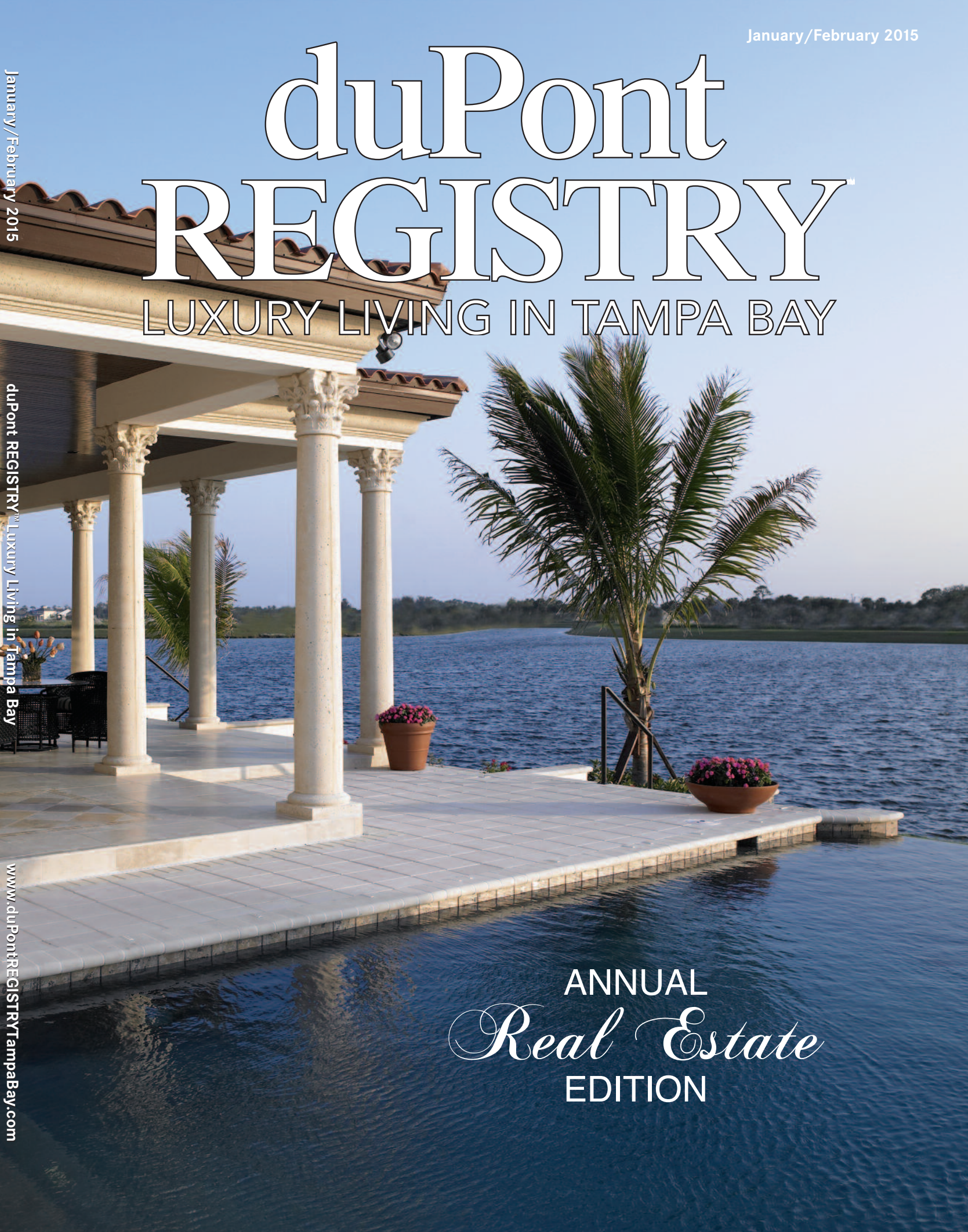
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By Susan B. Barnes

ROOMS OVER MIAMI AND NAPLES

There are plenty of options when it comes to exquisite resorts throughout Florida. Two that few can hold a candle to are the recently-renovated penthouse suite at the AAA 4-Diamond Hilton Bentley South Beach on Ocean Drive, and LaPlaya Beach & Golf Resort, a true, beachfront boutique resort on Florida's Gulf Coast in Naples.

