



FT. LAUDERDALE GAY RESORT RATINGS

We inspected them all for quality and sexual temperature... Here's our report.





During our recent inspection of gay resorts in Ft. Lauderdale, we were surprised by the number of *OUT&ABOUT 2003 Editor's Choice Award* plaques we saw. It was gratifying to see that ten years later, our opinion was still relevant, but it was also the first harbinger of a strange stasis in the guesthouse scene here, which in some ways — good and bad — hasn't changed in the last decade. We were the first people to inspect and rate gay resorts and guesthouses, and our ratings played an integral role in the recognition and advancement of this travel segment that had existed under-the-radar with no quality oversight from mainstream travel guides. With objective standards in place, travelers could choose among gay resorts based on verified qualities, not just paid advertising, and those resorts began competing on the basis of quality and amenities.

It's been ten years since anyone has rated these guesthouses, and now, we have returned to Fort Lauderdale with ManAboutWorld. While Tripadvisor and other user-generated ratings provide some measure of quality, our inspection-verified ratings are unique in the industry.

We have posted our ratings criteria before the ratings themselves, but note that they do reflect some subjective judgements by our team based on our personal reactions to particular things we observed that are more fully described in the individual resort descriptions.

Our Sexual Temperature ratings are unique, reflecting the relative friskiness of the resorts we've rated. Of course, your personal experience will vary widely depending on the other guests during your stay. The size of the resort plays a role here, but even more so, the sexual "personality" of the resort. We saw resorts across a whole spectrum of sexual expression: From co-ed resorts at one end of the spectrum to rooms equipped with slings at the other, and a wide range in between. The ManAboutWorld team has divergent preferences here, but we all agreed that this particular criteria is as important — maybe even more important — than the quality of the accommodations themselves.



OUR PALM RATINGS



FIVE PALM resorts offer quality, amenities and services comparable to mainstream luxury resorts. They meet or exceed Four Palm standards for all criteria, and add a measure of surprise that will delight even experienced travelers.



FOUR PALM resorts offer upgraded and fresh-feeling furnishings and amenities. Resort and room decor typically has a cohesive sense of style. Amenities go beyond standard, such as an expanded breakfast, other food or beverage presentations throughout the day, luxury bath products, higher quality linens, better electronics, onsite spa and/or gym. Bicycles or beach equipment are often available, and concierge-type services are offered.



THREE PALM resorts compare to typical mid-range hotels: rooms are clean, and fully functional, service is professional, and modern amenities, such as wifi, expanded bath products, and flat-screen TVs are offered. Room decor is typically pleasant, though non-descript.



TWO PALM resorts typically have mismatched furnishings, older electronics, and basic bath amenities. Public areas are less inviting, possibly unkempt or poorly furnished, but typically clean. Bath products are typically limited to soap, shampoo and conditioner. Front desk services may be limited in scope or hours.



ONE PALM resorts offer the most basic accommodations. Furnishings may be worn or in disrepair. Evidence of daily housekeeping is satisfactory, though not exemplary and deferred maintenance such as moldy grouting, peeling paint and/or poorly tended gardens are visible. Service may lack professionalism, friendliness or both.

THE END OF THE FIVE PALM GUESTHOUSE?

We were saddened to see so many guesthouses stop innovating. The few select guesthouses that received Five Palms in 2003 haven't gotten worse, but they haven't kept pace with today's luxury hotels. For now, if your priority is W Hotels glamour or Ritz Carlton luxury, you're going to have to stay at the W or the Ritz — there's no gay guesthouse that meets those standards.



SEXUAL TEMPERATURE

“Sexual Temperature” reflects the relative friskiness of the resorts we’ve inspected. Of course, your personal experience will vary widely depending on the other guests during your stay. The size of the resort plays a role here, but even more so, the sexual “personality” of the resort. We saw resorts across a whole spectrum of sexual expression: From co-ed resorts at one end of the spectrum to rooms equipped with slings and sex benches at the other, and a wide range in between. The ManAboutWorld team has divergent preferences here, but we all agreed that this particular criteria is as important — maybe even more important — than the quality of the accommodations themselves.

 **LOW SEXUAL TEMPERATURE:** Generally places with mixed clientele, and no clothing-optional space.

 **MEDIUM SEXUAL TEMPERATURE:** Typically gay resorts with at least some clothing-optional areas.

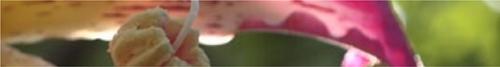
 **HIGH SEXUAL TEMPERATURE:** Clothing optional resorts where cruising is likely, but sex outside of rooms is not allowed or not encouraged.

 **VERY HIGH SEXUAL TEMPERATURE:** Clothing-optional resorts where there’s a definite sexual vibe, and sex in public areas seems likely and even facilitated.

