

Royal Island

Travel to a private island in the Bahamas, where villas overlook a sandy beach and customized adventures make for an unforgettable vacation

Story and photos by **Chad Chisholm**

AS THE FEATHERY WHITE CLOUDS parted outside the window of our jet, from my window seat I could see the azure Caribbean waters peppered with emerald gems of islands as we made our final descent. There it was: Royal Island, just off the coast of Eleuthera. I couldn't wait to plunge into the private island getaway that awaited me.

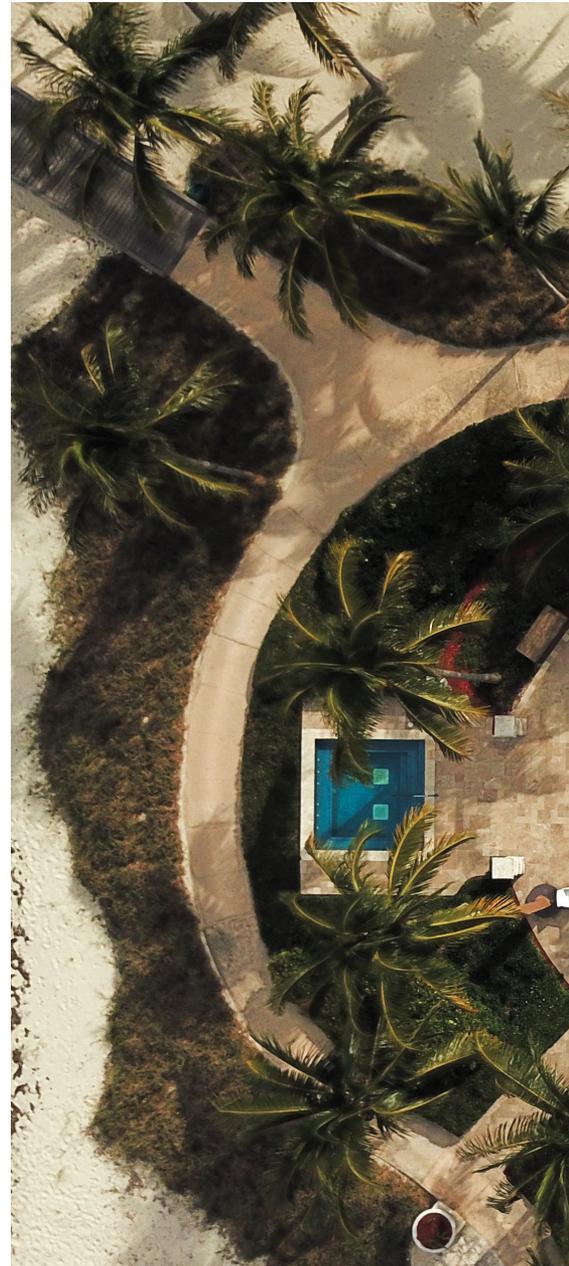
Thoughts of an island getaway spark daydreams of deserted beaches, sunshine-soaked pool decks, aqua waters and tranquil spaces. Royal Is-

land Bahamas by Cuveé has all those attributes, and more. The island oasis is a guest's dream, complete with accommodations for up to 18 guests, pool, jet skis, lounges and Bahamian hospitality.

After arriving on Eleuthera island, we took a private charter boat across sparkling Caribbean waters to the 430-acre Royal Island. The crystal-clear sea afforded a glimpse below of thriving coral reefs, lobsters scuttling along the sand and schools of shimmering fish. Once at Royal Island,



Refreshing cocktails like Bahama Mamas are an island staple.



THE DETAILS

Cuveé

Cuveé is a curated collection of ultra-luxury villas, chalets and estates and is not a membership club.

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we were treated to chilled coconuts, and luggage was whisked away to our villa. A welcome at The Beach Club was complete with snacks and bar to belly up to. I ordered a frozen rum drink and took in the ocean view beyond, nibbling on conch fritters and ice-cold fruit while soft steel drum music played on the breeze. I could feel my cares melt away.

On the island, there are five villas. A one-key experience, the island is yours and yours alone, whether that means a romantic getaway for two or for a

family gathering of 18 (you won't be sharing the pool with anyone you don't know, so feel free to hog the flamingo pool floatie). In addition to the five villas, there is a bunk room and spa suite—perfect for kids or nannies. Dark woods and crisp white sheets make for welcome island accommodations, with each villa lining a sandy beach and overlooking the waters beyond. The master-style bathroom suites and soaking tubs might have you enjoying the luxury of the room just as much as the property.

The heart of the resort is the pool and beach club area.

“We made the decision to invest in Royal Island and add it to our portfolio as it is one of the only islands in the world that offers a completely private experience,” said Kristin Westberg, vice president of global client experiences for Cuveé. “The entire on-island experience is curated to the preferences of our guests, including customized menus and adventures, and a truly dedicated staff

catering to their every desire. The island itself is pristine, authentically Bahamian, and only an hour's flight from South Florida airports.”

The heart of the resort is the pool and Beach Club area, where a chef offered local, fresh fare and poolside treats. The small, friendly staff quickly learned favorite drink orders and playfully bantered with the guests. (If you've never tried a Goombay Smash or Planter's Punch, this is the time to imbibe.) The large pool terrace is a tranquil spot to sip a drink or float away the afternoon; a nearby whirlpool spa overlooks an emerald bay where jet skis are at the ready for a fun-filled ride on the water or to transport you to nearby beaches.

Chef-prepared, locally inspired fare is excellent at Royal Island. I especially enjoyed lobster dinner night under a canopy of sparkling stars and with the glow of nearby tiki torches. A local band was brought in while we laughed and ate dinner. After dessert of an island-style cheesecake, dancing began on an impromptu dance floor, where we twirled to a rendition of “Red, Red Wine.” The dining terrace was then transformed into an outdoor movie theater, complete with lounge seating and popcorn, as the gentle island breezes swayed the palm trees and the movie played over a subtle lapping of waves on the



Yoga sessions under a flamboyant tree are among the activities for guests.



Chef Sergio prepares lobsters.



Royal Island's peaceful views and calm waters make your cares melt away.



Island villas overlook the beach and ocean.

private beach shore. We watched *Pirates of the Caribbean*; what else?

During the day, a boat is available to take guests snorkeling off a sunken ship, or for a picnic on a sugar-white sandbar. Minding the tides, the staff helps navigate the best times for

local activities. Early risers can take in the cotton-candy sunrise on a solitary beach walk or center their minds with some yoga near the pool under a blooming flamboyant tree.

One unexpected opportunity included an afternoon feeding and

All fresco dining is available for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

swimming with baby pigs. Almost as if a supper bell was rung as our boat pulled up to the beach, the pigs trotted across the white sands and splashed into the water, anxiously awaiting one of their favorite treats: apples. Slices skewered onto the ends of sticks were gobbled up by the piglets as they tread water seeking more food.

Tailored not only to the guests' desires and vacation plans, Cuvée's attention to detail also extends to curated cultural experiences and partnerships with the local community. "Cuvée's vision has always been to create highly personalized and authentic experiences for our guests in each of the destinations we call home," Westberg said.

Chad Chisholm is a Denver-based travel writer and photographer.