

THE NAPLES BEACH HOTEL & Golf Club

Take The Family To This Resort That Has It All

By Melissa Wolcott and Al Martino

When considering a family vacation, so often we just think about the children and what will please them. How about a destination that everyone will truly enjoy — from Grandpa all the way down to the toddlers? We discovered just such a place within a 3 hour drive south from St. Petersburg, at the Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Club.



In 1946, Henry Watkins purchased a Beach Club and adjacent 18-hole golf course, and many years and millions of dollars later, it grew to be a destination sought out by families and celebrities alike. In the early years the likes of Gary Cooper and Hedy Lamarr stayed here, and most recently George H.W. Bush, and General Norman Schwartzkopf visited. The resort is still in the Watkins family (Henry's grandson is now president of the



Guestroom with balcony overlooking the gulf.

company), which is probably why it retains its remarkable tradition. Many of the staff are long-time employees — one of whom just hit the 50-year mark — and a lot of guests make this a yearly trek, knowing they can count on friendly and familiar service.

All photos courtesy of The Naples Beach Hotel unless otherwise noted.

The 120-acre resort maintains the nostalgic look and feel of 50's Florida, but with the amenities today's guest has come to expect (including the all-important high-speed wireless internet for those who cannot bear to be without it — even on vacation.)

The Hotel and Clubhouse have both undergone extensive refurbishing and remodeling recently, as evidenced with a handsome new lobby in the hotel and charming tropical style guest rooms. The 318 rooms all have balconies or patios that overlook either the gulf, golf course, or resort grounds. The hotel is small by today's standards, which is definitely in its favor, as all the resort's amenities are just steps away from your room.

Within the complex are six restaurants, serving everything from sandwiches to elegant food, a retail store, beauty salon and two pro shops. Throughout the resort's public areas you will find beautiful live orchids rather than cut flowers, garnered from the resort's own orchid house located near the golf course. Tours of the orchid house and classes are available to guests.

The resort's 1,000 foot white sandy beach front is

Broadwell's Restaurant in the clubhouse.



a main attraction, as is the serenity that surrounds it. For seven miles to the south of the hotel are private homes, and to the north are low rise condos, as there are height restrictions along the beach.

The resort's golf course boasts that it was here, in 1951, that an 11-year old Jack Nicklaus broke 40 for the first time. Paul Bell, the club's first professional, still holds the course record of 63, set back in 1963. The 18th hole is considered one of the best finishing holes in South Florida, and the course is also reputed to be one of the most women-friendly courses in the U.S.

The hotel's HB's Restaurant is the only restaurant on the beach in Naples, so it is very popular with the local residents as well as hotel guests. Food at HB's is excellent, and artistically presented. The Sunset Beach Bar has entertainment, so that is also very popular with the locals. Being community



minded, the resort holds free outdoor monthly jazz nights, and brings in name entertainment. It was raining on jazz night when we were there, yet still the people came. We managed to enjoy a beautiful sunset over the gulf during a break in the rain.



Kids can run and play on the resort's broad lawn.

What about the kids? The resort has a program called "Beach Klub 4 Kids", which entertains them daily with activities such as swimming, arts and crafts, beach walks, sandcastle construction and more. They even have a "Kids Night Out", which includes dinner, a movie and games on the weekends.

There are quite a few off property activities to engage in, most of them nature-based. A visit to the Conservancy of Southwest Florida is a must. On their 22 acres, they have a wildlife rehab center, where they treat rehab injured animals and release them when feasible. We enjoyed a

Naples' beautiful beach unmarred by unsightly highrises.



Across a two-lane road from the hotel is the resort's 18-hole PGA championship golf course, tennis center (with six Har-Tru courts), and three-story clubhouse. The building complements the Hotel's style, and houses a wonderful spa with nine treatment rooms (and a great staff, by the way), fitness center, ballroom and a fine restaurant called Broadwell's.

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guided boat tour on the river surrounded by mangroves, plants and birds, which proved to be quite educational as well as relaxing. Kayak and canoe rentals are also available.

For more shopping and dining opportunities, hotel guests can peruse the trendy shops and restaurants on nearby 5th Avenue, historic 3rd Street, Waterside and more in downtown Naples. We had lunch at Campiello Ristorante on 3rd St., which we found to have a Tuscan-style charm and delectable food. The Dock at Crayton Cove is a rustic open-air Waterside restaurant that proved to have tasty food, and a big friendly crowd. Downtown



Jazz Night at the Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Club.



Naples has no chain restaurants, and all low rise buildings, with charming Florida architecture.

On a Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Club family vacation, Grandpa plays golf, Grandma goes to the spa, Dad plays tennis, Mom goes to the beach with the kids, and they all meet for dinner in HB's. The next day they switch activities, or do any, or all, of these things together. It's a win-win situation for everyone.



The aaah after the spa at the resort.



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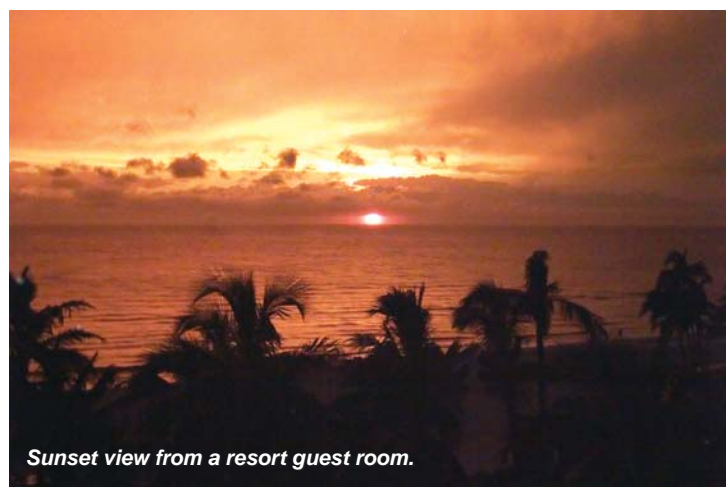
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Sunset view from a resort guest room.

Photo by Melissa Wolcott

IF YOU GO...

The Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Club - 851 Gulf Shore Blvd. North, Naples, FL, 34102; 800-237-7600; www.naplesbeachhotel.com

The Conservancy of Southwest Florida - www.conservancy.org

Campiello Ristorante - www.campiello.damico.com/

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