 **EXTREMELY HIGH SEXUAL TEMPERATURE:** sex-focused resorts, where public areas are designed specifically to encourage sex, and guests come expecting it.

ROOM RATES

We’ve only listed high season room rates for all resorts: from the least to the most expensive rooms and suites, in US dollars. You can expect significant discounts in periods of lower demand, represented by published low season rates, “Stay x, get y” free night offers, along with mid-week and some last-minute discounts. For periods of high demand, a minimum stay is often required. Special kudos here to the Worthington, which publishes their exact room availability and rates online. We like the transparency and convenience of seeing this detailed information.

 **OUR 2013 RATINGS** 



[Pineapple Point](#)

\$289-\$699

The most deluxe of the clothing-optional gay resorts, Pineapple Point remains the standard of gay guesthouses after more than a decade on top, retaining its blend of playful sex, aesthetic allure, and hospitable staff. The on-premise Grand Villa is possibly the best available room in the entire city: a gay-replica of a Real World house, three floors bursting with tropical colors, a full kitchen, one huge bedroom with a private deck and soaking hot tub; perfect for couples with some cash to burn (we're talking \$500 a night), or for a group of friends looking for a crazy weekend. The grounds have a selection of other Key West-style bungalows, bicycles available for rent, two pools, and the best on-site gym of any of the guesthouses. Nespresso coffee in the office and lemonade and ice water are available by the pool all day long. The Victoria Park location, once popular with the gays, now feels a bit isolated, and a car or taxi is necessary to reach both the beach and Wilton Manors, and a GPS is useful for finding your way back!



[The Ed Lugo Resort](#)

\$189-\$259

This small guesthouse received TripAdvisor's 2012 Travelers' Choice #5 US Hotel for service, delivered by none other than Ed Lugo himself, the proprietor. The three small houses hosting five guestrooms and suites are tucked away on a residential Wilton Manors block within walking distance of the gay strip of Wilton Drive. While the grounds are limited, the service is not. Ed Lugo is intently focused on personal comfort and service, ready to pull a bottle of Grey Goose or Patron from the freezer for his guests enjoyment at no charge. The spacious and sleekly-designed rooms and two-bedroom apartments offer complimentary snacks, WiFi, and plenty of peace and quiet. Special complimentary guest privileges (including Ed Lugo-branded towels) await guests at the Island City Gym around the corner.



[The Royal Palms](#)

\$199-\$239

This clean, modern gay resort with an on-site bar and restaurant has a uniquely youthful, social vibe. The rooms are clean and spacious, with nice rainforest showerheads and pebble shower floors, but it's clear this renovation was gay-washed on the cheap: the Ikea furnishings and lame gay erotica bring it down a notch. The on-site gym is one of the better guesthouse workout rooms we've seen, and the spa treatment area is serene and sexy. The 24-hour front desk is so helpful while you're on vacation in a new city, although you'll have to walk over or call them from your mobile — there are no in-room phones here. In the center of the main courtyard is a swimming pool and a bar with a small eatery, offering mediocre food at decent prices. The color-changing rainbow LEDs running around the bar is a aesthetic faux-pas, and the premises could use an influx of lush greenery. We would recommend a room away from the pool area as it can get loud, but loud is part of the fun at the Royal Palms, which hosts a monthly T-dance and welcomes non-guests to the scene at the bar, pool, spa and gym.



[The Grand Resort](#)

\$150-450

The gay-owned and managed Grand does a masterful job of balancing the sexual temperature here, managing to keep the on-site sexuality abuzz without allowing it to define the resort. The pool area is not clothing optional but the larger spa is, allowing guests to choose just how naughty they feel like being. The rooms are some of the largest we saw, all designed like a straight-man's first apartment: a little generic and incongruous with the Fort Lauderdale beach vibe outside. We appreciated the gregarious and professional host, the reasonably-priced mini-bar (not your typical airport prices for a bag of M&Ms) and a terrific fitness facility with actual free weights. We also really liked the small but hip and elegant day spa, offering a full range of services, including mani/pedis with a view to the spa deck.



[Lush Royale](#)

\$159-249

There's a lot still to love about the guesthouse that set industry standards when it was the original Royal Palms. The clothing optional resort still boasts clean, spacious rooms with plenty of natural light, some modern technological touches, an impressive selection of bath amenities, meticulously manicured grounds, afternoon slushie drinks and customer-focused service. But we found too little had changed since it sat atop the gay guesthouse world, and now the palm tree décor feels more dated than tropical and the modern touches are limited. There's still an orchid floating in the toilet when your room has been serviced, but the Lush Royale will need some new tricks (and some new furnishings) to reclaim a top spot in our ratings.



