



ISLAND HIDEAWAY, FLORIDA KEYS

You wouldn't think there was any place for black and white down on the Florida Keys. It seems to be more of a Caribbean kinda place where joyous, bubblegum colours saturate the landscape. And it is. However, there's one corner of the Keys where subdued shades reign. It's a corner of the Keys where everything is natural and low-key, and the only outlandish colours are likely to be in the sunsets that sink over the islands each night. It's a pocket of perfection known as Islamorada, or 'Village of Islands', and it's a place within this perfect pocket called Maroni House, which is arguably one of the most beautiful places in the whole of the Keys.

Set right on the beach (okay, a few sandy

steps back under a copse of shady palm trees), Maroni House is what perfect beach houses are supposed to look like: pretty on the outside; spacious on the inside; embellished with a wonderful wrap-round verandah for staring out to sea; enhanced with French doors leading out to aforementioned verandah, and imbued with a colonial-style charm that makes you feel you're somewhere truly foreign – and truly exquisite. (Think ceiling fans whirling overhead; interior French doors; lots of classic novels and an enormous old timber-and-enamel bath to read them in.)

The real beauty of Maroni House, though, is the understated nature of it. And this is where the monochromatic palette comes in.



Maroni's owners, who also own several other beach houses on this stretch of pristine beach (and, indeed, the beach itself), have deliberately built the house in the classic beach house style, with white timber exterior, a low-slung roofline and a wraparound white timber verandah to sit on and gaze out to sea through the frame of palm trees. It's no coincidence that the timber chairs on the decked verandah are covered in a pale beige canvas that's the exact colour of the sandy paths and beach in front. It's a decorating ruse that has the effect of keeping everything very low-key, and it also puts the emphasis back onto the landscape, which, in this stunning place, is where it should be.





Inside, the cool, calm, quietly glamorous monochromatic style continues. Dark, high-gloss floorboards run the length of the house, giving the spaces a rich sheen – and allowing for the sand that will inevitably enter – while white, high-gloss French doors allow the rooms to open up unto each other and the deck to create a seamless flow between inside and out.

Most of the furniture is dark and colonial in style, which, instead of being too ‘heavy’, gives the house a lovely colonial feel, transporting you back to another, more gracious time, when martini glasses and island hideaways were far more common – and generally far more stylish than they are now.

On the walls, black and white vintage photographs of classic coastal scenes – yachts, beaches, palm trees and people – lend further glamour, while the furnishings, most of which are in cool neutrals – creams, whites, blacks and taupes – walk a lovely line between looking impeccably chic and creating a wonderfully casual, laid-back feel.

It is a house where all you want to do is walk in, take off your city clothes, don some flip flops and a favourite old straw hat, and wander down to the white hammock that’s conveniently slung between two palm trees with a glass of wine and a classic book, settle in for the afternoon, and feel blissfully content.





