

Irma we had 130 employees. 20 of them were able to come back after the storm."

It took a year and a half to rebuild Islander. Workers relocated to the museum before they were able to return to their offices, and there were weeks of rescheduling guests, and refunding events and weddings. Each team member also had to take on more roles and responsibilities around the Resort, such as working maintenance, or acting as gate security.

As the resort rebuilt, it took the time to refurbish and renovate once again. Kitchens were removed from the rooms, and a modern approach was taken. Each room now has a refrigerator, microwave, and coffee maker. All linen and artwork was upgraded, with the rooms now sporting art by local painter Roberto "Pasta" Pantaleo. All patio furniture was replaced, and the lobby also got a fresh, new makeover.

"We are a luxury resort, not just a motel," says Robin. "It was a full, upscale redo, and we want to cater to guests, from the security greeting them at the front gate, to the eco-friendly guest transportation that is provided. 100% customer service is what is expected, down to the best coffee and creamer provided in the rooms.

Additionally, Islander now has two completely new restaurants, Tides Beachside Bar and Grill, serving lunch, dinner, and cocktails by the pool, and Elements Lounge and Restaurant, an upscale dinner dining experience.

Islander Resort, post-Irma, has also completely revamped its environmental impact. The resort has invested in a



solar photovoltaic system to produce electricity to offset in excess of 45% of their historical power use. Not only will this decrease their carbon footprint, but it will be the largest solar installation in Monroe County. The project will consist of the installation of 1,948 solar panels on 15 different buildings on the property. Each panel will provide 327 watts, and can withstand wind speeds in excess of 180mph. The projected energy production of the full system is 1,090 Megawatt hours annually, which is the equivalent of the amount of electricity that 134 homes would use in the US in a year. It's also cutting Greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to 164 passenger vehicles driven for one year.

The company behind the installation is Salt Energy, a Florida Certified Solar contractor, and has started installation

on the project, which they estimate will take about a full year to complete.

Along with the solar panels, each guest room now comes with an energy efficient mini split client control unit, and a reproduced water treatment system to collect and hold reclaimed water to irrigate the landscaping collection has been put into place.

The landscaping now consisted of drought resistant plants and trees native to the Keys, along with plants to attract butterflies scattered throughout, and in the butterfly garden. "You can't walk the property without seeing a monarch. We're doing our small part to help them," says Dan Martin, the Director of Sales and Marketing at Islander.

Returning guests will notice new trash and recycling bins across the property, and water filling stations provided, along with reusable bottles. Additionally, all take out cups and containers, and dish wear in the rooms, are made of biodegradable materials, recycled paper products, and repurposed palm fronds.

By 2020, Islander's green initiatives will reduce its energy uses and dependence on fossil fuels by over 50%, making it friendlier to our islands and the overall environment.

The history of Islander Resort now continues, fully-reopened post-Irma. Dine by the pool, travel the landscaped paths, and explore all the history Islander has to offer. For more information, please visit: <https://www.islanderfloridakeys.com>.

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