



NEWS

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TRAVEL 'N STYLE

A PERFECT GETAWAY *By Dana Damato*

FOR THE GIRLS



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"We need a girls' trip," I said matter-of-factly to my closest gal pal. We live on different sides of Florida's coast, and we never fail to get together every couple of months for brunch. However, with our busy lives and hectic careers, we needed not just brunch, but a weekend getaway to sip cocktails by the beach and relax. "I agree," she responded. "Where should we go?"

We wanted to go some place chic, on the beach and with plenty of things to do on property as well as nearby if we wanted to venture out. We knew the desired destination was Naples, and the next step was finding the perfect resort to accommodate our stay. After much research, we found the perfect property that seemed to be everything we were looking for and more – the Naples Grande Beach Resort & Spa.

Needless to say, it definitely was everything and more than we were expecting it to be. A newly renovated resort near beautiful beaches, live entertainment on property and exceptional dining, and all just a short drive away from the famous 5th Street – we couldn't have found a more perfect place to go.

From the moment we arrived at this beautiful resort, we knew we were in for a full weekend of rest, relaxation and most importantly...fun! The Naples Grande Beach Resort is the ideal coastal escape for any vacation that requires some peace, quiet and downtime to recharge your batteries. The resort overlooks the infinite Gulf of Mexico on 23-waterfront acres. This exquisite property is home to spacious and chic accommodations, a private beach, rejuvenating spa services, an 18-hole championship golf course, 15 tournament grade tennis courts, and world-class amenities.

Our stay was mostly geared toward sipping cocktails by the pool and the beach, and that was exactly what we did. The property doesn't just offer one pool for the entire resort though; we had enough options to alternate throughout the whole weekend, and we certainly enjoyed each and every pool.

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There are three swimming pools that include the Mangrove Pool, great for families, with a 100-foot twisting waterslide and beach style entry; the Palm Terrace Pool exclusive for adults, including a whirlpool and private cabanas available with butler service; and Hibiscus Hideaway Pool, offering lap lanes. We spent the majority of our time at the Mangrove Pool, only because there was a live DJ playing some upbeat songs, and we couldn't help but dance around, go to the bar, get a tan and go for a swim. The Palm Terrace Pool was excellent as well when we wanted to take naps and enjoy some peace and quiet.

When we weren't at the pool, we were laying out on a cabana on the beach. Lounging around on three miles of powdery, white-sand beaches always makes for a perfect afternoon. From the soothing breezes floating lightly off the stunning Gulf of Mexico to the warm sunshine on our skin, this pristine beach was more than what we were expecting – along with exceptional beachside service. Paddleboards and kayaks are available, and a full array of other watersports, including jet skiing, sailing, parasailing and deep-sea fishing, can be arranged through the concierge team.

Of course, when we weren't working on our suntans, we were working on nourishing our bodies with the exquisite dining on property. We threw our diets out the window this weekend and enjoyed ourselves. It was worth every bite.

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The Catch of the Pelican was our favorite restaurant on property. The restaurant offers vibrant flavors of the Gulf Coast in a relaxed-yet-sophisticated ambiance. Offering locally grown produce, The Catch of the Pelican specializes in local seafood such as Snapper, Seabass, and Grouper, as well as choice meats grilled to perfection.

Mantra, the newest food and beverage concept to debut in late 2017, is an innovative, Japanese and pan-Asian-inspired open kitchen with bar (we enjoyed both the restaurant and the bar). Inspired by several Asian influences such as Korea and Japan, Mantra features dishes such as Banh Mi sandwiches, noodles, rice bowls, sushi and sashimi. Sake and Asian-influenced cocktails are hand-crafted by mixologists with unique flavor profiles using fresh, local ingredients. Mantra is the perfect spot to dine and enjoy unique cocktails in a chic, modern and comfortable lounge setting.

As much as we adored the resort, the food, the drinks and the entertainment, we wanted to explore the town a bit and see where the locals go to get a sense of culture in Naples, FL. Is this town as extraordinary as the resort makes it seem? We had to check it out. The 'hot spot' in Naples is an affluent and trendy strip called 5th Avenue South. From the city to the Gulf, 5th Avenue is home to high-end fashion and jewelry boutiques, world-class spas, unique artwork, entertainment, fine dining and so much more.

5th Street is just a short 10-minute drive from the resort, and in no time we were strolling down the sidewalk amongst some of the most prestigious shops and restaurants in town! We didn't hesitate to make our way into some of the restaurant bars for a drink and an appetizer. Instead of one meal, we decided to hop around to places such as Bice Ristorante, Ocean Prime

and South Restaurant and Bar, just to name a few. After a fun night out and about, we couldn't wait to get back to the resort!

A full weekend away with sun, delicious food, refreshing cocktails, great company and a perfect resort with everything we could have ever asked for and more. There was nothing missing from this chic and one-of-a-kind beach resort. With a hospitable staff and a memorable resort experience, we will definitely be having another girls' weekend at the Naples Grande Beach Resort & Spa. We may even spend time at the spa during our next visit!

For more information about the resort, please visit www.naplesgrande.com or give them a call at 239-597-3232 today. See you at the beach!

