

Visiting the Pr Islands of Ge

By Debi Lander



Private Georgia

Who hasn't dreamed of owning their own island? My mind envisions a place for carefree adventures and seaside romance, along with a sense of power and pride. But you don't have to own an island to feel like you do. Simply rent Eagle Island, one of Andy Hill's Private Islands of Georgia, and you'll be in a world of your own. And, you don't have to be a millionaire, either.

Eagle Island is small (just ten acres), but replete with marshland, coastal wildlife and a warm inviting lodge. It's casually elegant, with spacious bedrooms, a fully equipped kitchen and killer wrap around porch including hammocks and a hot tub. Plus, there's Wi-Fi, if you must.

While an island can't be rated like a five-star hotel, owner Andy Hill describes it as, "The world's first five-moon destination." Along with the natural beauty, he further explains, "no agenda, no clocks, no deadlines."

Drive to Darien, Georgia, in the Golden Isles region of the state, and be met by staff. They'll whisk you via boat to "your" island, where they'll leave you for the next few days or weeks. If you choose, bring your own boat or Captain Hill will find one for rent. He will even make sure you know how to navigate the area.

Andy and staff try to exceed expectations. They will all but squeeze through a crab trap to meet your needs. They'll teach you how to bait and use those traps, prepare and cook a low-country boil for you, or even run an off island errand.

However, it is the privacy that makes Eagle Island so special. You have all the comforts of home, but none of the intrusions. Begin by kicking off your shoes and slide into flip flops or hiking boots depending on the weather. Flop onto the hammock or soak in the hot tub, both screened in for evenings minus the





mosquitoes. You'll find a fire pit for roasting marshmallows and a full outdoor kitchen- under cover in case of rain.

Should you wish to explore the surrounding area, you might choose Sapelo Island. Andy will arrange for your party to tour a mansion once owned by R.J. Reynolds or visit Nanny Goat Beach, where hundreds of sand dollars and shells await, but likely no other humans.

Another choice would be Cumberland Island, a U.S. National Seashore with limited access. Wild horses roam the sparsely populated island where JFK, Jr. was married.

Back on Eagle, recharge and commune with wilderness as you stroll round its pathways, some lined with oyster shells and tiki torches. Play cards. Launch a kayak and glide through lazy twists and turns of the narrow Altamaha waterways, lined by Spartina grass and home to all sorts of coastal creatures. Tidal changes make Coastal Georgia one of the most fertile watersheds in the country, great for shrimpin'. Lookout for dolphins, shore birds and, of course, eagles.

Whatever you choose, you can escape to peace and quiet or bring friends and family with you. It's your private island- do what you want.

