original or hand-copied oil and acrylic Haitian paintings from as little as \$15. Many of the straw items are imported from Asia. The vendors expect you to bargain the price down by about 10%, but don't be too miserly!

Aitken Gallery (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-328-7065; Madeira St, Nassau; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) This Palm-dale district gallery promotes paint and photographic works.

Balmain Gallery (Map p69; ☎ 242-323-7662; Bay St at Charlotte St, Nassau; ☎ 9:30am-5:30pm Mon-Sat) A mix of maps, antique prints, coins, postage stamps, lead soldiers, and oil and watercolor paintings.

Central Bank of the Bahamas Annex (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-2130; Trinity Pl & Frederick St, Nassau; ☎ 9:30am-4:30pm Mon-Fri) Monthly exhibitions of classic and contemporary Bahamian artists.

Doongalik Studios (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-393-6640; dstudios@bahamas.net.bs; 18 Village Rd, Nassau; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) For vibrant Junkanoo-inspired paintings, masks, crafts and T-shirts.

Kennedy Gallery (Map p69; ☎ 242-325-7662; http://mymurphys.com/kennedy; Parliament St, Nassau; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) Paintings, sculptures, ceramics, wind chimes and other works from both established and emerging artists, includes children's art.

Nassau Art Gallery (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-393-1482; fax 242-393-1483; East Bay Shopping Centre, E Bay St, Nassau; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) Just east of the Paradise Island Exit Bridge, this long-established gallery has a good selection of works.

Straw Market Cable Beach (Map p76; W Bay St); Nassau (Map p69; Bay St) The market near Prince George Wharf is a veritable Bahamian souk, bustling with vendors selling T-shirts, wood carvings, and straw baskets, mats, dolls, hats and other items. You'll also find a large straw and crafts market across from the Radisson Cable Beach.

Bahamas Rum Cake Shop (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-322-3444; Bay St, Nassau; cakes \$6; ☎ 7am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon some Saturdays) Tourist shops sell these buttery delights in fancy sealed tins for around \$20. Buy and eat a warm one right now or take it home; they also sell the fancy tinned version.

Green Lizard (Map p69; ☎ 242-323-8076; Bay St, Nassau) A diverse range of island-made items is offered, with items including crafts made

of straw, handprinted Androsia batiks and sarongs, plus guava jams, pepper sauces and even Haitian artworks and hammocks.

Cigars

Premium Cuban cigars can be bought for a song in Nassau, but remember, Uncle Sam prohibits US citizens from importing them. The good news is that Graycliff's cigars are not made with Cuban tobacco so *are* permitted into the US by customs.

Pipe of Peace (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-3908; Bay St at Charlotte St) Has a fine selection of Cuban cigars.

Havana Humidor (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-5809; Crystal Court, Atlantis, Paradise Island) A sizeable collection of Cuban cigars; includes rolling demonstrations.

Graycliff Cigar Co (p71) is also worth checking out. Castro's own cigar-roller oversees fellow Cubans hand-rolling these award-winning cigars

Clothing

You'll find T-shirts and resort wear at all the resort boutiques and in dozens of stores downtown. Several stores also sell simple clothes made from Androsia batiks. There are few bargains on high-fashion clothing.

Bonneville Bones (Map pp64-5; ☎ 242-394-2746; Mall at Marathon) This store sells elegant designer garb for men.

Brass & Leather Shops Charlotte St (Map p69, ☎ 242-322-3806); Mall at Marathon (Map pp64-5; ☎ 242-394-5676) All-leather goods and clothes.

Coles of Nassau (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-8393; Parliament St at Bay St, Nassau) These stores sell designer fashions such as Calvin Klein, Vittadini and Mondri.

The Bay (Map p69; ☎ 242-356-3918; Prince George Plaza, Bay St, Nassau) This store stocks elegant designer duds.

