



ABOVE, LEFT: Sunrise at the beach is a favored time for surfers and joggers, as well as beachcombers searching for turtle tracks left by nesting mothers. ABOVE: Grab a cool drink, and relax poolside at the Vero Beach Hotel & Club, adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean.

# Very Fine Vero Beach

This sleepy beach town has reawakened with up-to-date lodgings, restaurants, and shops along the Atlantic. By **Annette Thompson**

**T**he secret is out. Florida residents tried to keep the pleasures of this little oceanfront oasis to themselves, but today new hotels and a bevy of shops breathe renewed vigor into this Atlantic community.

**The New Hot Spot** The elegant Vero Beach Hotel & Club completed its construction in January. This all-suite resort features 83 one-, two-, and three-bedroom suites, some with full kitchens. With stone floors, mahogany furniture, fine linens, and high-definition flatscreen televisions, the luxurious decor indulges guests. The posh baths include granite countertops, soaking tubs, and rain-head showers.

You'll find a white-tablecloth oceanfront restaurant plus a fitness center. The full-service spa is set to open later this year. The courtyard pool faces the Atlantic and includes cabanas and beach service. While winter high-season rates remain steep (starting at \$350 a night), you can snag a room here for much less during other seasons.

**The Other Newcomers** Just one year old, the Caribbean Court Boutique Hotel rests in a lush garden. Across the

street from the beach, its 18 individually decorated, pet-friendly rooms provide casual surroundings. Whether or not you stay here, drop by the Maison Martinique Restaurant for a French-inspired dinner and cocktails in its upstairs piano bar.

Costa d'Este, a luxury boutique hotel, spa, and upscale Cuban restaurant owned by entertainer Gloria Estefan and her husband, Emilio, is due to open at the beginning of April. We'll keep our eyes on this spot on Ocean Drive that looks to bring Miami cool to Vero Beach.

**Where To Shop** Sunrises and sunsets are the best time to enjoy the beach, so plan some retail therapy in between.

Don't miss I'll Never Tell and its plated and synthetic jewelry. It's a favorite of South Florida mavens who prefer leaving their more valuable jewelry home for safekeeping while traveling. Visit The Laughing Dog Gallery for American arts and crafts and Admiralty Gallery for fine nautical and coastal paintings. The Gifted Cook dishes up kitchenware and handsome serving pieces.

Vero may no longer be undiscovered, yet it maintains its small-town charm as it welcomes world-class resorts. ●

## The Details

- **Vero Beach Hotel & Club:** 3500 Ocean Drive; [www.verobeachhotelandclub.com](http://www.verobeachhotelandclub.com) or (772) 231-5666. Rates: from \$350 in high season.
- **Caribbean Court Boutique Hotel:** 1601 Ocean Drive; [www.thecaribbean.court.com](http://www.thecaribbean.court.com) or (772) 231-7211. Rates: from \$259 in high season.
- **I'll Never Tell:** 3351 Ocean Drive; [www.illnevertell.com](http://www.illnevertell.com) or (772) 231-1148.
- **The Laughing Dog Gallery:** 2910 Cardinal Drive; [www.thelaughingdoggallery.com](http://www.thelaughingdoggallery.com) or (772) 234-6711.
- **Admiralty Gallery:** 3315 Ocean Drive; [www.admiraltygallery.com](http://www.admiraltygallery.com) or (772) 231-3178.
- **The Gifted Cook:** 3231 Ocean Drive; (772) 231-6115.
- **Indian River County Chamber of Commerce:** [www.indianriverchamber.com](http://www.indianriverchamber.com) or (772) 567-3491.