



The Catamaran Resort Hotel and Spa in San Diego lies between Mission Bay and the Pacific Ocean. Paths link all elements of the Catamaran: reception area, spa, Oceana Coastal Kitchen, Moray's bar, swimming pool and hot tub and the gate to the beach. PHOTOS: CATAMARAN RESORT HOTEL AND SPA

IF YOU GO

Mission Bay is 16 kilometres north of San Diego International Airport and 190 kilometres south of Los Angeles International.

Catamaran Resort Hotel and Spa: 858-488-1081, catamaranresort.com; 3999 Mission Blvd., San Diego. Other Evans properties include the nearby Bahia Resort Hotel and The Lodge at Torrey Pines.

Price: From Oct. to May, rooms start at US\$189 (suites and studios cost more), or from June to Sept., US\$249. Rates include pool, hot tub, beach set-ups, seasonal happenings (parrot show, video arcade, movie nights, plus spring break and summer programs), fitness room, Wi-Fi, in-room coffee. Packages with Catamaran Spa, Action Sport Rentals, SeaWorld San Diego. Extra: self-parking, \$25; valet, \$29.

Oceana Coastal Kitchen: 858-539-8635; free valet parking for dinner guests; vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options.

Action Sport Rentals: 858-539-8696, 619-241-4794, actionsportrentals.com; paddleboards, kayaks, sailboats, water ski boats, bicycles, Segways, wet suits, surfboards.

San Diego Tourism Authority: 619-232-3101, sandiego.org.

Reservations: 1-800-350-6205

CHECKING IN

SAN DIEGO'S CATAMARAN MESMERIZES

Resort features access to tranquil Mission Bay and the Pacific Ocean



ROCHELLE LASH

The Catamaran Resort Hotel and Spa in San Diego is a captivating tropical-style oasis from stem to stern.

This is where the mystique of the South Seas meets the all-American sports and modern cuisine of Southern California.

You'll be mesmerized by Catamaran from the get-go. Paths wind around palm trees, koi ponds, waterfalls and gardens of brilliant scarlet flowers. Exotic birds alight on branches, and at night, tiki torches light up the scene.

The pretty pathways link all of the resort's elements: the reception area, Catamaran Spa, Oceana Coastal Kitchen, Moray's Bar, large heated swimming pool and hot tub — and the pièce de résistance — the gate to the beach.

The good times at this entertaining getaway start with an exceptional setting — one façade is on the shore of tranquil Mission Bay and the other side is a half-block from the untamed Pacific Ocean. Two bodies of water mean beach life two ways, and gorgeous views all around. Loaded with resort features

and in a private domain of foliage, Catamaran is both an indulgent and romantic spa and sun escape for couples and a safe and car-free playground for children.

I also liked such conveniences as surf shops, diners and grocery stores within a block of the gated property.

The San Diego Airport is so close, you can eliminate renting a car and take a Super Shuttle van (about \$15 per person) or Uber (about \$30-\$40 for a group).

If you factor in San Diego's world-class attractions and average 265 days of sunshine a year, this adds up to an unbeatable destination.

FAMILIES

Your child's first encounter at Catamaran is the small parrot jungle where macaws and myna birds chatter away. Kids are enthralled. Then, it's on to ponds filled with luminescent tropical fish and gardens where rabbits play. It's a delight simply walking to breakfast.

Spring break and summer vacation programs offer arts and crafts, poolside games, movies screened on the beach and the Kei Kei Club. Sunset luaus are a major attraction for all, with a giant BBQ rotisserie and fiery torch dancers lighting up the sparkling waters of Mission Bay. Most activities are free, except for food and beverages. Catamaran is a full-service



Moray's bar at Catamaran Resort Hotel and Spa in San Diego serves tropical cocktails in a truly tropical setting.

resort with 310 rooms, suites and studios. Families favour accommodations with kitchenettes for light cooking and suites with two rooms and two televisions.

FOOD AND DRINK

Executive chef Steven Riemer brings the haute cuisine experience to Catamaran — he studied with France's superstars Paul Bocuse and Pierre Troisgros and has worked at the tony Lodge at Torrey Pines in La Jolla and Ritz-Carlton Laguna Niguel.

At Catamaran's gorgeous new bay-front Oceana Coastal Kitchen, Reimer goes California casual with regional produce and such intriguing dishes as two-duck risotto; pork chops with goat cheese grits and spiced apple; and fresh Pacific fish with enticing Asian accents of shiitake mushrooms, ginger, scallions and braised daikon. A seafood bar fea-

tures sushi, oysters, tuna crudo, sea bass ceviche and king crab.

Moray's is the place for après-sun cocktail action. The indoor lounge has a striking aquarium and TVs tuned to sports. The garden patio is a hot spot with fire pits, Happy Hour, the glow of the sunset and tropical drinks, craft beer and more than 30 California wines by the glass.

WHAT TO DO

Action Sport Rentals is a handy 20 metres from the hotel's Mission Bay beach entrance. Well-priced and loaded with equipment, this kiosk rents bicycles and Segways for the bike path that passes in front of the resort, stand-up paddleboards, kayaks, sailboats, surf gear and water ski boats for tranquil Mission Bay, and wetsuits and surf gear for the thrilling Pacific.

The Catamaran Spa is steps from the beach, perfect for after-

sun body and face care. The spa has 10 treatments rooms, an outdoor whirlpool facing Mission Bay, and an indoor sauna and steam room, as well as a boutique and beauty services with an appointment.

It is a full-service sanctuary, so there are lots of choices: manicures with citrus or sea products, restorative hair treatments, a lime-salt body exfoliation, milk bath and anti-aging facial.

Specialized services include teens' or men's facials and nearly 15 massages including pre-natal, Thai, shiatsu and therapeutic muscle and joint relief.

San Diego's famous tourist stops are mostly within a 30-minute drive using Interstate 5: the San Diego Zoo, Coronado Island, the town of La Jolla, SeaWorld San Diego, which offers Canadian discounts and the downtown Gaslamp Quarter.

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