Gucci (Map p69; ☎ 242-325-0561; Saffrey Sq, Nassau) This store off Bay St sells the well-known brand.

Jewelry, Perfume & Collectibles

Coin of the Realm (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-4497; Charlotte St, Nassau) Bahamian coins, stamps and semiprecious stones.

Colombian Emeralds (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-2230; Bay St, Nassau) Bright sparkling emeralds and much more at this chain store.

John Bull (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-4252, Bay St, Nassau) All the big names are here, such as Cartier

and Tiffany & Co, as well as all the classic perfumes.

Solomon's Mines (Map p69; ☎ 242-356-4362; Bay St, Nassau) This chain sells jewels and watches.

Linens Shop (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-4266; Bay St at Frederick St, Nassau) Stocks...yep linens!

Perfume Shop (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-2375; Bay St at Frederick St, Nassau) A vast collection of designer sniffs.

Philatelic bureau (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-3344; E Hill St at Parliament St, Nassau) The main post office sells collectible stamps.

Music

Cody's Music & Video Centre (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-323-8215; fax 242-323-2408; E Bay & Armstrong Sts, Nassau) Carries a large stock of Bahamian and Caribbean music.

Pyfoms (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-2603; Bay St) Head here if you want to take a Junkanoo drum or some CDs home.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

For information on international flights to the Bahamas and Nassau please refer to p288. For travel information between Nassau and other Bahamian islands, please refer to those destinations.

To reach Paradise Island, there are flights operated by **Chalk's Ocean Airways** (OP; ☎ 1-800-424-2557, 242-363-3114; www.flychalks.com; hubs Paradise Island Nassau & Fort Lauderdale), which uses the seaplane landing.

GETTING AROUND

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Nassau International Airport (NAS; Map pp64-5; ☎ 242-377-7281) lies 5 miles west of the city.

There are no buses to or from the airport, as the taxi-drivers' union has things sewn up. A few hotels do provide shuttle services, and taxis also line the forecourts of hotels and the area outside the arrivals lounge of the airport. Call the day ahead to book a **taxi** (☎ 242-323-5111/4555). Rates are fixed by the government and displayed at the airport on the wall by the taxi-rank; all destination rates are for two people with standard luggage, while each additional person costs \$3.

One-way rates to/from the airport are as follows: Cable Beach \$15; downtown Nassau and Prince George Wharf \$22; and Paradise Island \$27.

Taxi sightseeing rates are usually in the vicinity of \$50 per hour, which makes car hire a very attractive option!

Bicycle

Ask at your hotel; most either have bicycles for hire, or can arrange their availability (from \$10 per day).

On Paradise Island you can rent bicycles from Club Land'Or (\$10 daily) and at Pirate's Cove (around \$20 per day). They're single-gear beach cruisers with back-pedal brakes, but the island is flat and bicycling should prove no hardship given the short distances.

Boat

A two-level ferry departs Nassau for Paradise Island from the cruise dock (\$3 per person) every 30 minutes, 9:30am to 6pm, departing when full. It deposits passengers at the ferry terminal just west of the Paradise Island Exit Bridge; ferries for Nassau depart here on a regular basis. You'll see the signs or be hustled aboard by touts.

Water taxis also ply the same route between 8am and 6pm, but leave Nassau from Woodes Rogers Walk. They will drop you at any of the Paradise Island wharves upon request.

Car & Scooter

You really don't need a car to explore Nassau, Cable Beach and Paradise Island or to get to their beaches.

However if you intend to explore New Providence, it's worth saving the taxi fare to and from Nassau by hiring a car at the airport. Collision-damage waiver insurance

costs \$15 a day. For information on road rules, see p294.

The following companies have rental booths at the airport. (Dollar are the cheapest from around \$80 per 24 hours).

