



C&IT
DESTINATION
MICE GUIDE

The Islands Of The Bahamas

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Welcome to The Islands Of The Bahamas

When people think of The Bahamas, their minds often drift to a secluded white-sand beach, crystal-clear

waters and the perfect blue sky above.

This image isn't wrong, but beyond that there is a lot to know about the collection of islands. In fact, The Bahamas consists of 16 main islands among the hundreds of cays and islets, so there really is plenty to discover.

But don't worry, this isn't an in-depth guide to every grain of sand above the water that flies the aquamarine, black and gold flag. Instead we've highlighted the islands we believe to be key for MICE professionals: Nassau & Paradise Island, Grand Bahama Island, The Exumas, Eleuthera & Harbour Island, The Abacos, Andros, Bimini, San Salvador and Long Island – supplemented with all the info needed for a planner looking to organise an event in paradise.

From key logistical facts that will ensure every guest arrives stress-free, to some

inspirational concepts that will excite even the most well-travelled individual, this guide should help to paint a better picture of which hotels, venues and activities to consider when organising an event in The Bahamas.

Naturally, such a picturesque paradise lends itself perfectly as an incentive destination and so we've also compiled seven of the best incentive ideas for those wanting to give their delegates more than just sun, sea and sand.

In addition, we've got a pair of perspectives from planner peers to give an idea of what it's really like to organise an event in The Bahamas.

All of which I hope provides you with a guide that is both informative and inspirational and will be something you keep for future reference.

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Fired up Exclusive experiences are on offer across the islands

It's Better In The Bahamas

With 16 main islands and hundreds of islets and cays dispersed across 100,000 square miles of ocean, the archipelago is an ecological oasis with hotels, venues and activities to suit all tastes

The Islands Of The Bahamas are the perfect aspirational destination for conferences and incentives, and with an injection of new and upgraded hotels, venues and connectivity it has never been easier to create an impressive itinerary that blends both work and play.

Across 16 main islands, there are more than 50 resorts, hotels, villas and venues to suit all budgets and group sizes, plus an abundance of activities rooted in adventure, nature, culture and history. Year-round warm weather, a stunning backdrop of dreamy turquoise waters and

white – even pink – sandy beaches certainly heightens its allure.

Yet what really sets the subtropical islands apart are the myriad opportunities to create once-in-a-lifetime, memorable and often exclusive experiences.

Nothing says VIP louder than island-hopping to a private island and, in the Bahamian archipelago, you can take your pick.

While Nassau & Paradise Island and Grand Bahama Island are the most popular and accessible, the quieter Out Islands – The Abacos, Andros, Bimini, Eleuthera & Harbour Island, The Exumas, Long Island, San Salvador, Acklins & Crooked Island, Cat Island, The Berry Islands, Mayaguana and Inagua – provide a great pre- or post-trip add-on for an authentic Bahamian experience and escape-from-it-all serenity.

Across the islands, an astonishing array of all-inclusive properties allow event planners to maximise value and simplify meal arrangements for delegates. There is also a vast breadth of wellness facilities for accompanying spouses, or for delegates themselves whose companies seek to nurture their employees.

Discover more about what makes The Bahamas a unique destination for business events throughout the pages of this destination guide, and find out how The Bahamas Tourist Office can provide support and assistance to ensure delegates experience these islands like never before.



KEY FACTS

Geography

The Bahamas is a group of 700 islands and cays in the Atlantic Ocean, off the south-eastern coast of Florida. The capital is Nassau, which is located on the island of New Providence.

Climate

The islands have a warm tropical climate, with temperatures hardly varying. The most refreshing time to visit is between September and May, when the temperature averages 25-27°C (77-80°F). The more northerly islands are around five degrees cooler than the southern islands.

The rest of the year is warmer, with temperatures of 29-31°C (84-88°F). Night-time temperatures gently dip by 5-7°C.

Timezone

GMT -5

Currency

Bahamian Dollar is on par with the US Dollar and both currencies are used interchangeably. Credit cards are accepted.

Visas

Travellers using a full British Citizen passport do not need a visa and are allowed entry into the region for up to 90 days. Passport should be valid for six months from the date of departure from The Bahamas. If arriving from the USA, you need to apply for an ESTA.

■ For more information contact The Bahamas High Commission, London; bahamashclondon.net

Bahamas Tourist Office

The **Group Destination Services (GDS)** team consists of travel professionals at The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism & Aviation.

The team provides destination management services to inbound meetings, conferences and events, including assistance with planning and negotiating group travel programmes to enhance their travel experience.

KEY SERVICES INCLUDE:

- Meet and greet fast-tracking services at airports and cruise ports
- Bahamas Government representation
- Airport Authority liaison
- Immigration and customs clearance
- Airport and cruise port facilitation
- Courtesy calls on senior state officials
- Hotel liaison services
- Staff-manned hotel secretariat/hospitality zones
- Pre- and post-tour itineraries
- Ground operators and Destination Management Companies identification
- The identification of private estates for tours and functions

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How to get there



Greater and ever-growing connectivity to The Bahamas has given its C&I credentials a major boost. The archipelago boasts more than 26 main airports, many of which are international, including: Lynden Pindling International Airport, Nassau, and Grand Bahama International Airport, Freeport.

Groups can fly direct to Nassau with British Airways or from key destinations on the east coast of the US and Canada to many of the islands. This means the islands can easily be paired with US destinations for twin or multi-destination breaks.

