

DEEP WATERS

ALBANY, A LUXURY RESORT COMMUNITY IN THE BAHAMAS WAS ONCE A CLOSELY-GUARDED SECRET. NOW IT IS REINVENTING ITSELF AS ACCESSIBLE TO ANYONE WANTING A SUPERIOR SLICE OF PARADISE

WORDS ANGELINA VILLA-CLARKE



The best way to arrive at Albany in the Bahamas is, of course, by yacht. Cutting through the waters, which come in a myriad shades of turquoise, azure, ink and milky-blue, past dozens of tiny, untouched islands, means that when you finally arrive at the marina and come face-to-face with the towering, cutting-edge architecture of the resort – it's all the more impressive.

The stark white of the super-yachts bobbing in the waters is the ultimate contrast to the impossible blues. The vessels also serve to remind you that this is no ordinary place to come on holiday. Albany is owned by British billionaire Joe Lewis and his private investment organisation Tavistock Group, along with golfing greats Tiger Woods and Ernie Els and actor and musician Justin Timberlake. Its aim? To be one of the most exclusive resort communities in the world, offering a range of luxury living – with properties available to rent or to buy – for a line-up of glamorous guests.

Found on New Providence island in the Bahamas, the ambitious development first opened in 2010, and it has been quietly making waves with those in the know ever since. While it is built around a historic residence – Albany House – a candy-pink manor house famous for having featured in the Bond movie Casino Royal (it's the backdrop for Daniel Craig's memorable scene where he emerged from the ocean) – Albany is better known for its penchant for contemporary architecture.

The Honeycomb, for instance – the most visually impressive building and the first thing you'll see on arrival – was designed by Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG) – the award-winning Danish design firm responsible for noted projects, including the London's 2016 Serpentine Pavilion and the Two World Trade Centre in New York. Its hexagon design shimmers with a series of transparent infinity pools set into terraces, while, inside, there is a choice of luxury apartments. All have an individual 'flavour', some have coastal-chic interiors, with shell-encrusted chandeliers and mother-of-pearl furniture, and others with African-influenced schemes, which are richly textured with baskets as art work, sandy-hued palettes and jet-black furniture.

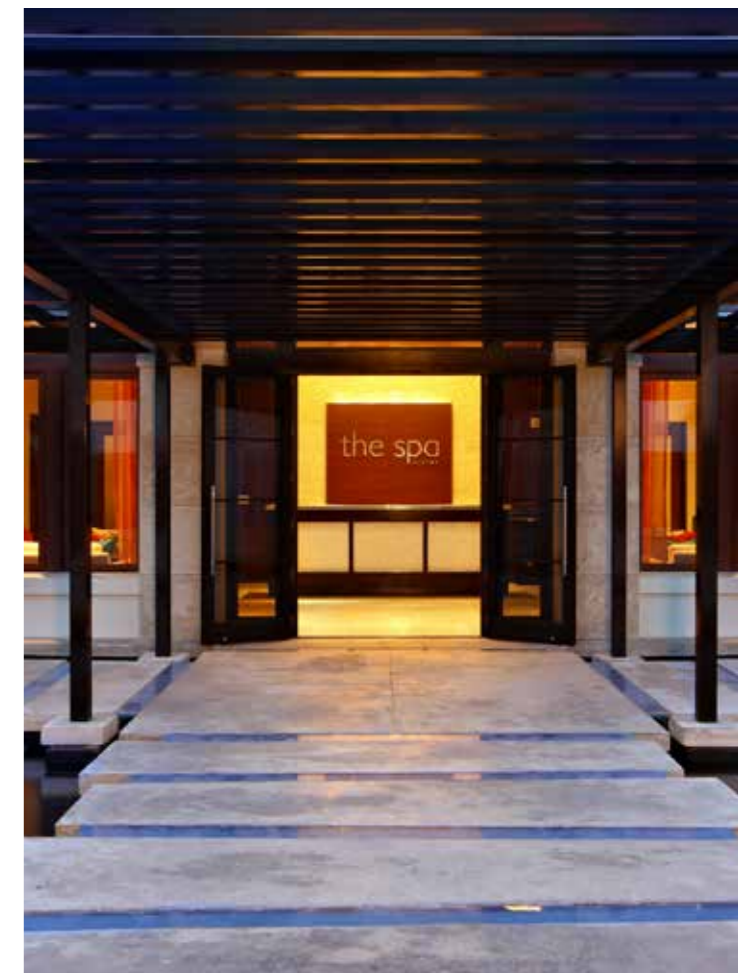


The Orchid, meanwhile, which is clad in metal lattice-work cut in the shape of flowers, has been conceived by Morris Adjmi Architects, the New York-based company behind Manhattan's Samsung Building and Brooklyn's Wythe Hotel. Here, you'll find nine sprawling apartments which have spectacular circular living rooms, marble floors and bespoke Italian furnishings – not to mention far reaching views over the Atlantic.

