

TIMES OF THE ISLANDS

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE OF THE

TURKS & CAICOS

FALL 2002
\$4.00

REEF ROMANCE

Coral Night Life

**BANKING ON
THE ENVIRONMENT**

TCI National Trust

NOT JUST FOR CUTTING WOOD

Ripsaw Music

BARK THAT BITES

It's Poison!

The Point Grace Experience:

SIMPLY ELEGANT



TROPICAL IMAGING

“Simplicity is the key to excellence,”

states Andre Neiderhauser, manager of Point Grace, one of the country’s most upscale hotel properties. The essential ingredients are all in place: Point Grace rises above a gentle curve of Providenciales’ picturesque Grace Bay, with miles of alabaster beach to either side and the magnificent Atlantic Ocean at the doorstep. The property is a British Colonial inspiration, with every room carefully designed for beauty, comfort and convenience. But it is the service that melds these elements into an unforgettable Caribbean retreat. Andre explains, “Our goal is to pay meticulous attention to behind-the-scenes details to ensure that each guest’s experience is elegant, beautiful and relaxing.”

It all starts well before arrival. Beverly Williams, the hotel’s personable reservations manager, queries guests on their favorite music, beverages and any special needs, so that suites can be prepared ahead of time. Visitors are met at the airport to be escorted to the resort; honeymooners and special guests arrive in a vintage Rolls Royce. A complimentary “destress” treatment at the spa can follow in-suite check-in, where fresh flowers and chilled drinks await tired travellers. Each afternoon, pool- and beachgoers are served Caribbean ice shavings; early evening drinks and canapes are offered at Grace’s Cottage, the hotel’s elegant restaurant, and at turn-down, staff lights oil lamps at bedside.

Lodging choices range from an

extraordinary penthouse to one-, two- and three-bedroom suites, with only 32 rooms in all to the intimate property. Suites in the two, three-story oceanfront buildings feature picture-perfect views of the sea from large terraces, but Assistant Manager Pamela Ewing says that a number of guests choose the charming gingerbread cottage suites, which are surrounded by mature tropical landscaping and steps away from both the poolside terrace and beach.

All suites have central air conditioning, ceiling fans, full kitchens, in-room safes and a washer/dryer, with elevator service in the beachfront units. Interiors are distinguished by Indonesian hardwood and teak furniture embellished with

BY KATHY BORSUK

brightly colored silk, cotton and linen fabrics. But once again, it is the extra attention to detail that makes a difference. King-size beds are adorned in soft Frette linens. Hand-painted Jerusalem tiles and mahogany woodwork grace the spacious bathrooms that feature hair dryers, luxurious Frette terry robes, lightweight Indonesian cotton robes and a collection of quality bath amenities. Each suite has its own CD and DVD players, as well as cable TV. Every morning, guests can savor freshly brewed coffee in their well equipped kitchens and the *New York Times Digest*, delivered to their mailbox.

A stroll around Point Grace's peaceful grounds is a simply sensual experience, replete with lush flora aromas, caressing sea breezes and the sweet music of silence . . . enhanced with a touch of culture. Point Grace is the vision of a Swiss developer, whose collection of African tribal art and artifacts lends an exotic flair to the hotel's public spaces and suites, while refined copies of masterpieces by Van Gogh, Renoir, Gauguin and other renowned artists add a classic touch.

Point Grace's buildings and cottages encircle a central courtyard, leaving open an ocean vista in ever-changing shades of blue. Here are the freshwater pool, whirlpool and sunning terrace perfectly shaded by the broad leaves of mature palms. Staff plies icy drinks from the poolside bar and chilled towels to keep guests cool and comfortable.



Views from Point Grace's oceanfront balconies are exquisite.

Nearby, one of the cottages serves as a social center for guests. On its sun-dappled terrace, breakfast and lunch are served. Throughout the day, fruit and beverages can be found in the casual lounge, which also holds a small library of books, board games, CDs and DVDs.

Just beyond the courtyard, the beach's pristine, powdery sands beckon sunbather, stroller and swimmer alike. There are plenty of beach lounges at the ready and an offshore barrier reef ensures that the surf "laps" rather than "pounds." Guests have complimentary use of kayaks, snorkel gear and Hobie Cats and beach attendants provide convenient beverage service.

Concierge Chris Jarrett and the front

desk staff stand ready to help guests experience the island beyond this luxurious enclave. Superb scuba diving, snorkeling, fishing and parasailing excursions are available through select local operators. The hotel's own 27' motor launch, *Lady Grace*, handles day trips and private island drop-offs; picnic hampers can be ordered ahead of time. Point Grace guests enjoy membership at the Provo Golf & Country Club and the country's only casino is nearby. Chris and staff also assist guests with car and bicycle rentals, restaurant selection and reservations, trips to nearby islands and can arrange for the services of babysitters, maids and butlers, personal fitness trainers and private chefs.