FLIGHTS FROM THE UK AND EUROPE

In nine hours, British Airways flies non-stop from London Heathrow to Nassau four times a week. The airline has replaced its older and smaller aircraft with a Boeing 777, which has greater seat capacity, particularly in premium cabins. Air Caraïbes runs a weekly direct flight from Paris Orly to San Salvador.

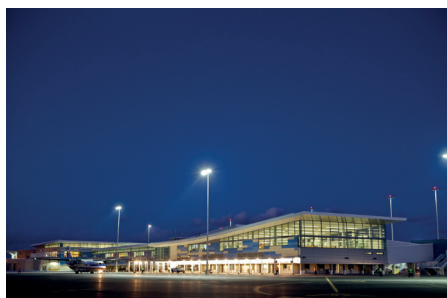
GLOBAL FLIGHT OPTIONS

The Bahamas' proximity to Florida means flights from Miami, Orlando, Fort Lauderdale and the East Coast are regular and inexpensive. The majority of flights head to Nassau or Freeport where passengers can then fly to a number of the Out Islands.

American Airlines, for example, operates flights from Charlotte to Eleuthera and to Marsh Harbour in The Abacos. It already runs several flights per day to Nassau from Miami and is adding flights between Miami and Freeport, as well as Chicago and New York City's LaGuardia airport to Nassau.

The flying time from Nassau to Miami is about 45 minutes, or three hours from New York. Other US airlines serving the region are Delta Air Lines, Silver Airways, JetBlue and United.

National carrier Bahamasair serves six



US destinations and flies to 14 airports in The Bahamas. Bahamasair also offers a weekly service from Miami to San Salvador.

INTER-ISLAND TRAVEL

Besides Bahamasair, local airlines include Sky Bahamas, Pineapple Air and Western Air. There are many private plane charter options, including seaplane charters out of the US. Air Flight Charters flies to every island airport in The Bahamas, as well as the seaplanes of SeaBird Air. Tropic Ocean Airways' seaplanes have scheduled flights to The Abacos, Bimini and Great Harbour Cay, plus private charters.

Alternatively, take to the seas with Bahamas Ferries, which connects Nassau with 11 Bahamian destinations. The most popular day-long excursion is to Eleuthera & Harbour Island.

CRUISE OPTIONS

Renowned as a classic cruising paradise, The Bahamas has a multitude of cruises suitable for corporate groups. The Bahamas Paradise Cruise Line, which sails out of the Port of Palm Beach to Grand Bahama Island, offers two-night cruises with the option to add two or four night stays at a choice of four beach resorts: Lighthouse Pointe at Grand Lucayan, Pelican Bay Hotel, Viva Wyndham Fortuna Beach and The Marlin at Taino Bay.

The FRS Caribbean serves Bimini from the Port of Miami and docks directly at the Hilton at Resorts World Bimini. Day trips feature a visit to Alice Town and Dolphin House museum, with day passes available for those wishing to use the facilities at the Hilton property.



Bahamian hospitality

From luxury hotels to private islands, there's no shortage of accommodation options and venues for events that will live long in the memory



Lap of luxury
The piano lounge at the Graycliff Hotel



Sea view
Poolside at Albany

GRAYCLIFF HOTEL

Tucked away from the glitter and action of Nassau is Graycliff, an 18th century colonial mansion that counts Al Capone and Winston Churchill as former guests.

Today, Graycliff is a 20-room hotel with a fine dining restaurant, lush tropical gardens, two swimming pools and one of

the largest wine collections in the world – around 250,000 at last count.

For meetings and events, the wine cellar can host a party of 18 people, while the main dining rooms and terraces can cater for larger groups. The property recently introduced Bahama Barrels, a wine-blending experience where guests can

learn about the wine-making process before mixing and bottling their own blend to take home with them. You can also try your hand at cigar rolling or visit Graycliff's chocolate factory.

THE ISLAND HOUSE

Set on a private estate, The Island House

boutique hotel is one of the most elegant hotspots in Nassau. The property offers a 44-seat cinema and an adjoining terrace can accommodate 75 people standing.

A cosy library has space for up to 30 guests, while the events lawn can welcome 80. The estate recently added a new building to cater for break-out meetings or office retreats for around 40 people.

Staying overnight? There are 30 bedrooms and six two- and three-bed apartments, plus a spa, yoga studio, lap pool and squash courts. Mahogany House serves Mediterranean fare.

ALBANY

Backed by the likes of golfing legend Tiger Woods and musician Justin Timberlake, the 600-acre oceanside resort of Albany is well suited for corporate board retreats.

For intimate client presentations or private viewings, the property has an 18-seat theatre, with reclining leather chairs and five screens. The Bull Pen is a 24-seat conference room with video conferencing technology and, earlier this year, the resort opened a recording studio called The Sanctuary.

The numerous pools overlooking the beach and ocean are the ideal outdoor venue for receptions or larger group gatherings. Accommodation ranges from beachfront villas to three- to eight-bedroom houses and marina residences with private pools overlooking a mega-yacht marina.

Dining options include a fine dining restaurant, a French patisserie and a smoothie bar. An 18-hole golf course designed by Ernie Els is a major attraction for golfers.

JOHN WATLING'S DISTILLERY

Located on the grounds of the 1789 Buena Vista Estate in downtown Nassau, John Watling's Distillery reopened after an extensive restoration and now runs museum-like tours on how the small-batch rum is produced. Signature cocktails can be sampled at The Red Turtle Tavern. For private events, the site can take up to 250 people.



