

# Sitting pretty

Nassau Paradise Island is worth more than a quick shore excursion, discovers Jeannine Williamson

It's one of the most popular cruise ports in the Caribbean, capital of the 700-plus islands of the Bahamas, and just a stone's throw from the Florida coast – but if you think that's all there is to Nassau, you've barely scratched the surface.

Perched on the 21-mile-long New Providence, and connected by bridge to Paradise Island – home to the mega-resort of Atlantis Paradise Island – it's one of 30 inhabited islands that made up this one-time British colony from 1718 to 1973.

That legacy – along with swashbuckling piracy – has shaped much of what visitors see today. A statue of Queen Victoria looks out imperiously from the front of the pastel-pink buildings of Parliament Square, islanders drive on the left, red letterboxes line the pavements and police officers in white uniforms and

pith helmets stand happily posing for photos.

Most cruise passengers don't make it beyond the souvenir-filled Straw Market and blingy tax-free jewellery shops lining Bay Street, but there's more to it than that, as *Travel Weekly* and a host of UK agents discovered on this fam trip.

## COLONIAL CHARM

With its beautiful beaches and impossibly blue waters, it's no surprise this sunny destination has been used as the backdrop for several James Bond films – including the iconic scene in *Casino Royale* where Daniel Craig emerged from the sea.

The beaches are undoubtedly key attractions. To tempt clients further there are several new accommodation options, such as sophisticated Albany in southern Nassau, where the blue trunk



**When a hotel is used as a backdrop to a James Bond film, you know you won't be disappointed!**

Bond scene was shot.

Beyond the beach, visitors can discover old colonial architecture and museums charting the history of piracy and the colourful annual Junkanoo festival.

Foodies will enjoy sampling the multi-cultural cuisine, which features many a dish centred on the ubiquitous conch (pronounced conk). As an added extra, the large pink shells that the sea snails make their homes are great souvenirs.

Robbie Megson, assistant

store manager at Kuoni Solihull, says: "It really surprised and impressed me. I loved that modern, impressive hotels and resorts combine with historic and authentic charms and flavours of the colonial Caribbean past.

"From fun-packed water parks to the unashamed luxury of five-star celebrity favourites, it's perfect for everyone."

The variety of accommodation was a hit with Travel Counsellors' Lizzie Adamson-Brown too. She says: "I was pleasantly surprised by the variety of accommodation on offer. My favourite has to be the One&Only Ocean Club, it really took my breath away. When a hotel is used as a backdrop to a James Bond film, you know you won't be disappointed!"

As for the practicalities, British Airways flies four times a week from Heathrow on one of its new 777-300s, offering greater levels



**SAMPLE PRODUCT**

Kuoni has a week at Atlantis Paradise Island, from £2,440, for May 2017. [kuoni.co.uk](http://kuoni.co.uk)

Hayes & Jarvis offers a week at Melia Nassau Beach Resort from £1,899, departing November 24, 2017. [hayesandjarvis.co.uk](http://hayesandjarvis.co.uk)

Prices are all-inclusive and include BA flights from Heathrow with transfers.

of comfort. The Bahamas can be sold as a twin-centre with Florida, less than an hour away, or an add-on to city breaks in New York and other US hubs.

The peak season is December to May, avoiding rainy summer months and the possibility of tropical hurricanes.

**COAST, CUISINE & CULTURE**

For such a small destination, there's a surprising amount to see and do. Tru Bahamian Food Tours offers a fantastic three-hour walking tour through Nassau, stopping off at six places for generous tastings of conch fritters, rum cake, ice cream, chocolates and more (\$69 for adults, \$49 children). [trubahamianfoodtours.com](http://trubahamianfoodtours.com)

One of the tastiest stops is Graycliff Chocolatier Factory, in the grounds of the historic Graycliff Hotel, where sweet-toothed visitors can sign up for chocolate-making workshops.

And don't miss Arawak Cay, with its inexpensive fish fry restaurants, and colourful beach bars pumping out music on Junkanoo Beach.

**Highlights aren't just of the edible variety: fancy meeting a dolphin, or being a keeper for the day?**

The highlights aren't just of the edible variety: fancy meeting a dolphin, or being a keeper for the day? Atlantis Paradise Island has its own Dolphin Cay, offering a variety of encounters, with a 30-minute shallow water experience for \$118.

Plus there's the ever popular Aquaventure water park, which is free to guests or \$129 for adults and \$99 for children who aren't staying in the hotel and want to buy a day pass.

Other top sightseeing tips include the Junkanoo Educulture Tour, a hands-on, fun activity for all ages where visitors learn about the annual



A carriage ride around Parliament Square

all-inclusive option, there's the 694-room Melia Nassau Beach Resort, set on the pristine sweep of Cable Beach, six miles outside Nassau. With expansive public areas and family rooms with access to the pools and gardens, the hotel boasts seven excellent restaurants, including Italian, Asian, Mexican and Spanish.

Traditionalists who want to be in the centre of town can opt for the 'grand dame' 288-room British Colonial Hilton, the island's oldest resort: the current building dates back to 1922 and is set on Nassau's only private beach.

Slightly out of town is the 20-room boutique property Graycliff, built by a pirate in 1740 and oozing history. Creaking stairs lead to ornately-decorated rooms and foodies are spoilt for choice as the immense restaurant wine list represents the world's third-largest wine collection.

An exciting newcomer is the adult-only all-inclusive Warwick Paradise Island overlooking the harbour. The top-to-toe transformation of an existing property has resulted in 243 cool rooms and suites, contemporary public areas inspired by the sea and a 6,000sq ft terrace with an outdoor steak and seafood restaurant. Operators featuring the property include Funway, Hayes & Jarvis and Gold Medal. [TW](#)



**ASK THE EXPERT**



**Miya Gilritchie,** regional account manager, [TravelCube](#)

"Nassau has that captivating, Caribbean charm that just grabs you from the get-go. Choose to stay at a beachfront hotel on the white sands of Cable Beach, or Downtown Nassau close to the buzz of Bay Streets' shops and Straw Market, or stay on Paradise Island, home to the mega-resort of Atlantis. Fab for families or for adults who want to live it up, you can now pack more value into a stay at Atlantis with the all-inclusive option. Recommend a local culture tour where you'll see how the costumes and music of the Bahamas' native Junkanoo festival come to life."

**THE PERFECT MIX**



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Junkanoo festival and have a go at making masks and playing music (from \$10).

[educulturebahamas.com](http://educulturebahamas.com)

Farther afield, take a boat trip to tranquil Rose Island with Sandy Toes, and swim, snorkel or simply chill on its idyllic beach. Packages, including lunch and drinks, start from \$89 for adults and \$49 for children. [sandytoesbahamas.com](http://sandytoesbahamas.com)

Whether clients want to indulge in a James Bond moment, join an impromptu Junkanoo party or soak up the sights and sounds of the lively street scene, there are plenty of ways to enjoy the rhythm of life in Nassau.

**SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW**

From all-singing, all-dancing resorts to a new adult getaway and a Robinson Crusoe villa hideaway on Rose Island, accommodation options are on the up.

The big news from the vast ocean-themed resort Atlantis Paradise Island is that two of its six properties - the deluxe Royal Towers and laid-back entry-level Beach Tower - are being sold on an all-inclusive basis and all properties now include free Wi-Fi.

With its 141-acre water park filled with slides and pools, amazing marine

exhibits, interactive dolphin experience and sophisticated Asian-themed Cove property with an adult-only beach club, Atlantis is a non-stop playground for all ages.

For those seeking a quieter



Agents at Dolphin Cay, Atlantis Paradise Island