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## WEBSITES

[www.bahamascruisersguide.com](http://www.bahamascruisersguide.com) Bahamas Cruisers Guide 2017 webpage (for cruisers by cruisers)  
[www.barometerbob.org](http://www.barometerbob.org) Abacos information  
[www.urcabahama.bs](http://www.urcabahama.bs) reciprocal SSB license  
[www.bahamas.com](http://www.bahamas.com) Official site of the Bahamas (post Irma and Maria news can be found here)

## GUIDES

Explorer Chartbooks/Guides <https://www.explorercharts.com/>  
Near Bahamas  
Far Bahamas  
Exumas and Ragged Islands  
Waterway Guide for the Bahamas <https://www.waterwayguide.com/guide/bahamas>  
Stephen Pavlidis Guides <https://www.seaworthy.com/bahamas-s/106.htm>  
Waterway Guide Explorer: <https://www.waterwayguide.com/explorer?latitude=25.06&longitude=-77.345&zoom=12&mode=marina>  
More information on guides: [https://www.practical-sailor.com/issues/37\\_49/features/Top-Cruising-Guides-for-the-Bahamas\\_11594-1.html](https://www.practical-sailor.com/issues/37_49/features/Top-Cruising-Guides-for-the-Bahamas_11594-1.html)  
Noonsite information on the Bahamas (some post-Irma updates included in comments)  
<http://www.noonsite.com/Countries/Bahamas>  
Comment: Navionics do not work well in the Bahamas

## Cruiser's Net

Abacos channel 68 @ 8:15 am  
Georgetown channel 72 @ 8:00am  
A list of 2017 Cruisers Nets [http://www.docksideradio.com/east\\_coast.htm](http://www.docksideradio.com/east_coast.htm)

## Chris Parker/Marine Weather Center

6:30 am Bahamas forecast SSB 4045 frequency  
subscribing members can ask for cruising advice after forecast

## Crossing options

Sailboats vs trawlers—Bimini is 54 miles from Miami

Leave from:

Miami, Ft Lauderdale, Lake Worth/Palm Beach, Ft Pierce

### Check ins:

Bimini:

S. Bimini marina check-in at the airport—take a taxi

If anchoring off the island—dinghy in

Bimini Blue Water Marina reported cost was \$1 per foot for a slip

West End

Grand Cay

Green Turtle: “easy check-in”

Marsh Harbor

Cat Key: “not recommended” as a check-in port

## Customs/Immigration

### *Arrival: Marina Check-ins vs Office Check-ins*

- Check-in costs: Boats over 35ft \$300, boats under 35ft \$150 (take cash)
- Some places require you to be in a slip to check in
- Some places can do check-ins at the slip
- Fly your quarantine flag until you check-in and don't go on land until you are checking-in.
- Do not fish until you have checked in
- Do your research so you know what to expect

### *Quarantine flag and courtesy flag*

- The quarantine flag and courtesy flag go on the starboard flag halyard
- Take an extra courtesy flag because they wear out quickly
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### *Ports of Entry:* [http://www.bahamas-travel.info/ports\\_of\\_entry.htm](http://www.bahamas-travel.info/ports_of_entry.htm)

- THE ABACOS: Green Turtle Cay, Marsh Harbor, Spanish Cay, Treasure Cay or Walker's Cay
  - THE BERRYS: Chub or Great Harbor Cays
  - NORTH BIMINI: Alice Town
  - CAT CAY: at Hawk's Nest Marina
  - ANDROS: Congo Town, Fresh Creek, Mangrove Cay or Morgan's Bluff
  - NASSAU, NEW PROVIDENCE: any marina
  - GRAND BAHAMA: Freeport Harbor, Lucayan Marina Village and Port Lucaya; Old Bahama Bay at West End
  - ELEUTHERA: Governor's Harbor, Harbor Island, Rock Sound or Spanish Wells
  - THE EXUMAS: George Town, Exuma
  - LONG ISLAND: Stella Maris Airport
  - SAN SALVADOR: Cockburn Town
  - MAYAGUANA: Abraham's Bay
  - INAGUA: Matthew Town.
- Paperwork-several sources, check online for current requirements: generally they want passports for each person, boat documentation, dinghy description, outboard info, hand gun description and amount/type of ammunition on board
  - Check-ins are a two part process:
    - Customs for your boat-Temporary Cruising Permit for 1 year
    - Immigration- for the people -Immigration Arrival Card
      - will give you a certain number of days 90, 180, at the whim of the officer.
      - will have to be renewed in office within the week of the expiration
  - Some you have to get a slip in a marina, some you walk into the office
  - FEE \$150/year for under 35 feet, \$300/year 35 feet and over  
<https://www.bahamas.com/faq/entering-exiting-policies>
  - Be ready to pay in **cash**
  - Make copies of your permits or save digitally
  - Permits include a basic **fishing license** for the boat and anyone on it
    - IF you are spearfishing, ask for an endorsement on your fishing permit. Can use Hawaiian sling, nothing with a trigger. Cannot use SCUBA gear when spearfishing
    - IF you are fishing, know the local regulations, not given to you at Customs (ask locals)
    - Good Source for fishing regulations -Explorer charts, ??
    - There may be seasonal fishing restrictions or changes in previous restrictions.
    - There are several NO TAKE parks—no fish, no shells, no rocks, etc. Take nothing.
    - If you are at Marsh Harbor—Island Joe's sells fishing gear (local knowledge)

