

PARADISE AND SWIMMING PIGS AT GRAND ISLE RESORT IN THE BAHAMAS



When it was decided that our Bahamas vacation would center around swimming pigs, the *only* property I considered was the award-winning [Grand Isle Resort](#) on the quiet island of Great Exuma. The stunning blue water views from spacious villas complete with high-end amenities and a bevy of family-friendly activities all sold me at first glance.

I'm even more convinced now that this is the best Bahamas hotel for those who have swimming pigs on a bucket list. But note that there are many things to do in the Exumas aside from this very unique experience. Here, it's possible to sunbathe alone on a white sand beach, stand on a sandbar in the middle of the ocean, snorkel with sea turtles and so much more.

Our December stay, despite some wind and rain, included pleasant temperatures in the mid 70's which made me grateful for the cloud cover seen in our photos. Rest assured the ocean, pool and air were all plenty warm.

Grand Isle Resort's Emerald Bay Location



Grand Isle Resort is located on Great Exuma, the largest island in the 365-island chain known as the Exuma Cays. To say that it is a large island isn't exactly correct as it's only 37 miles long (though joined by bridge to Little Exuma).

We took a 1-hour flight from Miami to George Town airport on [American Airlines](#), however, time from Nassau by plane is just 40 minutes. From the airport, it's wise to have rented a car or arranged a taxi in advance as it is a small island without a plethora of cabs to hail NYC-style.

The resort arranged for a taxi to pick us up for the roughly 20-minute drive to its location in Emerald Bay, a lovely resort area that is perfect for a Bahamas vacation. I felt at ease enough by the friendliness of locals and the small island vibe to ask our taxi driver to stop at a convenience store on the way to the resort—an idea suggested by the concierge since the villas have a full kitchens. She then drove us to the lobby area for check-in and onward to our villa.

I could not get over how nice everyone we came into contact was on the resort and off.

Gorgeous Villas

The villa set up feels residential with lovely lush landscaping and stunning views. An additional \$15 per day gives you the keys to a golf cart that is housed in a little garage at your villa. It's really a no-brainer. In addition to facilitating easy transport around the property, a variety of trails surrounding the nearby golf course and marina are on-limits for golf carting. My 8-year-old daughter loved our cart adventures often filming video from the rear-facing seat and collecting fallen coconuts spotted along the way.



With 1250 square feet, it would have been easy to settle into our villa for much longer than our short 3-night stay. They feel more like high-end homes with beautiful furnishings and accessories, granite countertops, an enormous marble bathroom with L'Occitane amenities and a patio accessible by French sliding doors. Villas range from [one bedroom on up to four bedrooms](#) and are perfect for [multigenerational vacations](#). In fact, perhaps because it was Christmas week, the resort was full of extended families.

Gourmet kitchens are fully-stocked with utensils, pots and pans, glassware and more. Designer appliances include a 2-drawer dishwasher, oven, stove, toaster and a Sub Zero refrigerator. Housekeeping replenishes coffee and tea daily so no need to bring in your own. High-speed WiFi is included and available throughout the resort. I will say that it along with cell service were down island-wide (no fault of the resort) when we arrived but all worked very well once back up and running.

The concierge maintains a list of videos and board games guests can check out to enjoy in their villas. We played Scrabble quite a bit after dinner.



I suggest opting for the ocean view villa as the views can be extraordinary even when it's raining or the trade winds are blowing. Our view overlooked Emerald Bay and it was amazing to think there was beach on the other side of our villa, too, just steps away as the resort is on a peninsula.



Dining at Grand Isle Resort

Guests of Grand Isle Resort have four choices for dining on the property. With a fully-stocked kitchen, it's easy to prep simple meals in the villa. The Palapa Grill restaurant boasts stunning views of the pool and ocean while serving breakfast, lunch and dinner. Guests can also have menu items from the Palapa Grill delivered poolside or to a villa via in-room dining.



For a stay of several days the food is very good (the lobster was a personal favorite) but might grow tiresome over a week's time because the menu is not extensive. Most of the selections are Western with an option for Bahamian conch fritters, but you'll need to go elsewhere for local dishes. I knew this going in so didn't particularly mind and am told that a menu revamp is in the works. This is a very minor critique in the scheme of such well-rounded and deluxe offerings.

Grand Isle Resort can stock your villa with grocery items from a predetermined list if your requests are made 72 hours in advance. You take advantage of this service or stop at a convenience store especially with kids in tow. Breakfast is served at 7:30 a.m. which is a tad late for my early-rising daughter so it was helpful to have a bit of cereal and fruit on-hand.

We weren't able to take advantage of much offsite dining because of rain and a short stay, but there are a handful of options nearby that the concierge can direct you to.

Onsite Activities: Pretty Pool and Beach



The stunning pool is somewhat shielded from the winds and a fantastic place to unwind. Much like the ocean, the pool water was quite warm which made lengthy swims possible. Organized activities for kids happen here in the late morning and I'd say that quite a few guests spend their days here reading books and rebooting.

Beach goers are completely in luck with the soft white sand and warm ocean waters here. The resort has beach chairs as well as stand-up paddleboards, volleyballs, snorkels, kayaks and more set up for complimentary guest use. We meant to fly a kite but forgot. Speaking of kites... kite surfing is incredibly common here when winds permit.

The ocean water is so turquoise blue in the Exumas that it almost doesn't look real.



An 18-hole golf course designed by Greg Norman weaves throughout the luxury resort, hugs Emerald Bay and finishes at the tip of the peninsula. The views are nothing short of spectacular and you can explore the course without interrupting players via villa golf cart. An onsite spa offers massage and facials... I will definitely take advantage of it next time.

Offsite Activities: Swimming With the Pigs and More

While it is entirely possible to chill for a week on the resort, the concierge team can book a variety of excursions ranging from deep sea fishing to island tours. I arranged a half-day tour with Exuma Water Sports via the Grand Isle Resort concierge which included swimming with the pigs, feeding iguanas on Nicolas Cage's private island and exploring other nooks and crannies in the Exuma Cays. The tour company picked us up at the resort, which I became extra grateful for after realizing I'd have a hard time finding the launch point on my own. The roads are not particularly flush with signage.

But, we swam with the pigs and it was so fun!



Rental cars can be delivered to Grand Isle Resort for guest use at a rate of \$75 per day. Most people do rent cars but you could survive a short stay like ours without one. In fact, we arranged for a taxi driver to take us to Chat N Chill, wait a few hours and then drop us at the airport. If you need to get creative with transportation ask the concierge to see if they can make it happen as they tend to know the taxi drivers well.

Good to Know

I would recommend staying at least a week to fully unwind and prevent unexpected weather from cancelling activities. There doesn't seem to be a particularly bad time of year weather-wise to visit the Bahamas but you never know when rain or trade winds might blow too hard for boats to go out.

Grand Isle Resort is a member of Preferred Hotels and Resorts, a group that I'm familiar with for catering particularly well to luxury family travelers like myself. I tend to lean heavily on concierges for advice and bookings especially when traveling to new destinations and I knew they wouldn't steer me wrong.

Villa pricing tends to fluctuate so lock in a rate you like as soon as possible. I paid a media rate of \$390 per night for our villa which is about what it was going for at the time of check-in. I saw it fluctuate much lower and also much higher in the months before our stay but even when it trended on the high side the accommodations are worth it, in my opinion. Check our carefully-selected affiliate partners for the latest prices at [Grand Isle Resort](#).

I'll say again... I really think this resort is a fabulous option for multigenerational vacations but I would highly recommend it for anyone.