Who are typical guests at this one-of-a-kind property? Surprisingly, it's **NOT** just the rich and famous. Pamela Ewing explains, "We host a mixture of the middle class, upper class and very wealthy. We have some people who have saved up for a special vacation and come here to be pampered. We cater to a lot of honeymooners . . . who we expect will return for their anniversaries." Andre Neiderhauser adds, "We're also attracting savvy travellers who come during the off season to experience luxury properties when prices are lower. And, there are more families, for which our larger units work well. But we strive to keep a reasonable blend of guests at any given time."

Business travellers are also encouraged, with a business room complete with FAX machine and Internet access and full secretarial service available. Point Grace's three- and four-bedroom penthouse suites

TROPICAL IMAGING

The Rolls Royce Experience

HONEYMOONERS AND select- ed guests are picked up at the Providenciales airport in a vintage white Rolls Royce, stocked with chilled drinks and cool towels. The 1965 Silver Shadow 3 was the pride of actor Kirk Douglas for 20 years (and still bears his family crest) before being regally restored for Point Grace. It retains the trademark chrome detailing, whitewall tires and burgundy leather/cherrywood interior, but the 6200 c.c. engine, air conditioning and sound system are all brand-new.



Gary Lightbourne transports Point Grace guests in style.

The chauffeur is Islander Gary Lightbourne, a former heavyweight boxing contender who is no stranger to rubbing elbows with the elite. Besides keeping the “Rolls” spotlessly clean, Gary makes sure that his passengers are given a thorough briefing on island activities as they make the 15-minute trip to the hotel in rolling luxury.

Rolls Royce service is included in Point Grace’s “Romantic Getaway” package for honeymooners and romantic couples. k

The Spa Experience

AS BEFITTING ITS OCEANFRONT location, Point Grace's spa features a unique concept termed *thalassotherapy*, literally "treatment by the sea." Spa Manager Edmone Sibide explains the technique, "Thalassotherapy is the use of seawater and seaweed in a number of wellness therapies. We import a specialized line of products from the Thalgo laboratories in France that use only marine ingredients."



Spa Manager Edmone Sibide practices thalassotherapy on a Point Grace guest.

Over the last 20 years, Thalgo has become the uncontested leader in the world of marine cosmetology, well-being and beauty products and draws from the riches of the ocean all elements indispensable to authentic and efficient programs.

Fresh sea breezes and a marvelous view of the ocean are part of the thalasso beauty elements. Point Grace's spa is located in three, white-washed buildings set apart at the east of the property and just back from the beach dune. The treatment rooms are designed to allow doors and windows to be open to the ocean view and sea air while guests are being

pampered, yet privacy is maintained. Each high-ceilinged suite is thoroughly outfitted with massage table, marble sinks and an open-roofed shower.

This simple, naturally beautiful environment blends well with Edmone's French-influenced philosophy of wellness therapy. She says, "I believe in a pure, natural approach without the need for artifice. Professionalism, the knowledge that comes through our hands and the best products are all that is needed."

The spa is in capable hands with Edmone, originally from the southwest of France and bringing 22 years of professional experience and awards in beauty treatments, most recently serving for seven years as manager of the Wellness Center for a major cruise line. This certified Master Beautician and Massage Therapist is aptly assisted by Technician Rosanna De La Rosa, originally from the Philippines, and a certified Massage Therapist and accredited instructor in different massage techniques, with 13 years of professional experience and many awards to her credit. Both are professionals who obviously love what they do and say, "We want to help people feel well."

Besides a variety of aromatherapeutic massages, including Swedish, Shiatsu, Tai, sports and lymph drainage techniques, the spa offers body scrubs and algae wraps, marine facial treatments, manicures, pedicures, waxing and cosmetic treatments. There are also one to five day packages designed to focus on specific results, whether rejuvenating, slimming or simply overall well being is your goal.

Services are open to all visitors and residents of the Turks & Caicos; phone for reservations in advance. k

are particularly conducive to small retreats or meetings.

Swiss-born Andre Neiderhauser brings 25 years of international experience in the hotel and restaurant business to his role as manager of Point Grace, most recently at Tortola's Prospect Reef Resort. He was attracted to the Turks & Caicos following a visit in 2000 to officiate as regional officer at the Islands' first *Chaine des Rotisseurs* meeting, and he often exercises his flair for fine dining at Grace's Cottage. North Caicos native Pamela Ewing has been at the hotel's forefront since its initial set-up in 1999, following a six year stint at the prestigious Grace Bay Club and an internship at the famous Hotel del Coronado in San Diego, California. With a busy daily schedule dealing with guests, staff, vendors, marketing personnel and the press, her organized, calm demeanor is crucial. She says,

At Point Grace, little details count.

"Little details count and you can't get easily frustrated when you are working in an island environment. Above all, we want our guests to feel welcomed and pampered. We want to show them that we understand their importance and appreciate their business."

With a ratio of nearly two staff members to each guest, Andre states the obvious when he says, "We feel that each person on our team is the key to making it happen." Point Grace offers training programs to assist employees in progressing in their jobs and is actively seeking to increase the number of Turks & Caicos Islanders seeking a career in the luxury resort industry. Andre explains, "We're looking for people who have the right attitude and desire to succeed . . . 'diamonds in the rough,' if you will, who will help enhance the Point Grace experience." k