

Created by: Debra C. Argen

Junkanoo

Are you ready to party Bahamian-style? Junkanoo, a combination of high-energy music, culture, pulsating dance rhythms and elaborate costumes, is an integral part of the Bahamas, and should be experienced by visitors at least once in a lifetime.

Bahamians celebrate Junkanoo twice per year, on Boxing Day (December 26) and New Year's Day, where the Junkanoo parades begin at 2:00 am when the individual Junkanoo groups start competing, and conclude at 9:00 am, when prizes are awarded to the top Junkanoo groups.



Junkanoo is a lively extravagant cultural musical celebration that combines a parade of exciting ornate handmade costumes, with electric dance movements, and music provided by an eclectic mix of instruments ranging from whistles, horns, cowbells, and drums that are generally made from discarded metal oil barrels, with both ends removed and the top covered in either sheep, goat or even camel skin, when they can get it. Each of the skins provides a different sound as the drummer beats out the rhythm with his hands. A strap with a large cloth pad on the drummer's shoulder helps to support the heavy weight of the barrel, making this instrument certainly not one for the weak.

During a stay at [The Abaco Club on Winding Bay](#), in Abaco, Bahamas in December 2005, Edward F. Nesta and I had the opportunity to experience Junkanoo, as fortunate guests at The Abaco Club on Winding Bay don't have to wait for the biannual performances, as there are Junkanoo performances held every Saturday evening.

The minute that I heard the exhilarating high-energy primal music coming up the hill to the restaurant, I sprang from my chair and rushed to the window to get a better look at what was to come. The Spring City Rockers, a Junkanoo group from Abaco, had arrived with great fanfare; whistles blowing, drums pounding, bells ringing, horns playing as the men and women dressed in vibrant costumes whirled around to the music!

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The Spring City Rockers paraded through the restaurant, and suddenly everywhere you looked you could see the guests tapping their feet, their heads nodding to the beat, and many of the guests, as well as the chefs and the restaurant staff, were on their feet joining in the Junkanoo festivities. This rhythmic music form gets into your blood, making it almost impossible to sit still and not want to get up off your chair and join in the parade of musicians, fall into the swaying choreographed dance movements, and celebrate the Bahamian art of Junkanoo.



After the Junkanoo performance, I met with Colin Curry, leader of the Spring City Rockers, which is made up of around 20 energetic members that include a diverse mix of men, women and even children in all age groups, with the youngest member being Mele, age 9, who has been performing Junkanoo for 6 years.

Each Junkanoo group has special costumes and colors. The Spring City Rockers wear white pants and white shirts, and then layer elaborate handmade costumes over their clothing. They construct their eye-catching costumes and their elaborate headdresses from cardboard, and then lavishly embellish the cardboard with multicolored crepe paper, sequins, beads, feathers, mirrors and other interesting items. How do people learn to perform Junkanoo? There are Junkanoo schools that teach this art. In nearby Marsh Harbor in Abaco, there is a Junkanoo school that meets every Saturday night at 5:00 pm, and visitors are always welcome.

I finished the interview and went in search of Edward, and found him attempting to play the cowbells with the Spring City Rockers! It seems that the Junkanoo music had “got” to him, so Colin, Sarah, Gary, and drummer Teddy, taught him how to be a “beller,” a member in a Junkanoo group that plays the cowbells. My comment to Edward; don’t give up your day job!

Please read our articles on The Abaco Club in the [Destinations](#), [Hotels & Resorts](#), [Chefs' Recipes](#), [Restaurants](#), [Music Scene](#), and [Events](#) sections.

For more information on Junkanoo and The Abaco Club on Winding Bay, please visit their websites at www.junkanoo.com and www.theabacoclub.com.

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