

VANCOUVER **courier**

Travel: Emerald Bay, Exuma, Even Bore Beautiful in Person



Cruising around the **Marina at Emerald Bay** on the Caribbean island of **Exuma** in May, my partner and I stopped to admire the super yachts berthed in their slips.

These mega yachts are a common sight in and around the island, a favorite playground for the rich and famous, including Johnny Depp, Bill Gates, Justin Timberlake and Madonna. But it's not just celebrities who frequent Exuma and during our stay at **Grand Isle Resort and Spa** we met visitors from across the globe. It often wasn't until later in a conversation we'd realize the person chatting us up at the bar was a multi-millionaire, in one case the owner of a software design company from London, England, and in another, a developer from Miami. But we also met families and couples from all economic backgrounds who make the pilgrimage to Exuma and Grand Isle annually. It's a bonus that it's tough to guess anyone's personal wealth when everyone is dressed in flip flops and shorts.



We had ridden over to the marina on the golf cart included with our vacation rental at Grand Isle, located on the ivory crescent beach of Emerald Bay. We stayed in a gorgeous one bedroom, two level villa overlooking the pool on one side and with a sweeping ocean view on the other, with, of course, a swaying coconut tree providing shade to our deck. The builder smartly located the bedroom on the ground floor so guests don't have to lug bags up any stairs once they check in and the beautifully appointed gourmet kitchen on the second floor had everything we needed to make meals. Visitors can rent one, two and three bedroom villas or penthouses, including a four-bedroom grand suite complete with an 1,100 square-foot ocean front balcony.



The two days we spent at Grand Isle were likely the most relaxing of our almost two week holiday to the Bahamas and Exuma, which was exactly how we planned it. We stocked up on groceries and wine and with the exception of our golf cart adventure, stuck close to the pool and extraordinarily beautiful beach. I had looked at many photographs of Grand Isle prior to our visit, but while standing, in person, on that white sand beach it was immediately apparent the beauty of Emerald Bay far exceeds any photos available online.

We also enjoyed dinner one night at the resort's **Palapa Grill**, which this year was named one of the best romantic restaurants in the Bahamas by Travel and Leisure magazine. It was there we enjoyed some of the freshest seafood imaginable at our poolside table against a backdrop of twinkling lights. (I'd highly recommend the coconut shrimp.)

Despite its gorgeous villas and grounds, Grand Isle has a laid-back feel to it where bare feet are the norm and shorts and a T-shirts are the dress code of the day.

