

# A Newly Recommended Hotel in the Bahamas

It's been four years since we were last in the [Bahamas](#). Our recent visit was prompted by the opening of an 11-room Harbour Island boutique hotel that is part of the upscale Eleven Experience. Our editor-in-chief was not disappointed by what he found: a tiny private world that was an ideal place to spend lazy days beside the pool.

June 1, 2020

By [Hideaway Report Editor](#)

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**Above:** Aerial view of Bahama House in Harbour Island, Bahamas - Eleven Experience

## Bahama House



Located on a quiet street in Dunmore Town on Harbour Island, this hideaway comprises a secluded walled compound where two stone 200-year-old buildings and two cottages overlook a central swimming pool and a sunken tiki bar. The accommodations come with plantation shutters, rattan furniture, shell-encrusted mirrors and floral pillows. Avoid the smaller rooms. Located on the second floor, “Colebrook” and “Dunmore” are spacious and share a terrace with views of the bay. There is no formal restaurant, but breakfast is served and dinner is available on request. Activities include horseback riding, diving and guided bonefishing. The island’s famous pink sand beach is five minutes away by golf cart. The property is frequently rented for exclusive use.

**From the editor:** “I was immediately struck by the sequestered atmosphere, which seemed more like that of a private residence than a hotel.”

*Read more about [Bahama House](#).*

✈️ [Read more about our editor’s trip to the Bahamas](#)

By [Hideaway Report Editor](#)

Hideaway Report editors travel the world anonymously to give you the unvarnished truth about luxury hotels. Hotels have no idea who the editors are, so they are treated exactly as you might be.

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# The Enduring Charm of the Bahamas' Harbour Island

Like most of the Bahamian Out Islands, Eleuthera feels sleepy and remote, with modest dwellings, potholed roads and scrubby vegetation backed by expanses of dazzling sea. The water taxi across to Harbour Island takes less than 10 minutes, but this brief journey across a lagoonlike bay brings you to a place that is unexpectedly different. Dunmore Town is a pretty and manicured settlement, its waterfront lined by enviable 18th-century cottages decked out in an entire paintbox of pastel colors and surrounded by white picket fences. Alighting at Valentines Marina or the Government Dock, there is a palpable sense of energy and bustle, evidence of commerce and prosperity.

Just over 3 miles long and at most a mile wide, Harbour Island has around 1,800 permanent inhabitants, a population that swells each winter with an influx of affluent snowbirds. (On approximately the same latitude as Miami, its climate is subtropical, with cooler temperatures in January and February than in the islands of the Caribbean proper, 750 miles to the south.) Its eastern shore is lined by a spectacular stretch of pink sand long beloved by fashion photographers, while inland a network of bumpy roads slices through lush vegetation illuminated by electric cascades of hibiscus and bougainvillea. There are few cars or trucks, and most people get around on golf carts, a mode of transport that promotes an informal and sociable atmosphere. People shout cheerful greetings to passing acquaintances, or pull over abruptly to engage in conversation. And despite its reputation as a magnet for movie people and celebrities of all stripes, Harbour Island feels open and warmhearted. It is never glitzy. Unlike St. Barths, say, there are few fancy boutiques. Indeed, visitors are informed with a kind of pride that here even the billionaires dress in T-shirts and faded shorts and look exactly like everybody else.

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Above: Pink Sands Beach on Harbour Island, Bahamas - BlueOrangeStudio/Shutterstock

