

Mamajuana or Bust Recap! by George Sargent, Trip Coordinator



2014



2019

Okay, here's the shot of the week but they were taken 5 years apart. Same beach. Same two people with different swim suits and the same visor! Although the colors in the two pictures differ the visor is more faded. Can you see the "A"?

The Resort

What a wonderful time we had during the week of May 4th. I was there in the late summer of 2014 and a lot has changed. The rooms and restaurants have all seen significant remodeling improvements. All the lower level rooms had



their own pool spanning the lower level. It added a touch of "I want that next time" feel.

The Beach

The Ambar beach still is one of my favorite beaches and the pool was never better. The crystal white sand extends at least 50 yards from the shore. Starting at about 15 yards from the waves one could find shade provided by palm trees and cabanas. This deep beach extended right up to the adult pool and the adjacent buffet.





The Pool

The adult pool offered comfort and convenience. Although busy, with 26 people in our group one never had to go far looking for someone in our group. I'd drop my towel, water shoes and tee shirt on a chaise and head for the water with a Dirty Monkey, Chocolate Martini or BananaMama. Many other drinks were offered but you get my point. It was all about being catered to and full relaxation.



The Dining

There were many dining options. For breakfast most visited the Ambar Palmyra. This location offered a vast array of choices morning, noon and night. I'm not sure I heard a single complaint - it would have been difficult to not find something catering to your taste buds. When you walked in, a hostess greeted you with mimosas or Bloody Marys made to your preference. From there you had to be real careful not to hurt yourself by over eating.

For lunch, I spent most of my time at the pool restaurant. This location was just a few steps from the beach or the pool. It was a good thing actually because my tummy didn't need further abuse. Yet, I still found myself wanting to sample the myriad of selections. This place still had everything but offered an appropriate ambiance for swim attire.

Dinner was supposed to be the crème de la crème. It WAS for many. Many of the gourmet restaurants offered exquisite food. Another term I've used is eclectic. Simply put, the menus offered the fancy and unique if not somewhat unusual. If you are the type that often wants something different, then these restaurants are what you want. If you are more of a steak and potatoes type person careful navigation through the menu and maybe a few questions

should yield flavors that satisfy your appetite. And of course, the Palmyra buffet was always a winner.



The Entertainment

Most resorts of this nature have nightly entertainment. The Bahia Principe is a large resort with seven separate resorts which includes the Ambar. There was something going on every night. In fact, there were maybe two or three separate venues offering live entertainment. These venues were located all over the place with many requiring a quick shuttle ride in order to be timely.

White Night involved listening and dancing to reggae music on the beach at night. There were lots of cool people having a lot of fun moving to angel wing lights.

The Magic Show was held in an open air amphitheater.



Just outside of that, there was a small rendition of Cirque du Soleil. I have to say some of the acts were pretty eye catching. I never made it to see the Michael Jackson revue but heard excellent reports that "Michael" was very good. There were so many nightly events going on it was hard to catch everything.



Live music was everywhere. There was even a Silent Disco. People wanting to dance would wear headphones that had psychedelic lights flashing to the beat of the music. But

the audience could hear nothing. It seemed like a bunch of crazies all dancing to a rhythm that was basically unheard.



Many of us found ourselves late night at the sports bar. Yes, the Rockets were trying their best. And before we turned in we could always find friends sharing a nightcap at the lobby bar.

Golfing In Paradise

Punta Cana is known for its golf. I'm not a golfer but several in the group were. Jeff Cross headed up a team including his wife Elise, Ron Rambin and Matt Lora. They told me the locations were nice but pricy. That didn't hold Jeff back as I believe he golfed for 4 days. The others golfed for 3 days or less.



Our Excursion to Alto De Chavon and Catalina Island

There were plans to do multiple excursions. But after getting to the resort, most people didn't want to leave. Sandra McCunis took the lead by asking questions to find out what people wanted. In the end her research indicated people wanted to snorkel and swim at Catalina Island. Catalina Island is in the Caribbean as opposed to where we were staying on the Atlantic side of the Dominican Republic. We took a bus to Catalina Island via another interesting village called Alto De Chavon.

Alto De Chavon

This village would have been a great back drop for the Game of Thrones series. It was actually created in 1976 by industrialist Charles Bluhdorn and finished in the early 1980's. It's a cultural center with 5000 seat amphitheater. The Pet Shop Boys, Frank Sinatra and Julio Iglesias to name a few have played there. The grounds include a church of certain notoriety, a number of restaurants and gift shops. It was pretty neat.



Catalina Island

Of course what we really wanted was the water, beach, snorkeling and catamaran ride to Catalina Island. We were not disappointed. Catalina Island is located about 1 ½ miles off the southeast coast of the Dominican Republic. It is a popular destination for tours from the mainland. The island offers mostly undisturbed terrain and beaches with crystal clear waters where one can swim, snorkel and scuba dive. Our particular tour included natively prepared foods and simple adult beverages.



The Last Supper

The Ambar was not set up to offer a-la-cart dining for 26 people at a different restaurant every night. We ended up separating into much smaller groups and even going to different restaurants on a given night. But for our last evening, I suggested everyone eat at the Palmyra. The Palmyra offers a different cuisine every evening and our Friday evening "last supper" featured native Dominican dishes. I was initially concerned but was soon relived and became immediately excited to see the goodness surrounding me. It was a smorgasbord of good eats. The Ambar worked hard to satisfy our dining reservations. The resort welcomed our idea of gathering as one group at the buffet. I met with the restaurant manager, his crew and both the resort manager Pablo and assistant manager Carlos. Everyone seemed sincere in making sure we were happy. I was so impressed with the carefully placed rose petals.



The People

My favorite trips have been with the people I most enjoyed. Sure, the exotics and mountains of the world are

spectacular. But for me, it's the fun and good times with friends that make a trip memorable. This Mamajuana or Bust trip had one of the most compatible groups of people I've ever traveled with. Twenty-six of us enjoyed the fun, food, beaches and sun to our fullest.



Post Trip Party

The Rabin's offered their beautiful home for the post trip party. Rowena took on the role of 'Post Trip Head Honcho' and teamed up with Roberta for a great dinner. Frozen Pina Colodas were chosen for the Caribbean rum reminder of where we'd been. Shrimp appetizers helped kill off afternoon tummy growls. Numerous bottles of wine were consumed with lasagna and blackened chicken alfredo. Desert was used to finish off the feast with cheesecake bars and key lime pie. I'd say all-in-all Roberta and Rowena did a superbly excellent job!

Honorable mentions for trip contributions

- Diane Gresko for communication support during the trip.
- Craig Campbell and Rowena Roche for their support of a medical emergency requiring an almost all night stay at a hospital.
- Sandra McCunis for leading the group excursion to Catalina Island.
- Jeff Cross for his coordination and support of the golfing group.
- Roberta and Ron Rabin for offering their home for our post trip party.
- Roberta Rabin and Rowena Roche for doing everything regarding the post trip party.

The End Until Next Time