Pull up a chair
The private island of Musha Cay

Private island retreats

MUSHA CAY

Conference and incentive planners with a sizeable budget should look no further than the ultra-luxurious private island Musha Cay, owned by illusionist David Copperfield. The four-island 500-acre plot in The Exumas has 24 secluded beaches and can accommodate 24 guests across five guesthouses. Experiences include Dave's Drive-in, a giant outdoor movie theatre; a secret jungle monkey village and a spy adventure with a helicopter ride, explosive special effects and laser beams.

Another treasure-hunt-style adventure takes groups on a tour of hidden caves and a petrified lake. Guests will have full use of Copperfield's catamaran and jet skis.

Dining options range from picnics on the beach to fine dining at the Balinese Pavilion, where each course is paired with a vintage wine from an extensive cellar collection.

KAMALAME CAY

Just off Andros Barrier Reef, and a 15-minute flight from Nassau (the closest airports are Fresh Creek International and San Andros), lies Kamalame Cay. The private resort sleeps 70 guests across 27 veranda-wrapped seaside cottages, bungalows and Balinese-style beach houses.

There is a three-mile beach, overwater spa, freshwater pool, tennis courts, a PADI dive centre, plus the chance to go wakeboarding, water-skiing or sea kayaking.

Breakfast baskets can be delivered to your door or walk over to The Great House, which serves breakfast, brunch, lunch and dinner with menus changed daily. Alternatively, go for al fresco dining at Tiki Bar & Beach Grill.

Nassau & Paradise Island

Vivacious Nassau, the modern metropolitan and cultural capital of The Bahamas, lies on New Providence, with Paradise Island only a short drive over Nassau Harbour's bridges

HOTELS AND VENUES: NASSAU

The biggest hotel news to emerge from The Bahamas recently has been the hotly anticipated opening of mega resort, **Baha Mar**. The third and final hotel on the Cable Beach complex in Nassau – the ultra-luxe **Rosewood Baha Mar** – joins the modern 1,800-room **Grand Hyatt** and lifestyle resort 299-room **SLS Baha Mar**.

The £3.3bn development now boasts more than 2,300 rooms, suites and villas; 40 restaurants and bars; casino, marine park, spas, shops, an 18-hole Jack Nicklaus-designed Signature Royal Blue golf course, and a vast range of light and airy meeting spaces.

The Convention, Arts and Entertainment Center has 18,500m² of indoor and outdoor space, including three nautically inspired ballrooms, a 2,000-seat entertainment venue and 16 meeting rooms.

Additionally, the 237-room **Rosewood Baha Mar** features a pillarless ballroom for 600 guests theatre-style.

The Rum Room, lined with premium rums and fine wines, is good for intimate dinners for up to 22 people. **The Rooftop Pavilion** at SLS has views of the sea and is ideal for daytime meetings or a cocktail reception for 300 guests, while its **Bungalow Pool Terrace** can accommodate

300 for a banquet or 600 for a reception.

Also part of Baha Mar, the all-inclusive **Meliá Nassau Beach Resort** has completed a £15m makeover. The 694-room property has seven dining venues and four bars, plus five meeting rooms that can accommodate up to 1,200 guests.

Experience a new level of luxury at **Sandals Royal Bahamian Spa Resort & Offshore Island** with 404 rooms, 10 dining options and Sandals' bespoke Butler Elite service, providing guests staying in top-tiered suites with flawless personalised attention.

The **Fred Kassner Conference Centre** welcomes 540 guest's banquet-style and 1,000 theatre-style. Evenings can be spent catching a boat to an exotic offshore island to enjoy a Caribbean seafood dinner overlooking the ocean.

Nearby on Cable Beach, Superclubs **Breezes Resort & Spa** features 391 rooms



and five meeting rooms, including a ballroom with space for 500 people theatre-style.

A classic option in downtown Nassau is the 288-room **British Colonial Hilton**. The hotel has meeting space for groups of 400 people and poolside receptions for 250.

HOTELS AND VENUES: PARADISE ISLAND

Meanwhile, over the bridge is the 3,400-room **Atlantis Paradise Island**. It features the largest open-air marine habitat in the world, complemented by a range of memorable guest experiences, gourmet dining, a world-class casino and five miles of magnificent white sand beaches.

The resort offers five distinct hotels in which to stay, from **The Royal** to **The Beach** and **The Coral** (which has been recently renovated), as well as luxury properties, **The Cove** and **The Reef**.

For meetings, planners are spoilt for choice. Atlantis boasts 27,870m² of indoor and outdoor meeting space, highlighted



Time for a swim? The beach at Sandals Royal Bahamian

by the 4,645m² Imperial Ballroom and 2,322m² Grand Ballroom. With 60 meeting rooms, Atlantis can accommodate groups of 15 to 4,000.

The Ocean Club, a Four Seasons Resort, which featured prominently in the remake of James Bond's *Casino Royale*, has Versailles-inspired gardens and a five-mile white-sand beach. There are 107 rooms and more than 2,000m² of events space.

Warwick Paradise Island is a 250-room adults-only all-inclusive hotel. The property has a small conference room for 12 guests, making it more suitable for incentive-based itineraries.

Also worth a mention is the 379-room all-inclusive **RIU Palace Paradise Island**, which received a major makeover and became an adults-only property.

