

# PRIVATE PARADISE

Over Yonder Cay offers a dream come true — your very own tropical island, with five-star amenities.

By Roger Grody

Scattered throughout the sun-kissed seas of the world are a myriad of exclusive resorts favored by a rich and famous clientele demanding luxury, privacy and security. The privately owned island of Over Yonder Cay, an outcropping in the Bahamas bordered by sugar-white sand, sets a new standard for the vacationing practices of privileged travelers.

This idyllic enclave is located in the Exumas, the picturesque southernmost chain of islands in the Bahamas, and the entire Cay can be rented for approximately \$400,000 per week. Jill Bobrow, a marketing consultant with Over Yonder Cay and editor-at-large for Yachts International magazine, is in a position to compare the island to the world's most exclusive accommodations. "Booking the island is like chartering a luxury yacht. It has everything a super-yacht would have, but more, including all the amenities of a five-star or Relais & Châteaux property." She reports that the ultimate exclusivity and extreme privacy offered by Over Yonder Cay make it ideal for celebrities. Bobrow also notes that while the all-inclusive rental fee is steep, it is competitive with a week on a mega-yacht, an experience that can cost as much as \$1 million.

Duncan Hipkin, Over Yonder Cay's manager and chief operating officer, reinforces the parallels to luxury yachting, stating, "It's the consummate boating experience, while enjoying all the comforts of land." He explains that the 72-acre island, unlike most others in the Bahamas, has some elevation to it, creating vistas that are unusually stunning. "The villas are spread out across the island, so you can feel like you're on your own, unlike at a generic resort," notes Hipkin. On-site recreational opportunities include every imaginable water sport — assisted by an impressive flotilla of boats and

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toys — with some of the most spectacular snorkeling and diving in the region. At the time of publication, construction had already commenced on tennis facilities and an oceanfront nine-hole golf course.

Visitors are flown in from Florida, Nassau or Great Exuma Island by a seaplane based on Over Yonder Cay, where a customized ramp and arrival center for the aircraft makes trips effortless. Guests are able to use the seaplanes during their stay, enhancing their abilities to island-hop, or simply explore isolated sandbars that are tailor-made for romantic getaways. A world-class culinary team, specializing in healthy spa cuisine and seafood freshly caught from the turquoise waters lapping the island, accommodates everything from formal communal dinners to intimate picnics. Meals are so flexible and tailored to guest preferences that Hipkin is prompted to quip, "If you want an Angus hamburger on the third green at midnight, we can do it!"

Owned by the Bosarge Family Office, Over Yonder Cay has a total capacity of 28 guests, distributed among four villas, each with its own distinct architecture and amenities. The island has the only deep-water marina in the Exumas, and can accommodate yachts up to 200 feet with 13 feet of draft — including the two luxurious sailing vessels sometimes there: the 114-foot Tena-cious and the 180-foot Marie. For those wishing to extend their vacation, sailing expeditions throughout the Bahamas and Caribbean can be arranged on these two mega-yachts, which are also managed by the owners of the Cay.

Houston-based Mihai Angelescu, the site planner, architectural designer and project manager for the development, describes in one word his reaction when he saw the island for the first time: "Awe." He recalls it was unlike any place he'd ever seen, but immediately began assessing the challenges of building on such a remote island. "For a small place, it has a lot of personality and diversity," says Angelescu, who captured every bit of the island's environmental nuances with the siting of its villas. Sun and wind were important considerations, and he adopted principles from traditional Bahamian homes, whose wraparound porches adapt to changing weather conditions throughout the day.

Angelescu and interior designer Rodica Mirea worked closely to ensure each villa was unique and custom-tailored to a number of tastes. Located at the highest point on Over Yonder Cay is Villa Fiamma, which Mirea refers to as "the Olympus of the island." It is the largest, most majestic of the homes, and while it may evoke traditional imagery, it also reflects a sleek, modern aesthetic with generous glass to capitalize on the ocean views. "You can call it contemporary, but you can also call it classical and timeless," suggests the architect. All structures were constructed according to stringent Miami-Dade County building codes, and

most of the impact-resistant glass panels, including a 28-foot span in the conservatory, slide open to integrate the natural environment with the interiors.

At Villa Fiamma, seamless indoor/outdoor living and an enormous infinity pool complement the turquoise sea that dominates the horizon. "Every indoor space has an outdoor space it works in concert with," explains Angelescu, including a covered outdoor dining room with fireplace. The modern vibe is tempered with antiques like 350-year-old sculpted doors. "The interior represents a timeless elegance, free of excess, and one is aware of the overwhelming surrounding seascape," adds Mirea.

Two-story Villa Acqua, situated on the island's most pristine sandy beach, is the ultimate beach bungalow. "In the villa's master suite, you take a step into heaven with murals that bring the Bahamas' sky into the room," says Mirea. Villa Cielo is located on a small hilltop, giving it an alpine feel, even though its elevation is actually a few feet lower than Villa Fiamma. This home's interior has more of a French poise and elegance, according to the interior designer, and both of its two master suites have wraparound balconies.

The most intimate, and possibly most charming, house on the island is Villa Terra, whose location on a narrow peninsula provides generous ocean views from three sides — resulting in spectacular sunrises and sunsets over the ocean. It's the personal favorite of interior designer Mirea, who notes, "With breathtaking views from each side of the living room, you don't know if you're on land or water." Although the villa is approachable, its living room has grand architectural proportions and is flooded with light.

The challenges of the project — shipping all materials in from Florida, and dealing with occasional hurricanes — required Angelescu and his staff to have a constant presence on the island throughout the two-year construction phase. Now, pampered guests enjoy the remarkable attention to detail and environmental sensitivity that Over Yonder Cay's designers invested in the island.

Travelers who demand luxury but don't want to leave their carbon footprints all over the world will be pleased to discover that 96 percent of the island's energy needs are generated on-site with renewable resources, including a one-and-a-half-acre solar field and wind turbine system. State-of-the-art diesel generators and battery banks provide back-up power in case of any disruptions. The resort owners and managers are also dedicated to being good stewards of the island's extraordinary natural habitat, where a wealth of delicate flora and fauna continue to thrive on land and underwater. Over Yonder Cay represents a pioneering approach to hospitality development, proving that ultimate luxury and environmental consciousness are compatible values. **UH**

