



A Private Island

The sanctuary of Kamalame Cay

By Gordon Ewing

Columbia is well known as a city with a great location, close to the beach and the mountains, but few realize just how close it is to incredible Caribbean hideaways. Recently, we experienced the tropical splendor of Kamalame Cay (pronounced kah-mal-a-me), a private island resort off Andros Island, Bahamas. Our short flight from Charlotte to Nassau was followed by a 15 minute connection in a twin engine Piper to Andros Island, arriving on Kamalame Cay in time for lunch.



Photography courtesy of Kamalame Cay



We were met by Najla, who issued us golf carts for our stay (every guest gets one), and we proceeded to our accommodations. Kamalame Cay is a narrow private island consisting of 96 acres with beach houses and bungalows and a maximum guest capacity of only 70. One side of the island is bordered by a white sandy beach and the turquoise water of the Caribbean Sea. The other looks out onto an immense saltwater flat that is exposed at low tide and beautifully covered by a few inches of water at high. Bonefish come up on this flat during high tide and can be fished simply by wading out and casting to them.

Buzzing along in our golf cart, we drove to our beach house on a winding sand road that cuts through palms and tropical undergrowth with a complete canopy overhead in many places. As we drove off, Najla instructed us, "Remember to drive on the left side of the road!"

The houses are tucked away from the road and look out onto the beach. Every house has a name, and ours was the newly constructed



Photography courtesy of Kamalame Cay

"Rock House." A white house with a wooden exterior and wraparound porch, our home for the next four nights looked beautiful against the green palm trees and the aqua Caribbean Sea.

The porch, complete with a small infinity pool overlooking the beach, proved to be a great place to soothe our spirits and relax while drinking a beer at the end of the day. Rock House has a complete open kitchen, with the latest appliances, connected to a cozy living area with facing sofas along with a wet bar with a wine cooler and high-pitched ceilings with four fans. The fans are appreciated but not necessarily needed since the house is refreshingly cooled with air-conditioning. Abundant natural light floods into the classically appointed interior through multiple windows and glass doors. A short hallway connects the bedroom to the living room.

Opposite: An aerial view of Kamalame Cay.
Above: Relaxing verandas are abundant.



Photography courtesy of Kamalame Cay

Before reaching the master bedroom, a small sleeping nook with a twin bed is incorporated, perfect for a young child. The master bedroom also faces the beach with French doors opening onto the porch and stairs leading to an idyllic beach area with shaded cabana, lounge chairs, and stress-free enjoyment. Rock House is also next door to the resort spa; incredibly, it is built over the water and connects to a long pier.

After we got settled, cocktail time was upon us, then on to the Great House for dinner. The Great House, a terraced open-air restaurant, serves breakfast and dinner. Decorated with beautiful artwork, antiques, fresh flowers, and greenery, it is a superb place to either start the day or end it with a sumptuous meal. The structure has a high cone-shaped ceiling rising to a point with several fans that circulate the air and assist the sea breeze that always seems to be blowing. It is never too hot, and the fresh sea air adds to the experience. Not surprisingly and happily, the menu has several local seafood dishes. One of our favorites the first night was the shrimp and crab tower. This dish consisted of poached stone crab and shrimp in a light lemon aioli layered with mango, sun ripened avocado, tomatoes, and arugula. It was served with citrus dressing and Sriracha sauce – delicious!

The next morning, lionfish and grits on the menu struck my fancy, so I ordered it and was not disappointed. A small skillet of yellow Bahamian grits was topped with a reduced tomato, onion, and pepper sauce with pan-fried lionfish and a sunny-side up egg. The meal was a wonderful way to fuel up for a full day of bonefishing.

