

(: Beach Reviews :)



Tricia Gonzalez – February 2012

BEACHES – Turks and Caicos

DO NOT take your kids to BEACHES Resort in Turks & Caicos! If you do, you'll never be able to vacation with them anywhere else! This place is kiddie paradise. .. and it's pretty fun for adults too!

I was fortunate enough to visit last weekend, getting out of NY before the short blast of snow blew in. After a short delay deicing, we were off the ground and on our way for a quick three hour flight to Turks. On landing, it's easy to see where the name Turks (turquoise) comes from. The water and beaches surrounding this small island are spectacular.

A short 10 minute ride (free transfers) and I was on the beach by 1. There are four Villages making up the resort – Caribbean (original), Seaside, French and the newest Italian Village. My room was in the Caribbean. Although one of the original rooms, they have been refurbished and my room was quite nice. With a king size four poster bed and trundle that sleeps 2 more, they will also allow a rollaway or crib in this category. With the addition of Concierge service, my room was equipped with mini fridge containing champagne, Beringer wines, beer and soft drinks. A full bar of rum, vodka, gin and scotch was also included.

On my last visit I stayed in a family suite in the Italian Village. This is ideal for larger families or for those that want to separate the little ones. The separate kids room includes bunk beds with a trundle to sleep 3. The larger room has a four poster king with either a sleeping chair or another trundle so they can accommodate 6 to 8 people. The French Village will sleep 4 to 14 in a three bedroom suite.

Now for the fun stuff. There are 16 restaurants. You can eat yourself silly. There is even an all night diner for burgers, snacks, ice cream, shakes, etc. My favorite was the French café where I stopped every afternoon for dark chocolate dipped marshmallows. Can you imagine, you can

walk in and have as many brownies, cookies, pastries, lattes as you can hold down? It's a good thing that the resort is large. I walked a lot.

There is a Pirates Island water park featuring nine water slides, lazy river, surf simulator and water cannons. Elmo, Ernie, Abby Cadabby were a few of the characters that I ran into while on my walks but they also have a weekly Sesame Street evening parade and Elmo and friends will come and tuck the wee ones in with a bedtime story (fee). They even have Sesame Street breakfast and private birthday parties with your choice of character (fee).

For the older ones, there is the X-BOX360 Games Garage. I think I saw almost as many adults as kids playing in there. For music enthusiasts, there is the Scratch DJ Academy, where kids can learn how to mix and scratch music.

For the adults – here's the good part – Camp Sesame will care for your children from 0 to 4 years old! Yes, you read right – they will take your newborn infant if you are so inclined! There are children's programs for your 5 to 17 year olds. I saw bands of teens walking around enjoying themselves and watched a large group of them hugging goodbye on departure day.

With seven pools and twelve miles of powder white sand beach, there are plenty of opportunities for water play. Oh, did I mention, the pools are heated? They are in January at least.

More adult fun can be found at the fitness center and Red Lane Spa.

Scuba diving is free for certified divers. If not certified, they offer a PADI course (fee). Other watersports include kayaks, windsurfing, snorkeling (I did this trip and the fish and reefs are spectacular!), aqua trikes and hobie cats.

If that's not enough, Island Routes offers a variety of tours and excursions, as well as a 65 foot catamaran. Kitty Katt Cruises offers snorkeling, sunset, character breakfast, tweens and teens cruises.

Weekly events include Beringer wine and cheese tasting, late night Chocolate buffet and BBQ beach party with music and bonfires.

Are you exhausted yet? You can always book a room with butler service. The butlers are trained by the Guild of Professional English Butlers. I watched these smiling butlers help families lugging strollers, beach toys and bags all over the resort. They will set up your beach cabana, chairs and stocked coolers so you can just get yourself to a chair and sit for the day. They have cell phones when you need them. They will also unpack and pack again. Need I say more?

Almost done; Sandals has a no tipping policy (except for butlers and spa) so you don't have to worry about handing out cash wherever you go. They CANNOT accept tips and they won't. They will be fired if they are caught.

One last note – Sandals is family owned. They run a Foundation that funds projects in education, community and the environment.

I think that about covers it. Beaches is the winner of “World Travel Awards” 4 years in a row for “World’s Leading Family Resort”. This is not a cheap vacation but the place was packed with families, multigenerations and friends. They do offer a group program if you have 5 or more rooms to book. They also have fabulous spots for Destination Weddings.

For help planning – call your Beaches/Sandals Certified Specialist. That would be me!

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