

# MARRIOTT HUTCHINSON ISLAND A FULLY LOADED FLORIDA GETAWAY

*Enjoy no-stress living, with everything you would want in one semi-private property*



ROCHELLE LASH

So many activities, so little time. Or perhaps you would prefer to simply luxuriate in Florida's trademark sun and sand.

The Marriott Hutchinson Island Beach Resort, Golf and Marina in Stuart, Fla., is a fully loaded vacation getaway with an excellent location, a 45-minute drive north of Palm Beach International Airport. It's a large estate that touches on the Intracoastal Waterway and the Atlantic Ocean, so there are activities on both land and water.

It offers a breathtaking choice of sports, but what drew me to Martin County was the promise of lots of fresh air, beach life and glitz-free fun. Marriott Hutchinson Island delivered. Plus, the prices are slightly lower for food and lodging than in some of the more glamorous areas of southeast Florida, and the resort includes parking, as well as many things to do.

Marriott Hutchinson Island includes dozens of low-rise villas and condos, as well as two hotels, all connected by walking or cycling paths and a few roads meandering past sparkling ponds and grassy fairways. It's no-stress living, with everything you would want in one semi-private property.

The two distinctive hotel

sections each have a swimming pool and tiki bar. The Marina Complex (the main building) has 200 traditional hotel rooms, and it's the centre of the action, close to the dining room, golf course and marina. Sandpiper Tower has 75 studios and one-bedroom suites, all with kitchenettes. It's more secluded, at the oceanfront and near the tennis centre and playground. Sandpiper is built around a courtyard, and has outdoor corridors.

**Dining:** Outdoor dining is the way to go. The Latitudes and Sandpiper tiki bars are both delightful day-to-evening patio eateries, ringed by palm trees and sunbrellas. At Sandpiper, you hear the swoosh of the ocean from steps away. At Latitudes, you're serenaded by piped-in mellow pop classics.

Chefs dish up burgers (vegetable or beef), salads, tacos, club sandwiches and, after 5 p.m., main courses like steaks, mahi mahi and risotto. Perky tropical cocktails, served by the glass or by the pitcher, include the Endless Summer Berry-ade, with Tito's Handmade Vodka, and the Cucumber-Mint Ketel One Vodka Refresher.

The indoor Baha Grille has a similar menu, but also has buffets on Friday and Saturday nights and breakfast daily.

**What to do:** Marriott Hutchinson Island features a lot of perks. Children have a playground, scheduled events and, of course, the Atlantic Ocean beach. Guests can borrow cruiser bicycles and swim at three heated pools (one is a lap pool) and two whirlpools. There are 13 tennis courts, with clinics and rackets



The Marina Complex at Marriott Hutchinson Island Beach Resort, Golf and Marina lies between the Indian River and the Atlantic Ocean.  
MARRIOTT HUTCHINSON ISLAND BEACH RESORT, GOLF AND MARINA

(772-225-6813), and there's also a jogging trail and a 24-hour fitness centre. Plus, there is no charge for the Aqua Driving Range, where the practice golf balls land in a small lake.

Other experiences on site carry fees, including golf at the Ocean Club's executive par-61, 18-hole course (772-225-6819) and deep-sea fishing that launches at the marina (772-236-4919).

Feet Wet Adventures handles rentals of pontoon and motor boats, jet skis, kayaks and paddleboards (feetwetadventures.com). This is a supremely paddle-friendly area because the marina is in a protected bay.

Also launching from the marina, Island Princess Cruises organizes sightseeing and dinner cruises (772-225-2100, islandprincesscruises.com). Taking the thrill quotient up, Next Level Watersports can have you kiteboarding, wakeboarding and tubing (508-680-3343, nlwatersports.com).

**Martin County:** The Florida Oceanographic Coastal Center and its new Ocean EcoCenter are among

Martin County's top attractions, full of wondrous exhibits at the Game Fish Lagoon, Sea Turtle Pavilion and Children's Activity Pavilion.

Jonathan Dickinson State Park is also a must for nature lovers, who can glimpse bald eagles, alligators and rare sandhill cranes.

Also new is the unusual Sailfish Sands Golf Course, which is a reversible championship 18-hole course — play nine holes, then play them backwards. This little-known style of links saves on space and maintenance, and has roots at the legendary St Andrews Links in Scotland.

Stuart's historic Lyric Theatre presents a smashing calendar of plays, music, comedy and dance. The lineup includes Lewis Black (Dec. 16), The Nutcracker by the St. Lucie Ballet and Treasure Coast Ballet (Dec. 19), Jay and the Americans (Jan. 25) and various tribute shows featuring Motown, '50s rock 'n' roll, country and disco.

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## IF YOU GO

**Marriott Hutchinson Island Beach Resort, Golf and Marina:** 772-225-3700, 800-775-5936, marriott.com; 555 N.E. Ocean Blvd., Stuart, Fla. Accessible facilities. Marriott Bonvoy program applies.

**Price:** All rooms have balconies or patios. Marina Complex from approximately US\$209 per night, for two people; Sandpiper studios from approximately US\$309 for up to four (one-bedroom suites available). Plus resort fee, US\$29 per day. Holiday prices are higher. Extra: beach setups, business centre.

**Martin County tourism:** 877-585-0085, 772-288-5451, discovermartin.com. Florida tourism: 888-735-2872, visitflorida.com.

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