- Ciguatera—DO NOT EAT BARRACUDA (ask locals about the fish they do eat)
  - <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ciguatera/>
- When asked what you have on your boat, reply “standard provisions” (if you claim 3 cases of Bud Light for example, you may be taxed for it)

## Pets

- Current regulations and form (may be subject to change)
  - [https://www.atlantisbahamas.com/pdf/marina/Bahamas\\_Application\\_to\\_Import\\_Domestic\\_Animals\\_in\\_TIOTB.pdf](https://www.atlantisbahamas.com/pdf/marina/Bahamas_Application_to_Import_Domestic_Animals_in_TIOTB.pdf)
- You have to have a current (within 48 hours) certificate of health (leave date blank)
- Use FED-EX, not snail mail (one person has been waiting on her permit since August 6<sup>th</sup> through the mail Mailed on the 4<sup>th</sup>, it is still at the post office in the Bahamas)

## Checking into the US on return

- Don't need to check out if going to the US
- Countries further south however, may want to see when you departed
- Report to Customs and Border Patrol CBP on return
- Florida Small Vessel Call Center: 1-800-432-1216 and 1-800-451-0393
- Remember to replace your US SIM card before you return
- When asking questions, be sure to get the name and badge number of the officer you speak with—in case you need it later to explain why you did something to another officer.
- “Local Boater Option” before going to the Bahamas—may be able to clear in on the phone. This was started in Florida. <https://www.cbp.gov/travel/pleasure-boats-private-flyers/pleasure-boat-locations/fl>
- If 30 feet or over, you must display a customs User Fee Decal-DTOPS-Decal and Transponder Online Procurement System \$27.50 per year You can apply online, then do a face-to-face interview: <https://www.cbp.gov/trade/basic-import-export/uftd-info>
  - DTOPS has worked for some and others don't know what you are talking about
  - “Lake Worth—Riviera Beach Marina/Peanut Island place to get DTOPS sticker \$10”
- Over the phone-register a float plan with CBP online before leaving and update before returning <https://svrs.cbp.dhs.gov/Default.aspx>
- “Boats arriving after 4pm are more likely to get a phone check-in”
- Do NOT bring fresh foods back with you—they will be confiscated and/or taxed
- Brunswick-BLM and Custom's officer will come to the marina
- Other ports further north?
  - Charleston Harbor—customs will come to your dock

## Money Bahamian\$ = US\$

- Cash machines (ATMs) are available, but bank fees, foreign bank fees and tourist taxes may be applied to your transaction. Fees for withdrawing cash using a credit card may be as high as 18%. Know in advance what your bank charges for ATM fees in the foreign countries you will visit.
- Visa and MasterCard credit cards accepted most places, but not always functioning
  - (American Express Card is NOT taken)

- Many businesses will charge an additional 5% charge for using a credit card, but if you use a debit card—you are not supposed to be charged the 5% fee, but not all clerks understand the difference.
- There is also a 7.5% Value Added Tax “*the broad based consumption tax is applied to almost all goods and services that are imported, bought and sold for use in The Bahamas.*”  
<http://inlandrevenue.finance.gov.bs/value-added-tax/about-vat>
- Call your bank to let them know you will be out of the country so that your card is not declined at an inopportune moment.
- Take your \$150/\$300 entry fee in cash.