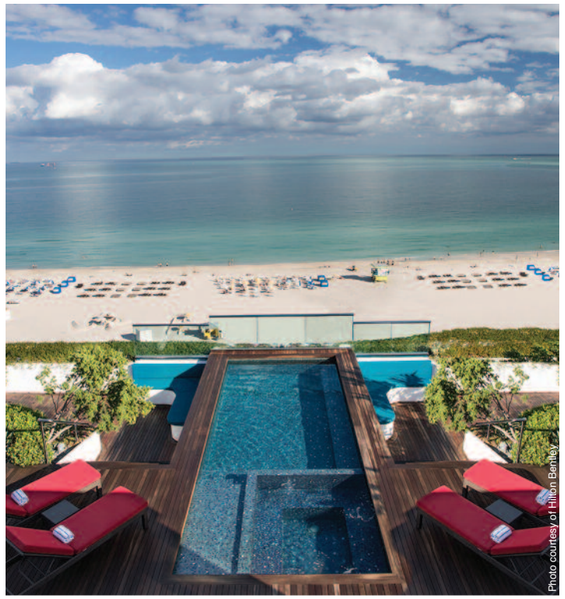

Photo courtesy of Hilton Bentley


Photo courtesy of Hilton Bentley

HILTON BENTLEY, MIAMI

The Kardashian sisters called the Hilton Bentley penthouse suite home during their time in Miami, and now you can, too. Overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, the sumptuously appointed 3,500-square-foot, two-story suite is filled with loads of luxurious amenities and space to spread out. Inside, a full stainless-steel kitchen in which to whip up breakfast, lunch, or dinner awaits, as does a personal wine cellar, dining and living rooms, two master bedrooms and three bathrooms. Floor-to-ceiling windows frame the varying blues and shimmering movements of the Atlantic Ocean just beyond.

Outside, however, is where the suite truly shines. The multi-million dollar renovation features a new, private 1,500-square-foot sun deck with rooftop infinity pool and Jacuzzi, and two private terraces on which to relax or entertain. The sweeping views of South Beach and the ocean from the sun deck are simply spectacular.

Though there's little reason to leave the penthouse suite, just downstairs is De Rodriguez Cuba, a AAA 4-Diamond award-winning restaurant led by Chef Douglas Rodriguez that's made its name by featuring Latin dishes with a twist. Though he's recently revamped the menu, Chef Rodriguez has promised to always pay tribute to his signature dishes: Smoked Marlin Tacos, The Churrasco, Sugar Cane Tuna and Kobe Meatballs are a mainstay. And if the menu appealing but leaving the penthouse isn't, in-suite service is available. A la Marie Antoinette, guests can essentially have their cake and eat it, too.

What's more, just steps outside Hilton Bentley is famed South Beach and Ocean Drive, lined with restaurants and clubs for dining and dancing–or simply people-watching–well into the night. South Florida's playground is there for the taking.

Reservations for the Hilton Bentley penthouse suite are now available, and overnight rates range from $2,700 to $7,500, seasonally.

LaPLAYA BEACH & GOLF RESORT

Directly to our south, the LaPlaya Beach & Golf Resort offers its own luxurious getaway to the beach. The Champagne Wishes package, available just through February 28, includes three nights' beachfront suite accommodations, an iced magnum of Veuve Clicquot and two Swarovski crystal champagne flutes, a 48-foot chartered luxury yacht for one day, "toes in the sand" dinner at BALEEN, a reserved beachside fire pit with a bottle of champagne, daily in-suite breakfast with mimosas and more.

LaPlaya Beach & Golf Resort, a part of the Noble House Hotels & Resorts collection, has earned itself a coveted spot on the *Condé Nast Traveler* "Gold List," and is ranked number two in the magazine's "Best Florida Resorts List"–and it's no surprise. The boutique resort's simple yet elegant décor, tranquil landscape and unbeatable views of the Gulf of Mexico make it a true retreat from the world outside.

Also at LaPlaya are the ultra-exclusive David Leadbetter Golf Academy with a private, 18-hole Bob Cupp golf course and Spa Terre for ultimate relaxation.

Reservations for Champagne Wishes at LaPlaya are now available, and three-night rates start at $18,000.

The next time you find yourself in South Florida, why not stay in a room over Miami or Naples? ●

When You Go

Direct flights are available on various airlines from Tampa to Miami, or it's just a four hour drive from the Bay area to Miami, and two and a half hours to Naples. For more about Hilton Bentley, please visit hiltonmiamisouthbeach.com, and for more about LaPlaya Beach, please visit laplayaresort.com.

Previous page: The Hilton Bentley's new rooftop infinity pool and sundeck is the perfect place to spend an afternoon. The views from the Hotel Bentley's penthouse suite are simply stunning.
Right: Watch the sun set fireside at LaPlaya Beach & Golf Resort.
Below: Your suite awaits with plush appointments and gorgeous views at LaPlaya Beach & Golf Resort.


Photo courtesy of LaPlaya Beach & Golf Resort


Photo courtesy of LaPlaya Beach & Golf Resort


Photo courtesy of LaPlaya Beach & Golf Resort

By Susan B. Barnes

PONIES ON THE RUN



Photo courtesy of LILA PHOTO



Photo courtesy of Juan Lamarca



Photo courtesy of LILA PHOTO



Photo courtesy of LILA PHOTO

Polo is primarily known for its social aspect, from half-time divot stomping to the big parties that are thrown before and after the matches. But top international polo player Nic Roldan has a different perspective.

