

LANGUAGE English is the official language of the Bahamas.

NOTES

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PORT EXPLORER & SHOPPING GUIDE

Nassau BAHAMAS

GENERAL INFORMATION In 1684 the Spanish sailed into a protected cove on the north coast of the island of New Providence. They came ashore and entered the small village of Charles Town. There was not much to see, however the settlement was English so the Spanish burned it to the ground then promptly sailed away. The village was slowly rebuilt and in 1695 it was renamed in honor of English King William III of the protestant Dutch House of Orange – Nassau. The small town was strategically located near some of the busiest waters in the New World...which was quite advantageous...for pirates.

By the early 1700s Thomas Barrow and Benjamin Hornigold were two of the most notorious pirates in the West Indies. They had established Nassau as their “Pirate Republic”. This declaration attracted from throughout the Caribbean and the Americas every cut-throat sailor that ever craved the excitement and rewards that only a life of pillage and plunder can bring. The town was under the control of pirates to such an extent that the magistrate was a man by the name of Edward Teach...the notorious Blackbeard. The English Crown was forced to act. Nassau had to be retaken.

Captain Woodes Rogers was appointed by King George I as Governor General of Nassau and the Bahamas. His mission was to pardon, capture, kill or drive out the pirates in Nassau. This was a clever move on the part of the King, for Woodes Rogers was himself a pirate. By stringing them from the nearest yardarm, hanging them in irons and public floggings (not to mention the presence of four mighty English ships of war) Nassau was cleared of buccaneers. This was only the beginning of the town’s colorful history.

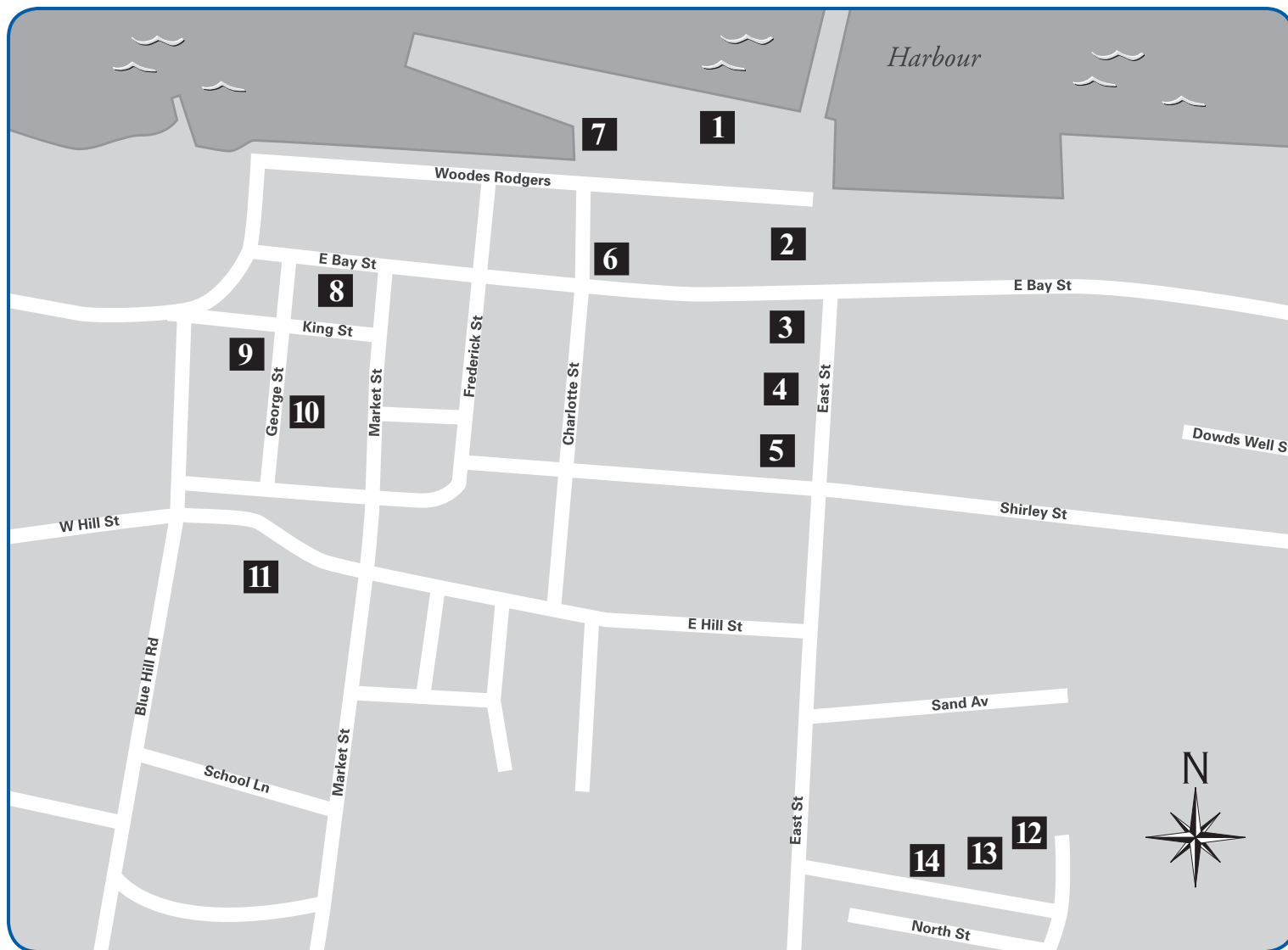
Today as the capital of the Bahamas, Nassau welcomes visitors from all over the world.