Comfort Suites Paradise Island has 223 bedrooms and two small event spaces ideal for classroom-style meetings of around 20 people. The perk for guests staying here is having access to all facilities at nearby **Atlantis Paradise Island**.

ACTIVITIES

Powerboat Adventures provides treasure hunts, 'survivor'-type challenges and themed events, or can simply whisk up to 100 thrill-seekers away on its powerboats to a nearby private isle. A simple island cookout or a full banquet can be prepared for your guests.

Alternatively, board a replica pirate ship and enter the world of bloodthirsty pirates at the interactive **Pirates of Nassau Museum**.

FOOD FOCUS

Experience the atmosphere of a traditional Bahamian Fish Fry at **Arawak Cay** in Nassau. This seafood paradise makes everything from conch salad and peas 'n' rice to grilled lobster tails and fried snapper. There's a chance you'll catch a live Junkanoo performance too.

The newest and hottest restaurant opening at Atlantis Paradise Island is **Fish**, where you can expect Michelin-starred food with a focus on sustainable sourcing. In fact, diners can go fishing for lionfish –

an invasive species that is decimating reefs in The Bahamas – before cooking and serving it up for dinner.

At Baha Mar, a superb fine dining option is sushi restaurant **Katsuya**, which has a sleek and sultry ambience created by design icon, Philippe Starck.

Regatta food hall ticks the box for international dishes and, for an outdoor experience, head to **Palms Cafe**. For small bites, visit piano bar **The Blue Note** for live jazz and cocktails.

Tru Bahamian Food Tours provides a food and cocktail pairing tour through old Nassau, while groups of six to 10 people can attend a cooking class with Graycliff Hotel and Restaurant's executive chef at the **Graycliff Culinary Academy**.

Luciano's of Chicago dishes up Italian cuisine in Nassau and can host private events for groups as small as 15 people and as large as 400.

The outside area overlooks the harbour and can welcome up to 250 guests.

Seafood dishes are served at **Sapodilla**, which has capacity for up to 250 diners.



Meeting Professionals

The Destination Management Companies in The Bahamas are highly experienced and provide myriad ideas and services to deliver your best-ever event. Every detail can be delivered to budget and perfection. The Group Destination Services team can advise you on the most appropriate planners (DMC) for your needs.

Grand Bahama Island

Lying just 55 miles from the Florida coast, Grand Bahama Island is one of the more northern islands in The Bahamas. Freeport, the main city, and nearby tourist hotspot Lucaya, offer non-stop activity and entertainment

HOTELS AND VENUES

At **Lighthouse Pointe** at Grand Lucayan, authenticity meets the ease and affordability of an all-inclusive resort.

The Grand Lucayan conference centre has 14 meetings room, many with ocean views. The events team often provide post-meeting rum tastings and a poolside Junkanoo event. The hotel itself has 196 rooms.

At **Pelican Bay Hotel** in Lucaya there are 186 rooms and more than 2,800m² of event space. The largest room can host 150 delegates theatre-style. Other meeting hotels include the 73-room **Old Bahama**

Life's a beach
Turquoise waters
beyond Lucayan
National Park



Candlelit evening
Lighthouse Pointe at
Grand Lucayan



Bay & Marina, and Viva Wyndham Fortuna Beach, which has 274 rooms and three meeting rooms that can be used for cocktail receptions for 120 to 450 people.

ACTIVITIES

There are plenty of activities on the island, including parasailing, Jeep and Segway tours. Go horseback riding in the sea with **Pinetree Stables** or visit the **Garden of the Groves**, a beautiful botanical garden. **Unexo** offers swimming with dolphins and sharks dives.

FOOD FOCUS

Port Lucaya Marketplace is a five-acre peninsula plaza offering dining, shopping and entertainment.

Sample local Bahamian street food such as coconut French toast, roast conch and jerk chicken.

Available for exclusive hire is the **Flying Fish GastroBar** in Lucaya, where you'll find a wide range of exotic seafood dishes such as piri piri shrimp and tempura tuna.



A major sailing destination and home to the oh-so-cute swimming pigs, The Exumas are a chain of 365 islands. Great Exuma is the largest and is joined to Little Exuma by a small bridge

HOTELS AND VENUES

In the middle of The Exumas chain of islands is Sandals-owned **Fowl Cay**, a private island retreat that sleeps up to 30 people across six villas. Guests will feel truly spoiled here as each villa comes with its own motorboat.

Personal butler service is available at the 249-room **Sandals Emerald Bay Golf, Tennis and Spa Resort** on Great Exuma.

The resort has 11 restaurants, a pub and three meeting rooms for 12 to 500 delegates. Nearby **Grand Isle Resort and Spa** has 78 villas and 500m² of meeting space.

The new owners of **Peace & Plenty Hotel** in George Town have recently completed renovations and the resort now features 32 waterfront rooms, a pool, two bars and a dock along Elizabeth Harbour.

Two other hotel options in George Town are the 55-room **Hideaways at Palm Bay** and the more intimate seven-villa **February Point Resort**, which has a spa, tennis courts and a small conference room for 20 people.

ACTIVITIES

You can snorkel **Thunderball Grotto**, an underwater cave featured in two James Bond films, or rent a Boston Whaler or catamaran at Minns in George Town. Visit the **Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park** and swim with the famous swimming pigs on Big Major

Cay, or with turtles at Hooper's Bay. The Greg Norman-designed 18-hole golf course at **Sandals Emerald Bay Golf, Tennis and Spa Resort** will excite golfing fans; thrill-seekers can go kitesurfing with **Exuma Kitesurfing** or a quad-biking island tour with **Island Routes Caribbean Adventures**.

