

PUNTA CANA HIDEAWAY IS RIPE FOR ROMANCE

Adults-only resort offers bonus amenities at neighbouring Marriott properties



ROCHELLE LASH

Hideaway at Royalton Punta Cana, an Autograph Collection All-Inclusive Resort by Marriott, is Valentine-worthy all year round. Scenic and seductive, with palm trees swaying and a breezy seafront beach, it radiates romance, whether it's a lovers' escape, a destination wedding or a honeymoon on the beloved Caribbean island of Dominican Republic.

Hideaway is adults only, so there are no disruptions from youngsters who usually have their own freedom-loving agenda, though the central bar does gets lively throughout the day. And it's all-inclusive, so there is no fuss about planning your day or paying your way. You don't have to overthink it. Simply feel the fiery sun, the hot sand and the surging sea.

The resort is brimming with romance-worthy ventures like a simple snuggle on Royalton's signature DreamBed with breakfast in bed, a languid beach day under a fluttering canopy or afternoon chardonnay on your private balcony. For a fee, there are couples' massages at the Royal Spa, as well as an idyllic dinner à deux on the shore, with champagne and the sea as a serenade.

Surely there is love in the air. Hideaway is host to countless celebrations, including up to three weddings a day in high season, either at the beach or the ballroom.

The scene: A winner of TripAdvisor's Certificate of Excellence, Hideaway at Royalton Punta Cana is an upbeat, medium-sized prop-

IF YOU GO

Hideaway at Royalton Punta Cana, an Autograph Collection Resort & Casino: 809-221-2121. Marriott International All-Inclusive Resorts: 800-535-4028, all-inclusive. marriott.com or vacationsby-marriott.com. Marriott Bonvoy loyalty program applies for certain rooms if booked at marriott.com. Green Globe Certified. Accessible.

Rates fluctuate: All-inclusive from approximately \$285 per night for two in March; can be higher during holidays. Fees apply for off-site boating excursions, the Escape Room (a puzzle challenge), an arcade and the Genesis Casino (it's small).

erty with 168 rooms and suites, all with balconies or patios and some with whirlpool tubs and deluxe swim-out access.

The resort is architecturally beautiful. It's low-rise, and built around ravishing tropical foliage, sparkling ponds and fountains. The central pavilion, housing the Royal Spa, the fitness centre, the theatre and shops for beachwear, wine and cigars, is large and contemporary, topped with a thatched roof that captures the spirit of the Caribbean.

The bonus is that the Hideaway is part of a three-resort Marriott complex that includes two family destinations — Royalton Punta Cana and Royalton Splash,



Several select Diamond Club suites have swim-out pools at the adults-only Hideaway at Royalton Punta Cana in Dominican Republic. Perks include spa discounts and one hour of hydrotherapy. *MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL*

famous for its epic water park. Hideaway has its own swimming pool, the waterfront Dorado seafood restaurant, a poolside bar and a private beach, but if you factor in the neighbours' extensive facilities, Hideaway expands into an almost boundless morning-to-night playground.

At no extra charge, Hideaway guests can take advantage of all three resorts under Royalton's stay-at-one-and-play-at-many model that encompasses 12 international restaurants, 15 bars and lounges, several pools, tennis and yoga as well as group activities like pool pong or dance lessons. Depending on sea conditions, there are water sports like kayaking, snorkelling and scuba lessons. The after-dinner shows on stage are decidedly off-off-Broadway, but still delightful. Music and dancing starts on an outdoor plaza and then segues into spectacular Dominican Republic Latin rhythms, Michael

Jackson's Motown songs or Marc Antony's salsa.

Diamond Club: If you would like to upgrade your accommodations, Royalton's select Diamond Club suites have scenic views and some have swim-out pools. Perks include spa discounts and one hour of hydrotherapy per visit, plus a private beach, a pillow menu, premium mini-bars, exclusive à la carte breakfasts and a VIP lounge with Nespresso, Tea Forte, premium spirits and all-day bites.

The most appreciable Diamond Club benefit is the butler, a personal dynamo at your service all day. They will escort you around and stay connected for requests via What's App. Butler's have insider knowledge of the best beach and pool cabanas and they can arrange spa visits or activities. Dining-wise, Royalton Hideaway is reservation-free, but Diamond Club butlers can book tables for their guests' favourite steak or sushi restaurant, which

might get filled up.

Dining: A world of cuisine includes Dorado, the only restaurant reserved for Hideaway guests and the top choice for seafood and ocean views. Others are Hunter Steakhouse, which has heavenly indoor-outdoor spaces; Gourmet Marché, specializing in buffets for breakfast, lunch and dinner, with tasty Dominican specialties; Grazie Italian Trattoria for pasta and tiramisu; Zen, which does fiery Japanese Teppanyaki and a chefs' show; and Jade, for Asian fusion with a Chinese accent. More casual are Score Sports Bar & Lounge and Scoops Gelato and Café Lounge. Plus, Hideaway guests can hop a trolley (or stroll the 800-metre stretch) to Royalton Splash for the Mexican Cantina and another Italian option, Bella Cucina.

The outstanding C/X Culinary Experience, for an extra fee, is a seven-course feast with music and special wines, for between four and 14 people.

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