

Mailboats: Lifeline of the Family Islands



Getting there is half the fun; that's why travelling to the Family Islands of The Bahamas by mailboat is so popular. It takes a lot longer, but when you're in the islands, you do not worry about time.

A mailboat trip is an experience, a voyage back through time. Today, however, with many of the boats now are equipped with air-conditioned lounges, the time lapse is somewhat shortened.

These vessels are called mail boats because they carry mail. They are funded by the government to carry mail throughout the islands. Their main income, however, comes from carrying freight: mostly hardware, building supplies and food. Over the years, many boats have changed from sailboats to motor crafts, but the policy remains the same. The priorities are still: mail, freight, and then passengers. Without mailboats, living on many Family islands would be difficult.

Mailboats have been used in The Bahamas since the 17th Century when they delivered mail and small packages from the US and Britain to Crooked Island. Smaller craft would then deliver the mail from this main depot to other islands. The first scheduled mail boat offering regular service was The Dart, which sailed between Nassau and Harbour Island.

Many of our mail boats are named after family members. For example, the vessel 'Lady D' is named after Captain's Munroe's daughter Deonne. It services the Central Andros communities. Also, Captain Eddison Taylor named his mail boat 'Lady Rosalind' after his wife. It services the North Cat Island communities. Other mail boats have more straightforward names like 'The Eleuthera Express' and 'The Bahamas Daybreak'. Whatever the name, a trip on a mail boat is a journey to remember, whether you are visiting family and old friends, or attending regattas.

Adapted from 'Welcome Bahamas'

Date: _____

1. List ONE difference between mailboats used in the past and mailboats used today. [1]

2. List TWO ways in which mailboats make their money. [2]

3. What TWO words in paragraph 2 mean the same as a journey? [2]

4. Which island in The Bahamas was the first to be visited by a mailboat? [1]

5. Did these islanders receive regular service? [1] _____

6. Give evidence to support your answer. [2]

7. Which mailboat travels to each island below? [2]

Cat Island _____

Andros _____

8. To show their importance according to the rules of the mailboat, order the following using numbers 1, 2, and 3 with 1 being the most important. [3]

— travelers

— letters

— goods