Avis Airport (☎ 242-377-7121); Cable Beach (☎ 242-322-2889); Paradise Island (☎ 242-363-2061)

Budget Airport (☎ 242-377-7405); Paradise Island (Map p77; ☎ 242-363-3095)

Dollar Airport (☎ 242-377-8300); Nassau (Map p69;

☎ 242-325-3716; British Colonial Hilton Nassau, 1 Bay St)

Hertz Airport (☎ 242-377-8684)

Several local companies also rent cars that are cheaper, from about \$55 daily. Ask your hotel to suggest a company or try **Orange Creek Rentals** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 242-323-4967, 800-891-7655; fax 242-356-5005; W Bay St, Nassau).

Scooters are widely available and can be found outside most major hotels. They cost \$50 a day.

Knowles Scooter Rentals (Map p69; ☎ 242-322-3415; Welcome Centre, Festival Pl, Nassau) rents scooters for \$30/45 per half-day/day.

You can rent scooters from \$40 to \$50 daily from Club Land'Or and from rental agencies at Pirate's Cove.

Public Transportation

Nassau and New Providence are well served by jitney buses, which run constantly from 6am to 8pm, although there are no fixed schedules. No buses run to Paradise Island.

All jitney buses depart downtown from Frederick St at Bay St and at designated bus stops. Destinations are clearly marked on the buses, which can be waved down. Likewise to request a stop anywhere when you're onboard, simply ask the driver.

The standard fare is \$1 (children \$0.75), paid to the driver upon exiting the bus.

Bus Number	Destination
No6	South New Providence
Nos10 & 10A	Cable Beach & Sandy Point
No38	Cable Beach & Prince George Wharf via Over-the-Hill
Nos24 & 30	New Paradise Island Bridge

While there's no bus service to Paradise Island, you can catch Bus 24 or 30 from Frederick St in downtown Nassau to the New Paradise Island Bridge, and then walk over to the island.

SCAM ALERT!

Some taxi drivers may try to charge the third or fourth person the same rate as for two people, or try to charge additional rates for luggage once you reach your destination. Don't agree to these blatant scams – the drivers normally will back down.

On the rare occasion they don't back off, take their license number and report them the next day (☎ 242-323-5111/4555). Most drivers are good folk who are appalled at this sort of behavior.

The 'Casino Express,' operated by Atlantis, runs a clockwise route throughout the day and early evening on Paradise Island, picking up and dropping off passengers at major hotels; the fare is \$1 for nonguests of Atlantis.

Western Transportation runs hourly buses from downtown Nassau (opposite the British Colonial Hilton) to Lyford, South Ocean and Compass Point (\$2 one way). In the evenings buses only depart from town at 9pm and midnight.

Free shuttle buses run between the Cable Beach hotels from 6pm to 2am.

AROUND NASSAU

WEST NEW PROVIDENCE

Running west from Cable Beach on the island's north shore, W Bay St offers a beautiful drive. The area is favored by the wealthy, who live in upscale homes atop the ridge.

Sights & Activities

One-and-a-half miles west of Delaport Point you'll pass the **Caves**, just east of Blake Rd. This large cavern system once sheltered Lucayan Indians. Just west is **Orange Hill Beach**, shaded by sea grapes and palms. It is undeveloped, except for the Orange Hill Beach Inn (right) hidden on the bluff overlooking the beach, and very popular with Bahamian families.

West of Compass Point is **Love Beach**, a small, little-used beach near Gambier Village. It's known for its snorkeling. Beyond Love Beach, the road turns inland and curls past the small settlement of Mt Pleasant and around **Lyford Cay**, a sprawling walled estate of manicured, tree-lined streets and canals framed by glorious multimillion dollar mansions. Here billionaires and celebrities – Sean Connery for one – protect themselves from the world.

Beyond the Commonwealth Brewery you'll pass the **South Ocean Golf Course** (☎ 242-362-4391, ext 6687; South Ocean Rd, West Providence) and a 5-mile-long beach lining Southwest Bay.

