

Now a hip, trendy Gay Fort Lauderdale!

Posted On Feb 28, Posted by [The Royal Palms](#) Category [Royal Palms News](#)

Fort Lauderdale has long been number-one among gay travelers for its casual, laid-back, inclusive vibe -- and its hot all-male resorts and gay guesthouses, where the excitement builds behind closed doors. As the gay Ft Lauderdale scene evolves, the famous beach city is developing a new set of urban amenities and drawing a younger crowd of sophisticated and trendy travelers.

"There's a huge difference in attitude between Fort Lauderdale and Miami," Rod Hagwood, fashion columnist for the daily Sun Sentinel, told [Jumponmarkslist.com](#), a Baedeker to the gay South Florida scene. "On weekends, when my friends in Miami really, really want to have fun, they come up here."

The reinvention of The Royal Palms symbolizes the shift. The first gay guesthouse in Ft. Lauderdale -- opening in 1991 -- Royal Palms put the sunny beach city on the map as a gay travel hotspot. A critical mass of businesses followed, from little inns and other places to stay to nudist-friendly gay resorts, along with myriad gay bars and dining options. Within a few years, metro Fort Lauderdale -- especially the enclave called Wilton Manors -- was dishing up fresh choices to gay South Florida travelers beyond Miami gay hotels and cramped city bed-and-breakfasts. Bolstered by émigrés from South Beach and beyond, Fort Lauderdale has grown to be the Gay Mecca in Florida and one of North America's gayest cities.

This spring heralds the new RP's unveiling, with the addition of a brand-new contemporary hotel two blocks from the original guesthouse. (Follow all the news at on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/royalpalmsresort](#)

). The 53-room addition brings the dernier cri in contemporary design and sleek luxury to a younger slice of the gay demographic -- travelers whose first choice might be the open experience of a straight-friendly boutique hotel over the somber intimacy of a guesthouse.

The new Royal Palms offers the advantages of both -- a boutique hotel boasting all the amenities of a gay resort. It's all nestled within the RP's lush foliage, a clothing-optional pool ensconced amidst bougainvillea, a full-service spa, and a totally re-conceived gay bar and

restaurant. The result? The largest luxury gay resort in the US, just a few blocks from the famed Sebastian Street gay beach.

Tying it all together with a bow is the Royal Palms' famously attentive service. Count on exquisite touches from the moment you check in. Pool boys are at the ready to help apply suntan lotion or offer cold towels treated with eucalyptus, lavender, and chamomile. Find the RP's orchid motif everywhere -- even a bloom freshening the toilet bowl! And you can count on the world's most compulsive gay housekeeping.

Complementing the personal service are design touches to tickle the fancy of tech-savvy, younger pleasure travelers -- from 42-inch flat screen TVs to the complimentary iPads guests can borrow at check-in, to the sleek contemporary design features, like pebble-floor European rain showers in the new hotel, and the trendy cuisine at the grille. And to wow you even more, the RP makes a sleek 54 foot luxury yacht available for a celebration of your picking during your stay.

"There's going to be nothing like this in the US for the gay traveler," says Royal Palms founder Richard Gray. "There's no question in my mind that we're going to be the first." Staying at the new Royal Palms means having a world of options. Enjoy Ft Lauderdale's pulsing clubs or just linger by the pool and check out what's hopping at the RP's own bar and grille -- the city's newest gay nightlife and dining destination right off the beach.

Royal Palms helped put Ft. Lauderdale on the map. As the resort recasts itself from the ground up, it's building a new brand of excitement and luxury into the city's mix. At one time, Fort Lauderdale was famous for its Spring Break revelers. Then town fathers switched gears to pursue an identity as a decidedly adult vacation paradise. Some of those former students -- now upscale young professionals -- are back adding an edge to the Fort Lauderdale scene that's entirely new.

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