

LUXURIOUS LIFESTYLE

Beverly Hills

REPORT

Luxury
Wedding
Issue

ESSENCE OF LUXURY

Tranquil Retreat

Rosemary Beach

Rosemary Beach is a newly minted town on the Northern Florida gulf coast where a dozen years ago there was only white sand and the indigenous boscage, highlighted by the blue-flowered aromatic evergreen shrub that gave the town its name. On a placid day the water at Rosemary Beach is a lucid poetic blue and the sand is soft and white with a consistency not unlike powdered sugar, looking more like fresh snowfall than beach sand.

At Rosemary Beach none of the more than 500 homes are more than a dozen years old, but they have been built with an eye toward the architectural styles of St. Augustine, Charleston, New Orleans and the West Indies. The streets in this town are pedestrian lanes, footpaths and boardwalks, with cars given secondary status just as they are in Amsterdam. These all lead to a public square, park, plaza, tennis court, swimming pool or the beach and the system of wooden boardwalks running parallel to the main thoroughfare enables you to walk directly down to the gulf, bypassing the activity in the center of town.

Some of the footpaths go through veritable tunnels of vegetation that seem as cool on a hot day as stepping into an air-conditioned room.

Walking through the town it becomes apparent that the town's nine structure types, ranging from 1,800-square-foot courtyard homes to spacious 4,000-square-foot units are less festively colored than the Seaside homes, which exhibit pastels and party-colors.

You can rent a carriage house or cottage at Rosemary Beach or buy a home, so there is a lively mix of residents and visitors. Note the contrast of the homeowners idling on their porches and the tourists on the move to rent sailboats, kayaks and hammocks.

I was in a gulf-view carriage house no more than a two minute walk from the town square, which is never deserted because of the number of shops and restaurants. There are also apparel and accessory, home furnishings, antiques and gardening design shops. It should be noted that Rosemary Beach is in the full bloom of expansion, with more shops

and homes in the works. Everywhere I looked there were workers on roofs and the sound of construction was ubiquitous. I was especially pleased to see the small white post office in the

center of town, a sight worthy of New England or some sleepy Southern town.

Rosemary Beach has its own zip code and the town bell rings the number of the hour, a quaint and rural touch. And to keep the general mood from becoming too sluggish or low key, there is a busy town events calendar featuring such things as Symphony by the Sea, Starlight Ballet, Town Center Trunk Show, Tunes by the Dunes, Town Center Sidewalk Sale, 4th of July and Christmas celebrations, and more.

Yet another source of a festive mood is the weddings that are frequently held in the town. On the weekend I spent there a white tent the size of a circus big top was pitched for a wedding whose festivities I enjoyed vicariously, watching the celebrants drink and eat, socialize and dance from mid-afternoon through twilight and into a night illuminated by a virtually exhibitionistic moon whose luminescence fairly up-

staged even the Rosemary Beach sand.

There's also a historical and scenic bonus to be had by visiting the nearby Eden State Gardens. There is a quaint picnic area here at the old mill site on Tucker Bayou, but the premier attraction is the house built by William Henry Wesley, of the Wesley Lumber Company, for his family in 1897, which at the time probably was the largest residential building in this part of Florida. The Wesley house was bought in 1953 by Lois Maxon, who used it as a showplace for her collection of family heirlooms and antiques. The house stands near the bayou where lumber once was loaded onto barges for shipment, and is surrounded by moss-draped live oaks and beds of azaleas and camellias.

As self-sufficient as life at Rosemary Beach can be one can easily satisfy an occasional yearning for a somewhat more metropolitan experience with a trip to Panama City or Fort Walton Beach, respectively a thirty-minute and one hour drive from Rosemary Beach.

-Larry Tritten



Considered a jewel on the Northern Florida gulf coast, Rosemary Beach features resorts, scenic beach rentals and endless hours of relaxation for those looking to get away.