Tetris is the latest build, set to open in 2020, and will be the boldest project to date. Conceived by OOK Architects, a female-led Swedish architecture firm, it will have a modular block design (based on the famous computer game), with 25 vast apartments, which are on sale at \$5-6m and reaching around \$20m for the penthouses. Giving an insight into how much Albany properties are in demand, it turns out that all of the apartments have already been sold, with interested parties now 'queuing' for forthcoming builds yet to break ground – there are three more buildings planned for construction over the next few years.

For those wanting a slice of the action, holidaymakers can visit and can choose from an urban-style apartment, or a range of ocean-front villas or garden houses, found dotted across the 600 acres, and available to rent through the Albany's Hotel Programme. As well as living it 'large', it means that you can tap into all the benefits available to residents – from the round-the-clock concierge service to the impressive range of facilities.

It's no surprise, given the fact that Ernie Els is one of the owners, that a highlight of Albany is the championship golf ▶





At Albany there's pizzazz - but it's paired back. It's part of a new era of quiet luxury

► course he designed. In fact, all of the names behind Albany have left their mark – Justin Timberlake's being The Sanctuary recording studio, which calls in a starry line-up of musical legends to lay down their tracks. While Joe Lewis has spearheaded the state-of-the-art boardroom facility, called The Bullpen (a nod to the famous Wall Street Bull) aimed at those who don't have a 'switch off' button, even while on holiday.

The health and fitness facilities are also second-to-none and as a consequence Albany attracts a high number of professional athletes who train, or recuperate following an injury, here. Don't be surprised to find yourself working out next to a professional footballer, for instance. From the al fresco CrossFit training facility to the 25-meter lap pool, there is something for everyone. There's also a range of expert trainers on hand who can create personalised programmes if you so wish. Dr Stephen Truszkowski, known as Dr. T, is the in-house sports chiropractor, medical acupuncturist, manual therapist and trainer and works with some of the leading sports stars. Christine Carey, meanwhile, is an holistic health coach and integrative wellness therapist, who treats the body and mind, by incorporating eastern and western healing techniques.

Set to open soon is the revamped spa – which aims to be one of the leading wellness centres in the region, with a host of well-known health experts under its roof. Targeting physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health, it will offer a 360 approach to health. On offer will be a range of diagnostic technologies, biotherapies, fitness nutrition, mind and body treatments as well as aesthetic services.

As well as an equestrian centre, art gallery, cinema, hair salon and a range of boutiques, Albany's other attraction is the culinary offering. Overseen by executive chef Oliver Stephens (who has worked at Hotel de Crillon in the past), there are a choice of outposts for guests to choose from, depending on your mood. Aviva, for example, offers gourmet cuisine with a Caribbean twist, while the Vesper Bar & Lounge, has a nightclub vibe with a sushi lounge, cocktails and resident DJ. Footprints – with its sunshine-yellow booths and sand floor – is a retro-inspired beachside eatery offering lobster fritters, tuna poke bowls and super-salads. While Wave is an innovative pop-up concept, hosting well-known chefs and restaurants from around the world, such as Loic Siino, from Eze in the South of France and Tom Halpin from Copenhagen's Noma.

It goes without saying that the Bahamas has long been known for its glamorous connotations. After the first casino opened on Paradise Island in the 60s, touching down here was akin to visiting Las Vegas but with a tropical vibe. Since then, Atlantis and, more recently, the mega-resort Baha Mar on Nassau, have opened – giving visitors the same glitzy feel. Albany, by contrast, feels more under the radar: there's pizzazz but it's pared-back. It's a new era of quiet luxury. Just keep it to yourselves. ■

Albanybahamas.com

Rates start at \$2,500 per night, through Albany's Hotel Programme. To book, email the Albany Concierge Service at hotel@albanybahamas.com



ALBANY AND BEYOND: THE CULINARY HOTSPOTS TO VISIT

COCO PLUM BISTRO, NASSAU

French chef Cecile Cathelin offers up French classics with an island twist in this charming jungle-inspired restaurant designed by Gabriella Curry, an Italian-Bahamian interior designer. Choose from Grilled Octopus, with black beans and mushrooms, Lobster Persillade, with garlic butter, parsley and spinach, and Big Baba della Mamma – a sponge cake with rum and whipped cream. Ask to sit outside in the exotic garden.

cocoplumbistro.com

CLEO, SLS, BAHA MAR, NEW PROVIDENCE

In this beachy-styled restaurant, the white-on-white décor is contrasted with verdant plants and mix-matched vintage crockery. This is worth the 30-minute drive from Albany to try award-winning chef Danny Elmaleh's Mediterranean-inspired cuisine with a Bahamian focus. From the Harissa Tuna Tartare to the Curried Calamari – choose from the small plates section to get a range of unique flavours.

bahamar.com

VESPER BAR & LOUNGE, ALBANY, NEW PROVIDENCE

Albany's very own James Bond-inspired lounge is a must come Friday. Chef Sukhum Temp serves up the freshest sushi (the Caribbean Lobster Roll is a must), sashimi and tempura. Hot bites include Bao Buns, Truffle Fries and Sizzling Wagyu Beef. Eat on the terrace with the crashing ocean below you.

albanybahamas.com