

Florida Keys resort gives a hero's welcome to military, first responders



Hawks Cay Resort in the Florida Keys offers discounted rates and other perks to military and first responders.

By **Lori Rackl**
Chicago Tribune

JULY 27, 2017, 8:45 AM

The family-friendly Hawks Cay Resort in the Florida Keys is making a visit extra enticing for past and present members of the military, police officers, firefighters and EMTs with its Heroes Salute program.

Rooms that normally start around \$300 can be had for as little as \$129 a night (plus taxes and resort fees) with the Heroes Salute rate. The discounted prices can be booked for stays between Aug. 13 and Dec. 23 — a month longer than the eligibility period in previous years.

“It’s an opportunity for us to give back,” said the resort’s managing director, Sheldon Suga, who started the program several years ago, around the time his son joined the U.S. Coast Guard. “We’ve gotten to meet a lot of interesting people and their families — that’s the part I like about it.”

Military discounts aren’t all that unusual in the hospitality industry, but Hawks Cay takes it a step further. Participants are encouraged to send photos that become part of a weekly Heroes Salute tribute ceremony and slideshow that takes place outdoors Saturdays, starting Labor Day weekend.

“Some people come up and tell their story,” Suga said. “It’s an emotional experience. Often there’s not a dry eye in the house.”

A Heroes Salute 5K run/walk, concert, fireworks and color guard performance also are on tap Labor Day weekend.

The Heroes Salute program offers extra perks, too, like special rates at the resort’s spa and discounts on fishing charters, among other things.

Located about halfway down the island chain between Key Largo and Key West, the 60-acre resort on Duck Key has 177 guestrooms in the main hotel, along with 250 multi-bedroom villas, also available at reduced rates. The property includes a full-service marina, spa, multiple pools and restaurants, and a dolphin facility.

People who don’t qualify for the heroes’ rate can get a 15 percent Heroes Supporter discount by donating at least \$5 to Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation through the resort’s website or its reservation agents.

Visit hawkscay.com/heroessalute, or call (866) 525-5368.

lrackl@chicagotribune.com

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/travel/sc-trav-0801-strip-heroes-salute-20170725-story.html>