## Bahama House

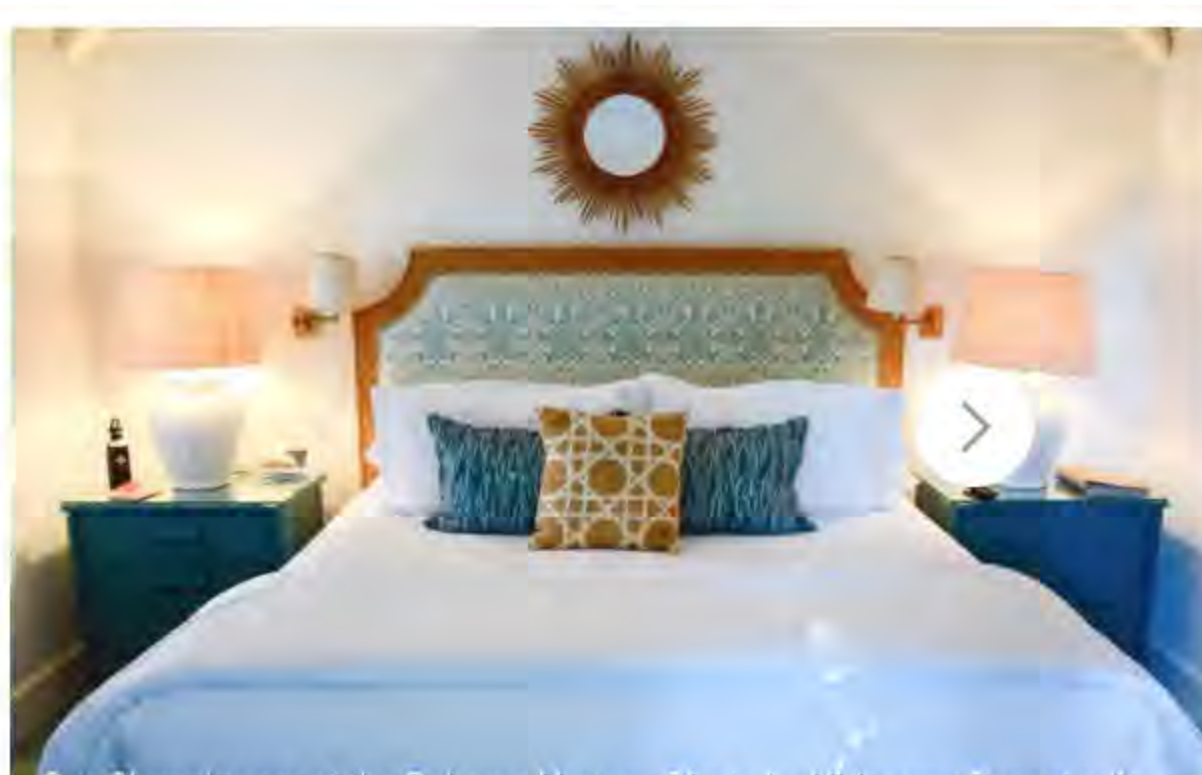


Cottage West terrace at the Bahama House on Harbour Island, Bahamas - Eleven Experience

It had been four years since my previous visit, and my return had been prompted chiefly by the opening of Bahama House, an 11-room boutique hotel that is part of the upscale Eleven Experience company owned by Chad Pike, a senior managing director at the Blackstone Group. (We currently recommend two of its properties in Colorado: Scarp Ridge Lodge and Taylor River Lodge.) I knew that Harbour Island had escaped the destruction of Hurricane Dorian, which passed to the northeast in September 2019 on its way to devastate Abaco and Grand Bahama, but it was still a relief to see Dunmore Town looking as well groomed as ever.

We were greeted on the dock by the Bahama House's ebullient lodge manager, Giorgia Ravilli Simmons, a native of Bologna it turned out, and we clambered aboard her golf buggy for the two-minute transfer to the hotel. A low hill rises from the waterfront, topped by the pink walls of St. John's Anglican Church, built in 1768 by the descendants of a group of Puritans called the Eleutheran Adventurers. Clustered around it are stone colonial buildings that line a network of steep narrow streets. Hidden behind high walls and accessible only with a private door code, the Bahama House compound comprises the "1800 Building," a classically proportioned structure with wide wraparound verandas, the adjoining Annex constructed in a similar style and likewise covered in peach-colored stucco, and two newly constructed cottages, all grouped around a courtyard swimming pool. I was immediately struck by the sequestered atmosphere, which seemed more like that of a private residence than a hotel.