## BUDGET:

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### Marina slips vs mooring balls

- Marinas good deals for long term?
  - Ranges in rates 2016 were 50¢ a foot to \$5.50 a foot
  - Water is usually charged for by the gallon
- Mooring balls \$20-25/night
- Many options for anchoring

### Telephones/Data

- Bahamian Telephone Company <http://www.btcbahamas.com/explore/mobile>
- Unlocked phone to accept a SIM card, which has been \$15
  - Suggested know what your phone system is it GSM, Triband or VAT? (compatibility with Bahamian carrier issues)
- Put money on an account. That can be used for adding data online without having to go into BTC or any store that says “TOP UP”, that money can go towards phone calls
- When you add data, if you have any data remaining, you will lose that data
- 2 GB \$10 for 30 days,
- Check with your US carrier about suspending your charges while you are gone
- T-Mobile phones may work in the Bahamas
- Many restaurants and resorts have free Wi-Fi, usually slow, and you typically buy something, which is more than buying the data
- Using the BTC phone to call the states was about \$1/minute
- Use data to call the states:
  - Face Book Messenger
  - Skype
  - What’s App <https://www.whatsapp.com/>
  - HANG OUTS
- Hang outs-they will get a call from an unknown caller and may not answer, so leave a message and call back. Have the person call and hang up, when you see their missed call, call them back
- ATT Mr. Sim Card plan: <http://www.mrsimcard.com/caribbean/s-batelco.html>
- ALIV new carrier-anyone familiar with their plan? <https://www.bealiv.com/shop/plans>
- You may want to purchase a Wi-Fi booster to access free Wi-Fi while anchored offshore.
  - One attendee said he could access a local bar’s Wi-Fi from ¼ mile offshore with his extender.

## Best grocery stores

- Marsh Harbor, Abacos
- Spanish Wells, Eleuthera
- Rock Sound, Eleuthera
- Georgetown, Exumas
- Salt Pond, Long Island
  
- Expensive items: paper products, snacks, soda/mix, and gourmet items, expect everything to be higher. Cruisers reported an 8-roll pack of paper towels cost \$54 at one location, and Toilet Paper consistently cost \$2 a roll—these are considered “non-essential” items in the Bahamas. Liquor and wine is often cheaper: one liquor store in the Exumas is reported to have volume discounts: 3 bottles = 10% discount, 12 bottles = 20% discount, so shop with friends.
- Fresh catch of the day can often be purchased from local fishermen, sometimes in exchange for beer.
- Grocery stores usually receive shipments once a week, often closing to restock. Nothing is refrigerated after it leaves the truck. Produce at the end of the week is often scarce or not so fresh.
- Food items like chicken, bean, rice, etc. may be cheaper than in the states.

## Restaurants

- Breakfast \$10-15 Lunch \$15-20 Dinner \$20 on up
- Take Away stands \$10
- Smaller places will usually tell you what they have that day
- Near expensive marinas-expect to pay more \$25 hamburger or dinner can run up to \$100/person with drinks and dessert
- 18% gratuity and tourist tax may be added

## Beverages

- Alcohol and wine reasonable, beer and sodas, mix, juices were high (soda stream?)
- We haven't heard of anyone being questioned about liquor when going through customs

## Fuel

- Probably 2 x in the US price
- available at most marinas, need a good filtration system or a fuel polisher,
- sometimes out of fuel
- Sailboaters- works good to take in jerry cans vs your boat into tight area. But they will often hand the hose down to you, which drips fuel onto you and your dingy.
- take fuel diapers
- Need to plan ahead
- Suggestion to purchase and use a Mr. Funnel to filter out water, dirt and debris. They can be purchased through Amazon for about \$20 each.  
<http://www.mrfunnel.com/Mr. Funnel/Home.html>
- Suggestion: have a Racor gas filter in your dinghy when you get fuel.
- Suggestion: wait a day after delivery to the fuel dock to purchase fuel so the debris has time to settle back down to the bottom.

## Propane

- \$15-\$20 for a 10# tank
- ask locals or use explorer charts and waterway guides to find propane sources
- Places where it is easier to find propane:
  - Marsh Harbor
  - Georgetown
  - Spanish Wells
  - Rock Sound

## NO PUMP OUTS

- Anchorages are crowded and not everyone follows the rules, so don't swim in a crowded anchorage—you may encounter "brown trout"
- When you need to pump out your holding tank, leave the anchorage and go past the 3 mile mark and pump overboard.

## Water

- There are free areas to fill jugs, some you can dinghy to, but you must search them out
- Many marinas charge for water, usually 50¢ a gallon.
- Taste water before putting it in your holding tank (one cruiser unknowingly put brackish water in their holding tank.
- Spanish Wells has a lobster plant with good water that they may sell you
- Always use a water filter when filling your tank
- One cruiser suggested that you purchase and use a parts per million water tester for your boat (salts, metals and minerals, but not pathogens.) As inexpensive as \$10 on Amazon.

## Boat Repair or boat parts:

- Ask the locals
- shipping items to the Bahamas-custom's duty that varies up to 100%
- friends bringing boat parts-might be asked
- Engine parts may be duty free
- Some use the term "boat in transit" to get the part through customs duty free
- Register the exported part in the US so that you don't have to pay a duty to bring it back into the US and when it returns to the Bahamas.

