

Beaches and cream



AGENT Expert

When Shore Travel agent Michelle Lawson visited Beaches Turks & Caicos with her husband and 16-year-old daughter Chloe, it was love at first sight. Here, she gives us her verdict on the family-friendly property, set on gateway island Providenciales

Although I'd been to the Caribbean before, I wasn't sure what to expect of Beaches, but as soon as we arrived at the resort, I felt a sense of serenity. It was so chilled and relaxing, and everything felt really fresh.

The location was excellent - it's right on a beach with beautiful sand and crystal-clear sea - and the island itself was stunning.

Working in travel, I'm a bit of a cynic because you know pictures get Photoshopped. But there was no need to Photoshop the Turks - it's beautiful.

ROOM WITH A VIEW

The resort is split into villages - we stayed in the Caribbean Village, which is closest to the water park and relatively near the beachfront. The main hub is the Italian Village, which is where most of the poolside entertainment happens, so it's quite lively. Then you've got the French Village and Key West Village, which is quieter and made up of villas with kitchenettes.

There were lots of different accommodation options →





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PICTURE: STEVE SANACORE

ABOVE: Mario's, Beaches Turks & Caicos

→ with rooms and villas, some with private pools and butlers, to suit all sizes of family. We had a Caribbean Deluxe Double room, which was spacious with two double beds, a good-sized bathroom and plenty of storage space, and a balcony overlooking the gardens.

If people want peace and quiet, they can find it, but if they want action, there's plenty of that too. There was a real mix of people, including groups and couples, as well as families.

There's lots going on for all ages. For younger children, there's a kids' club with Sesame Street-themed activities. Plus there's a teens' club with a nightclub and an Xbox lounge.

The evening entertainment was impressive and included a circus, beach party and chocolate-themed party by the pool. There were kids' shows and discos earlier in the evening, and later on it was more adult-oriented. There was even a reggae show, which was pretty cool.

We're a foodie family, and there was so much choice, with lots of dining experiences. The resort has 21 restaurants and we tried most of them – the standout was Sapodilla's, which is adult-only and Caribbean-themed. The Bella Napoli Pizzeria was



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also really good, and Sky was fantastic – it's set on a rooftop, offering amazing views over Grace Bay and the sea, with steak and other international dishes on the menu.

▶ OUT AND ABOUT

There was so much to do at the resort, the only problem was fitting it all in! We spent plenty of time on the beach and did lots of snorkelling (there was a protected reef a short walk from the resort).

We also went on some really good excursions. My favourite was a boat trip to Iguana Island – aka Little Water Cay – where iguanas are bred and protected. We saw loads of them! The trip included snorkelling in search of conch, which were then cooked in front of our eyes on a private island, as part of an evening barbecue – it felt like a real castaway-style experience.

We also tried water sports including the surf simulator, stand-up paddleboarding and kayaking, and went over to the water park, which was great. My husband went on a deep-sea fishing excursion, and he was able to bring the fish back to Arizona's restaurant to be cooked, which was amazing.

▶ SELLING TIPS

I would use the gourmet dining to show how much value this resort offers, and how much of an exclusive destination it is. If you were to go to London and have a gourmet meal it would cost a lot – but you could have that every night here if you wanted. With premium-brand drinks, cocktails and other things included, you do get your money's worth.

I think it's about breaking down the cost and explaining all the features and benefits that come with the Sandals and Beaches brands. There was just nothing to fault – even if you wanted to be super-critical, you couldn't.

That's true of the destination too. I've done a lot of travelling but the Turks & Caicos is one of my all-time favourite places. The beaches really are picture-perfect, like you see in the brochures. I'd go back in a heartbeat.

Book it: A week's all-inclusive in a French Village Luxury Room King at Beaches Turks & Caicos starts at £8,360 based on two adults and two children (aged two to 15) sharing. The price includes British Airways flights from Gatwick on August 25 and resort transfers. sellingsandals.co.uk

Best of the rest

FAMILY RESORTS

**Hodges Bay Resort & Spa
Antigua**

Families are at the heart of this much-anticipated, recently opened property, with villas featuring up to four bedrooms. There is also a teens' lounge, kids' club and child-friendly activities.

**Grand Sirenis Punta Cana Resort
Dominican Republic**

The Dominican Republic is Funway Holidays' bestseller on value, and this resort – which reopened in December following a refurbishment – offers accommodation and entertainment in one, with a huge water park and pirate-themed splash area for under-11s.

**Hard Rock Riviera Maya
Mexico**

Thomas Cook suggests Mexico for a sun-soaked family getaway. Recommend Hard Rock Riviera Maya for its Rockaway Bay water park (pictured) and Unlimited Playtime childcare packages (\$288 per child) for youngsters up to the age of 12.



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