



Behind Closed Doors:
Palm Beach
and its Mystique



March 12TH–17TH, 1998
To Benefit The Norton Museum

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Moorish, Spanish or Italianate gates, at which in visits to Palm Beach you might have stared wondering what lies beyond, open in this six day program to an exclusive world. Vast gardens with driveways lined with palm trees lead you into the private realm of **Mar-a-Lago**, once the home of Marjorie Merriweather Post. Step through the doorway of **Casa Alva**, where Consuelo Balsan, former Duchess of Marlborough, and her husband created homes. In such environments one can still breathe the romance of Palm Beach in the twenties and thirties when America's super rich and Europe's aristocratic elite turned this resort into a Riviera.

With luxurious accommodation at **The Brazilian Court Hotel**, set in central Palm Beach, within easy walking distance from Worth Avenue and the beach, we will recreate the spirit of an age when an average day included visits to at least five friends at sprawling mansions set in lavish grounds. Inside, as participants will see, each Mediterranean style castle was unique. There were spiral staircases and palatial Venetian dining rooms. Invariably there were arcaded walkways around interior courtyards where gardens and ornate fountains allowed the Florida sun and lushness of the environment to enter the house. Outside were patios opening onto swimming pools set against the backdrop of the ocean or Lake Worth, or tunnels leading underground to beach cabanas. In such surroundings Palm Beach's

high society enjoyed their wealth, relaxed and had fun in the sun. There was golf in the morning and cocktails before lunch, lunch at another house before an afternoon game of tennis somewhere else. Next was a game of bridge at another friend before rushing to change for an invitation to any number of cocktail parties. At eight o'clock one dressed for a lavish dinner hosted by Mrs. John Phipps or the Drexel Biddles or at the Mesker cottage, "Playa Reinte" where the ballroom hung over the ocean. Here you whispered about who such-and-such a person was or who they had been seen with lately. At a series of after dinner parties you sopped up highballs until dawn and next day at the exclusive Bath and Tennis Club enjoyed gossip about the scandalous developments of the night before.

Viewing supreme examples of the work of Palm Beach's most famous architects - **Addison Mizner, Joseph Urban, Maurice Fatio, Marion Sims Wyeth** and **John Volk** participants will step into this private world as the present day owners of houses open their doors to an equal round of daily visits. Stories handed down through families who have continuously occupied residences, or those who directly purchased mansions from the original owners, will take us back to the Palm Beach which Paris Singer, an heir to the Singer fortune, and Addison Mizner created after 1917. We will look too at **Whitehall**, and share visions of Palm Beach's founder **Henry Morrison Flagler**. With lunches, cocktail parties and dinners in private residences, walks through magnificent gardens, time to stroll down Worth Avenue, exclusive entree to the Norton Museum and to collections of present day Palm Beach residents we will see why this resort still beckons the rich and famous while maintaining its aura of mystique.♦

Schedule

Thursday, March 12th

Arrival in Palm Beach where participants will be greeted and driven to **The Brazilian Court Hotel**.

Gather in mid afternoon for refreshments with program hosts and Antony Underwood, President, The Argosy and long-time winter resident.

Lecture - "Riviera shirts and Purple Espadrilles, Mediterranean Stage Sets and Life Out-of-Doors - The Palm Beach of Paris Singer and Addison Mizner" with James Ponce, member and descendant of the Ponce de Leon family that discovered Florida in 1513.

Twilight drive pointing out highlights on Ocean Avenue, Worth Avenue and shores of Lake Worth with resident Ben Johnson. Dinner at a private house designed by **Addison Mizner**.

Friday, March 13th

Private visit of **Whitehall** - the marble palace built by **Henry Flagler** for his twenty-four year old third wife and now the **Flagler Museum**.

Visit **The Ducks Nest**, one of the earliest buildings of Palm Beach. We will be received here by owners, Mr. and Mrs. Michael Fawcett.

Lunch at **The Beach Club**, designed by **John Volk** and built on the site of The Coral Beach Club where society gathered in the 20s.

Private visit to the outstanding gardens of the **Phipps Estate** with owner Mr. Robert Eigelberger, husband of Susan Phipps, whose family has resorted at Palm Beach

since the early part of the century.

Tea at **The Breakers Hotel**. Dinner at a private residence.

Saturday, March 14th

Drive to **Casa Alva** once the home of Consuelo Balsan. Here Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin, who purchased the house from Ms. Balsan, will host a visit and morning tea. Alexandra Fatio Taylor, daughter of architect **Maurice Fatio** who designed the home, will discuss her father and his work. Our next visit is to **Il Sogno**, designed by **Marion Sims Wyeth**.

Lunch at **Mar-a-Lago** the spectacular sprawling 115 room ocean-to-lake villa spreading from the Atlantic Avenue to Lake Worth. Built originally for Marjorie Merriweather Post this Spanish castle is a supreme example of the work of **Joseph Urban** and gives us a taste of Palm Beach at its most lavish and theatrical.

Private visit to gardens at **Bethesda-by-the-Sea Episcopal Church** and the **Society of the Four Arts**. Time for late afternoon swim at the beach. Dinner at a private residence.

Sunday, March 15th

Visit **Hogarcito**, home of Mr. Bruce Bent. Built in 1921 by architect **Marion Sims Wyeth** this was the first home in Palm Beach of Marjorie Merriweather Post. The Spanish villa has a three-story tower and spectacular water views. Our next visit is to **Villa Dei Fiori** a **Mizner** home built for Frank Woodward, business tycoon and member of the family on which the book "The Two Mrs. Grenvilles" was based. We share the story of the family as we gather in the garden tea house designed by architect **Howard Major**. (cont'd)