FOOD FOCUS

Don't miss **Chat 'n' Chill** on Stocking Island where you'll find music, island drinks and a hog roast served Bahamian style every Sunday. Learn how to prepare conch salad and feed your scraps to the stingrays. For a low-key, authentic and memorable experience try the **Fish Fry**, located just west of George Town. This collection of small restaurants creates some of the best food on the island.

For something a little more fancy overlooking the sea, book **The Beacon Restaurant** at Lumina Point Resort & Spa on Stocking Island.



Big Major Cay
A swimming pig

Eleuthera & Harbour Island

Quaint colonial settlements, pineapple plantations, surfing and isolated coves can be found on Eleuthera. To the north sits Harbour Island, renowned for pink beaches



Pink Sands Resort
Dinner on the beach
(above) and Frangipani's
pool deck (below)

HOTELS AND VENUES

In Gregory Town, **The Cove Eleuthera Hotel** has 57 bedrooms and 165m² of event space. Private dinners and events can also be held on the beach. Other hotel options include the high-end **French Leave Resort** with 14 villas and **Pineapple Fields Resort** with 32 rooms.

Perfect for incentives is **Bahama House** on Harbour Island, operated by Eleven Experience. If booked on a buyout basis, groups are able to use a 35ft Scorpion RIB, which comes with a captain. The property can sleep 22 people, based on couples sharing.

Planners should also consider **Pink Sands Resort**, which offers 27 cottages and villas, two restaurants and bars and meeting spaces that can cater for everything from small affairs up to events for 100 people.

The resort offers a three-night Corporate Retreat Package featuring team-building activities such as cooking and mixology classes, waterskiing and boat charters.

Following a major renovation, the 38-room **Coral Sands Hotel** unveiled new private beachfront cottages and an infinity pool. Nearby **Valentine's Resort and Marina** has 41 rooms and meeting space for up to 30 delegates.



ACTIVITIES

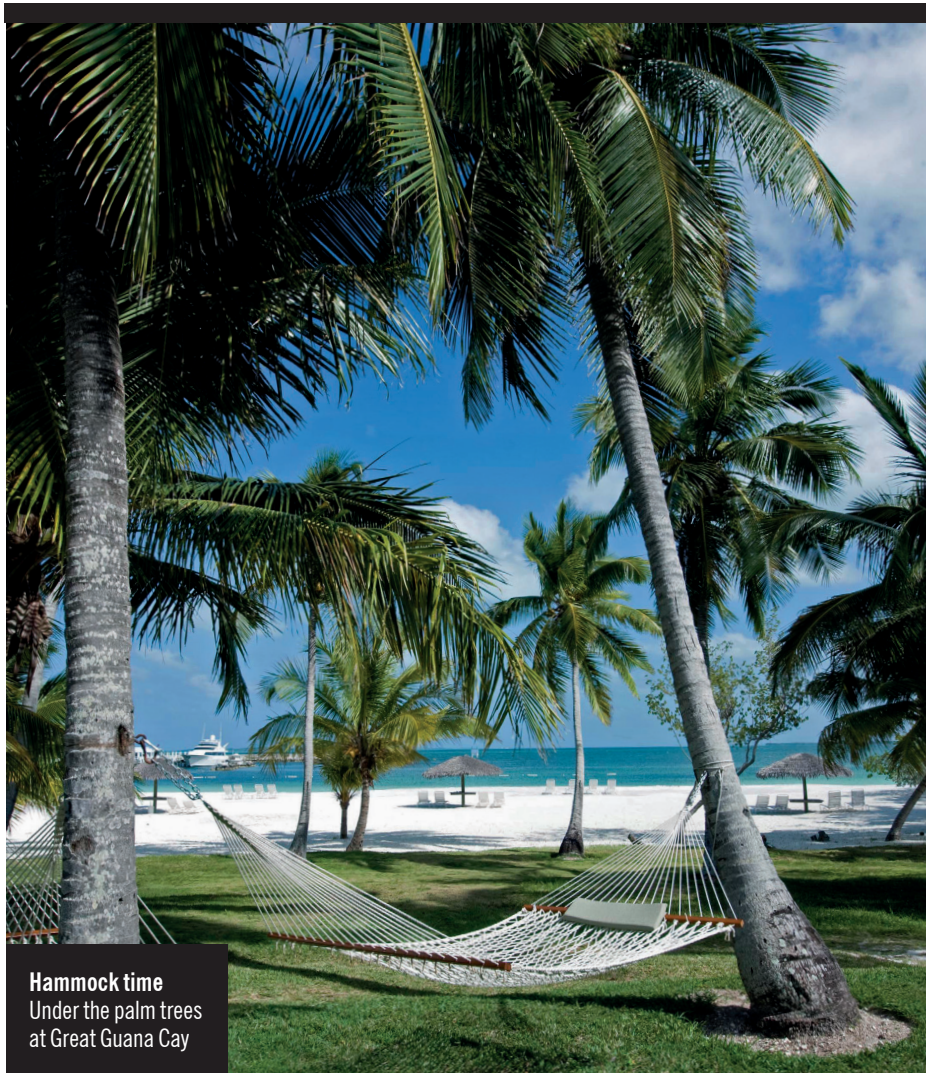
Pass by **The Glass Window Bridge** where you'll see the dark navy Atlantic on one side and

the turquoise-green waters of the Exuma Sound on the other. Explore the villages of the island: Tarpum Bay and its fish fry and Gregory Town and its pineapple plantations. Visit the **Queen's Baths**, small natural tide pools formed in the rock on the Atlantic side. Go diving with the team at **Ocean Fox Cotton Bay** based at Cape Eleuthera Resort & Marina or book watersports with **Bahamas Out Islands**

Adventures on Eleuthera and **Valentine's Resort and Marina** on Harbour Island.

