

Romance in The Bahamas

Saying “I Do” Island Style

The Islands Of The Bahamas is home to 700 islands infused with romance. This is a destination best known for the clear waters that surround it, attracting those who seek to snorkel, scuba, surf or simply relax on powdery sand beaches. It is, however, so much more. It has a culture all its own, with warm, welcoming people. Here you can discover historic forts and duty-free shopping, world-class casinos and a pulsating nightlife. There are championship golf courses to challenge you and national parks waiting for nature lovers to explore.

The Bahamas' close proximity to the U.S. makes it a top choice for destination weddings and honeymoons. Friends and family from across the U.S. can take advantage of the large number of airlines offering direct flights to many of the islands, or they can start the party early with the new high-speed ferry service from Fort Lauderdale to Grand Bahama Island. The requirements for getting married in The Islands Of The Bahamas are simple. Couples may submit an application for a marriage license after meeting the 24-hour

residency requirement and presenting evidence of the date of their arrival. You will also need to show government-issued photo identification, such as a valid driver's license or passport.

Choosing which island to stay on is the most difficult part of your decision. **Nassau** and **Paradise Island**, which is connected to Nassau by two bridges, offer great choices in activities that of course include endless watersports opportunities. On land, Nassau's downtown revitalization plans include the new **Bay Street Straw Market** that opened in December 2011. It is the place to go for authentic Bahamian straw and wood crafts, accommodating more than 450 vendors.

Other attractions here include **Fort Charlotte**, built in the late 18th century and featuring a waterless moat, a drawbridge and dungeons. Watch the marching flamingos, the national bird of The Bahamas, as they perform three times daily at the five-acre **Ardastra Gardens and Zoo**, which is home to rare tropical birds and other exotic animals from around the world. Explore the varied

ecosystems and local fauna along the winding trails of **Clifton Heritage National Park**, where you can also swim, fish and snorkel.

If you wish to leave the water long enough to discover other things on **Grand Bahama Island**, head to the **Port Lucaya Marketplace & Marina** for shops, crafts, restaurants, bars and nightly live entertainment. Check on special events here that can include parades, festivals and calypso and limbo dancing. The five-mile **Heritage Trail** near Freetown is the island's main nature walk where you can encounter more than 30 species of plants, 18 types of birds, seven species of butterfly and a part of The Hermitage, the oldest intact building on Grand Bahama, dating back to 1901. See all six of the islands' ecosystems at **Lucayan National Park**, which is also home to one of the world's longest underwater systems of limestone caves.

Activities abound at most of the larger resorts on the islands, so you need never leave their environs unless you wish to. Many of these same resorts cater to brides and grooms with destination weddings and honeymoon packages that offer you an easy way to wed and then relax amid the tropical splendor.

Resort Choices

The Wyndham Nassau Resort celebrates the rhythm and spirit of the Bahamas, offering brides and grooms a true sense of place for destination weddings and honeymoons. Wyndham Nassau Resort's experts handle every detail for your event and wedding group, so couples need only enjoy the property, located in the heart of Cable Beach.

The on-site wedding coordinators work with the brides and grooms to plan their ideal day, whether that be barefoot in the sand or black-tie only, with a choice of packages and indoor and outdoor settings. A personal bridal butler takes care of all day-of events. The property's wedding offerings span the entire weekend, from the bachelor/bachelorette escapades to the intimate ceremony performed in front of family and friends. The men enjoy island activities while the ladies relax poolside or enjoy

shopping before meeting up for nighttime fun at the resort's 30,000-square-foot casino or dancing at 22 Above.

