

Disney's Coronado Springs Resort: Festive Fun for All

by Jennifer and Dave Marx, PassPorter Guidebooks Author

Coronado Springs is located near Disney's Animal Kingdom and Disney's Hollywood Studios and offers moderately priced rooms and convention facilities. The resort surrounds a 15-acre lake known as Lago (Lake) Dorado.

Ambience at Coronado Springs Resort

The architecture and decor trace the travels of explorer Francisco de Coronado in colonial Mexico and the American Southwest. Adventure awaits around every corner, from the colorful, bustling market to the Mayan pyramid overlooking the main swimming pool. Your visit begins in a sunny plaza, which leads to the large, open lobby graced by beamed ceilings, elegant columns, and intricately inlaid floors. Around the corner, a festive market offers native foods, just the thing to eat on the lakeside terrace. The resort's buildings are clustered around sparkling Lago Dorado, including the stately main building, El Centro.

Guest Rooms & Resort Layout at Coronado Springs Resort

The renovated guest rooms in this 1,967-room resort are divided into three districts. Closest to El Centro are the Casitas, a bustling village of three- and four-story stucco buildings painted in soft pastels. Next around the lagoon are the rustic adobe-and-wood Ranchos. You could imagine Zorro dashing under the porch roofs and amid the cactus, while bubbling springs cascade into rock-strewn stream beds, ultimately to disappear into the parched desert earth. Finally, you reach the tropical Cabanas, vibrantly colored two-story buildings with the corrugated tin roofs of a rustic beach resort. Rooms are about 314 sq. ft. and offer two queen beds or one king bed, a separate vanity area with just one sink, table and chairs, armoire, and a TV. Amenities include toiletries, housekeeping, limited room service, hair dryer, iron and ironing board, coffeemaker, refrigerator, in-room safe, and voice mail. Newspaper delivery is available for \$1.50/day. Concierge rooms and junior, one-bedroom, and executive suites are also available.

The large 190,000 sq. ft. Conference Center is quite modern and generally lacks the regional character of the resort. It boasts the largest ballroom in the Southeast (60,214 sq. ft.). An 85,000 sq. ft. exhibit hall, meeting rooms, another 20,000 sq. ft. ballroom, and patios round out the facilities. A full-service business center is also available.

Dining at Coronado Springs Resort

Coronado Springs' dining options are the real enchilada. Maya Grill

(see page 256) is an upscale table-service restaurant open for breakfast and dinner. Pepper Market is an a la carte food court dressed up like a festive, outdoor market for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Typical menu items include veggie frittata platter (\$9.99), cheese omelet (\$9.99), cheeseburger (\$9.99), chef's salad (\$10.95), chicken quesadillas (\$9.99), and kids? chicken nuggets (\$6.50). An automatic 10% gratuity is added. Siesta's is the poolside bar serving sandwiches, nachos, fries, and various drinks. The Rix Lounge is a 300-seat lounge with music, appetizers, and specialty drinks. Limited room service is offered in the mornings and evenings. Refillable mugs (\$8.99-\$17.99) are available at the Pepper Market.

Playing & Relaxing at Coronado Springs Resort

For Athletes: La Vida Health Club has exercise equipment, whirlpool, and massage treatments. Boats, bikes, surreys, and fishing poles can be rented at La Marina, and there is a volleyball court. Enjoy a nature trail and a walk/jog around the lagoon.

For Charmers: Casa de Belleza offers beauty and hair treatments.

For Children: The Explorer's Playground is near the main pool.

For Gamers: Video games of all sorts are found at the Iguana Arcade near the main pool (note that the Jumping Bean Arcade closed).

For Shoppers: Panchito's has sundries, character items, and gifts.

For Swimmers: A leisure pool in each of the three districts, plus the Dig Site main pool, which is built around an ancient pyramid and features a water slide, spa (hot tub), and kids? pool.

Coronado Springs' Transportation

Transportation to the theme parks is by frequent, direct buses (see chart below for in-transit times). There are four bus stops (see map on page 64). For other destinations, transfer at a nearby theme park (daytime) or at Downtown Disney (evening). A sidewalk connects the resort to Blizzard Beach, and it's a quick drive to both Disney's Hollywood Studios and Disney's Animal Kingdom.

Tips & Notes at Coronado Springs Resort

The Dig Site is really a miniature water park with delightful scenery and fun water attractions. The pool itself is huge (10,800 sq. ft.), and there's a large sandbox that masquerades as the "dig site" of the Mayan pyramid. The 123-foot-long water slide has a jaguar atop it that spits water. Oh, and they have the largest outdoor spa (hot tub) of any Disney resort -- it fits 22 people!

Roll-away beds are available for \$15/day (but rooms are still limited to four guests). Request a roll-away bed with your reservation and again at check-in.

The Pepper Market food court works differently than other food courts. Upon arrival, you are seated by a cast member and given a ticket. You then visit the various food stations, and when you find an item you want, your ticket is stamped. You pay after your meal. A 10% gratuity is added (unless you get your food to go).

This resort goes for the sun-drenched effect and, in the process, seems to lack enough shade to protect you from the scorching Florida sun. Use caution if you are fair-skinned (as Jennifer is) or if you are going during the summer months.

Coronado Springs strikes us as a bit more buttoned-down than the other moderate resorts, no doubt due to the conference center and business facilities. While we have no major complaints, it also didn't delight us in the same way that other moderate Disney resorts have. On the other hand, some of our fellow vacationers are very impressed with the resort, especially its quality service. We definitely feel this is a great resort for business travelers.

Check-in time is 3:00 pm. Check-out time is 11:00 am.

Best Locations at Coronado Springs Resort

The Casitas are the least interesting visually, but they are convenient to the Convention Center -- in fact, they house the only rooms that you can reach from El Centro without leaving the protection of a roof or overhang. Building 1 is the closest to the Conference Center. The charming Ranchos are closest to the main pool and farthest from El Centro. We recommend building 6B for its view and proximity to the leisure pool. The Cabanas are convenient to El Centro. We loved our room in building 8B (close to pools and the bus); building 8A has good views, and 9B is next door to El Centro.

Coronado Springs Resort Address & Phone

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