PALM BEACH

& MANALAPAN

Winter Home of the Rich and Famous — An Introduction

❦

There are places the rich and famous visit, and there is the place they have always called home in winter. Since Henry Flagler laid his railroad to a mangrove island in 1894 and built hotels worthy of Newport, Palm Beach has been less a resort than a society — the Vanderbilts and Astors in the Gilded Age; Addison Mizner's Mediterranean fantasies and the founding of the Everglades Club in the 1920s; the Kennedys' oceanfront "Winter White House," where a President-elect drafted his inaugural address; Estée Lauder ruling her hedged villa on South Ocean Boulevard; the endless poolside afternoons Slim Aarons made famous in photographs the world still studies. Today the lineage continues with new names — the founders, financiers, and cultural figures remaking American wealth — and for the first time in its history, some are staying year-round.

~$3,050	$12.8M	60+	18 miles
median sold price per square foot	*median island sale, 2026*	*resident billionaires*	*of barrier island, fully built out*

The Island, North to South

The North End. Quiet lanes of single-family homes from the Inlet to Wells Road — lakefront docks to the west, deeded beach access to the east. Once the island's understated quarter, it is now its renovation-and-rebuild engine, and where the new generation of full-time families has settled.

Midtown & In-Town. The walkable heart around Worth Avenue and Royal Palm Way: landmarked townhouses, discreet co-operatives, and in-town villas steps from the galleries, the restaurants, and The Breakers. The most graceful — and most liquid — way to acquire an island address.

The Estate Section. From Worth Avenue south to Sloan's Curve lies the grand quarter: Mizner and Marion Sims Wyeth estates behind twenty-foot ficus hedges, multi-acre grounds, and the ocean-to-lake parcels that define the island's trophy tier. Mar-a-Lago and the Bath & Tennis Club hold its southern gate.

The South End. Along South Ocean Boulevard toward the Inlet: oceanfront apartments, townhomes, and the Sloan's Curve enclaves — the island's most attainable ocean views, favored for the lock-and-leave season.

The Season and the Life

Worth Avenue remains among the world's great shopping streets — a quarter mile of maisons and jewelers threaded with bougainvillea-draped vias — and the social calendar still turns on the storied clubs: the Everglades, the Bath & Tennis, Mar-a-Lago, the Sailfish. The season runs Thanksgiving to Easter in a procession of galas; the days belong to golf, tennis, the beach, and the boats along the Intracoastal docks. The Breakers and the famously pink Colony Hotel — the island's iconic houses of hospitality — anchor resort life, while the Royal Poinciana Plaza, John Volk's restored 1950s landmark on the grounds of Flagler's legendary Royal Poinciana Hotel, has become the most fashionable address for dining and maisons, Sant Ambroeus chief among them. It is a life conducted at close quarters among people the world knows by a single name — which is precisely why the island prizes discretion above all else.

Manalapan — The Billionaires' Retreat

Ten minutes south of the Estate Section, past a final bend in South Ocean Boulevard, lies a town of roughly four hundred and fifty residents with no commercial district, its own police force, and a single extraordinary inheritance: estate parcels that span the entire width of the island, private Atlantic beach to private Intracoastal dock. Harold Vanderbilt built here; Gloria Guinness presided here; Billy Joel composed here. The stretch is known today, simply, as Billionaire's Row.

Its modern chapter opened in 2022, when Larry Ellison acquired the sixteen-acre Gemini estate for $173 million — then the highest price ever paid for a Florida home — and went on to invest an estimated $450 million in the town, including the Eau Palm Beach Resort & Spa and its storied La Coquille Club. Jeffrey Skoll, Tony Robbins, and WeatherTech founder David MacNeil are among the names that followed; trophy estates now trade routinely between $60 and $100 million, and vacant ocean-to-lake land commands nine-figure asks. For those who want acreage, both waterfronts, and near-total privacy — with Worth Avenue ten minutes north — Manalapan is the connoisseur's answer.

Quietly Practical

Palm Beach International and its private-aviation terminals sit fifteen minutes from Worth Avenue, and Brightline places Miami at an hour. Across the bridges, "Wall Street South" has become a skyline: more than three hundred hedge funds and investment firms now operate in the county, and billionaire developer Stephen Ross — a Palm Beacher himself — is investing some $10 billion to remake West Palm Beach, from the One Flagler tower, whose tenants include Goldman Sachs, BlackRock, Point72, and the new Wells Fargo wealth-management headquarters, to South Flagler House, the Robert A.M. Stern–designed condominiums where penthouses have commanded $40 million and more. A new restaurant culture has arrived with the money — Estiatorio Milos at One Flagler's base among the openings drawing the island across the water. Florida, meanwhile, levies neither income nor estate tax — the quiet arithmetic behind the greatest migration of private wealth in modern American history, of which Palm Beach County is the nation's leading destination, with some $22.7 billion in income arriving between 2019 and 2023. Both towns keep their own police forces; few municipalities in America are safer.

The Bottom Line

Palm Beach and Manalapan offer what no fortune can manufacture elsewhere: a fixed supply of barrier-island land, a century of social architecture, and a neighbor list that has read like the society pages — and now reads like the Forbes 400. Fewer than sixty properties are publicly offered on the island at any moment, and many of the finest change hands without ever being listed. Here, knowing the inventory — the seen and the unseen — is everything. That is where I come in.

Market figures from MLS closed-sale records (Town of Palm Beach, areas 5001–5004) through June 2026; wealth-migration data from IRS county migration statistics as analyzed by the Miami Association of Realtors; Manalapan transaction history from public records and contemporaneous press reporting. Informational only; not a valuation or tax or legal advice.