

Better in the Bahamas

Hotspots Like Aura Nightclub Add Some Action to the Laid-Back Bahamas

+ Writing | Lisa Arcella

There used to be a time when the Bahamas was a prime destination for bargain hunters and budget-seeking families looking for a hassle-free vacation around spring break time. That side of travel to this Caribbean destination still exists, for sure (been to a Downtown Nassau club recently?), but now well-heeled, fashionable travelers also are being wooed here by the best of the best, via high-end venues and hotels.

But is it, indeed, better in the Bahamas? (Like the advertising slogan claims.)

"If I wanted to get away for a long weekend, and I could go to Miami or the Bahamas, why wouldn't I go to the Bahamas?" says New York City club king Jamie Mulholland. "It's a no-brainer. It's beautiful and everything is there." To prove his point, the South African-born entrepreneur behind NYC hotspots Cain and Goldbar just opened a lush new extension of Cain at The Cove, the latest high-end resort to open on the Bahamas' hotbed of high-end, Paradise Island. Situated along the outer perimeter of the hotel's sleek Ultra pool, Cain is being heralded as a one-of-a-kind pool experience with cabanas that are even more high-end than anything in over-the-top Las Vegas.

At Cain, patrons can rent one of 20 gorgeous, private beachfront (and poolside) cabanas, which, of course, comes with a private butler. An open-air gaming pavilion for craps and blackjack offers that urban nightclub feel, all while catching rays and tossing back tropical rum drinks.

Mulholland says that expanding to the Bahamas was a careful and deliberate decision.

"It was important that this project be exceptional," he says. "It's a unique place. We've seen a lot of beach clubs, but for us, it was all about doing something different." Pure Management Group — the company behind Vegas success stories like Pure, LAX and Social House — felt the same way. Last April, they launched Aura, their new club at the well-known Atlantis resort. The 9,000-square-foot nightclub features ample V.I.P. accommodations for the jet-set party crowd, and it's been drawing in celebs since its inception. (Everyone from Kristin Cavallari to Nick Lachey and Janet Jackson have partied there.)

"Celebrities love coming to Aura while on vacation in the Bahamas," says Candace Carrell, general manager of Aura. "It's a haven for them. Every night, Aura has a euphoric energy with people from all over the world coming together to party in paradise."

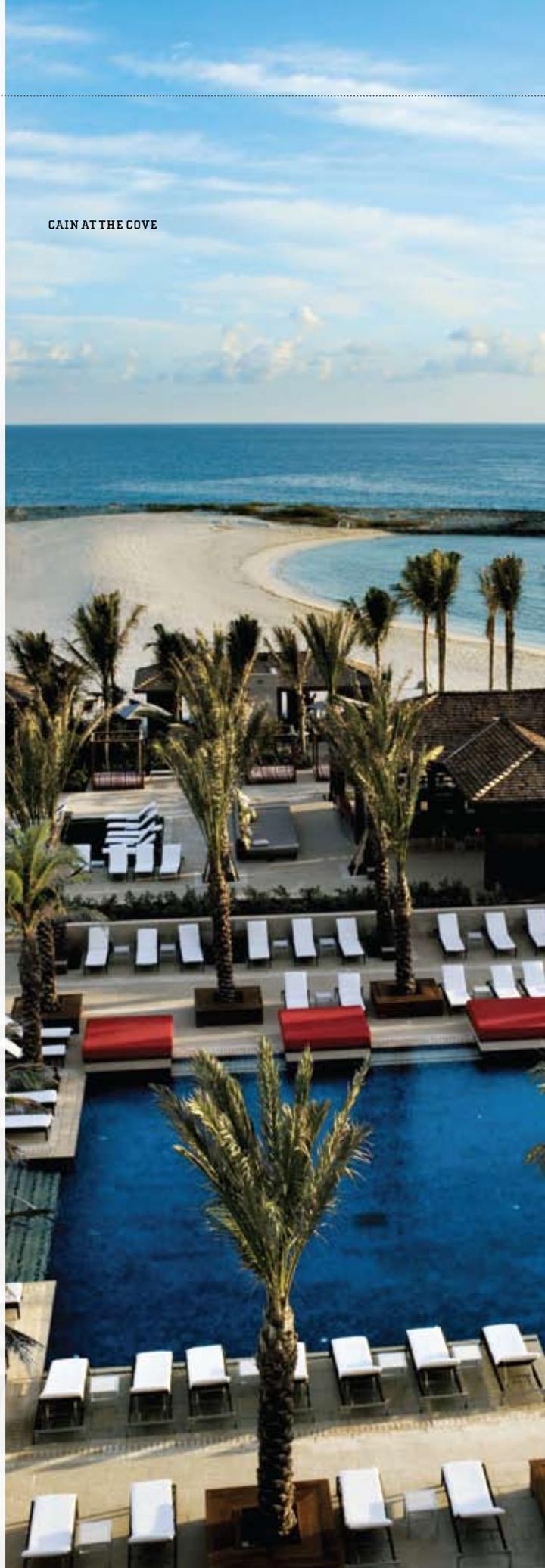
At night, the celebs crash at the luxe, 600-suite The Cove, a new, high-end addition to the family-packed Atlantis. Cain is an adults-only pool club with a shallow depth because they figure everyone will be standing up anyway. (It makes flirting and drinking easier.)

