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Due South

Travel and Adventure for the Southern Soul

Fishing Therapy

Kamalame Cay may be the only fishing resort in the world that's good for your body, your mind, and your marriage

by SID EVANS



Hot Pursuit

Bonefish guide Alvin Bauld heads to a flat near Kamalame Cay.

ALVIN GUNNED THE LITTLE FLATS SKIFF, AND WE SHOT across the turquoise water, heading into a stiff north wind on a morning bonefish expedition. To our left was the long, narrow strip of sand and coral known as Kamalame Cay, home to a discreet resort just off the coast of Andros, the largest and least-populated island in the Bahamas. To our right was a barrier reef that stretched as far as the eye could see, jutting out of the ocean like a saw blade.

It was unusually chilly for Andros (low sixties), and Alvin Bauld, our guide, had on enough layers to weather a New York blizzard. But more unusual was the fact that my wife, Susan, had come on a fishing trip with me. To put it mildly, she doesn't share my passion for the sport, and she's baffled by the amount of time, effort, and money it consumes. As we passed the spa, a gorgeous, two-story, cedar-shingled hut that sits out over the water on a two-hundred-foot-long pier, she shouted over the whine of the motor, "What time do you think we'll be back?"

We had come to Kamalame as a kind of experiment, a test to see if there was a fishing lodge where my fishing-averse wife could be happy, or a truly comfortable resort that also happened to have world-class fishing. After a decade of traveling together, we'd concluded that fishing and vacationing don't mix. I tend to like my piscatorial pursuits without the frills (and the bills) of high-thread-count hotels. But I also knew better than to strand my wife at a lodge with nothing to do but fish.

Alvin, who's one of the best and most pleasant guides I've ever been on the water with, seemed to understand this. He quickly put me on two very nice bonefish ("Good for you!" said Susan, who was wrapped in several towels against the wind), and soon we were headed back to our beautiful beachfront cottage, a bowl of lobster bisque and a salad for lunch, and an eagerly anticipated appointment at the spa.

Tomorrow I would meet Alvin again—solo.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

ALTHOUGH OUR TRIP HERE WAS A COMPROMISE, WE SOON realized that Kamalame doesn't compromise on anything. That was always the vision of Jamaica natives Brian and Jennifer Hew, who bought a home here in 1994 and then started plans for a resort that would have (according to a brochure) "something for everyone." They had first come here for the excellent offshore fishing, but they began to envision a life here, and a business. Brian handled the engineering, and Jennifer handled the design of the cottages, which are essentially British colonial, with Jamaican influences like peaked roofs and big, open living spaces. They even managed the tricky feat of giving each bathtub a view of the ocean.

Beyond what Brian describes as a "hassle-free" vibe that "feels like you're in the Seychelles or the Maldives," they wanted the food, the service, and the rooms to be run like a five-star hotel—not an easy trick in the Bahamas. And mostly, they've succeeded, thanks in large part to their son, David, who oversees the friendly and competent staff. Aside from a few hiccups with a broken espresso machine (who needs it?) and a blown fuse on the hot water heater



Paradise Found
Clockwise from above: An oceanfront cottage; grilled lobster with coconut curry; Bauld on the flats; the main dining room; a caught bonefish; the spa; lunch is served.

(fixed immediately), we had none of the problems that sometimes go with Caribbean "hideaways."

The food, for instance, was exceptional. Based on locally caught snapper, grouper, mahimahi, and conch, the meals were what you might call jazzed-up Bahamian.

Instead of frying everything, chef Devon Smith, an Andros native, mixed up the menu with things like a spicy seafood gumbo, fresh cracked conch served over Asian coleslaw, and a rack of lamb with roasted potatoes that could have been served in the best restaurants in nearby Miami.

Kamalame (named for a tree common on Andros) is also well known for its diving and snorkeling, which may be even better than its fishing. The reef just offshore is the third largest in the world, with a drop-off that abruptly goes from 90 feet to 6,000 feet. David Hew, who loves to dive, says there's always an abundance of colorful reef fish, but he has also encountered giant loggerhead turtles, bottlenose dolphins, eagle rays, and, once, a whale shark. If you're feeling adventurous, Andros is home to more blue holes than anyplace in the world, as well as coral gardens and dramatic vertical walls.

But for Susan and me, this was a rare vacation away from the kids, so we were content to walk on the beach, which was literally steps from our door, and to drive our golf cart (which came with the room)



to the end of the cay. It was about three miles down the lone sandy road, and one evening before dinner we took glasses of wine to watch the sunset. About halfway down I stopped suddenly at the sight of a beautiful limestone flat—and there, sparkling in the sunlight, were the tails of a half dozen bonefish, poking jauntily above the surface. My fly rod was back at the cottage, just a few minutes away.

I decided not to push my luck.

BACK TO THE FISH

THE NEXT MORNING I MET ALVIN AT 8:30 AT THE DOCK, where he awaited me with a big smile. He had just turned fifty a few days earlier, and he told me he loved to fish so much that he did it on his vacations—this from a guy who guides anglers about two hundred days a year.

"What happened to your fishing partner?" he asked with a grin.



Braxton Crim

If You Go

Timing: Though it was unseasonably cold during our trip in late December, peak season for Kamalame runs October through June. You might also consider

planning a trip around the Kamalame Cup, a horse race on the beach in December, or the annual All Andros Crab Fest in June, an island-wide party.

Rooms: Kamalame has a

variety of cottages available, as well as the Cove, a spectacular home overlooking the sea that can handle up to eight guests, with a private chef and staff. Oceanfront cot-

tages come with a golf cart, and kayaks are easily accessible. **Homes:** Plans are in the works to build a number of private homes along the cay, and lots are available.

"Don't worry," I said. "She's happy, very happy."

We ran a little farther north this time, and again Alvin guided me to two very nice bones, each one making that blistering run that fishermen will fly across continents to experience. He also talked a lot about the Jolters, a huge flat at the north end of Andros known for its raw beauty and its giant schools of bonefish. I would not get there this trip, as the weather was not cooperating, but I made a mental note to put it on my bucket list.

Back at Kamalame, Susan had gotten a facial at the spa and taken a walk on the beach. I came back to the cottage, leaned my fly rod on the porch, and found her in the hammock, engrossed in a novel.

She barely looked up, pausing just long enough to ask a question: "Why'd you come back so soon?"

► For rates and other information, go to kamalame.com.