



Exterior photo from water taxi of the entire panorama of Manhattan Tower.



Manhattan Tower is a jeweled hideaway.



Intracoastal Gardens

DISCOVERING A HIDDEN FORT LAUDERDALE OASIS AND CLUB NIBBLES

story and photos by LEIGH CORT



It's so easy to fall in love with Manhattan Tower – a jeweled hideaway that's considered to be one of the best-kept secret vacation spots in bustling Fort Lauderdale.

Only two blocks from the world-famous 23-mile beach that is dotted with chic properties adorning the shore and skyline, Manhattan Tower transports you back to a timeless colorful past – a masterpiece of architecture for

General Motors executives in the early 1950s. Imagined by the innovative and famed mid-century architect Charles McKirahan, the hotel was conceived as a corporate retreat that began with its pedigree. He was known for designing many surviving grand properties in South Florida: yacht and country clubs, iconic hotels, resorts and luxurious mansions along major avenues and hidden driveways. Today, Manhattan Tower is an oasis of tranquility and imagination.

Owners Russel Dion and Joseph Caffey love their Manhattan Tower guests,

who practically become family. Tasteful furnishings (distinctly different in each of their 17 accommodations) have been curated over the years. And after careers in art and antiques with a gallery on Las Olas Boulevard, in 2000 they focused their attention on the restoration of Manhattan Tower.

The meticulous collection includes a wide variety of unusual art and treasures that now fill the hotel and gardens. Their studios, one- and two-bedroom apartments and garden

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Suite with distinctive décor

OASIS

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villas are all comfy enclaves where they showcase the riches with anecdotes gathered from international travels mixed with newer acquisitions. Quiet, low-key and elegant, this is not a chain hotel experience. Russel and Joseph provide each guest with unequaled personal attention.

The three-story hideaway is reminiscent of images out of a Hollywood movie – although it's a real home for Russel and Joseph who reside in the third-floor penthouse, while guests are excited to take up residence for a few days or weeks on the first and second floors. Enter into Manhattan Tower's private tropical courtyard, manicured gardens and pristine pool. No bellman needed here. Even your elevator has charm – conveying a mid-century vibe that hints of romance and intrigue. If you're a Hollywood film fanatic,

you might even think of the elevator scene in Hitchcock's 1959 "North by Northwest."

The true magic is the extensive Intracoastal waterfront patio that sweeps across the front of the hotel's entire property. Guests are charmed with the privacy and grand comfort in the gardens where they can relax all day and night – an oasis dotted with chaise lounges, umbrella tables, pots of flora, sculptures and an open vista of flamboyant yachts cruising by.

Since each apartment has a full kitchen, it's not surprising to enjoy an al fresco meal in this stylish setting that you prepare yourself – or bring in from a nearby gourmet market or restaurant. You can discover your own hush-hush spot to have a private champagne toast or bring out the charcuterie and share with other guests who might be doing exactly the same thing.

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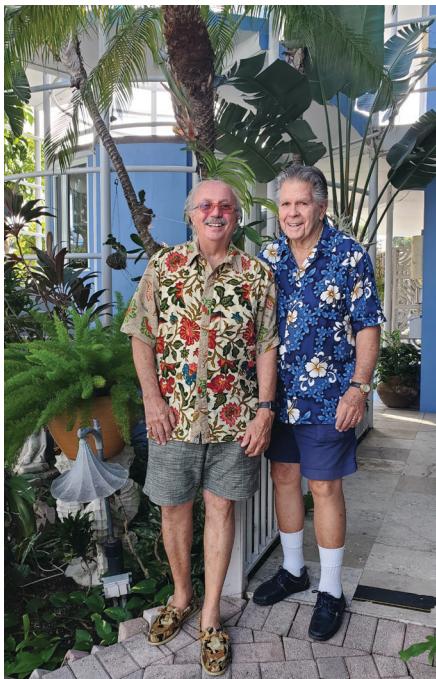
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WE MOVED!
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NEW LOCATION!





A place to relax by the pool.



Russel Dion and Joseph Caffey



Club Nibbles

OASIS

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Well-mannered dogs are invited to share your vacation and each year, Manhattan Tower is the quintessential location to watch the internationally acclaimed winter boat parade.

Fort Lauderdale, often tagged as the "Venice of Florida," has a wealth of fine and fun dining, shopping, beaches, museums and sightseeing that is best seen and sampled by taking the water taxi that has a "stop" at Manhattan Tower. It's exciting to know that for \$15-\$35 (children to adults) you can cruise the Intracoastal to shop, dine, stroll and explore the marvelous places that the crew advises for your pleasure. Each vacation is personalized as you discover the best way to see this beautiful city. You truly feel as if you have embarked on one of Florida's sweet luxuries without hiring a private tour director or driving yourself. Within minutes from your call, a water taxi captain becomes your guide and historian. www.watertaxi.com

For years, Russel and Joseph have been dreaming about and planning Club Nibbles. They've created an inviting spot on the patio that's chic and convenient for hotel guests to gather from 8 a.m. until 9 p.m. Start early with continental breakfast then throughout the day, Club

Nibbles' menu features cappuccino and casual culinary delights, a wine bar, open-faced sandwiches and cocktail sweets and savories. This season is the debut of their long-awaited café. If you're sunbathing poolside or relaxing on your private balcony, it's only a few steps from your door. You can even invite friends to join you without leaving Manhattan Tower behind.

Where to dine? The greater Fort Lauderdale dining scene is staggering.

Now that you know where to find white sandy beaches (a gentle 10-minute stroll from Manhattan Tower) and shopping along famous avenues, South Florida's all-year-round sunny weather, pristine water views and luxurious temperatures give you just enough inspiration to hit the town.

A bit of research will put you into bistros, pubs, rustic fish camps, celebrity chef dining rooms, alfresco rooftops and 5-star restaurants.

Food halls are the rage; Cuban food is a staple and Latin/Asian flavors could lure you out of bed for a late-night feast any night of the week. Fashion ranges from bathing attire to white dinner jacket and there are just too many choices to make this part of your vacation easy (but deliciously fun)!

A treasure not to overlook and only a short walk from Manhattan Tower is the historic Bonnet House Museum &

Gardens (circa late 1890s) – deeded to the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation as a "historic house museum." Nearly a century later, the New York Times described it as "an unrivaled time capsule neatly preserved from an era when the wealthy elite could afford a cozy 35-acre winter hideaway in Florida." www.bonnethouse.org

A mile from Manhattan Tower is Birch Park – the city's own "Central Park" that has been preserved as a perfect refuge for exercise and relaxation. It's a piece of the "Real Florida" and is a vibrant center for pleasures that range from inline skating to reading under the palms and oaks. You can rent canoes, kayak, walk dogs or just drive in, park and rent a beach chair and umbrella! www.floridastateparks.org

There is a bittersweet sadness about good times coming to an end. I adore Manhattan Tower and no matter the season, I'm smitten with its balance of history, today's pulsating vibe of Fort Lauderdale and the comfort of being "Home." Somehow, Apartment 108 will be my first indulgence when I return to fall in love all over again.

"Life is all memory except for the one present moment that goes by you so quickly you hardly catch it going." – Tennessee Williams.

www.ManhattanTowerFL.com