

ALBANY, BAHAMAS

Harry Jarman travels to the Bahamas to take a look at one luxury development that is in the headlines for all the right reasons.

Words by HARRY JARMAN



Beach front at the Albany Manor house at the centre of the resort.

Clockwise: Exterior of the pink Albany Manor House. Interiors of the Orchid Apartment V with a recreation room and sitting area. A view of the Orchid building from the marina.



J

ust the word 'Bahamas' conjures up visions of white, sandy beaches and crystal clear waters. However, this year the Bahamas has been in the headlines for all of

the wrong reasons. There have been billionaire court battles between members of the exclusive Lyford Cay community, as well as bankruptcy of property developments like the Baha Mar. But away from the negative headlines, one development getting noticed for all the right reasons: the Albany, Bahamas.

The brainchild of billionaire businessman, Joe Lewis, who along with partners including golfing legends Tiger Woods and Ernie Els, has developed 600 stunning oceanfront acres of New Providence's coastline. Albany House, a pink beachfront Bahamian manor that featured in Casino Royale during Daniel Craig's memorable swimming short scene, lends its name to the development.

However, it's all the things away from this centrepiece that I want to talk about and believe me, there's plenty to talk about. The whole development has been created

around three words: Live, work, and play - and they perfectly summarise the type of resort that Albany is. It's a home, a holiday destination, and a members club all in one. This is further emphasised by the presence of facilities like a financial centre - and there's even talk of building a school. Joe Lewis, who is a resident (albeit on his impressive 223ft yacht called Aviva), has created something extraordinary and totally unlike anywhere else.

Before Albany came along, the number one location to have a home in the Bahamas was the exclusive Lyford Cay area, which like the Albany has a club at its centre. But many have criticised it for being too exclusive and formal. One Bahamian resident even asked: 'Why would you want to come to the Bahamas only to wear a jacket and shirt for dinner?' A question that speaks volumes about the type of place it is.

Albany, on the other hand, tries to cater for everyone and, therefore, has a much more relaxed way of thinking. This is shown perfectly by the pool area, which has one side that is family orientated with the other designed for adults who prefer the peace and quiet.

Similarly, when it comes to property on the development; there's something for everyone. From a wide selection of luxury beach-front villas to a 71-slip mega yacht marina that can accommodate vessels up to 300 feet in length. The marina is surrounded by apartments designed by some of the world's top architects, including the renowned London based Finchatton.

The Orchid Apartment V is particularly beautiful. Set on the edge of the marina with far reaching ocean views, its facade is inspired by the architect's native New Orleans' French Quarter. Inside the apartment the residence has an expansive master suite with a bathroom, study, dressing room and its own private terrace. As you would expect from a Finchatton property, no expense has been spared; from the Crema

Botticino marble entrance hall to the SubZero appliances. Each bedroom has been fitted with bespoke panelling and marble counter tops run throughout. For owners, there is also a rental programme designed to help you generate income on your property when you're not there.

All of the apartments have been created with convenience in mind. We're not just talking about the 24 hour butler service that is included, but moreover about the fact you can lock up your apartment with ease, knowing that it will be exactly how you found it when you first arrived. I personally don't know of many places in the world that offer luxury, privacy, convenience and service in such a perfect balance.

With development partners such as Tiger Woods and Ernie Els, it doesn't take Sherlock Holmes to work out that Albany has become famous for its Ernie Els-designed 18-hole championship golf course. In the golfing community Albany is fast becoming known as one of the best courses - so much so that many professional golfers own homes here and can be often seen playing a round or two.

Aside from golf, it's clear that health and wellness were top of the list when Albany was being dreamt up. There is a 15,000 square foot, state-of-the-art fitness centre, an aerobics and pilates studio, a boxing ring, a 25-metre pool, an equestrian centre and an amazing spa which takes some beating.

In the evening you really get a feeling for the community spirit when residents and members gather at one of several restaurants, serving everything from sushi to gourmet cuisine, or dining on the beach looking out to sea. If, however, you prefer to dine in the privacy of your own apartment or villa, the Albany also functions like a 5-star hotel. Outside of Albany - and what make the Bahamas so special - are the 700 islands that the country consists of, most of which have beautiful white sandy beaches and crystal clear blue water. It's easy just to jump on a boat for a day and find yourself speeding across one of the many lagoons for lunch on a deserted beach.

Albany has a range of three to five bedroom villas starting at £3,500 per night, including a round of golf and and cart rental. British Airways has return direct flights from London Heathrow to Nassau from £781. For further information visit albanybahams.com



Why would you want to come to the Bahamas only to wear a jacket and shirt for dinner?' A question that speaks volumes about the type of place it is.

