



BEYOND THE BAHAMAS

With a bohemian-chic vibe, **Kamalame Cay** in the Bahamas offers a chance to get off the grid.

BY NILA DO SIMON PORTRAIT BY SETH BROWARNIK

ISLAND OF ADVENTURE David Hew, right, and Michael King are co-directors of the exclusive property, Kamalame Cay, in the Bahamas.





WELCOME HOME Kamalame Cay offers a combination of rooms, suites and villas on its 96-acre property, all with a pervading casual elegance.



There exists an unofficial motto on Kamalame Cay, a private island in the Bahamas. Borrowed from Bob Marley, the 96-acre, barefoot-chic property personifies the concept of “Love the life you live, and live the life you love.”

Built by Brian and Jennifer Hew, a Jamaican couple who fell in love with the Bahamian lifestyle, Kamalame Cay is a dreamy island retreat that embraces a casual elegance with a dash of artistry and flair. Accessible only by seaplane or private ferry from Andros Island, the property offers 38 rooms (12 of which are located in the hotel, with an additional 26 spread across the villas), which have been frequented by Nicole Kidman, Keith Urban, Penelope Cruz, Javier Bardem, Jane Seymour; various British nobles such as Lord Tryon, the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland; and members of the Norwegian, Bahraini and Saudi royal families.

The Hew family purchased the island in the 1990s and originally intended to construct their own private home as they split time between the Bahamas and Miami. Instead, beginning in 1998, the couple slowly transformed their tropical hideaway into a high-end retreat for affluent sports fishermen and their families. The desolate island, named after the Kamalame tree, was so devoid of lush vegetation that Brian brought in nearly 4,000 coconut tree seeds, raising them from seed to plant.

The Hews designed and built Kamalame Cay from the ground up, wanting it to feel more like a familiar home than a resort. Still residing on property, the Hews and their mostly local staff evoke a sense of family life for all guests. Communal dining in the Great House is encouraged, and to keep the property feeling intimate, no more than 80 guests are in residence at any time.

“Kamalame Cay was born out of that sense of familiarity, as if you were at a

friend’s house,” says David, the Hews’ son who took over the day-to-day operations and management of the property after he left his role as the operations manager at London’s famed Hamiltons Gallery. Though raised in Miami, when David refers to “home” it’s always in reference to Kamalame Cay, a place he has frequented since he was a child. Along with his husband and fellow property director, Michael King, David says the idea is to maintain a laid-back, luxurious atmosphere for the wanderlust traveler. King, a native New Zealander whose background includes owning magazine publisher The Kontent Group, brings his artistic eye and warm spirit.

“The idea is that guests walk away from the dinner table thinking how interesting the conversation was,” King says. “We want our guests to be comfortable in Louboutins, but know when to kick them off and walk barefoot.”

Kamalame Cay was also designed as a getaway that embraces all things unique to the Bahamas, including world-class diving, snorkeling and fishing, with on-property guides and staff focused on enhancing guests’ experiences. Not to be missed is the resort’s spa, the only over-the-water spa in the Bahamas located on top of a turquoise lagoon. Staff count is approximately 70, allowing for a near 1-to-1 staff-to-guest ratio.

Both Hew and King have kept the founding family’s steadfast focus on maintaining a comfortable yet swanky vibe while still enhancing the experience. The clearest example of that is how the property is expanding. In addition to the resort, Kamalame Cay offers private residences, four of which were built last year with more in the works.

“We want to expand but be conscious about it,” King says. “The roads will still always be sand, and everyone will still know everyone else’s names.” ■

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WATER WORLD Offshore diving and fishing are just some of the activities in which guests can participate.



ISLAND INSPIRATIONS Kamalame Cay is accessible only by ferry from Andros Island or by seaplane from companies such as Tropic Ocean Airways. The property showcases a distinct decor that marries tropical chic with touches of whimsy.