HISTORY Throughout its history the Bahamas have often served as a base of operations for a wide variety of iniquitous scallywags who have been hell bent on making their fortune by fair means or foul. There is a long list of notorious ne’er-do-wells dating back over the past 300 years. From pirates to peccantable playboys, from exiled kings to kingpins of the underworld ... the scandalous, scheming and scurrilous... there have been many real life characters that seemed to have stepped from the screen of a Hollywood blockbuster, or better yet, a classic black and white gangster movie. For decades these islands have drawn to them the naive and the neophyte as preverbal moths to the flame of the opportunist and the odious... men whose motivation was the money to be made by supplying the nefarious desires of a certain segment of the reprobates in American society.

A “who’s who” of pirates made the Bahamas home during the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Men like Captain Kid, Henry Morgan and the dreaded Blackbeard himself used the islands to launch their attacks against Spanish treasure ships and any other vessel they could overtake or run aground. By 1700 Nassau didn’t just have pirates in town. Nassau was a pirate town.

Following the defeat of the English in the American War for Independence thousands of colonists still loyal to the Crown headed to the Bahamas, many of whom brought their slaves with them. In the 1830s the abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire forced the islanders to seek other means of livelihood. Countless salvage companies were formed and they picked over hundred of ships that ran aground upon





PLACES OF INTEREST

the Bahamas' dangerous reefs and shores. The ships were often deceived into wrecking by the very salvage companies that rushed in to scoop up the plunder.

During the American Civil War the Bahamas were used by southern blockade-runners helping to supply the Confederacy while selling its cotton to Europe. It was rum-runners during Prohibition with their contraband of whisky stacked all along Bay Street waiting to be loaded aboard boats at Prince George Warf. The "mob" had arrived. Like Havana and Las Vegas, gambling in the Bahamas was wrapped up with organized crime. In the 70s and 80s the mob was joined by international cartels that used the islands as a base from which to flood America with the cocaine and marijuana.

From its beginning as a "Pirate Republic" through the old days of Confederate blockade runners and Prohibition bootleggers, Nassau and the Bahamas have developed into one of the premier family vacations destinations in the world. With local people that welcome visitors, warm weather, cool off shore breezes, refreshing ocean waters and pristine white beaches. Though the

buccaneers are long gone they knew a great place when they found it.

NASSAU PLACES OF INTEREST

1 Prince George Wharf was named for the Prince of Wales, later to be crowned as George V. In years past the wharf was a simple construction. Today it is one of the largest cruise ship berths in the world.

2 Rawson Square is adjacent to the cruise ship pier. It is a good starting point for visitors to get their bearings. The square is named in honor of Sir R.W. Rawson who served as governor in the 1960s.

3 Parliament House, constructed in the early 1800s, it is across the street heading south from Rawson Square. With a statue of Queen Victoria gracing the front, it remains a beautiful colonial style building.

4 The Supreme Court is next in line as visitors continue south. It was built in the 1920s.

5 The Library is just beyond the Supreme Court building. The library holds many of the historical records of the Bahamas. The building was constructed as the town's jail in the late 1700s.

