Nassau teems with Bahamian and British flavor. The capital city of the Bahamas boasts miles of spectacular beaches and stretches of vivid coral reefs perfect for snorkeling. Shop, dine, and sightsee, particularly along busy Bay Street, or if you're a James Bond fan, visit the British Colonial Hotel, which was used as a filming location for two of the Sean Connery-era movies. Visit during the famed Junkanoo Festival to experience a high-energy parade of spectacularly costumed dancers.

Top things to see and do

- **Blue Lagoon Island**
  Category: Islands

- **Sandy Toes**
  Category: Tours

- **The National Art Gallery of The Bahamas**
  Category: Art Museums

- **The Atlantis Aquarium**
  Category: Aquariums

- **Christ Church Cathedral**
  Category: Landmarks/Points of Interest; Religious Sites

- **Cable Beach**
  Category: Beaches

- **Ardastra Gardens, Zoo and Conservation Center**
  Category: Gardens; Zoos; Nature/Wildlife Areas

Just for your visit ...

Monday, July 7, 2014  7:00am - 2:00pm

High 89 °f, Low 78 °f, Precipitation: 6 inches
Sunrise: 6:25am  Sunset: 8:03pm
Timezone: EDT
Royal Caribbean International: **Nassau, Bahamas**
Language
English is spoken in the Bahamas.

Currency & Best Way to Get Money
Legal tender is the Bahamian dollar, which is equivalent in value to the U.S. dollar. Both U.S. and Bahamian dollars are accepted interchangeably throughout the island. European currency is not, so exchange it as necessary at a bank or ATM. All banks and their branches are generally open Monday through Thursday, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. and until 5 p.m. on Friday. For more currency exchange information, visit www.xe.com.

Note: Some hotels and restaurants add a fee for cashing traveler's checks.

Watch Out For
Calling home can be tricky, particularly from pay phones because they don't accept U.S. calling cards (the kind you buy at Wal-Mart, for instance). You have to buy a BATELCO (Bahamas Telephone Co.) card from their offices (Shirley Street and inside the Marathon Mall on Robertson Road), from vending machines or from one of the many shops and restaurants that offer them.

While there's no need to be over-alert, it does pay to leave valuables and excess cash in your stateroom safe and keep an eye on your surroundings.

Best Souvenirs
Junkanoo handicrafts are always a sure bet and can be found throughout the island.

Where You're Docked
You'll dock at Prince George Wharf, near Rawson Square and the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism -- great for picking up maps, brochures, etc. -- in the heart of Nassau.

Hanging Around
Passengers must pass through Festival Place to exit the port facility. There are counters staffed by tourism folks, who will provide maps and answer questions, as well as by companies that offer boat trips, over-land tours and taxi services. There's also a small Internet cafe. Beyond that is a small, but colorful, shopping mall that specializes in artisan boutiques. There's a steel-pan band that offers a musical welcome, as well as a food court, complete with stalls that sell the local conch.

Getting Around
Car Rentals: There are a handful of car-rental companies, such as Dollar Car Rental, Avis, Thrifty Car Rental and Budget at Prince George Wharf, as well as on Paradise Island and at the airport ranging in price from $55 to $110 for the day. There's also that pesky left-side-of-the-road driving to deal with.

Taxis: Taxis are plentiful and can be hailed everywhere, be it right by your ship or at all the hotels and restaurants. Count on sharing the taxi with other tourists and locals. Rates are fixed by law. Typical fares to Paradise Island are $4 per person, plus a 15 percent gratuity.

Jitney buses: These run between the downtown area to Cable Beach and Paradise Island from morning until about 7 p.m. at 30-minute intervals. Fares vary, about $1.25 per person, each way. Exact change is required.
The Nassau Water Taxi departs every 30 min. from behind the Festival Market to Paradise Island daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. for $6 roundtrip. Though the trip takes just 10 minutes, the water taxi may not depart on time. Since the operators tend to give you a bit of a "tour" along the way, expect to be approached for a gratuity.

Horse-drawn surreys can be found around Rawson Square and sometimes along Bay Street. They run about $15 per person for 25 minutes, but the price is usually negotiable. Note: From May to October, the horses rest from the sun from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Don't Miss
Though not quite as varied or option-plentiful as major duty-free destinations, shopping is a mainstay on Nassau. The Straw Market is a Nassau tradition, and you'll find all sorts of touristic souvenirs on sale, from thatched purses to hair-braiding. The market officially reopened in its original location in December 2011. (It was destroyed by a fire in 2001 and relocated until a new $12 million facility could be built.) You'll find the new and improved market, which houses more than 450 vendors, on Bay Street.

