



## Your Own Private Island

No man is an island – but  
he can rent one for an  
**idyllic vacation** ::

BY TROY ANDERSON

**E**VER SINCE DANIEL DEFOE PENNED *ROBINSON CRUSOE* in 1719, the mystique of being marooned on a deserted island has captured the imagination of millions the world over.

Whether it's the intrigue of surviving on a remote island with only the occasional cannibal like Crusoe's companion Friday, or the chance of finding Blackbeard's buried treasure, islands are places of mystery.

Today, there is not only Robinson Crusoe Island, offering simple lodging for travelers in search of adventure, but also hundreds of islands around the globe available for rent — a fantastic bucket list treat or an exotic location to celebrate a landmark birthday, anniversary, wedding, or any occasion.

Many of these islands are surprisingly affordable, even less than a luxury mainland hotel. And for the well-heeled, some islands, graced occasionally by royalty like Prince William and Kate Middleton or celebrities such as Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, offer the opportunity to partake in the fantasy getaway of blue bloods and movie stars.

That said, here are some of the best.

### ROBINSON CRUSOE ISLAND

Reachable by charter flight from Santiago de Chile, Robinson Crusoe Island is a nature sanctuary. Vladi Private Islands, an agency that rents and sells islands, notes the island offers much to be explored — beaches and bays, ravines and pastures, and mountains up to 3,200 feet high. Activities include trekking, horseback or bicycle riding, diving and fishing. But most fascinating is the island's legacy as the inspiration for Defoe's book.

"This is an island where you can play like Robinson Crusoe," says Farhad Vladi, owner of Vladi Private Islands.

In his book, Defoe wrote about a shipwrecked English sailor who spent 28 years on the island. The novel was inspired by real-life castaway Alexander Selkirk, marooned in 1704 following a quarrel with his captain. He remained there until 1709 when he was discovered by a passing



ship, Selkirk returned to England in 1711 where he met essayist Richard Steele who wrote about his adventures in *The Englishman*. Defoe later made use of the story in his popular novel.

Today, the island has several lodges with comfortable accommodations. The rate is \$420 per day, per person. Contact Vladi Private Islands, at 902-423-3202, or Vladi-Private-Islands.de for more information.

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#### **NORTH ISLAND**

The North Island, located off the coast of Africa in the Indian Ocean, is the getaway where Prince William and Kate Middleton celebrated their honeymoon. “By renting the entire island, they had guaranteed privacy,” Vladi says. “The only ones who could look at them were angels.”

This 500-acre tropical haven features an exclusive luxury resort, which *Condé Nast Traveler* recently bestowed with a “Gold Star Listing.” The resort has a 120-member staff, 14 bungalows with private swimming pools, and a spa. Activities include scuba diving, snorkeling, sea-kayaking, bike riding on island bicycles, fly-fishing and working out in a state-of-the-art gym

*This could be you on North Island!*





overlooking the sea. The villas range from \$2,809 to \$4,415 per person per night. The entire island goes for \$66,890 per night for 22 guests. (Vladi Private Islands, 902-423-3202, Vladi-Private-Islands.de)

### EAGLE ISLAND

The Private Islands of Georgia are a set of eight islands on more than 2,000 acres in coastal Georgia. One of these islands, Eagle Island, offers a charming, 1,500 square-foot home for rent that comfortably sleeps 12.

*Outside* magazine recently named it one of among its Top 50 Getaways. The luxury lodge features a six-person hot tub, indoor and outdoor fireplaces, a screen porch wrapping 360 degrees around the house, and hanging bed swings for napping and relaxing.

The rental includes fully-equipped indoor and outdoor kitchens stocked with a variety of seafood delectables — along with bait and traps to catch Georgia's famous blue crabs.

"It's great for a honeymoon, a guys' getaway, or a girls' getaway," says Captain Andy Hill, owner of the Private Islands. Hill, who navigates visitors to Eagle Island on his boat

while giving a narrated history, says the subtropical paradise offers plenty of activities, including kayaking, fishing, bird watching, boating, or soaking in the hot tub by the outdoor fireplace.

"Our islands and marshes are so rich with sea life and different animals that when you get out onto the river you can see everything from alligators and minks to egrets and kingfishers," Hill says. "It's a kayaker's heaven."



**H**ouseboats offer the same feel as an island, travel experts say, and include surprising amenities.

Plus, unlike an island, you have mobility. Whenever you feel like it you can pull up anchor and move to another

spot, making those fishing expeditions all the more profitable.

