

Multiple ways to enjoy Naples Grande

REBRANDED GULF OF MEXICO RESORT is unveiling an \$18M update



ROCHELLE LASH
CHECKING IN

Florida flash! The luxurious Naples Grande Beach Resort on the Gulf of Mexico in Naples, Fla., is launching this month with a new name and an \$18-million renovation. As of Tuesday, the hotel has been rebranded from a Waldorf Astoria affiliate to the independently operated Naples Grande — a change that goes along with updated resort facilities and fresh interior décor.

The resort is blessed with a splendid natural setting along a protected mangrove estuary on the Gulf Coast. It's a contemporary, airy hotel of carefree, laid-back luxury — decidedly upscale, but not at all stuffy.

Top-to-bottom overhaul

The buzz for the 2014-2015 winter season is that all of the Naples Grande's 474 deluxe rooms and suites are being redone. The resort is also adding major features such as cabanas at the adult and family swimming pools and Pelican's Catch, a swish seafood and steak house. A new clubhouse at the Naples Grande Golf Club is planned for 2016.

The new accommodations (about 50 per cent updated at the time of this writing) are light and bright, using a coastal-inspired palette of the sea and sky — soft seafoam, cloud white and vivid Gulf blue. The bathrooms are being redone with double vanities and soaking tubs, and some with whirlpools. The Naples Grande is a top-drawer place, so all the rooms are spacious and equipped with bathrobes, flat-screen TVs and coffee-makers.

The striking architecture allows all the guest rooms to have private balconies, which means that all patrons have mesmerizing, Instagram-worthy views of the sun setting over the sparkling Gulf of Mexico. And the upgrade includes plush new patio furniture that creates elegant outdoor living rooms.

Three lifestyle options



PHOTOS: NAPLES GRANDE BEACH RESORT

All deluxe rooms and suites at the Naples Grande Beach Resort have new décor in the colours of the sea, sky and sand.

Here are three dramatically different ways to enjoy the Naples Grande: A) a tranquil, sophisticated spa-golf getaway with Champagne and romantic suites; B) an energetic and sociable visit with sports, market-inspired dining and tropical drinks at the Pool Bar; and C) a terrific family vacation featuring an entertaining Kids' Club and a thrilling water slide, all in a safe, self-contained resort.

Option A: Serenity

If you're going for Option A, I'd snuggle into one of the fancy new cabanas at the adults-only pool. They are perfect sanctuaries, with pretty screens for privacy. Or beachcombers can laze at oceanfront lounges and watch the passing parade of nature — flocks of pelicans flying by and schools of dolphins frolicking in the Gulf.

For some easygoing exercise, a beach kiosk rents kayaks and standup paddle boards for gentle cruises through the calm waters by the mangroves. Other than the company of a majestic white egret or two, you'll be on your own, at peace in a



The Naples Grande Beach Resort in Florida is a full-service resort on the shore of the Gulf of Mexico.

wild nature preserve.

The Naples Grande Spa, a posh retreat surrounded by gardens and waterfalls, has treatments such as the Sea-Salt Scrub and the Sun-Kissed Restorative Mask. It's easy to spend the day. You can nibble at the spa café, beautify at the hair and nail salon or chill at the Spa Villa's sundeck, steam room and meditation lounge and labyrinth. A spa special, running until Nov. 30, offers massages, mani-pedis and some treatments at \$99 U.S. each.

Option B: Sporty and sociable

Option B boosts the pace with golf, tennis or cycling and three new or improved dining options.

Pelican's Catch will open in January with indoor and outdoor dining and the folksy look of a harbourfront fish market. Grilled steaks and Florida seafood, especially grouper, snapper and pompano, will be the highlights. The new beach bar, Rhode's End, will have a Riviera-style barefoot-chic ambience, with

crisp blue and white deck furniture and a new menu of Mediterranean cuisine. The Pool Bar and Grill is also being rebuilt and will offer Gulf shrimp, Asian wraps and sirloin burgers, as well as a happy hour featuring two-for-one mojitos, margaritas and mocktails.

Did someone mention drinks? On Fridays, the Naples Grande presents V2+U, an evening of Veuve Clicquot Yellow Label Champagne at \$5 a glass, with appetizers at \$5 and live music.

Option C: Kids are kings

Families can choose Option C. Youngsters have their own swimming pool — a biggie — which will have new surf-inspired cabanas with hi-def flat-screen TVs and video-game play stations. Tech fun aside, the pool's exciting water slide and inflatable sharks are the fave attractions.

If parents want personal time, children aged 4 to 12 can join the Kids' Club, which organizes sports, arts and crafts, dress-up and educational games. On Saturday mornings, there's the Little

IF YOU GO

Naples is a 50-kilometre/35-minute drive south of Fort Myers and a 177-kilometre/90-minute drive west of Fort Lauderdale. Air Canada (aircanada.com) flies Montreal to Fort Myers once a week through October, once daily in November and three times daily in December and January. Air Canada also flies Montreal to Fort Lauderdale daily (non-stop), expanding to five flights as of Dec. 12.

Naples Grande Beach Resort: 239-597-3232, naplesgrande.com; 475 Seagate Drive, Naples, Fla.

Price: Watch for resort credits and a fifth night free. Rooms, Oct. 1 to Dec. 21: \$179-\$229 U.S. per day; suites and bungalows cost more. Children stay for free in certain rooms. Rates include three pools, a whirlpool, a fitness centre and large beachfront. A \$30-a-day resort fee (per room) covers Wi-Fi, two welcome cocktails, beach shuttle, beach loungers, bicycles, driving-range golf balls, 800 and local calls, and a 10 per cent discount on beach sports and tennis (15 courts). Extras: parking, \$10 (self), \$22 (valet); pool cabanas; beach umbrellas. Packages available with Kids' Club, Naples Grande Spa, Naples Grande Golf Club, Waterside Shop discounts.

Paradise Coast (Naples, Marco Island, Everglades): 1 800-688-3600/800-2ESCAPE, ParadiseCoast.com

Chef class, a pizza-making session for youngsters.

The 50 bungalows at the Naples Grande are ideal for large families. These one-bedroom spaces don't have views of the Gulf, but they do have handy kitchenettes and sleeper-sofas in the living rooms, and they connect to create two and three bedrooms.

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