

Exclusivity meets luxury at Florida's Royal Blues Hotel

Boutique beachfront bijou provides epicurean dining, privacy for guests



ROCHELLE LASH
Checking In

Exclusive. Exquisite. Expensive. The Royal Blues Hotel in Deerfield Beach, just north of Fort Lauderdale, is Florida's first Relais & Châteaux. That's a lofty laurel in a region where hospitality has been an art for more than 100 years. This boutique bijou was custom designed to meet the exacting criteria of the global Relais & Châteaux hospitality group, with 12 luxurious accommodations, avant-garde artworks and epicurean dining and wining, all on an outstanding Atlantic Ocean beachfront.

Given Canadians' love affair with the prestigious Relais & Châteaux, Royal Blues already has been host to visitors from Montreal, Toronto and Ottawa almost every week since opening more than a year ago.

Just how boutique is this boutique hotel? Very.

Royal Blues doesn't have a lobby, only a podium for the reception manager. There are two to four accommodations on each floor, so privacy is paramount. The bar seats about 12. And, the rooftop pool is a modest 7 by 3 metres, ideal for dipping or lounging. It's all rather discreet and low-key, but if you want more action, Deerfield Beach's surf and sand are outside the door.

Imagine cocktails on your suite's terrace overlooking the landmark Deerfield Beach International Fishing Pier, which will present a dazzling U.S. Independence Day fireworks show on July 4. Or cappuccino on the patio, gazing at the sunrise over the Atlantic.

You will be in good company. I don't want to dish about the other guests at Royal Blues, but let's simply say owner Edward Walson, a cable-television mag-

nate, also is an award-winning TV, Broadway and film producer who is pals with countless A-list celebs. Walson produced Blue Jasmine, Magic in the Moonlight and theatre's Bullets over Broadway, all directed or written by Woody Allen.

Royal Blues is environmentally friendly, using mostly organic food and strictly green operating systems.

Accommodations: The Royal Blues' 12 gorgeous guest rooms and suites all have balconies and floor-to-ceiling patio doors with views of the Atlantic. Five categories range from a classic hotel room with a sofa bed for toddlers to a celeb-worthy suite with a tub-for-two that has an ocean view.

The look is contemporary classic with rich furnishings, marble floors and splashes of sunny yellow.

Royal Blues' dining room, Chanson, is the most gastronomic force ever to breeze into this casual beach town.

low against a sand-hued palette. Royal Blues plays on a yacht theme with teak panelling and touches of leather.

It's a best-of-everything place so the bed linens (and beach towels) are by Frette of Italy, and the toiletries are all natural and aromatic, by Red Flower of New York.

Newly built, the rooms have the latest tech controls. If you are an habitu   of five-star hotels, you've seen push-button drapes and showers with touch screen thermostats, but Royal Blues has more. Wait till you see the loo. Kohler's Numi model has a control panel, so I went to Settings and programmed for automated



Royal Blues Hotel, north of Fort Lauderdale, is Florida's first Relais & Châteaux. PHOTOS: ROYAL BLUES HOTEL

welcome music, a heated seat, Bluetooth and eco-flush. **Gourmet dining:** Royal Blues' dining room, Chanson, is the most gastronomic force ever to breeze into this casual beach town and it has taken dining and drinking to a new level of refinement.

Chef Bjoern Eicken has manned influential kitchens in Germany, England and the U.S., including a Michelin-starred establishment.

His cuisine is European-inspired with market-fresh ingredients, so Chanson features several dishes-of-the-moment, such as risotto, pasta, fish and crudo. Special starters include shrimp samosas, tuna tartare and foie gras, and some of his signature main courses are wagyu beef with braised short rib, herb-crusted lamb, veal with prosciutto, red snapper and sea scallops with fennel.

Walson has a keen interest in wine and has helped to choose Chanson's exceptional collection, which is on display in a glass wall. The list features fine Bordeaux and Burgundies, as well as outstanding examples of regional terroir, including Syrah from Gramercy Cellars of Columbia Valley, Washington, and a Pinot Nero by Joseph Hofstatter from Italy.

The lounge specializes in cocktails of premium tequila, vodka, rum and whisky, shaken and stirred with essences of Florida limes and oranges. Royal Blues wants to stay accessible — a little — so the bar offers two-for-one drinks on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and \$10 Veuve Clicquot Champagne on Fridays for women.

Even breakfast, served on the

IF YOU GO

Royal Blues Hotel is 27 kilometres north of Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport and 37 km south of Palm Beach International Airport. **Royal Blues Hotel:** 954-857-2929, royalblueshotel.com; 45 N.E. 21st Ave., Deerfield Beach, Fla. **Price:** five styles, all oceanfront: \$459-\$549-\$559-\$1,029-\$1,329 US per night until Sept. 30,

including in-room coffee, pool, beach setups, fitness room, Wi-Fi, evening turndown, parking. (From Oct. 1-March 31, 2017, it's \$499-\$589-\$599-\$1,079-\$1,399 US) **Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention and Visitors Bureau:** 800-356-1662 or 800-22-SUN-NY/800-227-8669, sunny.org; Visit Florida: 888-735-2872, www.visitflorida.com.



The 12 luxurious rooms and suites at the new Royal Blues Hotel in Deerfield Beach all face the Atlantic Ocean.

oceanfront patio, is divine. The morning chef does flaky, sweet pastries and cranberry nut bread, kiwi-kale-apple smoothies, and creative dishes such as eggs over kale and shiitake mushrooms. The yogurt, honey and fruit all are organic.

The neighbourhood: Deerfield Beach is Blue Wave certified by the Clean Beaches Coalition, a national environmental organization. The designation refers to high standards of clean water, safety and conservation of sea life.

Royal Blues is one block from Deerfield Beach's "S" curve on Route A1A, a cute walkable district with bike rentals, T-shirt shops, pubs and ice cream parlours. Island Water Sports organizes surfing and paddle boarding (islandwatersports.com).

The hotel is considering transforming a small adjacent property into a spa. Another sublime indulgence for its highly indulged guests.

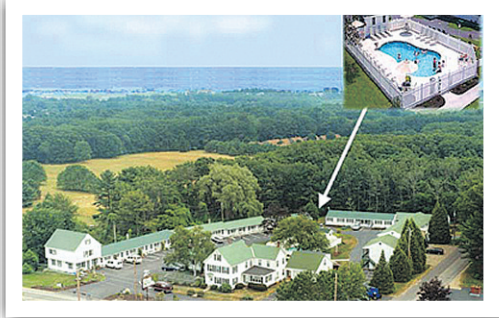
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