Wyndham Nassau Resort even starts the honeymoon off right by providing complimentary night-of accommodations in one of the 559 spacious guest rooms and suites for all couples who wed on property purchasing a ceremony package of \$5,000 or greater. The resort also hosts a farewell brunch the morning after the ceremony for departing guests to round out the special occasion for couples who opt for an on-property ceremony package of \$10,000 or greater. The personal attention continues throughout the honeymoon, with assistance in coordinating dinner reservations at the three on-site restaurants that include a steak house, Asian cuisine and an island favorites buffet. 800-WYNDHAM; wyndhamnassauresort.com



Whether you honeymoon or wed at **Atlantis, Paradise Island**, you will be immersed in a magical destination like no other. With nearly 4,000 hotel rooms set on 500 acres, Atlantis has something to offer for every destination wedding and honeymoon couple: countless pools; a 63-acre water park; more than 40 restaurants, bars and lounges; the Mandara Spa; a dolphin habitat; and a full-service marina.

Creating your special day will be easier than you ever imagined, with a team of wedding coordinators and a variety of wedding packages. You decide whether you want an intimate or grand, alfresco or enclosed affair. Ceremonies can take place at a secluded beach, in a seaside pavilion, on a private yacht or at a host of other locations. Receptions range from a lounge cocktail party under the stars to a formal ballroom experience.

Book the Celebrate Love wedding package and you will receive a three-night complimentary return stay for your first anniversary. New 2012 packages feature upgraded photography services and beautifully designed wedding albums.



When you honeymoon at Atlantis, you can enjoy some of the iconic Atlantis experiences with the Love, Atlantis Honeymoon Pass for \$995. Add on the Honeymoon Pass with any three-night or more reservation and take advantage of the resort's most popular activities that are perfect for honeymooners, including a Couples Massage, Gourmet Dinner, Dolphin Swim, Cain at the Cove Adult Pool access and more. 888-528-9758; loveatlantis.com

FACEBOOK WEDDING PLANNING

Now, with a few clicks of the mouse, you can take the first steps in planning your destination wedding in The Bahamas. A new application on The Bahamas Facebook page allows you to interact with Freda Madrisotti, Director of Romance for The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism and Aviation. Madrisotti certainly knows about love on the island, as she has been working with hotels, wedding planners and members of the Bahamas Bridal Association to assist with destination weddings, vow renewals and honeymoons since 2006.

Click on the "Romance" tab on the Facebook page to find answers to 10 of the most frequently asked questions, such as what you need to get a marriage license, where to research vendors for the big day, what kinds of locations/venues are available, what's the weather like, and even where you can get your hair and makeup done. Fans of the page can also participate in the "Find Your Romantic Island" interactive quiz and contact Madrisotti directly with any additional questions by submitting an inquiry through the "Ask the Director of Romance" box. [facebook.com/TheBahamas](https://www.facebook.com/TheBahamas)



It's all about the ocean when you wed at **Grand Lucayan, Bahamas** on Grand Bahama Island. This 519-room property sits along an expansive 7.5-acre beach boasting views of the turquoise Caribbean Sea. Exchange your vows on the powdery white sands, in one of three beach gazebos or on the Great Lawn. Even the resort's indoor ballrooms feature ocean views. Whether it's just the two of you or an extensive guest list of friends and family, Grand Lucayan's wedding coordinators make it stress-free.

A range of wedding packages all include a marriage officer, flowers, cake, wedding photos and album, marriage license and certificate. From there, you can add on all the elements you desire.

Once the big day is over, the AAA-rated Four

Diamond Grand Lucayan is made for honeymoon relaxation. Enjoy romantic couples' spa treatments at the Senses Spa or just lie on a lounge chair at one of four swimming pools or at the beach. The resort is home to two 18-hole championship golf courses, four tennis courts, an expansive fitness center, a casino, and a water sports center that features complimentary snorkeling, windsurfing, bodyboards and kayaks. Dining plans can include breakfast, lunch and dinner at the resort's nine restaurants that offer a variety of cuisines in casual to upscale settings. Create a Grand Lucayan honeymoon bridal registry and you can receive room nights, activities, spa treatments, dining and more as wedding gifts. 855-LUCAYAN; grandlucayan.com

Wherever you decide to start your life together in The Bahamas, you will never forget the beauty of the islands. Start planning your destination wedding or honeymoon now by calling 800-BAHAMAS or visiting bahamas.com