At the dock, we were met by Gregg, our fishing guide for the day. Andros Island is known for its bonefishing, especially in the northern area where the habitat abounds with shallow estuaries and flooded mangroves. The bonefish follow the tide as it covers the flats to find shrimp and small crabs to feed on. Gregg powered us out into the open water heading north on a flats boat. The weather was not in our favor

that day, due to a low pressure cloudy overcast, making the spotting of fish difficult. Bonefish must be seen first, and then the angler delicately presents a fly representing a shrimp a foot or two in front of its mouth. Most of the day was spent with Gregg poling us along, and we were able to see all types of marine life. Lemon and nurse sharks swam right by our boat as if we were not there. A turtle's head popped up, looked us over, and darted away. We did see bonefish, but it usually was too late as they saw us first and shot off like underwater rockets.

Top: The Tiki Bar overlooks the beautiful white beach.

Middle: The bedroom view in the Rock House, built and named for David Rockefeller, a much-loved repeat guest who spent Christmas on the island until his death a couple of years ago.

Bottom: The Rock House entrance.



Photography courtesy of Kamalame Cay



Photography courtesy of Kamalame Cay

Photography courtesy of Kamilane Cay



Top left: A perfect presentation of calamari.

Middle left: The Great House restaurant.

Bottom left: The fruit salad is served in a half coconut.

Top right: Mouth-watering grilled shrimp.

Below: The Rock House pool is built into the porch.

Photography courtesy of Kamilane Cay

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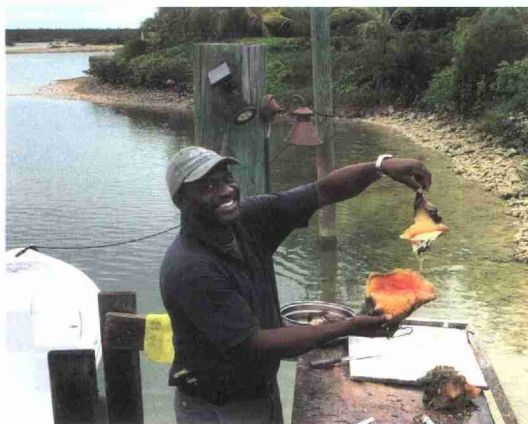




By afternoon, the clouds gave way and the sun peeked out. We had our chance. Gregg directed us out of the boat, and we began to wade in calf deep water. We walked slowly, careful not to pick up our feet but to slide them along so as not to create a disturbance. A school of bonefish just 50 feet in front of us seemed to materialize out of nothing. After a few casts, a bonefish chased down my fly and then took off, with my reel screaming in protest. The fish made a couple more runs before tiring out. After a photo or two, it was released and swam off, probably wondering what had just happened. We tied into several more bonefish, never tiring of



Photography courtesy of Kamalame Cay



Photography by Gordon Ewing

the ferocious runs they made, causing the line to scream off the rod. They are quite possibly, pound for pound, the hardest fighting fish to land on a fly rod. While the largest fish we caught was about 5 pounds, the sensation was of a fish much larger.

The next morning after breakfast, we drove our golf carts to the dock where we met Marlane, who prepared us for a snorkel adventure. With appropriate mask, fins, snorkel, and shorty wet suits, we boarded a 32-foot center console with twin 300 outboards and headed out for a short

Top: Bonefish are thrilling to catch on a fly rod.

Middle: The Kamalame spa is the only overwater spa in the Bahamas.

Bottom: Mike, who's been with the resort for 30 years, expertly removes the delicious conch meat from its shell.

ride. Marlane took us to a spot just offshore from the resort. She informed us that the wet suits would help keep us buoyant and off the coral in the very shallow water. "We will be snorkeling over to a small blue hole where there are some really big snapper," Marlane explained as we plopped over the side and into the crystal clear water.

Blue holes are sinkholes in the porous limestone that undergirds the Bahamas. Some are larger and deeper than others. We snorkeled over one that was quite small, perhaps 20 feet in diameter and a few feet deep, but the marine life was attracted to it so we saw a few large snapper as well as other tropical fish. Snorkeling back to the boat, we glided over a stretch of sand and turtle grass where we saw sea slugs. Sea slugs are marine invertebrates that look somewhat similar to land slugs. Diving down, Marlane tickled one and blackish ink came out, which is how it tries to avoid being eaten.