[Island Sands Inn](#)

\$159-209

The clean, very intimate Island Sands Inn is run by a young, friendly gay couple from up north, newly moved to Fort Lauderdale, and as amenable as can be — even willing to drive you over to the beach if it's convenient (Stay there now before they turn jaded and bitter ;). The three newly-renovated rooms are clean and modern, with private entrances, plenty of space, a mini-bottle of wine upon entry, affordable snacks, flat-screen Samsungs, and even room service breakfast. Fairly priced and well-located within crawling distance to the Wilton Manors nightlife, it's a great option for travelers who don't need coddling or company, and who are turned off by the older furnishings in so many other guesthouses.



[The Worthington](#)

\$169-395

With its recent acquisition of the Alcazar and the Villa Venice, The Worthington resort has become the largest here, a complex with three pools and two hot tubs, a small but attractive windowed gym looking out on the pool deck, more than 60 rooms of three different styles and varying quality, and a professional, friendly staff helmed by an on-site gay owner. All three sections ooze, so to speak, a playful, sexy vibe, with the large-windowed Alcazar rooms most inviting for exhibitionists and the guys who love them. This is not the place for prudes or modest types. The Worthington reminds us that while some of us gays live in progressive big cities where homosexuality is as normal as khaki pants, many men do not, and those men look forward to a week of sun and fornication with their fellow brethren. If that's your agenda, the friendly and frisky Worthington has no equal. That doesn't mean the resort is without its flaws; we found the rooms just decent — some nicer than others — but overall lacking in substance and style. The terrazzo floors and attempts at modernity are appreciated, but the resort doesn't pop with a particular sense of style or class. The three-in-one layout offers a wide price range and allows guests to follow the sun from one pool to the next as it arcs across the sky.



[Cabanas](#)

\$169-395

The king premium waterfront room at the Cabanas is one of our favorite rooms in all of Fort Lauderdale. The living room view of the Middle River, a floor-to-ceiling window overlooking a grand canal, is so picturesque, a gorgeous piece of southern Florida often overshadowed by the sweeping oceans. If you choose the clothing optional Cabanas as your resort, this is the room to stay in, and the value is unbeatable. The resort offers kayaking and bike rentals to guests, and we recommend you take advantage of both. The same owners have run this place for more than 13 years now and it shows in well-kept grounds. The central location is great for walking to the bars, and adds a nice social element to your stay. We loved the salt-water pool, one of two on the grounds, and their spa is sleek and full of services. Outside of the king suite, however, the rooms have a frumpy feel, the computer in the cafe looks to be decades old, and there's a general drabness about the place that could use updating.



[Coconut Cove](#)

\$169-289

Upon first impression, the lush, tropical grounds of Coconut Cove are quite impressive. The three-story, tiered courtyard with outdoor walkways and curved stair wells was built in 1939 originally as penthouse apartments, and exudes a rare Key West-inspired charm. The gay-owned and managed resort has built a definite following among the bears, hosting some of their local events, but is open and welcoming for all gay men. Rooms have all received new beds this year, but the décor is still stuck in the past, and could use a shove into the appropriate time period.



[La Casa Del Mar](#)

\$149-179

This gay-friendly, adults-only guest house has its charms, with a hacienda-like exterior and a clean and mostly modern decor. There are only 13-units and the premises are well-maintained inside and out. La Casa del Mar is not technically a gay guesthouse, though it is certainly gay friendly and gay marketed. But out-of-towners looking for that sexual tension and the opportunity to be around fellow gays will not find it here. Gay men looking for a friendly atmosphere that is not gay-centric may find this to be their ideal spot. Gay men looking for the charm and spirit of a true gay guest house should look elsewhere.



[Coral Reef](#)

\$169-215

This intimate resort of eight rooms tries to mimic the Key West-bungalow style with unremarkable results, instead bordering on a kind of 'Golden Girls' gaudiness. Some promised renovations could liven the place up, and the grounds are clothing optional, but the scene is uninspired, and while the heated pool is a draw, the resort suffers from having so much nearby competition offering the same perks but better. Whether you're looking for intimacy, privacy, sex, or style, you can find it all, but better, somewhere else. Coral Reef has its charm, but could do a better job of picking an audience.



[Flamingo Inn Amongst the Flowers](#)

\$189-370

There was a time when the Flamingo Inn Amongst the Flowers earned our highest praises, but no longer. Ten years later and the rooms look as if they're frozen in time with a dated decor and cluttered furnishings. The gay erotica on the walls is bizarre when juxtaposed with the stuffed teddy bears on the canopy beds, and the whole place just lacks that energy you want when you're on vacation. Some rooms even had a slight mildewed odor, reinforcing our inclination that the time for some updating is long overdue. Extra points for the Aveda bath amenities and the marble baths, but it's time for a change.



