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I write about hotels and the world that surrounds them

TRAVEL | 8/01/2012 @ 10:31AM | 7,092 views

The Ritz-Carlton Debuts Dorado Beach, A Reserve, The Must-See Resort of 2013



Dorado Beach

The words Dorado Beach recall an era of glamorous travel in the 1960s, when the Hollywood elite, social jetsetters, and presidents like John F. Kennedy buzzed down to Puerto Rico for time in the sun. Just outside San Juan, [Dorado Beach](#) was *the* place to go after Laurance Rockefeller, a businessman from that famous family line and huge conservationist, opened Dorado Beach as one of his first

RockResorts in 1958.

After a long history, it's about to be the place to go again, one of the must-see resorts for travelers in 2013. Why? All you need to know is RITZ. And that every room and suite sits directly on the beach.

It is a big year for [Ritz-Carlton Hotels](#), whose parent company is [Marriott International](#). [Dorado Beach](#), a Ritz-Carlton Reserve property in Puerto Rico, is opening on December 12, 2012, showcasing all the allure that originally drove visitors to this corner of the world while presenting an all-star dining program and a world-class spa. This is the second in a line of Reserve properties, after [Phulay Bay in Thailand](#). President and COO of Ritz-Carlton Hotels, Herve Humler, talked to me about the philosophy behind the Reserve brand as equally being a celebration of the uniqueness of place and guest individuality. "By creating designs that blend seamlessly into ultra-remote private locations, Ritz-Carlton Reserve amplifies extraordinary parts of the world in a sustainable way," he said. "It creates innovative spaces that are in tune with the surroundings."

Ritz-Carlton has kept beloved elements like Su Casa, a plantation home from the 1920s that was the center of [Dorado Beach](#) life at its height when Rockefeller owned it. But architects found detailed photographs to restore it to its original glory and spent millions on the four-bedroom beachfront villa. In the travel industry, I've heard Su Casa constantly being talked about as one

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of the great new accommodations in the world.



Su Casa at Dorado Beach, A Ritz-Carlton Reserve

Highly acclaimed [Chef José Andrés](#), who runs a popular empire of restaurants in Washington D.C., L.A. and Las Vegas inspired by Spanish cuisine, will head up his first restaurant outside the continental U.S. at Dorado Beach, while Spa Botánico will offer a menu of healing and wellness treatments amidst lush landscaping and outdoor showers. There will even be Treehouse treatment rooms above the spa terrain.

Rockefeller originally said he wanted 'no building taller than the palm trees' and no trees removed without his permission. Ritz-Carlton is continuing in his spirit of conservation with the Rockefeller Trail, an 11-mile paved trail through the land and water of the area for walkers, bikers, and electric carts. There will also be a signature Ritz-Carlton element found in other properties around the world, the eco-adventures program, Jean-Michel Cousteau's Ambassadors of the Environment for all ages, from small children on up to adults.

For those wanting to spend more time at [Dorado Beach](#) and own a piece of it, there will be 13 Ritz-Carlton Reserve Residences opening in December, and another 14 added six months later. These condos will have 2-4 bedrooms.

I connected with Mr. Humler further about this new achievement for Ritz-Carlton and a return to the grand days of Dorado Beach. "Our aim is to launch our own version of this legendary time and recapture the magic and sentiment that people associate with it, paired with contemporary and exclusive amenities that are unique only to Dorado Beach," he said.

Why should people plan a vacation to Dorado Beach this year over another place that has eco/adventure and luxury elements?

Dorado Beach is exceptional in a variety of ways and as the first Reserve in the Americas, it will offer guests a truly extraordinary experience pairing top tier service and exclusivity with Puerto Rico's rich landscape and culture. Guests will be able to enjoy 1,400 acres of natural beauty and luxury with all guestrooms and suites sitting directly on the beach, eat world-class cuisine by José Andrés, relive the magic of a legendary era at Su Casa and explore the landscape and wildlife by Jean-Michel Cousteau's Ambassadors of the

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Environment. Best of all, Dorado Beach is a quick domestic flight from many major U.S. cities to San Juan, and there is no U.S. passport required, no customs and no currency exchange.



A room at Dorado Beach, A Ritz-Carlton Reserve

Tell me what sets apart a Ritz-Carlton Reserve from the other properties.

By creating designs that blend seamlessly into ultra-remote private locations, Ritz-Carlton Reserve amplifies extraordinary parts of the world in a sustainable way. Design inspiration is taken from the unique environment in which each property is based, like native architectural signatures and innovative local art and indigenous furniture. Ritz-Carlton Reserve's low-density, low-rise sanctuaries, large rooms and expansive grounds celebrate the barefoot luxury of space. There is as much space as guests need. How they use it is entirely up to them.

From the viewpoint of service, those at Reserve understand the art of anticipation and how to provide an experience that is personalized and intuitive without being intrusive. It is a philosophy that successfully reveals the personality of each unique Reserve to create unforgettable experiences. This could mean enjoying a scuba diving adventure, buying colourful spices or fresh fish from nearby markets with a chef, exploring a mountain village with a resident family or joining a cultural ambassador to learn the secrets of local traditions and history. At the end of the day, these people are as vital to every Ritz-Carlton Reserve as the experiences they help create.

What is so special about Su Casa, in your opinion?

Su Casa is truly exceptional for a multitude of reasons. For one, it's a separate retreat within Dorado Beach and offers four bedrooms situated directly on the beach and surrounded by lush foliage and palm trees.



Su Casa at Dorado Beach, A Ritz-Carlton Reserve

Su Casa also offers a rich history which contributes to its status as truly one-of-a-kind. The hacienda was originally built in the 1920s by Clara Livingston, the world's first female helicopter pilot and Dorado Beach's original citrus plantation owner. Amelia Earhart often frequented Dorado Beach, landing her plane on the property's nearby runway. Later on when the property was purchased by Laurance Rockefeller, back when Dorado Beach was in its prime in the 1950s, Su Casa served as the epicenter of the resort where all of the era's elite stayed, including celebrities and politicians such as Joan Crawford, Ava Gardner, Presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy. This helped Su Casa to be considered an A-list playground, which guests are now able to experience first hand for themselves. Today, Su Casa has been completely renovated back to its original 1920s splendor and charm where it will serve as a VIP villa for guests of Dorado Beach, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve.

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