Back at the boat, we motored to another site that was close by but very different. This area consisted of coral outcroppings in a little deeper water. Abundant reef fish, such as sergeant majors, blue tangs, and parrotfish, make their home there as well as a large school of jacks that swam nervously by as if something was on the hunt for them. Large sea fans and sponges decorated this spot, creating a lovely underwater setting.

During our last full day, we made another snorkel trip and then spent the afternoon enjoying the beach as well as the refreshing pool located next to the outdoor Tiki bar and Beach Club. Driving back to our cottage after experiencing another wonderful and last-night dinner at Kamalame Cay, something appeared in our golf cart headlights scampering across the sand road. As we got closer, a large land crab was defending his spot with menacing claws, daring us to come closer. We gave him his space and silently glided down the path, enjoying the nighttime Caribbean breeze and gazing at the thousands of stars in the sky. Tomorrow meant re-entry into the world of reality, but at that moment we savored every last moment in the tropical paradise of Kamalame Cay.

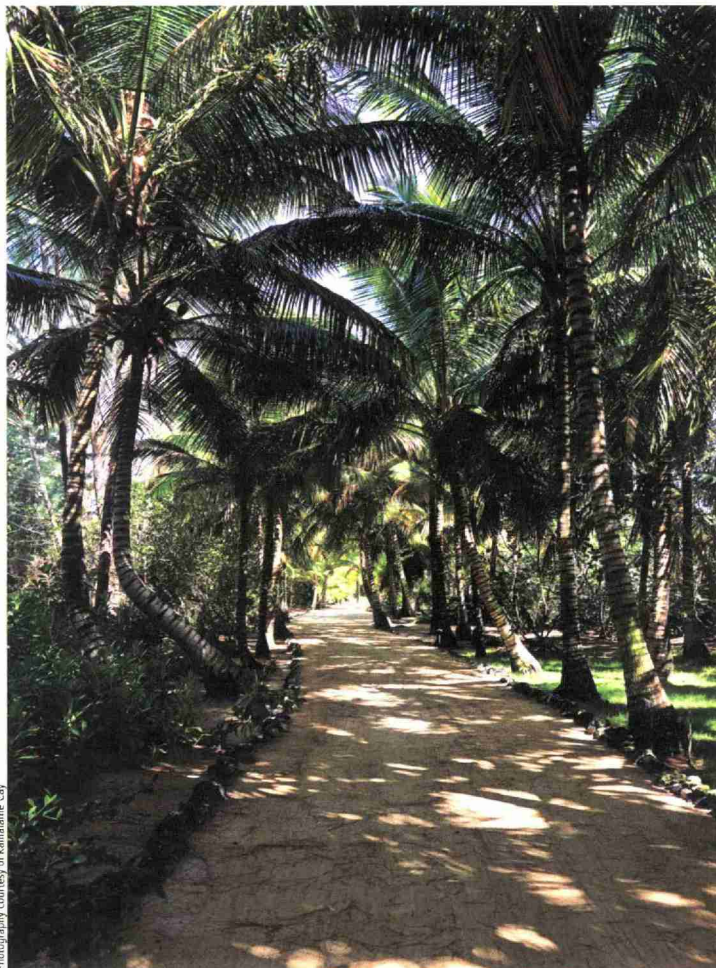
Kamalame Cay is located just off the coast of Andros Island and was completely untouched by Hurricane Dorian. Of the 700 islands of the Bahamas, the two major islands that were affected by Hurricane Dorian were Grand Bahama Island and Freeport. Freeport lies some 215 miles from Kamalame, about 50 miles from Florida. 🌴



Photography by Gordon Irving

Left: Starfish are plentiful on the beach.

Below: The island roads are narrow, perfectly suited for golf carts.



Photography courtesy of Kamalame Cay