



COWBELLS, WHISTLES AND LIVELY BAHAMIAN BEATS BECKON TRAVELERS TO THE ISLANDS OF THE BAHAMAS

It's 75+ degrees and sunny in The Islands of The Bahamas, but Junkanoo is what's really hot. Junkanoo is often compared to Carnival or Mardi Gras, but it is a Bahamian celebration all its own. Junkanoo is a time when Bahamians dress in elaborate costumes and fill the streets of Nassau dancing to a lively and inviting Bahamian beat. The procession concludes with a competition on Bay Street, where judges award prizes to winners in three main categories: best music, best costume and best overall group presentation.

The Islands of The Bahamas celebrate this colorful Bahamian festival of music, food and art each Boxing Day (December 26) and New Year's Day. People celebrate smaller "rush outs" held on special occasions throughout the year.

Junkanoo costumes, constructed of cardboard, aluminum rods, crepe paper, chicken wire, sequins and glue, represent anything from dragons and bats to Queen Elizabeth. Some of the lead costumes can be 16 to 18 feet high, weighing anywhere from 190 to 400 pounds. Junkanoo rules require that the lead costumes may not be built on wheels and that only one person at a time be allowed to lift them. The person carrying the costume must dance in it as well.

This rhythmic parade demonstrates the influence of the West Africans who arrived in the islands during the 18th century. The exact origin of the name is unclear, but may be derived from John Connu or John Canoe, an African prince and trader, or perhaps is French for unknown people, gens inconnus. Junkanoo began as slaves, given three days freedom at Christmas, donned costumes and masks, traveling from house to house to visit and celebrate. Though the tradition waned in Caribbean countries following the abolition of slavery in 1833, The Bahamas continues to honor this Afro-Bahamian heritage.

Contemporary Junkanoo crews like *Valley Boys*, *One Family* and *Roots* participate in an annual organized parade through the streets of Nassau celebrating this cultural legacy and competing for the distinction of best costume, best music, etc.

ABOUT THE BAHAMAS

With over 700 islands and cays, and 16 unique island destinations, The Bahamas lies just 55 miles off the coast of Florida offering an easy fly away escape that transports travelers away from their everyday. The Islands of The Bahamas have world-class fishing, diving, boating and thousands of miles of the earth's most spectacular water and beaches waiting for families, couples and adventurers. Explore all the islands have to offer at www.bahamas.com or on [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#) to see why It's Better in The Bahamas.

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PRESS INQUIRIES



Anita Johnson-Patty
General Manager, Global Communications
Bahamas Ministry of Tourism & Aviation
ajohnson@bahamas.com

Weber Shandwick
Public Relations
Bahamas@webershandwick.com