Duty-free shopping, centered on Bay Street, features the usual suspects, such as Diamonds International, Colombian Emeralds and Bacardi. Other retailers familiar to cruise travelers include Del Sol, for merchandise that changes color in the sun; Gucci; Harley Davidson; and an outpost of Cayman's Tortuga Bakery.

Head over to the man-made island of Arawak Cay, a local beach dusted with pastel-colored shacks, incredibly fresh conch from vendors cracking the mollusks right before your eyes, fried fish and grits, lime-marinated conch and plenty of coconut milk laced with gin. It's very popular, especially with the locals, and it gets very crowded, especially on weekend evenings. It's located on the harbor, across from Fort Charlotte.

Pink flamingos, honey bears and peacocks, oh my! You'll find all this and more at Ardastra Gardens. Wait until you see the flamingos parade in drill formation (10:30 a.m., 2:10 p.m. and 4:10 p.m.). It's open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is located on Chippingham Road in Nassau.

If you'd rather just spend the day as a guest at the showy, 34-acre Atlantis Resort on Paradise Island, consider purchasing a hard-to-come-by day pass for about $25 ($19 for kids). The pass gets you access to most of the must-see sights at the resort, such as the Dig, the marine habitats and their beach. What you won't get is the fun stuff around the pools and waterslides. Buy at the kiosk by the cruise terminal -- or at the resort.

The number one photo op on the island is the balcony of 18th century Balcony House, which also happens to be Nassau's oldest wooden structure. Step inside this island landmark to see the mahogany staircase, said to have been salvaged from a shipwreck in the mid-1800's. It's open Monday through Wednesday and Friday, 10 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Thursdays, it's only open until 1 p.m. It's located at Trinity Place in Nassau.

For dolphin encounters of the bottlenose kind and seven stunning beaches, head for Blue Lagoon Island (a.k.a. Salt Cay). If it looks a bit familiar, you saw it in the film Splash. (The beach scenes were filmed there.) There are plenty of water sports to try and hammocks to idle in, but for all things dolphin, make sure you plan ahead (www.dolphinswims.com). You'll find plenty of amenities, such as showers and changing rooms, too. Catch the ferry from the cruise terminal.

Kids love the Pirates of Nassau, a rather new, interactive museum filled with pirate stuff. They can walk through a 75-foot, three-masted pirate ship, too. It's open Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tours are scheduled every half-hour. It's located on Marlborough Street in Nassau.
One of the most popular cultural stops on the island is the 18th-century Fort Charlotte. It's fun to roam the dungeons and underground passageways and see the waterless moat -- but some say the amazing views of the harbor from the ramparts is the real don't-miss here. Two other forts worth checking out are Fort Fincastle (overlooking the town from Bennet's Hill) and Fort Montagu (E. Bay Street). It's open Monday through Saturday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., and it's located on Chippingham Road in Nassau.

If you're in port on a Saturday, you may get to see the changing of the guard at the Government House (every other week) from 10 a.m. to noon, accompanied by the music of the Royal Bahamas Police Force Band. The official residence of the governor-general of the Bahamas since 1801, this bubblegum-pink mansion is an excellent example of Bahamian-British and American Colonial architecture. You can find it on Duke Street in Nassau.

We dare you to take a royal climb up the 66 steps of the Queen's Staircase, which was carved out of calcareous -- a coral-based sandstone -- at the end of the 18th century. The stupendous view is the prize for such athleticism. Check it out on Elizabeth Avenue in Nassau.

Hop aboard the Seaworld Explorer for a 90-minute submarine tour. Think underwater observatory as you descend five feet below the water to observe the "sea gardens" through large glass windows. It's open daily and offers a tour at 11:30 a.m.; they add an additional tour at 1:30 p.m. from December through June. You must make reservations. It's located on the corner of Bay and Elizabeth Streets.

**Been There, Done That**

For an easygoing pool/beach day, the British Colonial Hilton offers a day-pass for $40 that includes beach chairs, use of nonmotorized water toys, towels and a $30 credit for food and beverages. (So you wind up paying $10 for the beach.) The hotel is an easy stroll from the ship.

The Cloister -- right in front of the Ocean Club -- is a 14th-century cloister, built in France by Augustinian monks and reassembled here, stone by stone. Huntington Hartford, the A & P grocery heir, purchased the cloister from the estate of William Randolph Hearst at Sam Simeon in California. This is one of only four cloisters that have ever been removed, stone by stone, from France. It's located on Paradise Island.

