

## Hidden Beach Resort Trip Report for Paul & Loretta

June 9-15, 2006

In order to set the context of this report, you should know that we are a very conservative couple. We are both in our 50s, we are not heavy drinkers, and we are not "party all night" people. Loretta is a teacher and I have a construction business, and we were looking for a vacation where we could simply get naked and REST... to cease using energy... to lay around and do nothing... to be together to spend time together and get caught up on things and renew and refresh our marriage. The other 51 weeks a year our lives tend to revolve around our jobs and we don't get the time for each other that we need, so this was going to be a week for US to devote to each other. That was our intent, and we were actually able to pull it off!

We booked our trip through Castaways Travel and as usual they did a great job. When we arrived in Cancun we zipped through the airport quickly and Castaways had arranged for a private limo to take us to the resort. It was a wonderful, relaxing ride down. The driver read my mind and stopped at a convenience store just outside the airport so we could buy a snack and drink to tide us over until we got to the resort. Here I learned how important it is to know the value of the Mexican currency... I didn't, so after buying \$5 worth of snacks and giving the clerk a \$10 bill, he gave me a \$20 peso bill as change and not knowing any better we got back in the limo and left. As I soon found out, a peso is about 11½ cents, so I got shorted about \$3. Oh well!

Just to keep this report from getting too long, let me state from the outset that the staff at this hotel is absolutely remarkable. Every one of them were well trained and went out of their way to make us comfortable. I've tried to think of any incident with any employee that would justify criticism, but I can't. I'm not good with remembering names (even of my closest friends) but these people made such an impression that I can recall many of their names quickly. Alex, Dorota, Eduardo, and Ricardo all made wonderful first impressions.... the check-in was fast and friendly; everything was ready for us and we didn't have to sit around and wait. I had even made some special requests a few weeks earlier to have certain non-alcoholic drinks available in our room, and they had obviously gone to a lot of extra trouble to get them. We were moved into our room within 20 minutes of our arrival.

The rooms are rustic and you can tell that they had to go through major repairs after the hurricanes of 2005. We did have a few minor issues with the room over the course of the week that I have already documented for the managers, but they were all very minor and no where near serious enough to mess up our vacation. The biggest issues were that the air conditioner was directly over the bed, so it got cold at night; and there was very little space to put our clothes after we unpacked. But that last one was partly our fault... as it turned out, more than half the clothes we brought were never worn, so we never needed them in the first place. Next time we'll pack a lot lighter. And the mattress on the bed was extremely hard, so we didn't sleep well on it; but we got caught up on our sleep out on the beach. The sliding windows facing the beach gave a spectacular view of the ocean and the pool area, and our Jacuzzi bathtub was right there under those windows so we could enjoy the atmosphere while washing each other's back.

To give you an idea of just how relaxing this place is, it really affected my wife real fast. Loretta is a little more shy than I am, and even though this was not our first excursion into nude recreation, she wanted to "ease" her way into naked. So, as soon as we could unpack she put on her bikini and a coverup dress and we went down to the pool area to get a light lunch. Loretta noticed right off the bat that everyone was naked and that there were all sorts of body types out there. So, after giving her lunch order to the waiter, she went back to the room, took off her bikini, came back to eat her sandwich, and as soon as we left the table, her coverup dress came off and, except for meals, she never put on clothes again until we checked out six days later. She did have a habit of wrapping one of those big towels around her when she walked back to the room, but even that stopped after a couple of days. I have never seen her loosen up so fast.

The fact that you can be naked anywhere on the property made things a lot easier. The only reason we dressed for dinner was because we chose to, and even then we were dressing for each other so we weren't wearing much. Most couples wore something to dinner; sometimes it was sexy-wear, sometimes beach-wear, sometimes just casual shorts and shirt; maybe 10% chose to be naked. We didn't feel any pressure to wear something to impress anybody else except each other, and that just enhanced the romance of the whole environment.

The palapa beds were comfortable and readily available. They are right there on the beach so you can lay there and watch the waves come in, and watch the fish jump, and feel that ocean breeze. We even asked if we could eat our lunch in the palapas and the waiters gladly brought our food to us out there. And the nights were fantastic. We happened to be there when there was a full moon, and for the first few nights the moon would rise up over the Caribbean around 8:00 PM and the view was remarkable. The moon would reflect off the water, and the whitecaps of the waves would be highlighted in the moonlight. Twice after dinner we took off our clothes and walked down to a palapa to watch this scene, and let me tell you, laying there naked with the one you love in a picture-post-card atmosphere like this was one of the most romantic moments we've ever experienced.

