

SunSentinel

January 29, 2023

High-end RV resorts grow popular amid the housing crunch. Some deem it 'affordable luxury.'

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South Florida Sun-Sentinel

Jan 29, 2023 at 7:00 am



Yacht Haven Park and Marina in Fort Lauderdale on Thursday, January 26, 2023. As the housing market soars, luxury RVs are rising in popularity as it offers owners flexibility and cheaper prices. (Carline Jean / South Florida Sun Sentinel)

Overlooking the New River in Fort Lauderdale not far from million-dollar homes situated across the waterway lies a well-kept secret: a luxury RV resort.

It offers what many think of when they visit South Florida: gorgeous waterfront views, lush greenery and million-dollar yachts floating by, but

Instead of condos or sky-high apartment buildings, Yacht Haven Park and Marina features more than 220 lots that guests can rent to park their RVs.

“I call it affordable luxury,” said Christine Schaub, 33, who rents a lot overlooking the New River with her husband, Joel, 40.

Dubbing themselves “young snowbirds,” the Chicago couple first purchased their RV in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, seeing the RV as an option that would let them escape the harsh Chicago winters and vacation at a time when international travel wasn’t really an option.

Almost three years later, the couple has traveled from coast to coast in their RV, visiting Arizona, New Orleans, Texas, the Florida Keys — and now Yacht Haven Park and Marina.



Christine Schaub works from her luxury RV at the Yacht Haven Park and Marina in Fort Lauderdale on Thursday. As the housing market soars, luxury RVs are rising in popularity as they offer owners flexibility and cheaper prices. (Carline Jean / South Florida Sun Sentinel)

They started staying at the resort in November 2022, liking the waterfront views it offered and the quick proximity to Fort Lauderdale’s downtown life.

“We can work remotely now,” added Joel. “We own a home in Chicago. We bought the RV and go to resorts like this where you can get out and avoid the snow.”

They aren’t the only ones opting out of a second home and into an RV. One in five leisure travelers has worked from an RV over the past 24 months, and

one in four consider doing it in the next year, according to data from the RV Industry Association.

The rise in popularity of RVs

Recreational vehicles, or RVs, saw a surge in popularity when the pandemic hit in 2020.

While the market for them was strong leading up to the pandemic, COVID lockdowns brought out droves of people looking for a means to still be able to vacation, while being socially distant.

“The pandemic supercharged it,” said Monika Geraci, spokesperson for the Recreational Vehicle Industry Association.

In 2021, over 600,00 RVs were built, a 20% increase from the previous record high in 2017, when over 500,000 RVs were built.

[And as the pandemic waned on](#), RV popularity grew as more people began to prioritize the outdoors. It also became a more affordable option for people who were looking to escape increased housing costs or even find a more affordable vacation home.

*“When the housing market went absolutely crazy, some homeowners jumped on the bandwagon, sold their homes and purchased RVs full time to wait until the market came back down,” said Gigi Stetler, founder of Planet RV, an RV dealership, in Dania Beach. **A luxury RV resort by the water***

Yacht Haven Park and Marina has been able to capitalize on the growing popularity of RVs. It’s been around for about 30 years, but only recently updated to a luxury resort. They’re catering to all segments of the market: snowbirds from the northeast and Canada, young families who can work and school remotely, and traveling nurses.

On a Thursday afternoon, the resort looked like a vacation spot, with palm trees paving the road throughout the site and RVs lined up only yards apart from each other.

Guests could be found laying by the pool or playing with their dogs in the dog park to enjoy the cooler weather. Some couples lounged outside on their patios, enjoying glasses of white wine.

Every now and then, a yacht would pass by and passengers aboard would wave to any resort guests they saw.

Some of the more upscale RVs, which can cost upward of a million dollars, were like stepping into a miniature luxury home, complete with leather seats for relaxing, stainless-steel appliances, closet space and ample kitchen space.



Toby the cat roams the inside of a luxury RV at Yacht Haven Park and Marina in Fort Lauderdale on Thursday. As the housing market soars, luxury RVs are rising in popularity. (Carline Jean / South Florida Sun Sentinel)

Managing sponsor Gary Cioffi and partner Christopher Hein acquired the 20-acre site last year, investing about \$26 million in the property to create an atmosphere where resort guests can park their motorcoaches and enjoy the tranquility.

“When we first bought it, there was actually a boom in the RV side and yachts were being sold at record highs,” Cioffi said. “There is certainly high demand and low supply for places like ours with the location being so close to the downtown.”

The park is located on West State Road 84 in Fort Lauderdale, just off the highway and about five miles from the popular stretch of Las Olas Boulevard, in the downtown. One of the distinguishing points of the Yacht Haven Park and Marina is the fact that it not only has docks for people to park their yachts and boats if need be, but is also so close to the downtown.

Other luxury campgrounds across the region include the Aztec RV Resort in Margate and the Pelican Lake Motorcoach Resort in Naples.

The Yacht Haven Park and Marina offers guests six different lot types for guests to choose from, such as Royal Point Waterfront, Garden View and Waterfront Premium. Each lot has synthetic grass, new driveway areas and a patio for guests to relax on.

Daily rates range depending on the season, but typically start at \$105 a night for the summer season, and \$145 a night for the winter season.

“To be by the water and the boats is lovely,” added Christine Schaub.

Amenities at the resort include a dog park, a playground for those with kids, a fitness center, a pool and laundry and showers. They are in the process of getting permits to build a 6,000-square-foot clubhouse with a rooftop lounge, a fitness center, a revamped pool and sundeck area, along with pickle ball and basketball courts.

“What we have seen across the board for campgrounds is that people want more amenities period,” said Geraci. “We have seen campgrounds adding the type of amenities that you would find at resorts.”

The resort welcomes motor coaches of all types, as long as they are in good condition.