Sleeping & Eating

Compass Point Inn (☎ 242-327-4500; fax 242-327-3299; W Bay St, Gambier Village; r \$410, mains \$12-35; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner; (P) ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒ ☒) For

pure rock-star fun, stay, eat and drink at recording genius Chris Blackwell's former joint. Although this inn was likely to be resold at the time of research, it was once beloved by musicians recording at Compass Point Studios across the road, as well as by celebs like Naomi Campbell and Cindy Crawford. The octagonal clapboard cottages (some on stilts) boast large windows, cute porches, conical beamed ceilings and rustic yet tasteful furnishings, and edge up to the turquoise sea. The beachside restaurant is known for its wonderful breakfast dishes, such as coconut French toast and hickory-smoked salmon, as well as their lunch and dinner menus. The bar (open noon until late) attracts locals in the know, with an extended happy hour from 4pm to 7pm. Live music adds to the fun on weekends.

Orange Hill Beach Inn (☎ 242-327-7157; orange.hil@batelnet.bs; W Bay St, Orange Hill; d \$130, mains \$15 to \$25; (P) ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒ ☒) This casual family-run place, on the bluff overlooking Orange Hill Beach, is preferred for overnights in transit between islands, and offers airport drop-offs. The uninspiring rooms have contemporary furniture, refrigerators, microwaves and toasters. A simple traditional and burger dinner menu changes daily and there's also a bar.

SOUTH NEW PROVIDENCE

Most of this region is backed by mangroves, swampy wetlands and brine pools, parts of which have been used for years as rubbish dumps. Curiously, dozens of minor Christian bodies have erected their little churches along these roads.

On the southwest side of the island, **South Ocean Beach** is narrow, secluded, several miles long, and trodden by very few people. You'll find great scuba-diving offshore.

Adelaide

Adelaide is a quiet village whose nostalgic lifestyle revolves around fishing. Visually it isn't noteworthy, but it is about as close as you can get to traditional life on the island. Seventeen miles southwest of Nassau on a spit of land jutting into a navigable creek rich in conch, fish and lobster, the village dates back to 1832 when it was founded for slaves freed from a Portuguese slave trader,

A hurricane in 1926 wrecked the harbor. In 1990 the Bahamas National Trust ini-

tiated a plan to restore Adelaide Creek, and an army of volunteers and schoolchildren from across New Providence showed up to lend a hand. Donations flooded in to replace the causeways with bridges. Finally, on Earth Day the creek's mouth was reopened and a tidal creek was reborn. Almost immediately marine life returned: crabs, shads and even bonefish. Today baby tiger sharks, barracudas, snappers, lobsters and vast armadas of other young fish journey in and out.

The village is fronted by narrow, white-sand **Adelaide Beach**, extending between South Ocean and the village. Fishing boats are drawn up on the beach, and the wharf is lively at sunset when the day's work is done.

For yummy seafood and rum drinks, loiter at **Avery's Restaurant & Bar** (☎ 242-362-1547; Adelaide Village; mains \$10-20; ☎ lunch & dinner), a very popular little restaurant and bar.

Coral Harbour

Coral Harbour Rd leads south to this residential marina community. Several dive and sportfishing operators are based here (see p79), and there's a small beach. The road turns west along the shore, becoming Ranfurly Dr, and dead-ends at the base of the Royal Bahamas Defence Force.

After Fidel Castro's expropriation of the Bacardi family's rum factories during the Cuban Revolution, the family set up its business in other locales, including this site east of Coral Harbour. The **Bacardi Rum Factory** (☎ 242-362-1412; cnr Bacardi & Carmichael Rds; ☎ tours 10am-3pm Mon-Thu) produces Bacardi rum (the family successfully sued the Castro regime for the Bacardi title) from sugar imported from other Caribbean islands. The free 30-minute guided tours are for eight people or more, but you can hang around in the pavilion, sampling free drinks in the hope that other visitors achieve a quorum.

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