

# Therapy dolphins, accessibility keys for Curaçao resort



**ROCHELLE LASH**  
*Hotel Intel*

I got goosebumps when I met some of the most distinguished residents of the idyllic Caribbean nation of Curaçao. No, they were not showbiz celebrities, royals or sports stars. My new BFs were dolphins who play a crucial role at the Curaçao Dolphin Therapy and Research Center. They're also a big draw for people staying at the Dolphin Suites and Wellness Curaçao, a boutique resort.

The two non-government enterprises are almost adjacent, so they work together accommodating special needs guests of all ages. The hotel and therapy centre are about 100 metres from the ocean, with adapted transport and beach access.

"About 50 per cent of our clients are here to participate in the therapy-assisted program," said Alette Borger, manager and co-owner of the Dolphin hotel. "Our hotel is completely wheelchair accessible, so it is a great fit, but we also have regular sun-seekers who love our pool, and we hold wellness retreats."

**Dolphin Suites:** The hotel is renovating its 21 rooms and suites and is opening a major new wing of 38 more, which includes configurations a big as a three-bedroom apartment. All accommodations are fully accessible, equipped with anti-slip floors, adapted bathrooms and decor in soft colours for a low-stimulus environment. Guests without disabilities like this hotel, too, especially for the extra space in the guest rooms.

The new wing, opening this summer, is a vision of tropical decor indoors with the added attraction of outdoor terraces and corridors that let in natural light and the Caribbean breeze.



Patients with special needs can frolic with new friends at the Curaçao Dolphin Treatment Center in the Caribbean. **DOLPHIN TREATMENT CENTER**

Part of Dolphin Suites' expansion is Reefs Café and Co., a new go-to eatery and mini-market. Reefs maintains the wellness theme with natural decor and lots of light and plants. It has a simple menu of smoothies, pancakes, burgers, wine and beer. The takeout section offers sandwiches and fruit so guests can stock their fridges.

Dolphin Suites hosts special retreats for all geared toward creating a healthy lifestyle and building meditative techniques and self-awareness (Nov. 22-29, 2023, May 22-29, 2024).

The events will be led by Kirti Daryanani, life coach and author of #BeFriendurMind. Some of the exceptional experiences are a dolphin swim and wataflow, a form of bodywork that sees water as a sacred element.

**Dolphin therapy:** Almost next

door, the Curaçao Dolphin Therapy and Research Center (CDTC) welcomes special needs visitors of all ages. Most of the patients are youngsters or teens, but adults participate as well.

"Our organization chose Curaçao because of the wonderful warm climate, the natural open water for our dolphins and the country's high medical standards," said general manager Jeannette Pot. "We have patients from throughout North America and Europe, especially Holland and Germany."

The centre's two-week supervised program includes speech, physical, behavioural or occupational therapy; swimming and interacting with the dolphins; a family swim and consultations on issues like mobility, hygiene, aggression, life skills and sensory integration.

"Having fun is paramount, but it's also a very intense, very personalized program," Pot said. "Each patient has three people attending — a therapist, the dolphin trainer and an assistant — plus, of course, the dolphin. "Our visitors see results and that is the most beautiful thing."

The dolphins live in natural sea lagoons with other fish and wildlife. The centre has its own veterinarian and expert animal handlers.

"The dolphins seem to like what they do," Pot said. "They are spirited and playful and they interact freely, swimming with people and sometimes nosing up and even touching, which is wonderful close contact."

The CDTC has treated thousands of patients with cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism, ADHD, congenital and non-con-

IF YOU GO

Air Canada flies directly from Montreal to Curaçao seasonally and from Toronto to Curaçao year-round. Bell offers free messaging for Aeroplan members on most flights (aircanada.com).

**Curaçao Tourism:** curacao.com.

**Dolphin Suites and Wellness Curaçao:** 5999-465-2700, dolphinsuites-curacao.com; Bapor Kibra, Willemstad, Curaçao. From approximately \$210 Cdn for two (basic room) and from approximately \$342 Cdn for two (suites). Deluxe apartment for six, \$400-\$575 Cdn. Winter/Christmas rates are higher.

**Curaçao Dolphin Therapy Center:** 5999-461-9886, cdtc.info; Bapor Kibra, Willemstad, Curaçao. Fee on request.

genital disorders, and even cancer and post-traumatic stress.

**Sightseeing:** Curaçao's capital city, Willemstad, is a UNESCO heritage site for its colourful harbourfront houses and cobblestone alleys, which date from Dutch colonial times of the 1600s.

Willemstad's OIermai district is popping with galleries and cafés. History fans can enjoy the Maritime Museum and the Israel-Emanuel Synagogue, the oldest in the Western Hemisphere. Nature excursions explore turtle and flamingo habitats.

And everyone takes a selfie at a huge sign that says Dushi, which, in the local language of Papiamentu, means many endearing things, including darling or sweet.



TINNITUS

I CAN FINALLY APPRECIATE THE SILENCE...

*The ringing in my ears has subsided!*

Johnny is retired and now enjoys spending time fishing and playing golf but, the constant ringing in his ears made it hard to enjoy his retirement fully.

"I couldn't take the ringing anymore. The ringing in my ears began about 5 years ago. It was so bad that I felt like I was in the noisy city when I was in the peacefulness of the countryside. My tinnitus became too unbearable and I had to find something to help.

**I FINALLY FOUND RELIEF FOR MY TINNITUS**

I came across a product at my local pharmacy called Ear Tone™ that I decided to try. Made from naturally sourced ingredients, I thought to myself: "Why not give it a try". Shortly after beginning to take the tablets, I could feel a true difference. My tinnitus has decreased, and I hardly notice the ringing anymore. This made me so happy!

**I APPRECIATE THE SILENCE AND QUIETNESS**

Now I can finally enjoy the quietness of the countryside and can't go a day without taking Ear Tone™ as part of my routine. I highly recommend this product for those who had the same issues as me."

- Johnny, France



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**TINNITUS AND MICRO NUTRIENT SUPPLY**

Although the exact cause of tinnitus is not clearly established, links have been made to the health of the ear's hair cells. These cells benefit from good blood supply and micro nutrient supply, not least magnesium, which scientists have found to help reduce the perception of tinnitus.



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