

HOT SPOTS

SHOP AMONG THE STARS

BAL HARBOUR – ONE OF A KIND

BY DENISE REYNOLDS

South Florida's social season is upon us, and you don't want to see yourself coming and going at all those charity events, now do you? With the bevy of committee meetings and events that are cropping up on your calendar, finding time to shop can be a challenge. Never mind finding a collection that everyone else hasn't found first. There must be a better way.

TAKE A TIP FROM THE STARS. SHOP WHERE THEY SHOP.

You don't have to jet out to Rodeo Drive. Utterly amazing shopping is just down the beach a bit. At Bal Harbour Shops. Catering discreetly to a discerning international clientele, including a long list of celebrities, these illustrious shops, nestled in a lush outdoor garden setting with koi ponds and art deco statues, provide one-stop shopping for the rich and famous. Ranked the #1 shopping center in the country by *Women's Wear Daily*, Bal Harbour Shops generates more than three times the national sales average, ringing in at an astounding \$1350 per square foot—further proof that it is indeed “Florida's most fashionable destination.”

Developed by Stanley Whitman in 1965, the prestigious Bal Harbour Shops, located one block from the ocean at the northern end of Miami Beach, showcases a collection of exclusive and luxurious retail stores seldom seen side by side anywhere—except in the world's fashion capitals of Paris, Milan, and New York. Home to the first Neiman Marcus department store outside of Texas, the Bal Harbour Shops boasts a top-tier couture tenant list that reads like a *Who's Who* in high fashion: Armani, Bvlgari, Cartier, Cavalli, Chanel, Dior, D&G, Escada,

Fendi, Gucci, Hermes—and that's just the beginning of this elite roster that finishes up with Versace, YSL, and Zegna.

Oprah is a frequent shopper here, as are a couple of Europe's Crown Princes. One day, not long ago, Cartier closed the doors of its boutique to allow J.Lo and Ben Affleck to play their endearing bauble-for-bauble gift-giving courtship game in private.

Gentle ocean breezes ensure that it's never hot, and always haute, in this mile of style. Even the dogs are fashionistas here, dressed in Burberry and proudly parading beside their owners, or looking decidedly dashing tableside at Elia, one of the trendy sidewalk cafes scattered throughout the shops. Each weekend carefully-coiffed standard poodles named Coco and Chanel (one black and one white) make their regularly scheduled appearance at the Bal Harbour Bistro.

Back to your shopping mission. Do yourself a favor. Check in to one of Bal Harbour's two hotels for the night. And check out the shops. After a full day of shopping, relax with an aromatherapy massage or a botanical facial at the Sheraton Bal Harbour Resort Spa. Then enjoy a cocktail and a leisurely al fresco dinner at Carpaccio, while you formulate your shopping plan of attack for the following day.

Only two hotels call Bal Harbour home and they are as different as old money is from new. Sea View Hotel provides a home away from home for generations of families who have been wintering here since its completion in 1947. Over the years, Sea View has welcomed royalty, presidents, celebrities, and heads of state, along with leaders of business and industry from across the globe. Steeped in tradition, its clas-



sic European ambiance and custom French furnishings exude a casual elegance reminiscent of a kinder, gentler era.

The flashy Sheraton Bal Harbour Resort, a four-star, four-diamond property, features a \$12 million fantasy playground with a waterfall slide, jacuzzis, and a lagoon-style pool that winds through 10 acres of tropical landscaping. Every modern amenity is available—from a state-of-the-art fitness center to high-speed Internet access.

One can never have enough closet space, and the hotels here thoughtfully provide walk-in closets to accommodate your assortment of glossy shopping bags. And if the sport of shopping leaves you yearning for something even more adventurous, the Atlantic

Beach Club offers a variety of low-tech water sports rentals, including catamarans, kayaks, and rafts, as well as adrenaline-boosting options like windsurfing, waverunning, and parasailing. Or just be content to wiggle your toes in the sand along this mile of gently curving beachfront, bordered by a greenery-framed jogging path, all recently renourished by Bal Harbour Village at a cost of nearly \$2 million. Ultra-hip South Beach is just a few miles south, with its deco district and steamy clubs that sizzle until dawn.

However you choose to while away the hours after the shops have closed, one thing is for sure—you'll never have to look in your closet and bemoan the fact that you have nothing to wear.