

# CAYO ESPANTO

## *A Genie Not In a Bottle*

BY VICTORIA L. HOFFMAN

**I**t's true that genies do exist to fulfill "your wish is my command" especially at this tiny yet very exclusive and privileged island of Cayo Espanto. Touted as one of the world's top private luxury islands where indulgences are met with enthusiasm and expectations are left breathless with supreme beauty and pure delight, this small paradise is located off the northern coast of Belize. Only a fifteen minute boat ride or seven minute flight by helicopter from John Greif II Airport in San Pedro - but who's counting - the property is going on its 21st year of heavenly existence.

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Founded by the entrepreneur-turned-film-and-TV-producer Jeff Gram, the island once upon a time was empty except for the vision of this genie who used Belize as his medicinal cure while recovering from a personal injury. It's clear that Gram fell in love with Belize and its lush tropical rainforests, Mayan ruins, and magical sandy white beaches which he turned into his spa oasis. When a real estate opportunity was presented to him, he assembled a team of architects and surveyors and decided this would be a home away from a home – a place for his friends and family to enjoy.







A destination of barefoot elegance, the property accommodates up to 18 guests. When guests arrive they are promptly greeted by their own designated butler. Each villa has a private dock and beach area.

Perhaps one of the most unique features of Cayo Espanto is knowing that there are no plans to expand past its seven uniquely designed villas – one of which is an overwater villa with a glass floor to view the marine life below. Most of the villas have their own plunge pool along with outdoor showers. Though the accommodations are immersed in natural beauty, guests can expect to find the best in modern luxury including Egyptian linens and state-of-the-art in-room technology ranging from iPad and Wi-Fi to air-conditioning.

The décor of each villa has a simple, elegant design. Expect crisp, clean white colors with wooden flooring and furniture to best complement the lush tropical landscape and surrounding blue waters. The bedrooms each have a king-sized bed and there is the option to have two twin-sized beds for guests that travel in groups and families.



An unusual feature of the island is its lack of restaurants, but don't worry. The island is designed to allow each guest to truly experience intimacy without interacting with other guests, unless of course, they want a communal dining experience which is rare. The goal for Chef Patrick, a man who was trained in international cuisine, is to prepare anything you want and I do mean anything – and then send your freshly prepared cuisine to your villa or dock for your private dining pleasure at any time. Want black truffle which is rarely in season and hard to find? Chef Patrick will scour the world and prepare it for your meal. Only want a vegan dish? No problem. Enjoy an old vintage of Dom Perignon or sip a nice red like Chateau La Nerthe while watching the sun set from your private dock.

For those who like sports activities there's plenty to do. Want to fish or dive the famous Great Blue Hole? Your yacht awaits! The Great Blue Hole is a true destination that many divers have on their bucket list as it's known for its vast aquarium of marine life including spectacular corals and tropical fish. Another alluring site to explore is the second largest coral reef system in the world called Hol Chan Shark Ray Alley. And for those who wish to be more mellow, guests have the option to kayak and paddleboard. For workout junkies, snap your fingers and ask for a Peloton or treadmill. It will appear in your villa.

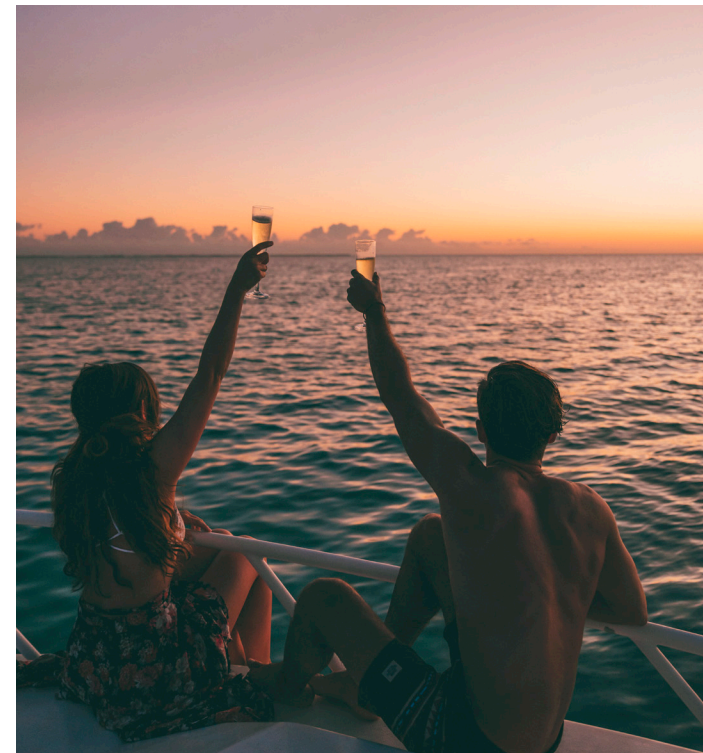




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And in case you want a day away from this haven of perfection take a trip to shop at the San Pedro market, explore the ancient civilization of the Mayans, or trek through the jungle to view the wildlife.

It's no wonder that socialites, CEOs, and well-known public figures like Bill Gates, Jennifer Lawrence, and Leonardo DiCaprio are frequent guests of this very special place. In fact, DiCaprio and Gram are partners on a new eco-friendly resort slated to be called Blackadore Caye, a 104-acre island, also in Belize.

Travel tip: avoid the rain season June-August. For more information visit [www.aprivateisland.com](http://www.aprivateisland.com).

About the author: Victoria L. Hoffman is the owner of the luxury agency Concierge & Events by Victoria that provides one-of-a-kind WOW experiences, luxury Virtuoso travel programs, and event planning.