## Garbage

- Some larger islands are free, some charge \$1 per bag, some donation
  - Some charge as high as \$5 for the first bag, \$20 for the second bag
  - There is no recycling, but some people do sort their trash into categories:
    - Burnable/Glass & Cans/Garbage while transiting
    - Throwing your garbage overboard tends to attract unwanted visitors like sharks and barracudas.
    - NEVER throw PLASTICS overboard
- DO NOT LEAVE ON A DOCK OR OUTSIDE OF A RECEPTACLE -dogs and rats

## Medical

- Gov't clinics and private doctors on larger island
  - Real life experience: Georgetown Government clinic \$30 exam and \$5 Rx
  - Real life experience: Marsh Harbor private Doctor \$135 exam and \$60 Rx at pharmacy
- Smaller islands have a clinic that may only be staffed a few days a week, maybe by a nurse
- Dentists are available on larger islands
- Observation: Medical costs outside the US are often equivalent to what we usually pay in deductibles for our insurance in the US.
- Suggestions:
  - Possible Health Insurance Providers for Cruisers (IMG is also reported as having this type of insurance available now):

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**HEALTH INSURANCE FOR CRUISERS**

	<b>DAN insurance program</b>	<a href="http://www.diversalertnetwork.org/insurance/">http://www.diversalertnetwork.org/insurance/</a>
	<b>International Marine Insurance Services</b>	<a href="http://www.imis.pro/OnlineServices.htm#IntlMedicalPlans">http://www.imis.pro/OnlineServices.htm#IntlMedicalPlans</a>
	<b>Pantaenius</b>	<a href="http://www.pantaenius.com/en/moncao/insurance/products/healthcare-plan-for-longterm-sailors.html">http://www.pantaenius.com/en/moncao/insurance/products/healthcare-plan-for-longterm-sailors.html</a>
	<b>US Sailing</b>	<a href="http://membership.ussailing.org/Assets/Membership/Health+Insurance+from+GeoBlue.pdf">http://membership.ussailing.org/Assets/Membership/Health+Insurance+from+GeoBlue.pdf</a>
	<b>Protexplan</b>	<a href="http://www.protexplan.com/">http://www.protexplan.com/</a>

- DAN (Divers Alert Network) (800) 446-2671 <http://www.danboater.org>
- Skymed Nautical <http://www.skymed.com/PamelaBendall>

## EMERGENCIES:

- BASRA (Bahamas Air-Sea Rescue Association) is an all-volunteer organization; sometimes nearby boaters can get there faster.
  - They monitor **SSB 2182** daily 9:00am-5:00pm
  - Phone **(242) 325-8864**
  - They also have an emergency repeater on stand-by **VHF Channel 22A**, which covers a 100 mile within range from Nassau on a 24/7 basis.
  - Membership \$40 a year. To donate to BASRA, visit <http://www.basra.org/support> .
- Bahaman Royal Defense is the name of their Coast Guard
  - They keep watch on SSB **4125** and handle all emergency messages for BASRA 24 hours a day.
  - Anecdote: parents of a teen serving 30 days in jail for letting the kids make a false call.

## SSB Annual Reciprocal License

- If you have an SSB, you need a license [www.urcabahamas.bs](http://www.urcabahamas.bs) has the forms
- apply online, takes 3 weeks and \$35

## Guests

- If you have guest flying in for a visit, be sure to send them copies of your cruising permit to take through customs, and be sure they know the name and location of your boat.
- Customs may them ask what port or marina your boat is in
- Taxis to the dock usually waiting, but can be hailed on certain channels
- Many small airlines that fly between islands



**Note: If you leave** Bahamas via airplane and plan to return take copies of customs and immigration forms when returning, they will put a new date in your passport may have to have a ticket for returning to the US-buy that day and cancel within 24 hours.

## Islands and events

Abacos

Eleuthera

Exuma: 5 F Party (First Friday Farmers Fest on Friday Island?)

Nassau/ New Providence

Cat Island

Long Island

Berries

Bimini

Andros

Far Islands

## Miscellaneous

Junkanoo:

<http://www.bahamas.co.uk/about/junkanoo/what-is-junkanoo>

Regattas:

Last in February Cruisers

Family in April

## Sites for More Information:

Bahama Tourism

<http://www.tourismtoday.com/>

Bahamas Government Site Events List (Culture Department)

<http://www.bahamas.gov.bs/wps/portal/public/Culture/>

Bahamas Local (find a business or service a-z)

<https://www.bahamaslocal.com/categories/>

**The Fine Print:** This is unofficial information intended to supplement your research through the shared experiences of those that have been there. This is not a comprehensive guide to cruising the Bahamas. Prices, circumstances, information, and conditions are subject to change.