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Eleuthera

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I really hate saying too much about Eleuthera. And not because it's not the perfect unspoiled Caribbean getaway, if you'll excuse the double negative. It's that I'm reluctant to let too many people in on the secret. On the other hand, there's so much to say, so shhh I let you in on what I've discovered.

Eleuthera is only 50 miles to the east of Nassau and although its part of the Bahamas, it seems a world away from the more touristy capital. In fact, the very long and thin island (about 110 miles long) is only an hour flight from Miami or Ft. Lauderdale but feels like someplace far more remote and isolated.

There's a reason why celebrities flock to this place. The sparse population of only about 8000 people are friendly and genuinely seem happy to see you, but no one really seems to care if you have a famous face or not. Part time Eleuthera resident Lenny Kravitz happened to be on island working on a new CD (he also has a recording studio here). We spotted him at the opening of the tiny **Glass Window Art Gallery**. The place was packed with locals who simply seemed to know and regard him as Lenny from down the block, not Mr. International Rock Star. Many of the hotels are also protective of a guest's privacy, particularly if they are well known. The Cove's Kirk Aulin had to stop his own mother from trying to ask Penelope Cruz for an autograph when she stopped in to check out a perfect sunset from the hotel's restaurant.

Harbour Island



On this island, there are three international airports and a ferry service connecting it to the outside world. We landed in Gregory Town and made a short hop to catch a boat (\$10 with Dukes water taxi) over to the adjacent island. Harbour Island is perhaps the busiest place on Eleuthera. But on this tiny island where the main mode of transport is a golf cart, we're not exactly talking Times Square hustle and bustle.

In fact the vibe is relaxed and easy. We stayed the beautiful **Romora Bay** resort, whose hibiscus filled grounds and colorful cottages lead down to its dock and a casual restaurant called Sunsets, which of course is the best place on the island to relax and see one. At the top of the hill near the reception area is **Vue** restaurant where Executive Chef Matthew Ona, who has worked at the venerable French Laundry in the Napa Valley among other top establishments, creates his magic. The duo of beef was beyond delicious. General Manager Anne Ward is a gracious hostess and will out do herself to try and make you happy.



Golf carts rent for about \$55 and a short spin away is the **Pink Sands Resort**. The beach is indeed pink and when I visited, pristine and nearly empty. The Pink Sands is a celebrity favorite, with secluded cottages on a hill. The private patios have unbelievable views of the beach and turquoise blue water below. If you aren't staying at the resort, don't miss having lunch or a cocktail at the **Blue Bar** that overlooks the

grounds. Next door is the **Coral Sands** resort, which is slightly less expensive and nearly as beautiful. It's also a popular pick for destination weddings.

Here are a few suggestions for where to eat and play on Harbour Island:

Sip Sip- Once you are through its electric green exterior, Sip Sip (the local term for gossip) is one of the best places to try conch chili or a lobster quesadilla. Sipping a ginger margarita on its patio near the sea will help you forget that you ever had a care in the world.



Ma Rubys and the **Tingum Village Hotel-** No body makes a better cheeseburger. Just ask Jimmy Buffet, who wrote "Cheeseburger in Paradise" about Ruby Percentie's \$10 masterpiece. People love her place 76 year old Ruby tells us, "Because they can be anything they want to be here."



The **Vic Hum Club-** doesn't get hopping until after midnight, but lots of people including Jon

Bon Jovi, Harrison Ford, Naomi Campbell and Drew Barrymore come to the nondescript bar for a Kalit or a Sands (the local beers) and its outdoor dance floor. Ask the bartender to show you his 33-year-old coconut (no we're not kidding), he claims it's the world's largest.

Queen Conch- At one of the tiny storefront shacks near the harbor, you can watch you're delicious conch salad made fresh to order. Locals like to say that conch is the Bahamian aphrodisiac. We're not sure about that, but for only \$10 it's worth the price no matter what happens!

Vue and Sunsets Bar & Grille at Romora Bay- The best food on the island.

Arthur's Bakery- Warm coconut bread from Arthur's is like nothing you've ever tasted.

Eleuthera

After Duke returns us to the mainland and over the glass window bridge which lays claim to being the "narrowest place on earth." On one side the dark blue Atlantic Ocean crashes into the rock formations created by a hurricane and on the other, there are the calm light blue waters of the Caribbean inviting you to come and stay awhile. Our destination is the nearby **Cove Hotel**. Everyone on the island seems to know Wallace, the bartender at the center of the lobby restaurant and after tasting his tasty "Cove Smash" cocktail we can understand why. He's a good friend to have!



The Cove is the kind of place you go to when you really want to get away from it all. The 25 rooms and suites have no phone, television or even room keys (seriously, its so safe there isn't even a need for a room key!). But what there is, are big windows overlooking the Caribbean, a small sandy beach for relaxing and another rockier private beach that's known for its wonderful snorkeling.



Kirk Aulin is the easygoing manager (wouldn't you be if you were able to live here all the time?) who can seem to make just about anything happen for you and his two young sons often accompany guests on fishing and snorkeling trips nearby.

You'll need to rent a car to get around on Eleuthera, but the good news is there's only one very long main road, The Queen's Highway and it would take considerable effort to get lost. Eleuthera is even more laid back in some ways than Harbour Island, but residents are always ready for a good time.

Suggestions of what to eat, play and see on Eleuthera include:

The Fish Fry- Every Friday night, sleepy Governor's Harbor springs to life with locals and tourists happily mingling for a barbecue and dancing on the beach just outside the Methodist Church.

Elvinas- It looks like nothing from the outside, but inside it's the local hotspot and a place where Lenny Kravitz and his band mates are known to jump



on stage. When they aren't around, you're bound to hear some fantastic rake and scrape (think something like Bahamian zydeco).

Cocodimama- A tiny Yorkshire terrier named Hercules is the first to greet you at this tiny resort with candy colored cottages right on the beach and an Italian restaurant that many feel is the best on the island. Janet Jackson certainly agreed when she recently visited.

Tippys- You haven't been to Eleuthera until you've visited Tippys. On the Atlantic side, its fantastic open-air dining and if you want to take a dip in the



ocean, fine. There's shower's to rinse off before you sit down and enjoy your meal. We loved the tuna burger and there's live music Friday and Sunday nights. The local hotspot is owned by the Pineapple Fields resort across the street - and yes there are pineapple plantations nearby. Pineapple Fields is a very pretty property, with lush tropical gardens and a secluded pool. There's also a 25 acre botanical preserve next door, so you know you'll never encounter a hoard of other

tourists to crush you "I'm the only person who knows about this place" delusions.

Snorkeling- As you might imagine, this is the perfect place to snorkel and scuba dive. The waters are warm and the visibility is great. Tom Glucksman at www.bahamasadventures.com was a terrific guide and can also help you discover some of the caves and tidal pools nearby.

Island Made Gift Shop- Our favorite stop for great gifts in Gregory Town.

Daddy Joes- It's not much to look at, but if you are looking for genuine Bahamian fare this is the place. Try the grouper fingers and peas and rice (and that's not rice and peas mind you - that's what you'll find in Jamaica, my waitress informed me.)

Of course, there's so much more to see and do, or do absolutely nothing if that's your desire. A big part of the appeal of Eleuthera is that there's no "us and them" mentality. You are always made to feel like you're a local, you belong. And no matter where you are, you seem to have a view of the incredible turquoise waters always reminding you that this is paradise.

<http://www.bahamas.com/out-islands/eleuthera-harbour-island>

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