### FLOATING OASIS

On Quiet Cove Key & Manatee, also known as Charlie's Island, houseboat renters can experience the pristine, tranquil Gulf waters of the Florida Keys from the unique perspective of their own floating home.

Permanently docked at the island, the two-bedroom houseboat comes fully equipped, offering a safe and comfortable home base for local activities.

Along with the houseboat rental, customers receive exclusive use of the island for camping, picnicking,

For two people, the rate is \$475-\$575 a night. The weekly rate for two guests is \$2,900. (Private Islands of Georgia, 912-222-0801, PrivateIslandsofGeorgia.com)

**SEA SHELL KEY**

Sea Shell Key, a tropical island in the Florida Keys, is both affordable and fantastic for those who are seeking the ultimate in privacy. That's because those who rent Sea Shell Key have the island to themselves.

Located in the turquoise waters of the Gulf of Mexico, the island features a two-bedroom home with a fully equipped kitchen.

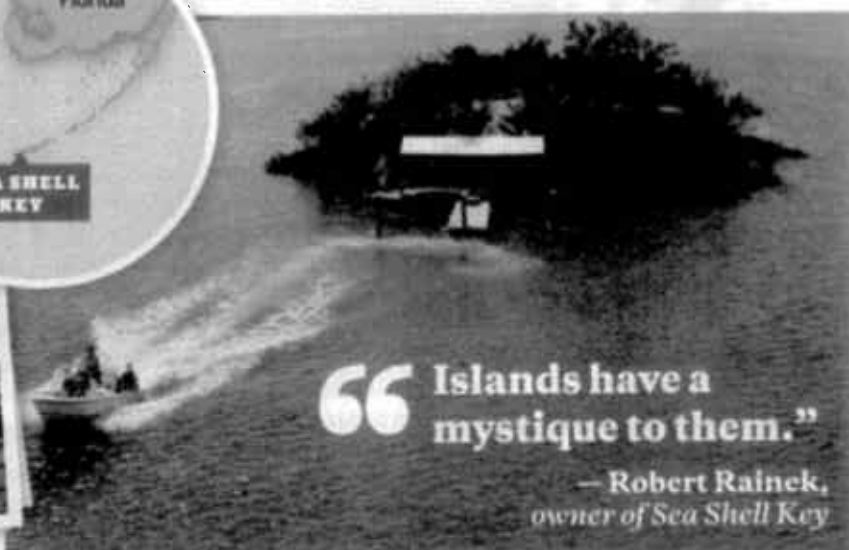
The master suite has a Jacuzzi with a two-sided ocean view shower. The rental includes a 17-foot powerboat to cruise between the island and the shore. Landscaped boardwalks surround the home for leisurely strolls around the island. Located on a chain of



islands with the largest living coral reef in North America, the reef features black mangroves, silver buttonwood, sea grapes and pitch apples, attracting a variety of birds. The crystal-clear, warm waters of this quintessential Keys location are also visited by dolphins, manatees, sea turtles, pelicans, great herons, and a variety of aquatic life.

"Islands have a mystique to them," says Robert Rainek, the island's owner. "I've always enjoyed nature and a little elbowroom around me, and it's great to see the dolphins and stingrays playing in the distance or swimming around the island. Islands have a magical feel to them."

Sea Shell Key costs \$3,495 a week to rent. This includes a fully stocked and furnished kitchen, the boat, and kayaks. (RentMyIsland.com, Florida Keys, 262-650-0246 or 262-352-4467, rentmyisland.com) □



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kayaking, and snorkeling. It is beautifully landscaped with trails throughout.

The half-acre island also features a grill and picnic tables as well as a hammock for the perfect perch to enjoy the tropical breezes off the Gulf waters. The houseboat costs \$2,495 to \$2,795 per week. Rent My Island, at 262-650-0246, or the RentMyIsland.com website,

has more information.

**LEISURE TIME – MARATHON**

In terms of a true Florida Keys experience, you can't do better than the Leisure Time houseboat, which is

docked at a private marina in Marathon. The boat sleeps five with a queen bed and a twin bed in the bedroom and a full sofa sleeper in the living room. It has



**PRIVATE GETAWAY** Charlie's Island, above, left, is an excellent way to experience houseboat docking and excursions. The Leisure Time houseboat, above right, has all creature comforts.

all the creature comforts: television, satellite, and even Wi-Fi. There's also a full kitchen. The houseboat rents for \$695 per week. (Rent My Island, Florida Keys, 262-650-0246, RentMyIsland.com) □