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Sandpearl Resort: Destination Paradise

By: Dana Damato

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> As the illuminating sun slowly set into the Gulf Coast horizon and the sky's light slowly dimmed from a vibrant gold to the blackness of the nighttime sky, I couldn't help but stare in awe of the beauty that nature has provided. As a gentle ocean breeze freely tousled my hair, I took a sip of my Chardonnay and gazed into the endless atmosphere feeling at my utmost state of serenity, relaxation, and rejuvenation of mind, body, and soul. It's not everyday a Florida resident ever really considers traveling to a local destination for a weekend or week long getaway. It's difficult to discover a unique gem that truly sets itself apart from any other well known destination. In my travels, I surely discovered one beautiful pearl that has set a whole new standard for Clearwater Beach and the west coast of Florida. Poised along 700 feet of Clearwater's world famous and exquisite shoreline is where you will find a destination that rivals the ultimate luxury resorts known in this day and age. The Sandpearl Resort at Clearwater Beach is self explanatory right down to the name, a pearl in the sand.

Upon my arrival to the Sandpearl, my knowledge of a luxury resort was pretty set in my mind due to my previous stays at The Ritz- Carlton and Waldorf Astoria. However, I hadn't previously heard of any other known Sandpearl Resort since it is currently the only one of its kind. The experience began with a warm welcoming from the valet staff, happy to assist me from the very moment I drove up to the bellman who delivered my luggage immediately from the car to my room. Walking into what seemed like a tropical palace of chandeliers, beautiful décor that offers an ambiance inspired by the Gulf waters, and a straight view outside overlooking an exquisite pool area which further led out to the ocean. My appreciation for luxury resorts went far beyond my idea of what I've seen in the city or on any other beach property. With jovial smiles from the front desk staff and an offering of

a crisp glass of Champagne, this was a welcoming I have never experienced before.

The most important aspect of a vacation stay is the cuisine, and I was in for quite a treat with the selection presented at the Sandpearl Resort. Offering three remarkable choices for dining, the Sandpearl's cuisine selection is by far the most appetizing and breathtaking all in one sitting. For a more intimate dining selection open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, Caretta on the Gulf is the Sandpearl's award winning AAA four-diamond restaurant that hovers above the beach with indoor seating, outdoor seating, and a private dining room. With seasonally inspired cuisine infused with South American, Caribbean, and other international flavors, Caretta on the Gulf's culinary art is by far the most spectacular I have tasted in any other resort thus far. The restaurant features a ceviche bar, private wine room, lounge and bar, and magnificent sunset views. Also included as part of the culinary experience is a hands-on organic cooking class with executive chef, Steve Jordan, who offers healthy eaters his personal attention in an exclusive 10 person class sharing cooking tips for gourmet organic meals. For a more laid back setting inches from the sand with live island music at dusk, Tate Island Grill offers a casual dining experience complemented with an extensive cocktail menu. Watching the sun sinking into the Gulf and enjoying great company at dinner, Tate Island Grill is a perfect way to end the day and start the night.

With the various attractions that surround the Sandpearl Resort such as the Clearwater Marine Aquarium, where the star of the Warner Brothers feature film, "A Dolphin's Tale," Winter the Dolphin resides, and the strip of shopping stores, restaurants, and lounges are located, my favorite attraction of all was Pier 60. Making my way down the beach from Sandpearl to Pier 60 after dinner, I began







“A SERENE HAVEN OF NATURAL BEAUTY, THE SPA PROVIDES OVER 50 SPA SERVICES, INCLUDING WATER THERAPY, TOUCH THERAPY, SPA RITUALS, SKIN CARE, AND SALON SERVICES.”

to hear music and see crowds of people in the distance. Being an intrigued tourist making my way down to Pier 60 to see what all the hype was about, I came to see the features of artisans, crafts, streets performers, and live musical entertainment right there on the Pier. I asked around how often they put on this kind of celebration and was informed that these events happen every night of the week (weather permitting). The energy, music, mix of families, older couples, and younger crowds was the perfect bit of variety that allows visitors of all ages to have a great time.

On an afternoon that I wasn't feeling up to being out in the Sun, the next and best alternative was indulging in Sandpearl Spa services. A serene haven of natural beauty, the spa provides over 50 spa services, including water therapy, touch therapy, spa rituals, skin care, and salon services. The Sandpearl Spa facility offers seven treatment rooms, a therapeutic whirlpool with a cool shower, private relaxation rooms, a hydro tub, steam rooms and a deluxe couple's treatment room with Swiss showers. Also accommodating the spa facilities is a world class fitness center that provides state of the art fitness equipment along with Yoga, Personal Training, and Tai Chi.

As my days started either relaxing by the pool, soaking in some rays at the beach, exploring the area's attractions, or simply spending time in the spa, I found a perfect quick grab-and-go dining option, The Marketplace. Offering a variety of pastries, fruit, cereal, and freshly prepared salads and sandwiches for fuel needed before a day out in the

sun. Best of all, The Marketplace brews signature Starbucks hot and cold drinks. Being a waterfront resort, the Sandpearl offers an array of boating activities. From kayaks to sailboats, the pleasure of relaxing on a vessel in the middle of the Gulf is an opportunity worth taking advantage of. On a particularly beautiful morning, my vessel of choice happened to be one of Clearwater's most comfortable and luxurious yachts, Dolce Vita. The Dolce Vita is a 45' Seamaster, a self-contained vessel capable of long-range trans-oceanic cruising. As the Dolce Vita set sail into the Gulf, Captain Paul of Meetings Afloat, took the group on a fascinating excursion along the Intracoastal Waterway from Clearwater to Caladesi Island State Park. Cruising through the Mandalay Channel under the clear blue sky, we finally reached our destination at the park's marina where we explored the private beach and enjoyed some R&R.

Looking for a place to gather with families, renew old friendships, indulge in new experiences, and recharge your spirit? Then look no further. The sparkling Gulf of Mexico waters and warmth of a welcoming resort staff is ready and willing to make you their number one priority. The Sandpearl spirit awaits you.

For reservations: 1-877-726-3111

500 Mandalay Avenue
Clearwater Beach, FL 33767

www.sandpearl.com <