FOOD FOCUS

Tippy's, across the road from Pineapple Fields, is a beach bar with an eclectic decor, live music and coconut shrimp and Bahamian bouillabaisse on the menu. The **1648 island restaurant** at French Leave Resort ticks the box for a sophisticated seafood dining experience. If you take a trip to Gregory Town and its surrounding pineapple plantations, stop by **Thompson Bakery** for a pineapple or coconut tart.



Hammock time
Under the palm trees
at Great Guana Cay

The Abacos

On the 120-mile-long chain of islands that make up The Abacos you'll find the iconic candy-striped Lighthouse on Elbow Cay and charming colonial towns on Green Turtle Cay. The islands are renowned as both a sailing and bird-watching paradise

HOTELS AND VENUES

For small groups, **The Delphi Club** at Rolling Harbour is an elegant yet informal luxury eight-room hotel and fishing lodge in a picturesque location with a private house-party atmosphere.

At Marsh Harbour, the **Abaco Beach Resort & Boat Harbour** has 72 oceanfront rooms and can host 650 delegates in a marquee overlooking the marina. The structure can be sectioned off into thirds for smaller gatherings. There is also a 2,300m² lawn, plus two further event spaces that can host 190 and 160 people respectively.

Expect nightly beach bonfires at the **Bahama Beach Club**, which has 152 rooms and a beachfront pavilion for 250 people. Seaside 'event tents' can be erected for smaller groups.

Treasure Cay Beach, Marina & Golf Resort has 93 rooms and three event spaces for 50 to 220 people. Smaller meeting hotel options include the 25-room **Hope Town Harbour Lodge**, **Green Turtle Club** with 31 rooms and **The Abaco Club on Winding Bay**, which has 29 rooms.

ACTIVITIES

Abaco Wild Horse Preserve, set in a 4,000-acre pine forest, offers visitors the chance to see an endangered breed of horse, followed by a picnic and a dip in a beautiful blue swimming hole.

Rent sailboats or motorised catamarans with or without a skipper with **Dream Yacht Charter**, **Sunsail** and **The Moorings**, all located in Marsh Harbour. Book diving and adventure tours with **Brendal.com**, one of the most comprehensive excursion operators. Make a short stop at **Abaco Neem**, a farm that harvests the fruit and leaves from the medicinal Neem Tree to produce an assortment of natural products.

FOOD FOCUS

An islet off Great Abaco, Great Guana Cay is a seven-mile-long island with secluded beaches, grassy dunes and only 100 inhabitants, plus a few roosters. At weekends, visitors can expect all-day pig roasts at **Nipper's Beach Bar & Grill**.

Andros

The largest island in the Bahamian archipelago, Andros is home to one of the world's largest barrier reefs and is THE place to go snorkelling or diving

HOTELS AND VENUES

Aside from the ultra-exclusive private island, **Kamalame Cay** (see page 11), a more affordable option could be the all-inclusive **Small Hope Bay Lodge**, which has 21 beachfront cottages. **Tiamo Resort** on South Andros has 13 rooms, plus 700m² of meeting space on offer.

ACTIVITIES

Go swimming at the **Blue Holes National Park** or visit the **Androsia** factory to learn how to make your own batik bag. **Small Hope Bay Lodge** can organise an array of watersports including bonefishing and diving with sharks. Andros has eight national parks that can all be explored on foot or by bike.



Bonefishing
Organise a trip
with Small Hope
Bay Lodge

FOOD FOCUS

A foodie highlight is the four-day **Andros Crab Fest** in June each year. Highlights include crabs cooked 101 ways, a culinary contest and rake 'n' scrape music. Dine on a jetty at **Brigadiers**, where you can sample authentic Bahamian cuisine such as grilled crawfish and cracked conch. Expect gourmet experiences from **Kamalame Cay** and **Tiamo Resorts**.

Bimini

Known as Ernest Hemingway's favourite escape, Bimini is the closest Bahamian island to the US. Seaplane flights from Fort Lauderdale take 30 minutes

HOTELS AND VENUES

Hilton at Resorts World Bimini boasts 305 rooms (including 18 suites) and 23 meeting rooms. **The Marina Pavilion** features floor-to-ceiling glass windows

and can host 500 people theatre-style. For after-meeting drinks, head to the hotel's rooftop bar **Monkey Business**, which has



Beach cabana
Hilton at Resorts
World Bimini

an infinity pool, a 10,000 square-foot Casino and views of Bimini Bay.