"Above all, I think what most people enjoy is watching the match itself–the intensity of the sport, the beauty of the horses running down the field," said Roldan. "It's a beautiful sport to watch."

"The reaction I get from most people when they watch polo is that they're shocked at how intense it is and how much fun it is to watch."

It's polo season here in Florida, and some of the biggest, most prestigious tournaments in the U.S., and in fact around the world, are played on the polo fields right here in the Sunshine State.

Since 1991, the Sarasota Polo Club has been showcasing the "fastest game on four feet" in central west Florida, and today boasts nine world-class polo fields. The 2015 season at the Sarasota Polo Club began mid-December and runs through April 12; gates open each Sunday at 10 a.m., and all matches begin at 1 p.m., complete with divot stomping and half-time entertainment. Reserve a tailgate spot in the Members Only section for the season and make a day of it.

The International Polo Club Palm Beach in South Florida kicked off its 16-week season early-January and continues each Sunday through April 19 when the season culminates with the 111th U.S. Open Polo Championship®. Each match begins at 3 p.m., but make plans to arrive early for an elaborate champagne brunch – this is the place to see and be seen in Palm Beach during polo season. What's more, the club is the only polo facility in the U.S. that features high-goal polo, attracting the world's most elite polo players for the winter polo season; Roldan plays for the Audi 20-goal team.

Closer to home, Dardo Iglesias from DI Polo Tour invites pro polo players who are in Wellington/Palm Beach to participate in monthly high-goal matches at its Plant City facilities during the season, through April. Additional matches are played each weekend through the season, and players come in from throughout Florida, as well as Atlanta, South Carolina and New York.

On Saturday, March 21, the Morgan Auto Group Charity Polo Classic will be held at DI Polo Tour, and all proceeds benefit the Children's Cancer Center and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Tampa Bay. This year's classic begins at 11 a.m., and the day will be filled with traditional polo activities such as a match with top polo stars, stomping of the divots, and live and silent auctions.

What better way is there to spend a weekend in Florida than out in the sunshine, sipping champagne and watching the ponies run?



Photo courtesy of Charity Polo

Previous page top: Polo, the sport of kings, is the fastest game on four feet. Previous page bottom: (left) Nic Roldan. (middle) The Piaget Gold Cup will be awarded in March at The International Polo Club Palm Beach. (right) Divot stomping traditionally takes place at each polo match, this one at The International Polo Club Palm Beach.

Above: Chris Gannon, Morgan Auto Group Charity Polo Classic founding board member, plays in the charity event.

Right: Jennifer Versaggi, Andy Berkhart, Patrick Moraites and Tina Hunter Greene.



Photo courtesy of Tina Hunter Greene

MORE THAN A GAME

Nic Roldan was born in Argentina and raised in Wellington in South Florida. He's played in matches all around the world, yet always enjoys playing back home in Florida.

"Playing in Florida is home for me, but besides that, the International Polo Club Palm Beach is the biggest polo club in the world," said Roldan.

When Roldan noticed the growth of the polo and equestrian community in Wellington, he and his friend/fellow polo player Brandon Phillips were inspired to found Bedford Park International, a real estate advisement firm primarily focused on equestrian facilities, with Darren Marotta and Tara Lordi Construction. The firm oversees everything from design to permit to landscaping and more.

"You can only play polo for so long, like any professional sport, and we were thinking about our futures," said Roldan. "I've always had an interest in architecture and interior design (Nic's mother is an interior designer), and there wasn't really a company doing turn-key equestrian facilities."

Bedford Park's first project is a contemporary and decadent barn in Grand Prix Village South, very near the International Polo Club Palm Beach. The 17,500 square foot barn sits on four acres and features an amazing 20-stall barn with four wash stalls, two tack rooms, a laundry room and a feed room. The owners' lounge is just as luxe, with a professional kitchen and a great room for entertaining and views of the 220' x 120' competition ring. A separate, four-bedroom grooms' apartment and six paddocks are also included. (Listing price: $13 million)

In addition, this year the team is developing the most luxurious equestrian estates in Wellington, including eight farms on 10-acre parcels.

Grand Prix Village South | 14814grandprix.com



Photo courtesy of Julie Photo


Photo courtesy of Carol Sollak, Engel & Volkers Wellington


Photo courtesy of Carol Sollak, Engel & Volkers Wellington

Top right: Top international polo player Nic Roldan plays at the International Polo Club Palm Beach on the Audi 20-goal team.
Above left: The barn at 14814 Grand Prix Village South has 20 stalls.
Above right: The owners' lounge of 14814 Grand Prix Village South.

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