Nobu, at Atlantis, and The Cove's Mesa Grill, Bobby Flay's first venture outside of the U.S., are there to attract the foodies. (Conveniently, Nobu rests right outside the entrance to Aura.) Famed interior architect Jeffrey Beers, who designed both Aura and Cain, as well as all of the common areas at The Cove, says he was challenged by the hotel's owners to create a more glamorous, grown-up destination.

"It's a distinct blend of natural beauty and urban vibe," Beers says. "Families will still flock to the Bahamas, but now there is a haven for the adults."

Hit the islands at www.thecoveatlantis.com or 877.COVE.VIP

CAIN AT THE COVE



Forget Green – Go Blue

The Bahamas' Reef Atlantis Takes Eco-Tourism to the Waters

✦ Writing | Laura Mier and Lisa Arcella

Flipping through 944, one might think that everyone is going green, but The Reef Atlantis has set itself apart by going blue. This luxurious resort is located on the white, sandy beaches of Paradise Island, Bahamas, and has become the pioneer of the newest eco-trend: Blue Tourism. The parent company of The Reef Atlantis, Kerzner International, has formed the KMF (Kerzner Marine Foundation) to protect and preserve the delicate ecosystems of the ocean.

Protecting the marine ecosystems is not only important for the environment, it makes good business sense, too. The values of beachfront water properties are directly affected by the beauty and wellbeing of the surrounding waters.

"It is quite logical for a destination resort that is built around the ocean to care about the ocean," says Sol Kerzner, CEO of Kerzner International. Joining forces with The Nature Conservancy,

Bahamas National Trust and Bahamas Reef Education Environmental Foundation, the KMF launched The Blue Project, which raises awareness about the environmental dangers facing the coral reefs. This program helps fund

REEF ATLANTIS



preservation projects for the reefs and teaches both locals and tourists about the importance of these endangered marine life habitats.

"There is no part of the ocean that hasn't been affected by serious environmental issues," says Debra Erickson, executive director of the KMF. "The reefs protect the sand around the islands, and once that goes, you will start to see the beaches disappear, too."

Guests at The Reef Atlantis can experience the natural splendor of the coral reefs through snorkeling expeditions, scuba adventures and observation of the oceanic wildlife in its natural state. These adventures not only enhance public awareness about marine conservation, but a portion of the proceeds from each of these adventures goes to help fund The Blue Project. (The hotel also donates \$10 of each room's fee.)

Being part of a good cause has never felt so simple.

Go blue at www.atlantis.com

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