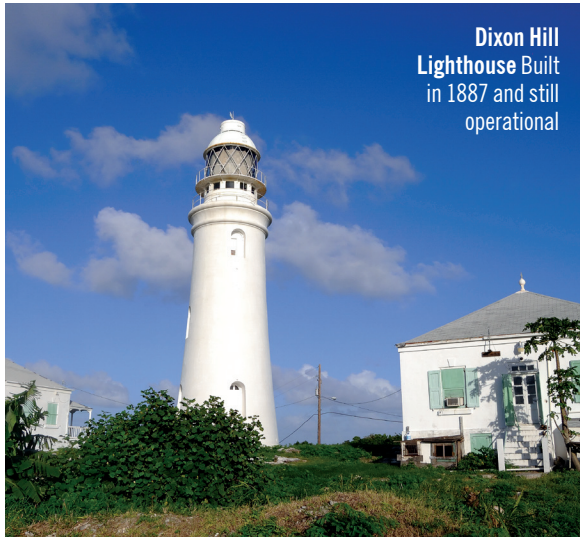
ACTIVITIES

Snorkel with wild dolphins with **Bimini Undersea**. On South Bimini visit **Bimini Shark lab**, a research facility that offers daily tours and shark excursions.

FOOD FOCUS

The Tides fine dining restaurant at Hilton at Resorts World Bimini serves Italian fare, including seafood dishes and wood-fired pizzas. At breakfast try Bimini Bread French Toast and for dinner try the Lobster Truffle Mac & Cheese. **Bimini Big Game Club** offers casual waterfront dining.

San Salvador



Dixon Hill Lighthouse Built in 1887 and still operational

The story goes that San Salvador is where Christopher Columbus landed in 1492. The plantation ruins and shipwrecks are set amidst scores of beaches and lakes

HOTELS AND VENUES

Watling's Restaurant at the 236-room **Club Med Bahamas Columbus Isle** can host around 70 people for events. For groups of 20 or less, pick **San Sal Resort**

and **Spa**, also known as The Sands Hotel, which has 12 beachfront cottages.

ACTIVITIES

Go kitesurfing on the shallow lagoons with the **Guanahani Beach Club** or **Club Med Columbus Isle** kitesurfing centres, or opt for a kayaking adventure at **Pigeon Creek**. Visit **Great Lake Preserve** and head to the lighthouse at **Dixon Hill**.

FOOD FOCUS

Entertain your guests with native food, music and beach volleyball at the **Fish Fry** at Graham's Harbour or, with advance booking, **Riding Rock Resort & Marina** has a pleasant dining room for group dinners.

Long Island

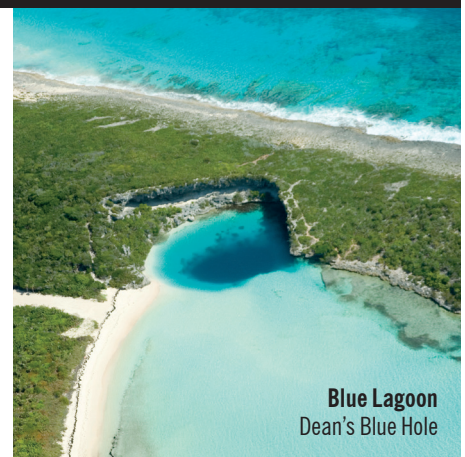
Long Island stands out for its dramatic cliffs and world famous diving spot, Dean's Blue Hole, one of the deepest blue holes in the world. The island is perfect for anglers, divers or boaters, featuring brilliant coral reefs and serene beaches

HOTELS AND VENUES

Cape Santa Maria Beach Resort's 40 beachfront bungalows and villas are set on a glorious white sand beach. The **Winter Haven** is located in the capital Clarence Town and has 15 rooms; it's also 10 minutes from Dean's Blue Hole.

ACTIVITIES

Explore the limestone caves in Hamilton and go to the **Columbus Monument** to admire the 360-degree views from the top of the cliff. Hire a boat to visit **Sandy Cay** – one of the locations from the film *Pirates of the Caribbean*.



Blue Lagoon
Dean's Blue Hole

FOOD FOCUS

Chez Pierre, part of Cape Santa Maria Beach Resort, is an oceanfront restaurant offering Continental and Caribbean cuisine. **Stella Maris Resort** cooks up Bahamian fare with a rum collection at its **Moonshine Beach Bar & Grill**.



OF THE BEST INCENTIVES

A SELECTION OF UNUSUAL INCENTIVES TO GIVE GROUPS A MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE

SWIMMING WITH PIGS

Snapping a selfie with the hashtag #swimmingpigs is a must-do experience in The Exumas. It's a mystery as to how our porcine friends got there, but Big Major Cay – aka Pig Beach – has become home to a group of pigs and piglets.

As guests approach the island by boat, the pigs wade out to greet them, hoping for a snack or two. This excursion can be combined with a trip to The Exuma Cays Land and Sea National Park, an ecological preserve and wildlife refuge, where guests can visit rare Bahamian rock iguanas.

A private powerboat charter with Powerboat Adventures can be organised to whizz guests from Nassau and around The Exumas. Swimming with pigs is also available on Rose Island, Spanish Wells on Eleuthera and The Abacos. Excursion operators include:

[The Exumas – Harboursafaris.com](http://TheExumas-Harboursafaris.com)

Powerboatadventures.com

[The Abacos – brendal.com](http://TheAbacos-brendal.com)

[Rose Island – sandytoesbahamas.com](http://RoseIsland-sandytoesbahamas.com)

JUNKANOO

A trip to The Bahamas wouldn't be complete without a Junkanoo experience. The 200-year-old national cultural festival – celebrated in spectacular street parades – has been expertly recreated by Educulture Bahamas for corporate groups.



Swimming pigs
Pig Beach in
The Exumas

A typical Junkanoo workshop includes costume-making, performers dancing to the beat of goatskin drums and cowbells, and a presentation on the history and culture of the annual festival. To inject an evening event with a party atmosphere, a Junkanoo 'rush' can be organised to serenade and escort guests to dinner.

