

NUOVO



Marina Abramović

A Work of Art

Tom Dixon
Panerai
Richard Ginori
RIMOWA
Penfolds
Stefano Ricci
+
The Return of
Yellow Gold

FYI Travel



A Pair to Know Amanera and Playa Grande Beach Club.

Writer **Claudia Cusano**

A refined breed of retreat is emerging in the Dominican Republic. The arrivals of an Aman property—Amanera—and Playa Grande Beach Club signal that the island (a destination long known for its all-inclusives) is ready for top-tier luxury.

An hour-and-a-half drive from Puerto Plata, surrounded by sleepy towns and untamed jungle, Amanera presides on a dramatic cliff. Like other Amans, the resort's aesthetic of sleek minimalism and the luxury of open space hold true to the brand's philosophy. Amanera was designed by architect John Heah to be integrated into the environment, and it has a fluid indoor/outdoor layout and a palette of muted stone.

Amanera is centred around Casa Grande, which houses the lobby, pool, restaurant, and lounge bar. The two-storey structure, all glass and concrete and Indonesian teak, marries drama with understated effortlessness and boasts floating walkways, infinity pools, and a sweeping ocean view.

Twenty-five *casitas* occupy a hillside facing the ocean. Each offers a water view and most have their own infinity pool. Aman takes privacy seriously and the spacious, minimalist *casitas* are surrounded by greenery—200 trees and shrubs were planted each month leading up to the November 2014 opening, and the planting continues—and utterly secluded. The first-ever golf-integrated Aman, Amanera boasts a newly renovated 370-acre golf course, where more often than

Photos: The openings of Playa Grande Beach Club (right) and Amanera (above) signal top-tier luxury has arrived in the Dominican Republic.

not, you will be the sole golfer. The Amanera spa is a 10-minute golf cart ride away from the guest *casitas*; there, signature treatments are inspired by the healing traditions of the Dominican Republic.

Amanera, quiet and ideal for those looking for a private and serene escape, lies at one end of Playa Grande, a crescent-shaped beach that has a rare, wild beauty. At the other end is Amanera's closest neighbour, the nostalgic Caribbean fairy-tale world of Playa Grande Beach Club, dreamt up by New York financier Boykin Curry and his wife, interior designer Celerie Kemble. The couple have been visiting the north coast of the Dominican Republic for over a decade and in 2004 bought the 2,000-acre plot from the Dominican Republic's central bank that has since been parcelled out (golf course, Amanera, and plenty of white sand beach).

Playa Grande Beach Club was originally conceived as a private vacation club (partners in the project include Richard Meier and

Charlie Rose), but as word got out that the *sui generis* of properties had opened on the island, the nine-bungalow resort transitioned to a resort that feels less like a hotel and more like a country club. The architecture faithfully references the Dominican Republic's Victorian-era lacy gingerbread buildings with corrugated zinc roofs, lattice woodwork (*tragaluz*), scrollwork balustrades, and pastel-macaron colour schemes.

The passion project has a distinct barefoot-chic personality with boho flair and fantastical spirit. Most of the furniture and light fixtures are made on the island, as well as the hand-painted tiles and copper components. But these aren't the only elements that ground the place in the Dominican Republic: nearly all the staff are from nearby towns (and most have enrolled in a resort-funded literacy program). Playa Grande Beach Club is the kind of place where you admire how the cushions are placed on the throne-like wicker chairs, but you also take a seat without a second thought in your sandy beach cover-up. There are many stars of the property, but the one that shines brightest is its uncompromisingly alluring decor. 🌟



MCC MEG CONNOLLY COMMUNICATIONS