



The reflecting pool and bungalows of one of Amanyaara's luxury villas

## AT AMANYARA IN THE TURKS AND CAICOS REJUVENATING BODY AND SOUL COMES STANDARD

Maybe because I'm a bit of an overpreparer when it comes to travel, or maybe because I had been scarred by a recent trip to the Caribbean that was plagued by endless flight delays and interminable transfers, it was just before a long weekend break to Turks and Caicos that I made the leap and bought an iPad. On my previous expedition, along with the delays, a weather system hovered over my destination, so this time I was determined to have in-hand, customized entertainment for my solo rejuvenation trip—just in case. I downloaded movies, bookmarked a few Web sites, and headed out to the airport. But as is often the case with the best of plans, all my preparations would soon prove blissfully pointless. Turks and Caicos—and, more specifically, Providenciales, the most populated island there, where the Amanyaara resort I was traveling to is located—is just north and east of Cuba and just south of the Bahamas, making the trip from New York a quick three-hour jump. So before I could even get into the second movie, I was being ushered into a luxury SUV by an Amanyaara staff member, and twenty minutes later I was in my villa home. I've had trips to the Hamptons that took more time.

And if I thought my new toy was a bit superfluous while getting to my destination, the resort itself rendered it downright obsolete. From the moment I pulled off the cement "highway" of Providenciales and onto a bumpy dirt road that led through the low tropical jungle and into the resort, I had a feeling I wouldn't be spending much time plugged into civilization via my high-tech lifeline or otherwise. Amanyaara sits at the outer edge of an eighteen-thousand-acre nature preserve, and the villas and lodging pavilions are designed to fit into the natural landscape seamlessly and connect the guests to the outdoors. When I arrived at my villa, I found that my pavilion had four sliding glass walls housing a bedroom, bath, and state-of-the-art amenities, and that they could be opened to the outdoors. Out front was a private sundeck, which sat on an enormous man-made reflecting pool with views of the foliage beyond. To my right was the main pavilion (where private meals are prepared by the villa's staff), which served as the communal space of the four-pavilion villa that I had chosen. And beyond that sat a glassy pool made of volcanic rock, convenient for swims.

Amanyaara, a Sanskrit word for "peaceful place," is part of the global luxury group Aman, which creates destinations around the world that seem to melt into their surroundings. Because of its impeccable reputation at achieving that unobtrusiveness, Aman is given unique allowances to build in locations like the one in Providenciales, and that's also why Aman is possibly the most popular resort chain for repeat visitors in the world. The "Aman junkie" is a real entity, and I was quickly becoming one. My first night at Amanyaara was spent in the main pavilion of my villa, where the private chefs prepared a three-course dinner, complete with wine pairings, as I tried to figure out the best way to fit in all the activities—water sports and more—available at all times to guests and owners (each of the villas is for sale, with price tags starting in the tens of millions). The only thing I was sure of was that I'd have to get to sleep early and get up early in order to be ready to tackle the day. Luckily, by nine o'clock at night such a stony silence descended over the villa that I was off to sleep in no time at all.



Each bungalow provides a peaceful and private retreat

After a serene night's sleep, I was up early to explore the rest of the resort. I started with a morning of tennis on the clay courts at the tennis center, with an on-staff pro, and followed that with a trip to the main area of Amanyaara. It occurred to me as I rode down the shell-covered path in a villa-provided golf cart that I hadn't even seen the beach yet, which speaks volumes about the beauty and design of the entire complex. Designed by Jean Michel-Gathy, of Denniston International Architects (Viceroy Snowmass, Setai in Miami), the open-air structures are made of dark teak wood and have a vaguely Asian aesthetic. Natural touches like volcanic rocks and reflecting pools make guests feel that they are at once completely isolated and completely cared for. I was almost surprised to see there were other guests. Lounging at the infinity pool, beyond an enormous volcanic-rock reflecting pool that sat in right-angular contrast to the curved domes of the main bar and lounge, they had taken on the expected languid movements of those in a state of total relaxation. Lunch was being served, and it featured a mix of Asian, island, and European flavors. Special dishes included seared tuna, jerk chicken, and a steak and chutney salad—all delicious. But rather than taking a seat at the pool after dining, I sought out a more active afternoon.

Water sports at the Amanyaara beach abound just a few steps from the pool and restaurants. Paddleboarding, kayaking, scuba diving, snorkeling, trophy fishing: You name it, and it can be found at Amanyaara, and in a setting out of a picture book. The beach is idyllic: Bleached white sand and turquoise waters extend in a 1.5-mile crescent to the edge of a lagoon rimmed with craggy rocks. And the moment you walk out onto the beach, an attendant sets up a chaise, with fresh towels and a cold bottle of water. It's hard not to feel coddled and comfortable at a place like this, and I settled in for a few days that would leave me in the same languid state as the guests I had seen on my walk to the sand.

After a long weekend spent partaking in all the activities, visiting the world-class spa (where you can have a massage in an open-air pavilion with nothing but chirping birds to distract you), and dining on the freshest of seafood, the idea of returning to civilization was a painful one. But the hour of my departure eventually arrived, and after packing up my luggage and getting ready to go, I grabbed my iPad and decided to take some minor comfort in playing with the new toy on the trip home. Of course, this plan also hit a snag. While enjoying myself at Amanyaara, I had never bothered to plug it in—my battery was dead.

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1. All photos courtesy Amanresorts