The pool was nice and the swim-up bar is a very cool concept. It was disappointing that the pool is closed at night because we were looking forward to a naked night swim. The actual pool water itself is straight from the public water supply and is extremely salty (this is also true in your shower, which you'll learn when you try to lather up or use shampoo). But in that Caribbean sun, the pool is very refreshing.

As a general warning, we saw several people with fair or pasty skin who burned in a matter of minutes. One afternoon a couple took the palapa next to us and they fell asleep; it was late afternoon so the sun was getting lower in the sky and the rays were coming in under the thatch roof. We watched as the man's entire right side, from shoulder to foot, turned from fair to pink to red in less than 30 minutes. We debated whether or not to go wake them up and warn them, (we did) and they went back to their room to apply aloe. But the point is to be prepared for a sun that can burn you real fast. We pre-tanned for a month and still used sun block (both SPF 30 and 50), and we came through fine.

The restaurant was good and the wait staff was very attentive. Our only issue was that we wished they had a menu with more traditional Mexican food. The menus were largely American or international cuisines, and the themed cultural menus seemed to be more Americanized. Plus, they focused a great deal on presentation. Don't misunderstand... the food was good... we only had one dish in one meal that was not up to their usual quality. We really enjoyed eating poolside in the evenings when it wasn't too windy.

The resort offers theme nights that a number of people enjoyed; those often went well into the wee hours of the morning. Others (like us) didn't do the theme nights because we just wanted to rest and be alone with each other. That's the nice thing about this resort: they have plenty of things you can do and special activities so you can let loose and have a good time, or you can NOT do them and go do your own thing. Whatever you want!

The same is true for the all day cruise that is offered on Wednesdays. This is sponsored by Exotic Travel and the resort really recruited us to go, but because Loretta just started a new medication that made her queasy and I get motion sick very easily, and since it was our last full day at HBR, we thought it would be wise not to go. We both knew we would both be getting sick just a couple of hours into the cruise and would make everybody else miserable, so we chose to stay behind rather than spoil the trip for everyone else. And we were glad we did for two reasons: (1) there were only about a handful of people who didn't go, so the resort was so peaceful and quiet and we had the pool all to ourselves and it was extremely relaxing, and (2) that night and the next morning we spoke to a number of couples who had gone; some had a great time but three couples told us that they wished they had not gone, stating that it was too long, too hot, ultimately too loud, and a handful of people had too much to drink and got even louder. Let me stress here that this was a larger-than-normal group on this cruise because the Rowdy's were having their "Mother of All Parties" week, which does have a cause-and-effect on a party environment that may not be as much of an issue with a smaller group. Anyway, after we heard all sorts of stories we knew we made the right decision not to go, but so many others had such a great time that I would recommend that you take the time to get feedback from others who have been on the cruise with both small and large groups, consider ALL of the relevant factors, and then make a carefully thought-out decision that is right for YOU and based on what you'd enjoy doing.

Right next to the pool is a small hut where a lady named Tina hand-paints some of the most beautiful and brightly colored ceramic pieces I've ever seen. We bought several pieces from her and they look great in our Caribbean-themed bathroom and in our art niches. And there's the massages.... you absolutely HAVE to get at least one massage. We got a "couples massage" (no, its not an erotic massage, just the two of us on two tables getting massages at the same time) and those girls were GOOD!! They knew what they were doing and we could feel it all over when they were done.

The beach itself is narrow and when the tide comes in there isn't much left to walk on. But what they have they keep immaculate... there is always somebody raking up the seaweed and debris. We were able to walk out into the water a little; it is on a coral reef so it is rocky and you have to step carefully, but it was fun to go out there and watch the fish swim around your feet.

Finally, the sad moment came when we had to check out and get back to the airport for our mournful journey home, and the hotel handled that with class, too. The managers made sure we had a good time and seemed to really want to know what they can do to make the resort better. We got through the check-out quickly and our limo was waiting for us. That's the most difficult part of such a great vacation... getting into that limo knowing that we have to return to the real world again. But we'll be back... I promise!