

{STAYCATION}

BAL HARBOUR HEAVEN



No luxurious detail is overlooked at the St. Regis Bal Harbour, where guests can breathe in the ocean air from their balconies, from the resort's white-sand beach or from its two infinity pools with private cabanas, daybeds and villas.



In the midst of a \$35 million renovation, the St. Regis Bal Harbour reimagines its signature restaurant, suites and lobby while retaining its beloved luxuries and traditions.

No one was suggesting that the regal St. Regis Bal Harbour needed an update. But sometimes even the best can be made better. And so, at the behest of its Qatari owners, the famed resort is undergoing a \$35 million facelift as it prepares to celebrate its fifth anniversary. “We will continue being No. 1!” promised Cristina Amescua, group sales manager.

Gone is the critically acclaimed J&G Grill. In its place: Atlantikós, where you can dine like a Greek goddess, sampling shared plates from an authentic menu inspired by the Greek Isles and tailored to Miami. Chef Anastasios Chasekioglou, a native of Greece, delights with dishes like grilled octopus made with fava from Santorini, pickled sea fennel, caper berries and caramelized onions. The indoor-outdoor space, conceived by Michael Wolk Design Associates, evokes images of Santorini with its contrasting splashes of bright blue and white.

SUPERSIZED SUITES

And just in case the astounding original suites aren't quite extravagant — or large — enough, live like a titan in one of the new Signature Suites. They're designed to emulate private penthouses with four bedrooms and four bathrooms while maintaining the amenities of a luxury resort. These suites, which start at \$8,000 a night and can be combined to accommodate up to 20 guests, feature a main living room — ideal for lounging — and four balconies with sweeping ocean views. Currently under construction: a standalone five-bedroom presidential villa that will span three stories.

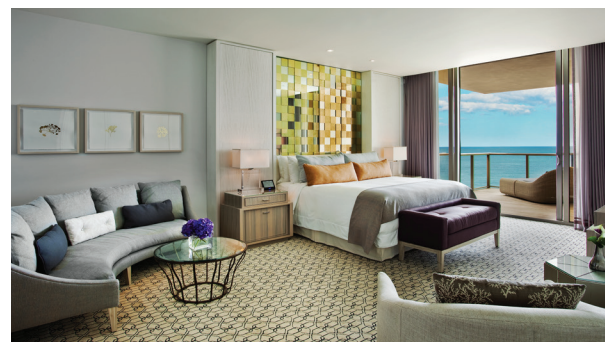
All suites include the legendary St. Regis Butler service, where a butler will unpack your suitcases, press your garments within the hour, deliver French-press coffee on demand, shine your shoes and — when it's time to depart — repack your belongings. Essentially, your wish is their command. “If the butlers can't make it happen, they can find someone who can,” Amescua said.

Meantime, down in the lobby area, construction workers are building a new Lobby Lounge, an open area for guests to gather, shop and enjoy pastries by celebrated executive pastry chef Antonio Bachour. On its way out: the original lobby, which was modeled after a mansion for intimate gatherings to take place in small mirrored vignettes (designed, to be sure, to conjure up images of the tennis bracelets cherished by St. Regis founder and socialite Caroline Astor).

As the Starwood-managed property undergoes these enhancements, the luxuries and traditions that have made the St. Regis Bal Harbour a consistent Forbes five-star, AAA five-diamond property endure. For starters, guests checking in take a seat at the reception desk and enjoy a glass of Champagne or bottled water. The spacious rooms, all boasting oceanfront balconies, are tricked out with touchscreen lighting, pillowtop beds with 400-thread-count Pratesi linens, and marble bathrooms featuring a wall mirror that disguises a flat screen television.

PRIVATE CARS AND CABANAS

You can summon the Bentley house car for a ride, or you can head to the beach, the family pool or the adult pool. Private oceanfront villas are available (starting at \$550/day) and include a full bathroom, TV and air conditioning.



Ocean views abound at the St. Regis. The five-year-old property's unique design provides every room with at least one balcony that overlooks the water.

For a Forbes five-star spa indulgence, head to the Remède Spa, a sanctuary of relaxation. The experience begins with a cool washcloth and unique fruit juice (honeydew-cantaloupe, anyone?) and ends with a chocolate truffle and Champagne. Choose among a full range of massages, facials, body treatments and salon services, and soak up the heat in saunas, whirlpools and steam rooms. Parents can drop their little ones (ages 4 to 12) at the Sea Turtle Club, where counselors supervise arts and crafts, lunch, and excursions to the pool and beach.

If there's an afternoon rain shower, grab an oversized umbrella from the room and trot across Collins Avenue to the famed Bal Harbour Shops for the hottest in designer fashion. Anchored by Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman Marcus, the open-air mall beckons with the likes of Chanel, Prada and Gucci, as well as bookworm paradise Books & Books.

No matter how you spend your day, cap it off at the newly remodeled St. Regis Bar & Sushi Lounge by ordering a Lobster Roll and a Bal Harbour Sunrise, the hotel's spin on the original Bloody Mary created in 1934 at the first St. Regis in New York City (think fresh Key lime and Clamato juice). Then, come 7:30 p.m., marvel as the butler sabers a bottle of Champagne, a nightly St. Regis ritual inspired by Napoleon, and raise your complimentary glass to toast the Greek gods for such a heavenly staycation. **WORDS BY LAUREN COMANDER**

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Order a craft beer and gourmet burger at the casual BH Burger Bar, right, or go more upscale with a meal at the brand-new Atlantikós restaurant, left.



St. Regis Bal Harbour, 9703 Collins Avenue, Bal Harbour; 305-993-3300; stregisbalharbour.com.