

CHECKING IN

A VIBRANT UPDATE FOR PALM BEACH'S CLASSIC COLONY



ROCHELLE LASH

The classic Colony Hotel in glamorous Palm Beach, Fla., has experienced a next-generation rejuvenation.

The 71-year-young Colony is at the nexus of Palm Beach's essentials. It is adjacent to famous Worth Ave. where one-per-centers patronize jewelry stores, art galleries and fashion touchstones like Chanel and Gucci. And the hotel also is one block from the Atlantic Ocean.

Members of the Florida Riviera social elite alight at The Colony for drinks and dinner, cabaret entertainment, weddings and charity affairs. And generations of gentry vacation together in this clubby getaway. Even with that exclusive ambience, sun-seekers watching their budget can find reasonable value with moderate rates in the low season of May through October.

Back in the day, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor felt very at home in their penthouse suite. Frank Sinatra, Judy Garland and Sophia Loren partied in private villas and even John Lennon made this establishment scene.

You can name-drop forever. For example, some of The Colony's rooms feature works by the accomplished artist Edwina Sandys, granddaughter of Sir Winston Churchill, who was a passionate painter as well.

The Colony was a boutique establishment long before the term was invented. It is petite, posh and personal, with fine cuisine, assiduous service and a refined resort ambience at the centre of a genteel town. Front-desk staff greet new arrivals with a tulip of champagne. The concierges set up cycling, tennis, golf, cultural outings and massages.

Andrew and Sarah Wetenhall — she's the CEO — were so smitten by this beloved heritage establishment that they bought it from his father. Their dual mission when they updated it was to

IF YOU GO

The Colony Hotel Palm Beach: 800-521-5525, 561-655-5430, thecolonypalmbeach.com; 155 Hammon Ave., Palm Beach, Florida.

Price: Rates fluctuate and specials pop up. May-Oct., rooms/suites are approximately US\$209-\$500. From Nov.-April, they're US\$350-\$1,200. Rates include pool, beach shuttle/chairs/umbrellas, bicycles, yoga, lawn games, children's welcome bag/toys, morning coffee.

Dining: Polo Restaurant has breakfast, lunch, dinner daily; Motown party every Friday, 9 p.m. no cover charge. Café 155 is open Mon.-Sat., 7 a.m.-5 p.m. Bimini Poolside Bar is open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. daily. Royal Room Cabaret is open Nov.-March, with a dress code.

Discover the Palm Beaches: 800-833-5733, 561-233-3000, thepalmbeaches.com. Visit Florida: 888-735-2872, visitflorida.com.

have respect for its past and keep a sharp eye on the future.

The news: The vivid new interiors of the new Colony are so playful and uplifting that they make every space a celebration, and each salon, suite and corridor is unique.

Interior decorator Carleton Varney went wanton with Florida shades of azalea pink, sunny yellow, sea aqua and golf green. For curtains, pillows and upholstery, he used 285 different fabrics and motifs dancing with palm fronds, banana leaves and grapes.

What about the décor trend of minimalist white? "I'm not that person," Varney said. "I adore texture, pattern and exciting colour and I like everything pretty."

The rooms are plush, with deluxe beds, walk-in closets and views of Palm Beach's foliage and Mediterranean-inspired mansions. The bathrooms — caution, many are compact — are freshly done with crystalline mosaics, glass showers and luxurious toiletries from Italy. Tranquillity rules. The rooms are soundproof



The Colony Hotel in Palm Beach offers old-school glamour with a vivid new interior makeover.

and the residential area is quiet.

The flat-screen TVs stream Netflix for free and the phones are enabled with Bluetooth.

Dining: Polo Steaks & Seafood is the place to be for indoor-outdoor dining. Patrons linger for hours to make the most of the beautiful surroundings and tony atmosphere. For dinner, you might start with lobster bisque, crab cakes or tuna tartare, and follow with scallops, lobster salad or filet mignon. Easygoing dishes like Wagyu burgers are perfect for poolside evenings. Watch for special evenings with wine-themed feasts.

Highlights at breakfast include crab Benedict or omelettes of shrimp, goat cheese and avocado. Brunch features duck confit omelettes or a bowl of açai-

pomegranate, while lunch might be chicken curry salad or The Colony club sandwich.

The Bimini Bar serves poolside bites and cocktails — try the Sunshine State Mojito with rum, mint and orange. Café 155 is handy for a breakfast croissant, sandwiches or homemade cookies.

What to do: The Colony has a new fleet of bicycles and the car-free Lake Trail meanders past many impressive sights: the stately Henry Morrison Flagler Museum, the Society of the Four Arts Botanical Garden, the Royal Poinciana Plaza, the magnificent mansions along the Intracoastal Waterway and the grand yachts at the Palm Beach Town Docks.

The hotel also presents yoga on several mornings at 10 a.m. And the bellmen will ferry you

around town in a Cadillac SUV or to the beach in a deluxe golf cart.

Nightlife: Go figure, this placid getaway is also a renowned hub of Palm Beach nightlife. The Royal Room Cabaret (seasonal) is a supper club with dinner, drinks and star lounge performers who have garnered Grammys, Emmys and Tonys.

The Colony is conservative, but not dull. A jazz soloist serenades during brunch and torchy lounge singers take to the stage after dinner at Polo, adding a dance beat. Plus, The Colony's sensational Motown nights (Fridays at 9 p.m., year-round) are so popular that you'll need a reservation.

Trust me. I heard it through the grapevine.

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