

Southern Comfort

It really is better in the Bahamas, especially when you can spend a few glorious days with your best girls at the sublime Kamalame Cay.

BY MARIA TETTAMANTI

The Over Water Spa at the end of the pier allows for blissful al fresco treatments.

What if I told you there's a private island hideaway a stone's throw away from Miami where the beach is free of crowds, the ocean is as flat as glass, the food is exceptionally exquisite and the accommodations mirror the sublime creations of India Hicks? Well, it exists.

Nestled off the coast of Nassau in the Bahamas, I relished a far-too-fleeting weekend on Kamalame Cay with two of my cronies for a much needed and overdue girlfriend getaway. You see, it's been 13 years since I've taken a girlfriend getaway (I blame good old-fashioned guilt), so when the idea to visit this off-the-beaten-path destination with my friends presented itself, I decided to throw caution to the Caribbean wind. And thank goodness I did, because this estrogen-charged excursion was one for the books.



Resort owners David Hews and Michael King



With bestie Marcella Novella



Beach babes: Lauren Gnazzo and me

Our accommodations? Breathtaking. Think seashell chandeliers, freshly cut palm fronds, white couches, nautical nuances and tropical prints—our British Colonial-style home emulated the neighboring kaleidoscopic ocean. In fact, our villa is what co-owner David Hew has fittingly coined as “island chic.”

Intentionally, there are no telephones, televisions or Internet in our suite, either. “All of this lends itself to a pace of life that is defined not by the time or a TV show but instead by the sunrise, sunset and gathering to break bread and share in conversation and reverie,” Hew says. You see, David and his family developed and grew up on the island and they add their personal touch to every aspect of the property, from the rustic-meets-plush décor to the ample amenities to the tremendous sense of warmth inherent in the staff. David’s partner, Michael, brings a serious highbrow touch to the property’s culinary experience. “My parents designed and built Kamalame using indigenous materials and finishes. They



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Scenes from paradise, including an open-air bar with stone touches; a vignette from the villa bedroom; the cozy living room and dining area; a sitting area at the tiki bar; front view of the Magnolia House.



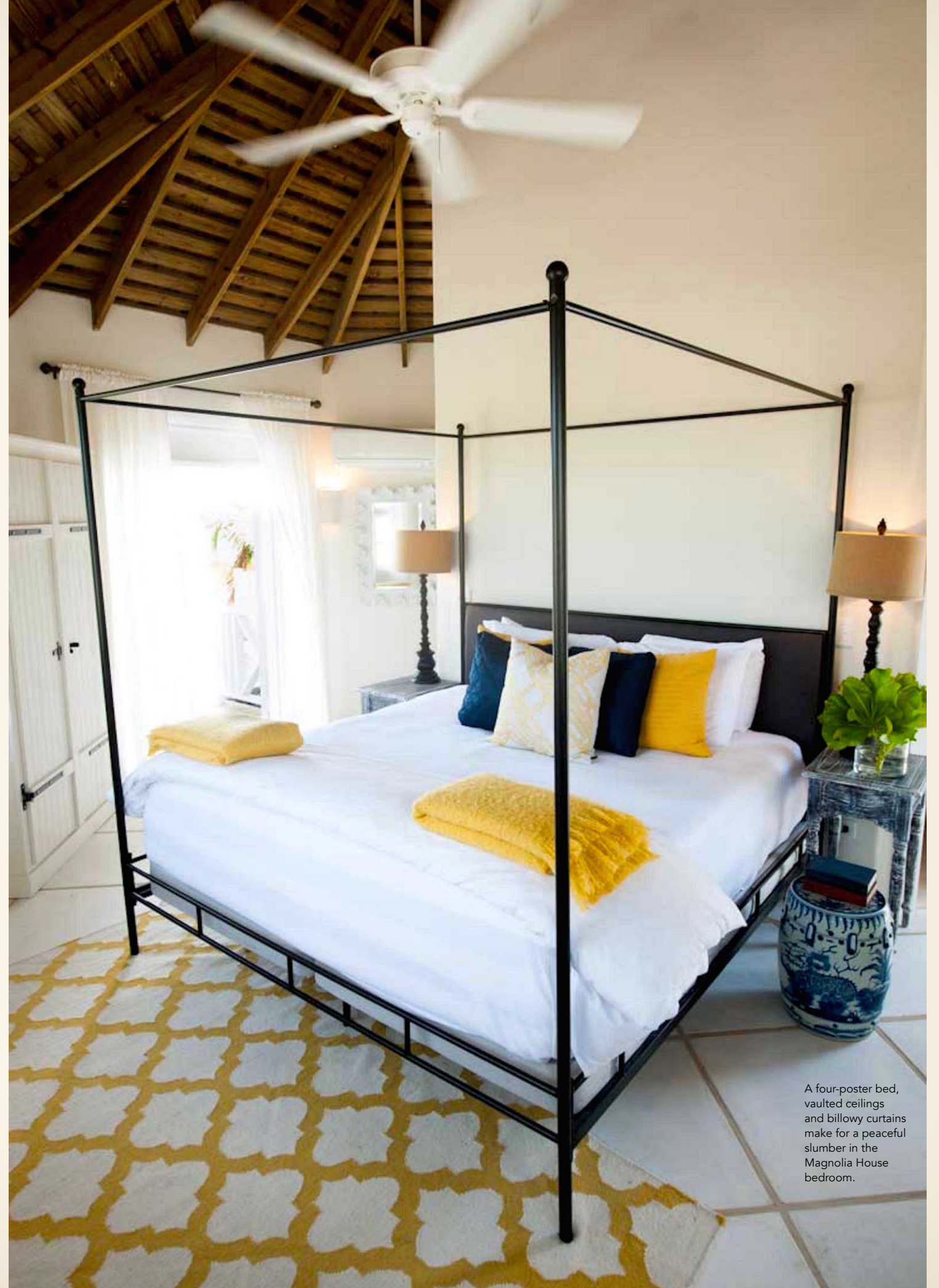
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Socializing inside the Great House; a chill spot on the Magnolia deck; seating area in the Great House; one more way to enjoy the view.

