

Forbes

America's Best Private Island Resort Is Back And Better Than Ever

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Crowded beaches are not an issue when you check into a private island resort.

Little Palm Island

An unusually destructive hurricane - even for the worst possible Category 5 - 2017's Irma was considered the most powerful storm ever for the open Atlantic region and the worst to hit the U.S. since Katrina twelve years earlier. In addition to catastrophic destruction across the northern Caribbean, it was devastating in the Florida Keys.

As a result, it has taken two and a half years for one of the nation's most iconic luxury resorts to reopen. But as of yesterday (March 1), [Little Palm Island Resort & Spa](#) is back and welcoming guests. That's big news for luxury travelers.



Little Palm Island has just 30 suites, all in thatched roof bungalows like this one.

Little Palm Island

To many fans of beaches and warm water, private island resorts are the ultimate indulgence, hotels that have their own entire islands to themselves. Examples of great ones abound, such as Parrot Cay in the Turks & Caicos, Kamalame Cay in the Bahamas, the Brando in French Polynesia, Six Senses in the Seychelles, Laucala in Fiji, and so on. But when it comes to the United States and easily accessed, close to home, passport-free travel, luxe private island resorts are virtually non-existent - Little Palm Island claims to be the nation's only luxury option, and it is certainly the most famous.



Bonefishing is a popular activity in the Florida Keys.

Little Palm Island

The 5 1/2-acre island is accessible solely by private boat, seaplane or its own ferry, a 15-minute ride that departs from the resort's reception office on Little Torch Key, located at Mile Marker 29 in the Florida Keys (the traditional northeastern start of the Keys, Key Largo, is 107, while the last point of land, Key West, is mile zero).

Returning guests will easily recognize their beloved resort, as the scale and theme have been kept the same, while at the same time, noticeable improvements have been made. The lodging is still comprised of 30 suites in thatched roof bungalows, with a maximum of just 60 guests at a time. It still has no telephones, no televisions (well, actually there is one, in the Great Room common area), and admits no guests sunder the age of 18. The walking paths crisscrossing the private island paradise are still "paved" with crushed seashells, and the pool area once again features the extremely popular palapa bar.



But everything is new, from the redesigned suites - all with ocean view and private decks and many with outdoor showers - to the new poolside private cabanas to the expanded main restaurant, the Dining Room (with a new and acclaimed chef). The once small spa has been replaced with an all new version more in keeping with a modern luxury destination resort, featuring a new two-story atrium with a handcrafted tile fountain. There's also a brand-new fitness center.

"In reopening Little Palm Island we knew that we faced an exciting challenge - how do we not only restore the spirit and essence of the property, that our loyal guests adore, but also evolve the experience, aesthetic and functionality?" said Pat Colee, owner, founder and chairman of the board of [Noble House Hotels & Resorts](#), the parent company Noble House also operates one of the marquee luxury properties in nearby Key West, The Ocean Key Resort, as well as two of the best ski-in/ski-out properties in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, both of which I have stayed at, the Hotel Terra and Teton Mountain Lodge. "The answer for us was extraordinary attention to detail. This restoration has been a true labor of love and we believe we've maintained the authentic character of Little Palm while ushering in added amenities. We cannot wait to welcome guests back on our shores."



The 2 1/2 year renovation of Little Palm Island added a lot - like an all new spa.

Little Palm Island

Before its closure, *Conde Nast Traveler* named it one of the world's Top 10 private island resorts, *Travel + Leisure* rated them the second-best hotel in Florida, and the more discerning *Andrew Harper's Hideaway Report* ranked them in the nation's Top 10 Hideaways. Little Palm Island officially reopens on March 1, 2020 and room rates include valet parking on the mainland, transfers in the resort's private motor yacht, and use of watersports equipment including paddleboards, kayaks, Hobie cats and Boston Whalers. A la carte activities include flats fishing, Scuba diving, sailing, boat snorkeling trips, and even sky diving.