Educulturebahamas.com

SUBS

Zoom effortlessly around coral gardens and steer past tropical fish on self-contained banana-yellow motorcycles

under the sea. These SUBs have a large 'bubble', or dome, to keep guests' heads dry and to enable them to breathe without a need for snorkels.

An alternative underwater adventure is SNUBA – a cross between snorkelling and scuba diving – where swimmers are equipped with a regulator, mask and fins while their air supply floats on a raft at the surface. It's a perfect way to explore a shallow coral reef or wreck without any certification or experience. Diving is also available.

Stuartcove.com

PEOPLE TO PEOPLE TEA PARTY EXPERIENCE

Enjoy bush teas and cold 'Switcha' lemonade, live music, watch a fashion show from Bahamian designers and mingle with locals while enjoying sandwiches and pastries at the historic Government House in Nassau, hosted by distinguished Bahamian women.

bahamas.com/people-people-experience-tea-party

PRIVATE ISLAND DAY TRIP

Shake up your conference by relocating for the day to a private, uninhabited island. On idyllic Pearl Island, 250 delegates can meet in the courtyard of a lighthouse, which guests can later climb. The Ocean View Terrace can cater for a 200-person reception, while the Main House can take 50.

Visitors can also enjoy white sand beaches, a grill restaurant and three bars, plus watersports such as paddleboarding and kayaking. To get there, parties of ten or fewer can hop in a speedboat for a ten-minute ride from Nassau. For larger groups, the island has two catamarans with capacity for 60 people each.

Another private island day trip close to Nassau is Sandy Toes on Rose Island, which can accommodate groups of up to 300 people. Activities include beach games, tubing and beach-side massages.

PearlIslandbahamas.com

Sandytoesbahamas.com

DIVING WITH HAMMERHEAD SHARKS, DOLPHINS AND SEA LIONS

From December to April each year, great hammerhead sharks can be seen off the shores of Bimini. Neal Watson's Bimini Scuba Centre runs the Great Hammerhead



Safari, a day-long diving expedition for a group of 14 people.

For non-divers, a wild dolphin snorkel could be a more suitable option. Take a 20-minute scenic boat ride through historic Nassau harbour on a double-decker catamaran to private Blue Lagoon Island to hug, feed and swim with dolphins. Encounters with California Sea Lions and stingrays are also available.

Biminiscubacenter.com

Dolphinencounters.com

LUCAYAN NATIONAL PARK KAYAK & NATURE TOUR

Home to one of the largest underwater cave systems in the world, the 40-acre Lucayan National Park on Grand Bahama Island can be explored in a two-man kayak. The 90-minute guided tour includes lunch on a private beach and allows time for swimming and beach combing. A guided nature walk and visit to the caves can also be arranged.

grandbahamanaturetours.com

"It has a wow-factor"

Two planners share their experiences and tips on organising corporate events in The Bahamas



STEVE WALLBRIDGE
Business development
Manager
In2Events

"We recently placed a client in The Bahamas for a five-day residential conference and incentive trip for 80 people,"

says Wallbridge. "The group stayed at Sandals Royal Bahamian in Nassau and the itinerary consisted of a mixture of meetings and activities.

"Among the activities were beachfront BBQs, Jeep safaris, quad biking and a catamaran tour. The highlight was the final night – dinner on the beach with local music and performers. It was a great way to end a brilliant trip.

"I'd highly recommend The Bahamas as a C&I destination. It has a real wow-factor with some once-in-a-lifetime opportunities for groups of all sizes. The capital

Nassau has a great vibe, with something for everyone.

"For something more remote we recommend Exuma, a short 40-minute flight from Nassau. The waters around Exuma are incredibly warm and the island has some of the most picturesque beaches we have ever seen."

"I'd highly recommend The Bahamas as a C&I destination. It has a real wow-factor with some once-in-a-lifetime opportunities for groups of all sizes"



SALLY YATES
Project director
Black Tomato Agency

"The Bahamas is a Black Tomato Agency favourite," says Yates. "With more than 700 islands and close to 2,500 cays, most of them

uninhabited, there are options to cater to any budget, as well as endless opportunities to privatise and personalise.

"The full opening of the long-anticipated Baha Mar resort has finally taken place. The Rosewood hotel, in particular, is the headline draw for UK groups but SLS shouldn't be overlooked as its rooftop pavilion accommodates 300 people with views of the resort.

"For a touch of old-school glamour, our favourite is Harbour Island. The boutique 'barefoot luxury' accommodation means it's perfect for smaller groups who

are after something special and aren't in search of all the amenities of a resort. Its stunning pink sand beaches, pastel-coloured beach houses, plethora of outdoor activities and top-notch restaurants more than make up for any perceived shortcomings."

"With more than 700 islands... there are options to cater to any budget, as well as endless opportunities to privatise and personalise"



SLS BAHAMAR

SOMETHING LOVELY'S STARTED

SLS Hotels takes its standards of style, luxury and service to an exotic new locale with SLS Baha Mar. Combining a five-star hotel experience with elements of creativity and community, SLS Baha Mar is an irresistible Bahamian retreat for the most discerning global traveler. Located in Nassau, SLS Baha Mar features 299 rooms, world-class décor, and unforgettable dining and nightlife experiences.

FOR ENQUIRIES, CONTACT **JOSEPHINE SOMERS**
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