worked with the land around them and removed invasive exotic flora and replaced it with their indigenous counter parts,” Hew explains of the island’s metamorphosis. “They then peppered this with the niceties they liked to surround themselves with—think toes in the sand while drinking a delicious glass of wine.

“The same applies to our decorating style in the sense that we blur the lines between the rough finishes and the refined ones. We bring the outdoors inside and the indoors outside,” he adds. “We have managed to amass a team of employees, an extended family if you will, to whom this is they’re home also. It is this relaxed island vibe and hospitality that ring true with most of our guests.”

So here we were, on this spellbinding sliver of heaven bursting with postcard-perfect beaches, hermit crabs, spiral-tailed lizards, coconuts, hummingbirds, parrotfish and lush landscapes. We had planned our trip to fall on a Saturday in sunny June for one of the island’s legendary lunches at the Great House. During these special reunions, locals from the neighboring islands and wanderlust types helicopter, seaplane or boat in for delicious eats, tangy libations (compliments of the sweetest couple, Will and Laura of Young’s Fine Wine) and dancing—emphasis on the “dancing” part. Honestly, I cannot recall the last time I danced until 1 a.m. It was so very freeing.

The next morning, I savored a three-mile walk



A four-poster bed, vaulted ceilings and billowy curtains make for a peaceful slumber in the Magnolia House bedroom.



Yet another way to relax at Kamalame: poolside by the beach.

atop the powdery white-sand beach and didn't bump into a single soul. Not once. (This experience alone is reason enough to schedule a return trip.) Later on in the day, my girlfriends and I snorkeled right off the shore of Kamalame Cay, as it's perched on the edge of the third-largest barrier reef in the world. Here, we spotted glow-in-the-dark fish, oversized billowing sea fans and undulating stingrays on the boundless coral reef.

Back on land, we sauntered along palm tree-lined paths, zipped around on golf carts (the Hews affectionately call them "sand chariots"), quaffed Minuty rosé and noshed on perfectly cooked conch fritters, coconut soup, spring rolls and key lime pie until our bellies were full. The banter flowed into the wee hours and we fell asleep to the sound of the waves lapping the shore while the salty air wafted through our bedroom.

It's the kind of place that rendering one to pinch themselves in hopes reality is not merely a quixotic dream. The three of us quickly learned that paradise indeed exists on this earth—and its name is Kamalame Cay. **■**

If You Go

• GETTING THERE

From Fort Lauderdale, guests can charter a direct private flight with Tropic Ocean Airways (flytropic.com). From Miami International Airport, most major airlines fly directly to Nassau. To reach Kamalame Cay from Nassau, guests must travel via helicopter or seaplane. There is also a private ferry from Andros.

• ACCOMMODATIONS

The property offers 34 rooms in the shape of Bahamian-style villas and cottage suites.

• AMENITIES

An ocean-top spa, The Over Water Spa, boasts five treatment rooms utilizing holistic Naturopathica products. The Great House is the property's on-site restaurant featuring Asian- and Bahamas-inspired dishes among others..

• ACTIVITIES

Diving, snorkeling, tennis, paddle boarding, kayaking, deep-sea and bone fishing can be arranged.

• MARINA

The private island now accommodates boats up to 110 feet and can dock up to six vessels at any given time with virtually unlimited mooring options.

Visit kamalame.com for more details.