

# Disney's Coronado Springs Resort: A Resort Review

by Sue Kulick, PassPorter Featured Columnist

This year we were surprised to learn our company's annual business conference would be held at Walt Disney World! I have to admit, I was a little skeptical at first. I mean, Walt Disney World is the center of family fun and entertainment, right? What could they offer business travelers like us?

We were told that our conference would be held at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort. Having never been there, I did a little research. I liked the pictures and its Southwestern theme. I began to warm to the idea

We arrived at Coronado Springs in the mid afternoon, and I was immediately impressed with the color scheme. Warm Southwestern colors greeted us as we entered the beautiful lobby, El Centro. We walked past a gently bubbling fountain, and went quickly through the check-in process. On our way back out, we paused to look up at the breathtaking domed ceiling. Incredible!

Coronado Springs boasts three differently-styled guest building "districts." Our room was in the section called the Cabanas. We were in building 8B, which was pretty close to a pool and a laundry facility (Yes, I do laundry on vacation!). It was also not too far from a bus stop, and a short walk to El Centro. My fellow conventioners were in the other sections. The Ranchos were close to the Main Pool, known as the Dig Site, and the Casitas were close to the conference center. We did a few unofficial room tours, and I would be hard pressed to pick my favorite!

Our Coronado Springs room was ready, so bell services loaded us and our luggage on a golf cart and off we went! Our room was on the second floor, and we overlooked part of the lake that lies at the middle of the resort. The room was wonderful. I understand that this resort is in the process of being refurbished. I am not sure if we had one of the refurbished rooms, but it was clean, comfy and beautiful!

The theme of the rooms is like the rest of the resort; Southwestern with a Mexican flair. The room had two double beds, a dark wood armoire, a table and chairs, and a ceiling fan. And, remember how I like to do laundry? We had an iron and ironing board! Pretty cool stuff for a clothes horse like me! Of course, my husband was MUCH more impressed with the small refrigerator and the coffee maker. The bathroom had one sink, and was adequately sized for the two of us. I was thinking it might be a bit small for a family of 4, but of course,

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people make things work all the time, don't they?

We unpacked, and decided to wander around the resort. Our conference didn't start till the morning, leaving us time to explore. We decided to walk the resort, although there is an internal shuttle bus available. We wanted to enjoy both the warm Florida weather and our first day away!

We took the path that lead from our room around the lake, which I learned was called Lago Dorado. According to my guide book, this distance is 1.1 miles -- good enough for a casual walker like me to feel good but not exhausted! And the view! We walked in the late afternoon as the sun was starting to go lower in the sky. The shadows and lights reflected on the water were just incredible. I was kicking myself for leaving my camera in the room! The resort's pathways are lined with rocks, cactus and other vegetation. I almost expected to see the explorer Coronado himself tying his horse up!

We walked past the main pool, called "The Dig Site." The highlight of this HUGE (10,800 square feet) pool is the Mayan pyramid that flows like a waterfall into the pool. At first, my husband thought it was a water slide, but the branches that decorate the pyramid would make it a little difficult to slide down! There is, however, a 123-foot water slide known as the Jaguar, right next to the pyramid, which was on our list to try while we were here! There was also a HUGE hot tub! Somehow, I believed that we would be in here later in the week, possibly with a margarita close by!

We were getting a bit hungry, so we decided to try the Coronado Springs restaurant, Maya Grill. Once again, we were impressed with both the theme and the service. The servers were dressed in Mexican-style costume, and were very friendly and attentive. I opted for the Chilean Salmon Filet, and my husband, ever the steak guy, had the Shoulder Beef Tender. We split the Pulled Pork Empanada for an appetizer. I would have liked to have tried the Seafood Margarita, but he is allergic to seafood, so this was a compromise. The food was wonderful, and just the right amount. We found out that they also serve a breakfast buffet. Our server told us the choices, which included all the traditional fare, spiced up with breakfast burritos and Mexican scrambled eggs. Sounded like another thing on the "must do" list!

After dinner, we stopped for a nightcap at the newly opened "Rix" lounge. While Rix continued the theme of the resort, it was definitely a little more upbeat and funky! The colors were more vibrant and rich than the pastels we had seen throughout the resort. Muted browns and tans were splashed with bright orange, fuchsia and turquoise. There

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was seating at the bar, and little sections where you could chat with just a few people. We found a few of our fellow conventioners here, and discussed the upcoming agenda over a signature chocolate martini!

Several of the others had eaten dinner in the Pepper Market, which we had passed but not stopped into. The Pepper Market is a food court of sorts, set up like an open-air Mexican market. You have your choice of stations, everything from tacos to burgers, pizza to stir fry, sandwiches to steaks, and pretty much everything in between. They are also open for breakfast, and glory be, they have a gourmet coffee and cappuccino station! I am so there!

We decided to call it a night, since tomorrow would be an early day. We stopped into Panchito's, the not-so-little gift shop in El Centro, and picked up a few snacks plus a tube of toothpaste; since I left ours on the bathroom sink at home. There was a lovely selection of merchandise, and I knew we would be back to pick up a few souvenirs for the folks back home.

We came here not knowing what to expect, but we were so surprised to find this business and pleasure gem of a resort right in the middle of our favorite place in the world.

*About The Author: Sue Kulick is a resident of the Pocono Mountains and an avid Disney fan. She and her husband, Steve, live in a log home with their Golden Retrievers, Cody and Belle and their cat Tigger.*

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