[The Schubert Resort](#)

~~\$289-\$699~~

The Schubert feels a little betwixt and between — like its location, almost midway between Wilton Manors and the beach, but walking distance to neither. The resort has its good points — we like the spacious layout, the jacuzzi tubs in the king suites, the terrazzo floors, the private courtyards, and the wheelchair accessibility — but more noticeable are the upgrades needed to be on par with some of its nearby counterparts. The website claims the resort just went through a \$2.5 million renovation, but you could've fooled us. Instead, we saw moldy grout in some showers and drab rooms in need of, well, a renovation.



[Manor Inn](#)

~~\$149-169~~

With just a few rooms, this place is certainly intimate, and has the advantage of being the only clothing-optional guest house in Wilton Manors. We liked that it was smoke-free, with a huge pool, screened-in porch and friendly, low-key host. We presume the secludedness may be conducive to late-night friskiness, but don't hold us to that, especially with so few rooms. What stands out, though, is the general unkemptness of the rooms, cluttered with old TVs and older computers, mismatched towels, and messy in a way a guesthouse shouldn't be. To be fair, the rooms are reasonably priced, and there is something to having the owner on-site. There are far better choices, but not many in Wilton Manors.



[Windamar](#)

~~\$149-209~~

To judge the Windamar from its rather innocuous exterior is to misjudge just how sex-friendly this resort is. What appears at first glance to be a middling yet decent hotel turns out to have hidden glory holes tucked away behind the bushes around the back, an impressive porno collection in the lobby, and a cavernous video lounge in the basement, where men can hang out naked together any time of the day or night. The resort also plays hosts to the [Cumunion](#) bareback sex parties. The rooms are forgettable, mostly outdated, with old tube TV sets, and for all of its attempts at color, comes of as rather bleak.



[The Cheston House](#)

~~\$159-229~~

The biggest perk of staying at the Cheston House is the location; the hotel is a short walk to the beach. Otherwise, there's little to rave about here. The large clothing-optional pool area is now in the shadow of the Hilton and W high-rises; so much for the high-fences. The plain rooms need an overhaul — the patio furnishings were particularly cheap — and not even the smallest amenity could be found. Instead, you're given Dial hand soap, a wire shower rack, and plastic wrapped muffins. Even the workout room was tiny and cramped. Glimpses of change came in the form of the small flat screens in the room, and the on-site laundry is nice. We were told the majority of the guests are returning visitors, so surely there's a level of comfort here for some patrons, but there are better options within walking distance.



[Palm Plaza](#) \$119-159

This Intercoastal-adjacent property has potential, with some nice views, a great location, and what could be a shabby Key West look, but it doesn't come together, and too many missteps take it down too many notches for us to recommend this as a place to stay. You'll surely notice the Astroturf when you first enter, the first red flag, and then on to the 12 rooms which take on a look more like a funky motor lodge than a Key West bungalow. As a whole, it seemed like the hotel had a sociability about it, with plenty of outdoor common space for guests to congregate, meet, and flirt. No gym (though guests have access to the nearby Royal Palms gym), no spa, no real amenities, and some tacky furnishings both inside and out, left us feeling this place has some work to do before we can enthusiastically recommend it.



[Inn Leather](#) \$187-198

If we were to judge Inn Leather from the perspective of a leather-fetish bear looking for a weekend of kink of wild sex locked away in a dungeon of sex-swings and torture toys, this specialty resort may very well earn a five-star rating. For its target audience, it does an impressive and creative job of creating an atmosphere of lusty fun, a kind of deviant fantasy land of glory holes, watersports, and bondage, with a singular host, the garrulous porn-star Milan, whose hospitality knows no bounds, made evident by his offer to co-star with you in your very own porno flick. If, by chance, you don't fit into this niche, Inn Leather skews more scary than sexy, with rooms in need of more than a little tending, updating, and redesigning, three suggestions rendered utterly impractical by the nature of this resort: Let's face it, nobody at the fisting party cares if the pillows match the freshly-painted pastel walls. As a fetishistic sex haven, Inn Leather is in a league of its own.



[Elysium Resort](#) \$155-225

The mildew and grime, unkempt rooms and untended grounds earn the Elysium the dishonorable distinction of being the worst guest house we saw in Fort Lauderdale. When we say we'd rather sleep in our cars than spend the night here, we mean it. The out-of-order gym, the moldy grout in the showers, the old TVs, all add up to a dank and depressing stay. The indifferent staff didn't help matters. The resort is clothing-optional and priced at a lower level than its neighbors, but you didn't come to Fort Lauderdale to deal with these problems. Aside from its close proximity to the beach and large hot tub, the Elysium has little to offer. We recommend you avoid.

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