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Our Chapel room at the Bahama House - Photo by Hideaway Report editor

We had been allocated to the Chapel room on the corner of the Annex, whose shuttered windows overlooked the swimming pool with its surrounding flower beds and palm trees. My first impression was that it was attractive but on the small side at a distinctly cozy 245 square feet. Much of the space was taken up by the king-size bed, and there was no obvious place to put a suitcase aside from an ottoman at its foot. The closet was adequate at best. White walls and a relaxing color scheme of marine blues and greens were complemented by wicker furniture and rush matting. The adjoining bath came with a striking jade-green tile floor, a powerful walk-in shower (but no tub) and a single old-fashioned sink with brass faucets. The waffle-wool robes and Malin-Goetz toiletries were a nice surprise, but the almost total lack of shelf space was not. Overall, it appeared that despite their best efforts the designers had found themselves constrained by the dimensions of the old building. On the plus side, the veranda immediately outside our room opened onto a rotunda, an outdoor sitting area appointed with a wicker sofa and armchairs that provided glimpses of Eleutheran Bay.

Further investigation revealed that Bahama House offers several different accommodation types, ranging from queen-bedded rooms, which couples should avoid, to a pair of two-bedroom cottages with living rooms and private verandas. On a future occasion, however, I would opt for either Dunmore or Colebrook, which are generous king-bedded rooms on the second floor of the 1800 Building that share a semi-private terrace with water views. Apparently, around half of the property's business comes from exclusive buyouts (for a maximum of 22 guests). In this context, the widely differing rooms sizes make sense, as the queen rooms would be suitable for children.

Having read for a while in the rotunda, glancing up occasionally to watch the breeze ruffling the palm fronds, we headed down to the courtyard for a cocktail at the sunken bar next to the swimming pool. There, Robert, the affable barman, mixed a Goombay Smash and a Dark 'n' Stormy, both made with local rum. An alternative venue for an early evening drink is provided by the Rum Bar and the adjacent lounge of the 1800 Building. The bar operates on an honor system and contains around 40 varieties of rum in a custom-built hardwood cabinet, while the lounge is a serene and civilized living place with a traditional Caribbean décor of cane furnishings, rush matting, bright throw pillows, shell-encrusted lamps and a collection of large-format illustrated books.



Although there is no restaurant at Bahama House – dinner is available on request – a chef can be hired to cater for private groups, and several of the island's better restaurants are located a short walk away. Breakfast is served on an open-air terrace overlooking the pool, including home-baked breads and pastries, dishes such as lobster omelets and avocado eggs Benedict are prepared to order.

Given its seclusion and tranquility, Bahama House is an ideal place to spend lazy days beside the pool. A tiny rent golf carts, the hotel offers little incentive to venture out. However, most guests rent golf carts, and the island's famous pink sands are a five-minute drive away. There, hotel staff provide towels, loungers and umbrellas, and serve drinks and snacks from coolers. Owner Chad Pike's great passion is fly-fishing, and many of his other properties – including those in Chile, Iceland and New Zealand, as well as Colorado – offer trout fishing as one of the principal activities. At Bahama House, the draw is guided fly-fishing for bonefish on the flats around Harbour Island. Other diversions include scuba diving, kitesurfing and deep-sea fishing for game species such as tuna, wahoo and mahi-mahi.

Ultimately, the appeal of Bahama House comes from its secluded residential atmosphere. Other hotels on Harbour Island offer restaurants, more lavish accommodations and access to the high-season whirl. But they lack its combination of privacy and intimacy, qualities that are doubtless best experienced when part of a private group of family or friends.

- HOTEL AT A GLANCE -

## Bahama House 91

Like	Dislike	Good to Know
The sense of being a houseguest in a grand private residence; the atmosphere of seclusion and tranquility; the convenient central location close to several of the island's better restaurants; the extremely hospitable lodge manager; the friendly and professional staff.	Queen rooms are small and best avoided; the lack of a restaurant.	The property is ideal for a large private group of family or friends; private air transfers from Nassau or Miami to North Eleuthera Airport can be arranged.

Rates: Lowest Rate: Queen, \$600; Editor's Choice: Dunmore, \$900; Property buyout based on 22 guests, \$9,700 (house wine and spirits, and airport transfers included)

Address: Dunmore Street, Dunmore Town, Harbour Island

Telephone: (242) 817-9706

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