6 Bay Street is the tourist center of downtown Nassau. Today it is all about shopping however at one time the men that ran Bay Street were the undisputed power brokers of the islands.

7 The Straw Market is a collection of vendors offering a varied assortment of hand woven bags, baskets and hats. Wood carvings and other tourist nick-knacks are available.

8 George and Market Streets both head south from Bay Street. Along these two streets are a number of beautiful and historic buildings and churches dating as far back as the late 1700s.

9 The Pirates of Nassau Museum tells the history of many of the famous pirates that sailed the waters of the Bahamas and made Nassau their home.

10 Balcony House was built in the late 1700s. It is the oldest wooden home remaining in Nassau. The interior has been restored with authentic furnishings and artifacts. Constructed in the Tropical Colonial style, the home has welcomed many distinguished guests over the past two centuries.

11 Government House was the political seat of the appointed British Governor from 1801 through 1973. The building was designed in the classic Roman style. Overlooking Nassau from Mount Fitzwilliam, Government House is easily recognizable by the statue of Christopher Columbus erected in front of the entrance.

12 The Queen's Staircase was carved into the hillside by slave labor in the late 1700s. The purpose of the 66 stairs was to give British soldiers access to Fort Fincastle.

13 Fort Fincastle was built in 1793. It is not a large fortification however from the walls the views of Nassau and the surrounding waters are excellent.

14 The Water Tower is 126 feet tall and rises over 200 feet above sea level. Visitors can climb the stairs or, for a small fee, ride up in the elevator. Understandably, the views from this vantage point are great.

SHORE EXCURSIONS To make the most of your visit to Nassau, we suggest you take one of our organized Shore Excursions. For information concerning your options, content and pricing, consult your Shore Excursion Brochure or contact the Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, be advised to take only items that are necessary and secure any valuables onboard.

LOCAL CUSTOMS Bargaining: Prices are fixed in restaurants and most stores. Friendly bargaining at the Straw Market is common.

Tipping: A 10-15 % tip is customary at restaurants.

Local Cuisine: Traditional cuisine in the Bahamas is based on fresh sea food. Many of the recipes have been influenced by South American and West African dishes. Among the many favorites are: Baked Stuffed Crab, that combines cooked crab meat with spiced bread crumbs and onions sautéed in butter, salt and pepper. The mixture is spooned back into the crab shell and baked. Try some fresh lemon juice sprinkled on top. Conch Chowder combines cubed conch meat with tomatoes, green peppers, onions, celery, carrots and potatoes then slowly stewed. Conch Fritters are a deep fried batter made by combining cubed conch meat with eggs, onions, green peppers, celery, salt and flour. Guava Duff is a rolled dough pastry with sliced guava on the inside. It is baked and covered with a sauce made from butter, vanilla, sugar and condensed milk.

Drink Specialties: When people think of the Bahamas the first thing that comes to mind is rarely beer. Though is next to impossible to find outside of the islands, Kalik beer has a very good reputation and is well spoken of by beer lovers. Just to prove the point, the International Institute for Beer Quality Selections has awarded Kalik numerous Monde Selection Gold Medals. Switcher is another popular drink in the islands. It combines coconut water, limes, milk and gin.

SHOPPING FACILITIES Bay Street, close to the docks, is Nassau's main tourist shopping area. International stores are represented as well as shops offering locally produced merchandise. Deals can still be found, however most prices reflect the fact that this is primarily a tourist destination. Bay Street is also famous for its colorful Straw Market. There are numerous cafes and restaurants all along the street.

LOCAL CURRENCY The Bahamian dollar (\$B) is the islands' currency. The Bahamian Dollar is on par with the U.S. Dollar. U.S. dollars and major credit cards are widely accepted.

POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE FACILITIES There is a Post Office located in the cruise ship terminal, known as Festival Place. The main Post Office is located on top of the hill of Parliament Street.

Place a call with your personal calling card using the following access code:

AT&T: 1.800.872.2881

MCI: 1.800.888.8000

TOURIST INFORMATION There is a Tourist Information Center also located in Festival Place. The Ministry of Tourism is located on Rawson Square, across from the cruise dock at Prince George Wharf.

TRANSPORTATION Taxis and mini buses travel throughout the island. Nassau is easily walked and the cruise docks are close to downtown.