Under the heading of Mardi Gras fun, check out the museum dedicated to the flashy Junkanoo Festival (a middle-of-the-night event the days after Christmas and New Year's Day) at the Junkanoo Expo. It's a chance to see the humongous costumes and floats. Check them out daily from 9 to 5 at Prince George Wharf.

Take a 25-minute helicopter tour with Majestic Tours for a breathtaking trip over Nassau. You'll travel roundtrip from the Heliport on Paradise Island for the bird's-eye views. Daily departures are offered every 30 minutes from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The conch vendors are just part of the scene at Potter's Cay, a Bahamian marketplace beneath Paradise Island Bridge. There, you'll find plenty of vendors selling locals goods to both locals and tourists.

If you're curious about Bahamian food, culture and history, check out [Tru Bahamian Food Tours](#). The company offers a three-hour walking tour around the main streets of Nassau and includes seven tasting stops, along with informative talks on local culture, history, architecture and more. Even if you're not all that into the learning part of the tour, the yummy conch fritters, jerk chicken, salted caramel dark chocolates and rum cake make it totally worthwhile.
**Lunching**

Conch Fritters Bar and Grill, located across from the British Colonial Hilton, offers a TGIF-style dining experience at very reasonable prices. (Local island fare, from conch to lamb, is offered at $10 for a full meal.) There's also a full bar. It's open Daily from 11:30 a.m., and it's located on Marlborough Street.

On Paradise Island, Anthony's Caribbean Grill is casual-chic and offers gourmet-type pizzas, topped with jerk chicken; very excellent ribs, doused in an awesome barbecue sauce; and warm-weather cocktails bigger than a house. The per-person cost for three courses, including wine, will run about $20. It's open daily from 11 a.m. and can be found on Casino Drive on Paradise Island.

Crocodile's Waterfront Bar & Grill: This joint offers waterside dining under thatched tiki huts and island drinks galore. Consider this place if you're looking for funky-casual. The Bahamian-style fried chicken is excellent. The per-person cost for three courses, including wine, will run about $20. You can dine there daily from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on E. Bay Street in Nassau.

Cafe Matisse: This is our favorite spot on the island for a relaxing, languid lunch. Despite being named for a French artist, the food is Italian, and it's fresh and beautifully prepared. If it's a nice day, ask to sit out back in the serene courtyard. It's a five-minute walk from the cruise terminal. (Just ask for the police station: it's right next door.) The per-person cost for three courses, including wine, will run about $32. Eat there Monday through Saturday, noon to 3 p.m. Reservations are recommended, but walk-ins are made welcome. Know, though, that this is perhaps the island's most popular restaurant for locals, so it does get busy. It's on Bank Lane in Nassau.

Graycliff: Graycliff is an eccentric, glorious, 20-room hotel with a gourmet restaurant that claims a 250,000-bottle wine cellar, a humidor and an onsite cigar-rolling facility. (Don't miss it - it's fascinating, and you can buy the stogies at the onsite boutique.) It offers a wine luncheon, featuring continental cuisine with Bahamian influences, Monday through Friday from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. Reservations are a must. (Call 1-800-476-0446 in the U.S./Canada or 1-242-302-9150 from other places.) The per-person cost for three courses, including wine, will run about $75. Greycliff is located across from Government House on W. Hill Street in Nassau; it's within walking distance from the port.

**Beaches**

**Best Beach for Active Types:** Visit Paradise Island, where you can find all manner of water-sports rentals and eateries. Some say the most beautiful spot there is Cabbage Beach, on the north shore. Another good choice is Cable Beach, with all the usual beach amenities and dazzling beachfront resorts along baby-powder-soft sand. For great snorkeling, try Love Beach near Gambier Village, about 12 miles west of downtown Nassau.

**Secluded Beach:** South Ocean Beach, close to Adelaide Village, is where it's at if you want an option that's a bit less-visited. Caves Beach in Rock Point (close to the airport turnoff on Blake Road) is another good out-of-the-way choice.
Staying in Touch
There is a small Internet cafe in Festival Hall with four terminals. The cost is $5 per half hour. For travelers who want to use their own Wi-Fi-equipped laptops, the cost is $5 per day. There are also scattered cyber cafes throughout downtown Nassau.

For More Information
On the Web: www.bahamas.com
Cruise Critic Message Boards: Bahamas
The Independent Traveler: Caribbean Exchange
Those 2 Cruise Planners: Ports of Call

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